

JADE REGENT



JADE REGENT

FOREST OF SPIRITS

● PART ONE: ORDU-AGANHEI

Leaving the Crown of the World, the PCs enter the city of Ordu-Aganhei in the Tian nation of Hongal, where they must impress their royal host while fighting off attacks from the Five Storms.

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● PART TWO: THE FOREST OF SPIRITS

A mysterious new ally offers to guide the PCs to Minkai through the strange and haunted Forest of Spirits. There, the PCs meet the kami of the forest, who tell them of the House of Withered Blossoms, the ancient fortress of the Five Storms.

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● PART THREE: HOUSE OF WITHERED BLOSSOMS

The PCs find themselves caught in the middle of an ongoing war between the current inhabitants of the House of Withered Blossoms as they search the ancient palace for clues about the nature and weaknesses of their deadly foes, the Five Storms.

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ADVANCEMENT TRACK

“Forest of Spirits” uses the medium XP track.

10 The PCs begin this adventure at 10th level.

11 By the time the PCs descend into Munasukaru’s Penance, they should be 11th level. If they are not 11th level by this point, consider placing a few random encounters in the Forest of Spirits or the House of Withered Blossoms.

The PCs should be 12th level by the adventure’s end.

FOREST OF SPIRITS

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Deep within the Forest of Spirits stands an ancient pagoda called the House of Withered Blossoms. The palace of the oni of the Five Storms, it also served as their prison. The kami, the spirits of the forest outside, kept endless watch over their enemies, but just as the oni were forbidden by the gods to leave the House of Withered Blossoms, the kami were not allowed to enter the pagoda. And so, for centuries, the pagoda and its occupants were held in balance, even stagnation. No mortal magic, no mere *teleportation* or *gate* spell, could enable the Five Storms to escape their prison, their sentence decreed by far more powerful beings.

Yet oni are not of mortal flesh; they are the heralds of disaster, and the leader of the Five Storms, a powerful wind yai oni named Anamurumon, vowed that he would not spend his days in torpor, locked in his prison palace, when outside, beyond the Forest of Spirits, there was flesh to flay and covet and command. And one day, Anamurumon came upon an ancient legend within his great library that brought a smile to his scowling face for the first time in centuries.

The legend told of a magical demon gate, or *kimon*, a way unbound by mortal magic through which spirits can pass and vanish like an echo. The creation of a *kimon* would require the sacrifice of many souls, but Anamurumon was not constrained by mortal timescales. The Five Storms began a harvest that spanned generations. They sent feelers out among the dark things of the Forest of Spirits, and the twisted, evil hobgoblins inhabiting the forest answered their call. Worshiping the oni almost as gods, these hobgoblins acted as the hands of the Five Storms, scouring the forest to gather souls for the *kimon*. While the kami were able to kill many of the hobgoblins, they could not kill them all, and slowly the harvest of souls continued until there were enough.

As Anamurumon worked to create the *kimon* and engineer the Five Storms' escape, he soon realized that they would still be pursued by the kami, for as soon as the Five Storms left the House of Withered Blossoms, the kami would be able to enter the pagoda and learn what they had done. So Anamurumon devised a plan. He would sacrifice one of his own, the least of his commanders in fact, to stay in the House of Withered Blossoms for all time. He chose a ja noi, or hobgoblin oni, named Munasukaru as his sacrifice. With Munasukaru still imprisoned within the pagoda, the kami would be powerless to cross its threshold and discover the oni's treachery.

At last the *kimon* was created, its surface writhing with spirits and souls. As the Five Storms began passing through the gate, Anamurumon stopped Munasukaru and commanded her to stay. Unable to resist the command, Munasukaru stayed behind with a few oni soldiers and the Five Storms' hobgoblin servants while the other oni escaped to Minkai and beyond.

Munasukaru's imprisonment in the House of Withered Blossoms soon drove her to madness. Believing that Anamurumon had punished her for failing the Five Storms somehow, she went into self-imposed exile in the dungeons beneath the palace, which her hobgoblin followers named Munasukaru's Penance. As Munasukaru spiraled into insanity, her warped will slowly but inevitably began twisting her dungeon as well as the pagoda and its surroundings, creating a blight in the middle of the Forest of Spirits.

Outside the House of Withered Blossoms, the kami grew more and more concerned about the Five Storms' harvest of souls and subsequent silence, and soon realized that the majority of the Five Storms had escaped their prison, though how they had accomplished this feat remained a mystery. Still unable to intervene directly, the kami had no choice but to continue their vigil over the now-silent pagoda.

When a tribe of araneas, under the leadership of a sorcerer named Akinosa, came to the House of Withered Blossoms 60 years ago, in search of great stores of wealth and knowledge that Akinosa believed lay in the dungeons beneath the palace, the kami allowed them to pass, hoping that the araneas would drive out the last of the oni. Once the kami were able to enter the pagoda, they could discover the exact whereabouts of the Five Storms and the method of their escape.

While the araneas' initial forays into the House of Withered Blossoms were successful, Akinosa—a notorious drunkard and opium addict—was unable to press his advantage, and Munasukaru and her hobgoblins were only driven into the dungeons beneath the pagoda. A long war for control of the House of Withered Blossoms began between Akinosa's araneas and Munasukaru's hobgoblin followers. This war has lasted 60 years and is still at a stalemate—Akinosa and Munasukaru always manage to stay one step ahead of the other, always thwarting each other's plans for dominance, and the hobgoblins' fecundity more than makes up for the araneas' sorcery. Currently, the araneas inhabit the aboveground portions of the palace, while the hobgoblins lurk in Munasukaru's Penance below, with the ground floor of the pagoda a no-man's-land between the two opposing forces.

Outside, in the Forest of Spirits, the kami continue to watch the House of Withered Blossoms, for as long as even one oni remains inside, they must maintain their guard. Meanwhile, the Five Storms grow in strength, and their ally, the Jade Regent, tightens his grip on the empire of Minkai.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Concluding their epic journey across the Crown of the World, the PCs finally reach the lands of Tian Xia and enter the city of Ordu-Aganhei. As the PCs begin to explore this strange city, they receive an invitation from Batsaikhar, prince of Ordu-Aganhei, who wants to meet these visitors

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TIAN EQUIPMENT

Many of the characters and creatures encountered in this adventure, and in subsequent volumes of the Jade Regent Adventure Path, are equipped with armor and weapons common in Tian Xia, but which may be unfamiliar to players and GMs used to adventuring in the Inner Sea region. In most cases, all of the information you need to run such characters is already included in their stat blocks. To get full descriptions and statistics for the Eastern weapons and armor referenced here, check out *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat*, available at fine gaming stores and at paizo.com.

from the far-off lands to the west. The prince hosts a variety of feasts for the PCs, giving them the opportunity to impress their host while learning more about the current situation in Minkai. If the PCs are successful, Batsaikhar rewards them with gifts that will be useful for their journey, but if they displease him, they soon find that trade without the prince's permission is impossible.

During the final festival, the PCs are attacked by agents of the Five Storms, who are now aware of the PCs' presence in Tian Xia. The PCs receive aid in the battle from an unexpected source—a kitsune named Miyaro, who has been sent by the kami, the spiritual protectors of the natural world. She tells the PCs that the road from Hongal to Minkai is guarded by the Five Storms, but that the kami will allow the PCs passage through the Forest of Spirits, the vast, haunted forest that grows between Minkai and the rest of Tian Xia, to bypass the heavily patrolled main road.

Meeting the kami in their forest home, the PCs learn of an ancient pagoda in the depths of the Forest of Spirits called the House of Withered Blossoms. This palace once served as a prison for the Five Storms, but the oni somehow managed to escape. Unable to investigate directly, the kami ask the PCs to search for clues as to how the oni escaped. At the same time, the kami know that the Jade Regent of Minkai is allied with the Five Storms, so any information the PCs discover about the Five Storms while exploring the pagoda and its dungeons can only help them in their fight against the Jade Regent.

Traveling through the wood, the PCs encounter several of the spirits that give the forest its name. With the help of Miyaro and the kami, the journey is swift, but still dangerous. Entering the House of Withered Blossoms, the PCs face both a tribe of araneas who have taken over the aboveground levels of the pagoda and the hobgoblins who still serve the last of the oni left behind to guard the palace by the Five Storms. In the process, the PCs can learn much about their enemies, as well as gain new weapons to aid in them in their eventual showdown with the Jade Regent.

PART ONE: ORDU-AGANHEI

The adventure begins as the PCs complete their journey over the Crown of the World and arrive at the city of Ordu-Aganhei—the gateway to the mysterious Dragon Empires of Tian Xia, or, as Tians prefer to view it, the last outpost of civilization before the wilds of the Crown of the World and beyond. Named after the Tian explorer who first charted the route over the Crown of the World, Ordu-Aganhei is the primary trade hub on the Tian side of the Path of Aganhei, and represents the first major outpost of civilization the PCs have likely encountered since leaving Kalsgard. The PCs can relax and recover from the rigors of their journey in the city, as well seek out information on the current situation in Minkai.

The PCs enter the city through its north gate, a decorated tower with a single 30-foot-high reinforced iron door and some 30 guards inside. A caravan coming out of the Crown of the World in the off-season is an almost unheard of occurrence, and the gate guards examine the PCs with barely hidden suspicion. The guards' examination is strict and thorough, dust swirling around them as they work. Just as it looks like the guards won't allow the PCs into the city, however, a well-dressed man appears at the gate from within the city, prostrates himself (quite literally) before the PCs, and makes a speech.

Honored guests! Welcome, welcome, and three welcomes more! Please ignore these slithering worms beneath your feet—I assure you they shall be punished for their insolence. Prince Batsaikhar, golden orb of sunlight at the black portal of barbarism, bids you welcome to Ordu-Aganhei, the City at the Edge of the World. My most munificent lord invites his honored guests to his humble palace to rest, dine, partake in polite conversation, and perhaps indulge in some pleasure. The Golden One says he hopes you will honor him with your clever speech from strange lands, a speech that he of all men in Hongal has mastered. He is eager to hear of your journey across the Crown of the World in this most difficult time of travel.

The man is Chua, the royal advisor to Prince Batsaikhar of Ordu-Aganhei, and he has been ordered to bring the PCs and their allies to the prince's palace. To any women in the party, Chua offers a special gift—a black rose—and these words: “There is no fire like the fire in the souls of the women of far lands. Beauty is the wisdom of women, and wisdom is the beauty of men.”

If the PCs accept the invitation, go to Meeting the Prince on page 10. If the PC want to refuse the invitation, Ameiko warns them that it would likely be unwise to turn down the friendship of the prince. His palace might offer an excellent place to rest and make ready for the next part of their journey, and by talking with him, they could perhaps learn something of Minkai and the road ahead. Nevertheless, Ameiko defers

to the PCs, and if they turn down the invitation, the caravan can camp in one of the caravansaries outside the city. If the PCs choose not to meet Batsaikhar, the offended prince effectively closes the city's shops to them. The PCs will have to bribe their way into shops to buy or sell equipment, paying exorbitant prices for new items and receiving offers far below market value for items they wish to sell. In this case, run the Attack at the Steaming Lake Market encounter (see page 13) as an ambush at a point of your choosing. The kitsune Miyaro still joins the battle, and afterward offers to lead the PCs through the Forest of Spirits.

ORDU-AGANHEI

LN small city

Corruption +3; **Crime** -1; **Economy** +4; **Law** +4; **Lore** +3;
Society -2

Qualities prosperous, rumormongering citizens, strategic location, tourist attraction

Danger +5

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government overlord

Population 8,227 (5,753 humans; 1,895 tengus; 202 elves; 187 dwarves; 103 samsarans; 57 kitsune; 17 gnomes; 13 halflings)

Notable NPCs

Prince Batsaikhar (LN male human aristocrat 8/fighter 5)

Royal Advisor Chua (N male human expert 8)

Royal Bodyguard Okimoto Izume (LN female human samurai 11)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 6,400 gp; **Purchase Limit** 37,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 6th
Minor Items 4d4; **Medium Items** 3d4; **Major Items** 1d6

ORDU-AGANHEI FEATURES

The capital of the nation of Hongal, Ordu-Aganhei is also the northernmost city in Tian Xia. It lies on the edge of the Arctic Circle and is an oasis of luxury and hospitality in an icy desert of despair. The city is famed for its thermal hot springs, which have formed a sulfur-rimed lake in the center of the city, frequented by residents and visitors alike. Prince Batsaikhar, younger brother of the khan of Hongal, rules Ordu-Aganhei. Called the Golden One by his subjects, who live in both awe and terror of him, Batsaikhar is a man known to smile and sing as he has those who have angered him torn apart.

Ordu-Aganhei is crammed between stout timber walls 40 feet high, topped with spikes replete with the severed heads of bandits who preyed upon the Path of Aganhei. The city's layout is confusing, with narrow, winding streets. Buildings are timber framed and have high, gabled roofs and ornate, decorated eaves. A large, parklike garden surrounds Ordu-Aganhei's central lake, which lies more or less in the middle of the city. The park is flanked on one side by the Palace of the Prince, a forbidden place guarded by hundreds of

soldiers, and on the other by the temple of Abadar, known in Tian Xia as the God of Walls and Ditches.

Paper lanterns light the streets of Ordu-Aganhei at night. The streets are immaculately clean (Prince Batsaikhar hates dirt) and regularly patrolled. Prayer flags of all colors dance in the wind from every gable and roof. Everywhere one turns a shop is selling something, and the heady scent of incense mingles with the smell of unfamiliar cooked foods. On the city's outskirts, huge corrals contain herds of prized Hongali horses, and numerous caravansaries cater to the caravans coming down from the Crown of the World.

CULTURE SHOCK

Ordu-Aganhei should feel like a totally alien place to the PCs—signs, faces, language, and culture are all totally new. You can give your players a memorable experience not only by emphasizing this strangeness, but by playing it up. The food, the smells, the talk, and the architecture each play a part in the dizzying new world the PCs have entered. A few suggestions on how to subject your players to culture shock are given below.

Language: Tien, the “common tongue” of Tian Xia, is not at all similar to Taldane, Avistan's Common, nor are its letters remotely related. Allow your players to have fun making mistakes, but don't let a session turn into endless rounds of Linguistics checks to allow the PCs to be understood. Simply have the locals smile when the PCs make their first Diplomacy check to gather information, have them point out a tea house when asked for an armor shop, or have them smile and take what is proffered by the PCs when asked for a similar object.

One easy way for the PCs to make themselves understood is through pantomime. While overly complex conversations are not possible, a DC 10 Linguistics check should allow simple communication (such as buying something). More complex communication (such as getting directions) requires a DC 20 Linguistics check.

Chopsticks: Everyone eats with chopsticks, and using them incorrectly is a great insult to one's host, adding +2 to the DC of any check made to impress that character or gain her confidence that day. The PCs can attempt to use chopsticks to eat with a DC 15 Dexterity check. After properly using chopsticks at each meal for 1 week, a character has mastered their use and no longer needs to make checks.

Entertainment: Street performances are common in Ordu-Aganhei, with dangerous acts being the most popular—walking a tightrope over barrels of scorpions, dodging arrows and other missiles, wrestling, and martial arts displays (such as chopping through boards with hands or feet, breaking stones with head butts, punching walls, and balancing for hours over hot coals).

Shopping: Ordu-Aganhei teems with pushy traders. These merchants sell everything from porcelain to silk to

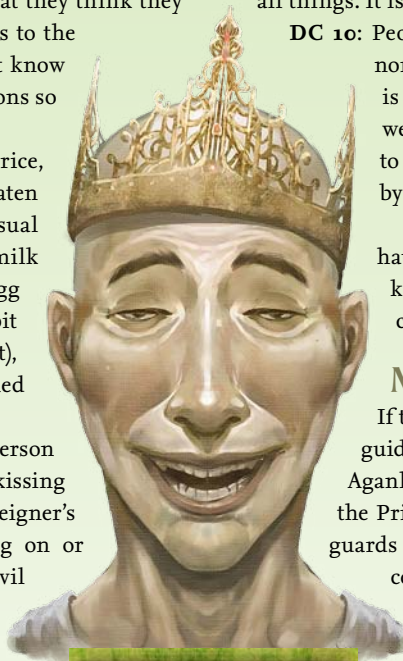
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tea to even stranger wares. Trade only takes place with the prince's permission, and if he is displeased, the PCs soon find that shops are closed when they visit.

Smiling Faces: Everywhere the PCs go, they pass smiling locals, all of whom are so anxious to please the prince's new guests that they tell the PCs exactly what they think they wish to hear. If the PCs want directions to the nearest magic shop, and a local doesn't know the way, she is likely to make up directions so as not to seem impolite.

Street Food: As well as the standard rice, noodles, and spicy soups commonly eaten here, the PCs may come upon more unusual feasts, such as horse sausages, fried milk (stir-fried chicken liver and ham in egg whites and curdled milk), fried rabbit ears, tanghulu (skewers of candied fruit), and wood ear (a type of local fungus dried and eaten as a snack).

Local Superstitions: Touching a person with blond hair brings luck for a day; kissing one brings luck for a year. Never let a foreigner's shadow fall across your own. Stepping on or standing astride a threshold invites evil spirits inside. He who smiles wins smiles. A stranger does not wear a sword indoors as decoration. All strangers are relations to each other.



PRINCE BATSAIKHAR

GATHERING INFORMATION

Once in Ordu-Aganhei, the PCs will likely wish to find out more information about the current situation in Minkai and the road ahead. The PCs can make Diplomacy checks to gather information or Knowledge (local) checks to hear the following gossip about Minkai.

DC 10: An ancient place called the Forest of Spirits lies between Hongal and Minkai. The forest is known to be haunted, so the main road to Minkai, called the Spirit Road, skirts the forest to the south and west. Loyal samurai of Minkai's Jade Regent patrol the Spirit Road in great numbers to keep it open and safe.

DC 20: The Jade Regent's samurai patrols are far more likely to rob you than protect you, and many caravans have disappeared on the Spirit Road. Although many people blame the haunted Forest of Spirits for the disappearances, others claim the Jade Regent's troops, a small army of whom patrol along the road, are responsible.

DC 25: Whispers of rebellion or outright civil war are coming out of Minkai. The emperor is in hiding and has not been seen in public in years, and his appointed viceroy, the Jade Regent, is far from a popular ruler. Many groups oppose the Jade Regent, and they could topple him if they ever joined together.

If the PCs wish to know more about the Forest of Spirits, they can learn the following information with Diplomacy checks to gather information, Knowledge (geography) checks, or Knowledge (local) checks.

DC 5: The Forest of Spirits has existed since the dawn of all things. It is not a place for people.

DC 10: People do not live in the Forest of Spirits, nor do they cross through it, as the place is well known to be haunted. Only one well-patrolled route leads from Hongal to Minkai, called the Spirit Road, which bypasses the forest rather than entering it.

DC 20: The Forest of Spirits is not really haunted. In fact, it is the birthplace of the kami, spirits who protect the objects and creatures of the natural world.

MEETING THE PRINCE

If the PCs accept the prince's invitation, Chua guides them through the streets of Ordu-Aganhei to the enormous wooden Palace of the Prince. Chua hurries the PCs past countless guards and groveling slaves to the palace's central courtyard, a vast chamber nearly 100 yards across built around a steaming lake. Orchids grow in gardens overlooking the lake, while colorful herons swoop through the air, all beneath a ceiling hidden by prayer flags.

On a huge bed surrounded by colorful silks, painted screens, and beautiful white-painted women sits an enormous, smiling man barely dressed in voluminous robes—Prince Batsaikhar. Immediately behind him stands his bodyguard Izume, a tall figure in full samurai armor, carrying an enormous drawn sword.

Batsaikhar is known for his perpetual smile: he smiles as he eats, he smiles as he engages in polite conversation, and he smiles as he amuses himself by personally beheading seven people piled one on top of the other with one blow of his katana, just to see if he can do so. Batsaikhar sees himself as a very firm ruler, but fair, and he is renowned for his etiquette, delicate words, and insatiable lusts. The prince particularly loves foreign women, and is certain to fixate on any such female character present.

During the PCs' stay in Ordu-Aganhei, Prince Batsaikhar is an ever-smiling figure to fear. Although he needs great provocation to kill strangers, he might behead a hundred of his followers instead if the strangers insult him. He would not dream of mentioning anything about the beheadings, as criticizing guests would be the height of rudeness.

When the PCs are brought into his presence, the prince is almost unbearably polite, plying them with extravagant food and drink. He is anxious to hear about their travels

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(which frankly bore him quickly, though he is good at hiding his feelings) and their reasons for crossing the Crown of the World at this time of the year. If the PCs are hesitant to discuss such matters, the prince doesn't press them, but he does develop a fixation on one of the characters or one of their possessions (see sidebar). As a result, Batsaikhar announces that the PCs shall be afforded the status of royal guests. He instructs his staff to provide them the best rooms and begin preparations for the Five Feasts of Hongal in their honor. The first feast will take place that very night; the last will take place in 5 days' time across the whole city.

The prince then dismisses the PCs to brood upon the object of his desire. The Palace of the Prince is a large and rambling structure, and as guests, the PCs have free rein. However, there are so many guards, retainers, and advisors in the palace that guests are hard pressed to do anything without at least half a dozen people appearing around them to help. The PCs' rooms are luxurious, with goose feather beds, warm fireplaces, access to steaming lakes to bathe in, and endless assistants to pamper them.

The PCs may also wish to visit the city, and may do so at their leisure, though the prince will likely assign several guards and servants to accompany and guide them through the city.

THE FIVE FEASTS OF HONGAL

Over the next 5 days, Prince Batsaikhar hosts five feasts in honor of the PCs. The feasts are lavish affairs, and take place in the prince's throne room courtyard with over 300 guests, including Batsaikhar's wives, courtiers, concubines, subjects, and slaves, who all react in exactly the same way that he does. Desperate to impress the PCs and thus obtain the object of his fixation, the prince orders his chefs to create the finest meals from only the rarest and most luxurious foods imaginable, and the chefs take him quite literally.

Each of the feasts is briefly detailed below, with a list of food served and the entertainment for the feast. After the entertainment, the prince challenges the PCs to show him similar performances or skills from their own lands. The PCs (or their NPC allies) must make a series of skill checks or other checks to complete the challenges and impress the prince. They cannot take 20 on these checks, but may take 10 if they wish.

If the PCs succeed at challenges, the prince is pleased and presents them with gifts in appreciation of their performance. However, the prince angrily chastises his own performers in Tien for their lack of talent, and once his guests leave, he broods over suitable punishments to inflict upon his staff. The PCs also receive XP awards for successfully completing each challenge.

If the PCs fail at the required checks (or refuse to perform), the prince politely ignores this, but the next day the PCs find the shops in the city closed as the notoriously

FIXATIONS OF A BORED RULER

Prince Batsaikhar is used to getting what he wants, and once he meets the PCs, he wants something from them. At their initial meeting, Batsaikhar develops a fixation on the PCs' party—most likely a non-Tian female PC (or a significant NPC such as Shalelu), or one of the PCs' most valuable magic items or possessions. During the PCs' stay, the prince arranges for the object of his fixation to be brought to him often, by frequently summoning the PC he is fixated on or the PC who possesses the object. Batsaikhar makes no secret of his wonder and desire regarding the object of his fixation, but he never takes his heart's desire (that would be impolite). He simply wishes the PC to give him what he wants. He would never force the PCs to comply, though you should make the players think he might. The prince is never threatening or aggressive, but his desire is open and plain.

If the fixation is a woman, Batsaikhar makes a proposal of marriage immediately before the Feast of the Honored Visitors (see page 12) with a suitably flowery speech. He promises the stars to the object of his desire, and a place by his side forever. If he is fixated on an item, he suggests the object of his desire would make a suitable gift for his hospitality.

Refusal angers the prince, and he retires to his chambers and sulks for the remainder of the time the PCs are here. If the PCs agree to his request, the overjoyed prince presents them with a gift to match his happiness: the Ruby of Hongal, a fabulously large, flawless gemstone worth at least 10,000 gp. Needless to say, any woman who accepts Batsaikhar's offer of marriage soon discovers her new husband's incredibly short attention span and fiery temper.

mercurial prince does not wish his subjects to be corrupted by the PCs' lack of grace or talent. In this case, the DCs for Diplomacy checks in the city increase by +10 as well, as locals refuse to talk to them, under the prince's orders.

THE FEAST OF THREE

The Feast of Three takes place on the PCs' first night in Ordu-Aganhei as guests of Prince Batsaikhar.

Feast: Spicy duck heads; ox forehead; turtle casserole; pigeon brains; fried chicken feet; and tiger, dragon, and phoenix soup (made with cat, snake, and chicken meat).

Entertainment: The prince's royal guards perform an exhibition of the Three Games of Hongal: mounted archery, bareback horse racing, and wrestling.

Challenge: Prince Batsaikhar asks the PCs to show him something similar from the magnificently verdant lands of the west. Only one PC can attempt each challenge, and other characters cannot use aid another to assist.

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For mounted archery, a PC must make a DC 5 Ride check to guide his mount with his knees, a DC 10 Ride check to fight from his mount, and then shoot at a target with a ranged weapon while the mount is running (making a bull's-eye is AC 25, and the attack roll takes a –8 penalty due to the mount's speed).

For horse racing, a PC must make a DC 20 Ride check to fast mount her horse, a DC 15 Ride check to spur her mount to greater speed, and a third DC 15 Ride check to leap over obstacles. Each of these checks takes a –5 penalty from riding bareback.

For wrestling, a PC must grapple the prince's champion **Huk** (N male human fighter 8 with the Greater Grapple feat; **CMB** +12 [+5 grapple]; **CMD** 25 [27 vs. grapple]). The first one to pin his opponent wins the challenge.

Story Award: For each challenge the PCs successfully perform, award them 800 XP.

Gift: If the PCs successfully complete at least two out of the three challenges, the prince presents them with a masterwork composite shortbow, an *efficient quiver*, and 10 +1 arrows.

THE FEAST OF THE ANCIENTS

The Feast of the Ancients takes place on the second night.

Feast: Steamed Hongali stone frogs, goose stomach, goat's feet tendons in wheat noodles, fish lips with celery, solidified duck blood, and drunken shrimp (a delicacy in which one dips live shrimp in alcohol before pinching off their heads and eating their flesh).

Entertainment: "Why the Marmot Doesn't Have Thumbs," an ancient Hongali folk tale performed with *pi ying xi* (shadow puppet theater using leather puppets) accompanied by throat singing and music on the *morin khuur*, or horsehead fiddle, a traditional Hongali stringed instrument.

Challenge: Prince Batsaikhar asks to see something similar from the young lands of beautiful women. The PCs must make skill checks to impress the prince, from the following performance types: a DC 35 Perform (act) or Sleight of Hand check to perform using the *pi ying xi*, a DC 25 Perform (act) or Perform (oratory) check, a DC 30 Perform (sing) check, or a DC 30 Perform (string instruments) check. Only one PC can attempt each check, but other characters can use aid another to assist their companions.

Story Award: For each successful skill check made by the PCs, award them 800 XP.

Gift: If the PCs successfully perform using the *pi ying xi*, or succeed at two out of three other performances, the prince gives them a finely carved and decorated masterwork *morin khuur* worth 500 gp.

THE FEAST OF FIRE

Prince Batsaikhar hosts the Feast of Fire on the third night.

Feast: Thousand-year-old eggs (duck eggs coated with lime, ashes, and mud and soaked in horse urine for 100

days), cow's lung soaked in chili sauce, pig face (made by pouring hot tar on a pig's head to remove the hair but leave the skin intact), snake venom soup, deep fried bee larvae, and duck's feet marinated in blood.

Entertainment: "The Taming of the Kirin," a dazzlingly dangerous display of fire breathing and swordplay while dancing on hot coals.

Challenge: Prince Batsaikhar asks the PCs if they can amuse him with similar feats from the bountiful lands of enlightenment to the west. The PCs must make a DC 30 Perform (dance) check, a DC 30 Acrobatics check, and a DC 25 Intimidate check. Only one PC can attempt each check, but other characters can use aid another to assist their companions.

Story Award: For each successful skill check made by the PCs, award them 800 XP.

Gift: The prince rewards the PCs with a case of *elixir of fire breath* (two flasks of elixir for each successful skill check).

THE FEAST OF THE HONORED VISITORS

On the fourth night, the Feast of the Honored Visitors is held. For this feast, the guests must advise the royal chefs what to cook, and must provide the entertainment for the feast. The prince's advisor Chua wakes the PCs at dawn and asks for instructions for the feast—the royal household is ready to act under their direction.

Feast: The PCs have to feed the prince's 300 guests, but all dishes must be made from what is locally available—camel, horse, mutton, and pork being the most obvious options.

Challenge: The prince's chefs are totally unfamiliar with Avistani cuisine, and unless the PCs personally intervene, the cooks produce something that looks disgusting and tastes vile, which displeases the prince. The PCs can supervise the cooks and create a pleasing meal with a DC 25 Profession (butcher), Profession (cook), or similar skill check, or by using magic.

The PCs must also entertain the guests at the feast. They must make two skill checks, one at DC 30 and one at DC 35, using Perform or other skills (such as Acrobatics, Escape Artist, or the like) to provide suitable entertainment. Only one PC can attempt each check, but other characters can use aid another to assist their companions.

XP: For each successful skill check (for cooking and entertainment) made by the PCs, award them 800 XP.

Gift: If the PCs make all of their skill checks and the food and entertainment are both good, the prince gives them a beautiful +1 *scimitar* in a ceremonial scabbard decorated with opals worth 1,000 gp.

THE FEAST OF THE DRAGON

The prince's final feast, the Feast of the Dragon, is an evening of celebration that takes place across the city on the fifth night. Prince Batsaikhar does not leave the palace, but

he encourages and expects the PCs to do so. He has issued instructions for his merchants to open up their warehouses and show the finest wares of Tian Xia at a special market held on the shores of the steaming lake in the middle of the city.

Feast: In addition to the normal street food found in Ordu-Aganhei, horse-hoof gruel, “household deer” (fried rats), smells like fish pork (pork cooked with wood ear mushrooms and green hot peppers), skewered roasted sparrows, snakehead soup, and live scorpions doused in potent liquor are all available during the Feast of the Dragon.

Entertainment: The prince has instructed his subjects to be happy for the evening, and to arrange a dragon parade in honor of the visitors. Hundreds of brightly colored dragon costumes are paraded through the streets, accompanied by the staccato explosions of paper candles. The festivities conclude at midnight with an incredible fireworks display over the palace walls, with hundreds of Desnan candles, skyrocketers, and starfountains turning night into day.

Challenge: There is no challenge for the PCs to perform during the Feast of the Dragon, but their presence in the city has not gone unnoticed by the Five Storms, who quickly send agents racing to the city to attack the PCs.

ATTACK AT THE LAKE MARKET (CR 12)

The vast market on the lakeshore forms a central part of the evening. Market stalls stand close together, hawking every sort of ware imaginable. Almost anything the PCs might want to purchase can likely be found at the market, up to the city’s base value.

Creatures: A group of eight Five Storms ninja has been dispatched to assassinate the PCs and Ameiko, the first of potentially many to come. Six of the ninja approach the PCs under a large golden dragon costume (a paper object held aloft on bamboo struts) while the other two stand behind beating heavy drums. As they pass the PCs, the ninja throw off their dragon costume and attack. The ninja are completely silent and do not speak, even if captured. All of the ninja cut out their own tongues when they took their oaths to the Five Storms to prevent them from speaking truths, even after death.

On the third round of combat, the PCs gain an unexpected ally in their battle against the ninja, as a woman runs out of the crowd and begins attacking the ninja as well. This is Miyaro, one of the race of foxlike shapechangers called kitsune, sent here by the kami of the Forest of Spirits to assist and guide the PCs. Here in Ordu-Aganhei, Miyaro stays in her human form, that of a simple peasant woman, and therefore loses her bite attack, but she wields her kukri to devastating effect, flanking with the PCs to make sneak attacks against the ninja.

FIVE STORMS NINJA (8) CR 6
XP 2,400 each

Human ninja 7 (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 13)

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +8; **Senses** Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 56 each (7d8+21)

Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk katana* +11 (1d8+1 plus poison/18–20)

Ranged shuriken +9 (1d2+1 plus poison)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

TACTICS

Before Combat The ninja poison their katanas and shuriken with shadow essence before combat, and drink their *potions of displacement*.

During Combat The ninja pair up against opponents, flanking to make sneak attacks.

Morale If reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, the ninja drink their *potions of cure serious wounds*. If reduced to 8 hit points or fewer after this point, the ninja commit seppuku (ritual suicide by performing a self-inflicted coup de grace with their katanas) rather than submit to capture.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 21

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (katana*)

Skills Acrobatics +13, Bluff +11, Climb +10, Disguise +11, Escape Artist +13, Intimidate +8, Perception +9, Sleight of Hand +14, Stealth +13, Swim +6

Languages Tien (cannot speak)

SQ *ki* pool (4), light steps, ninja tricks (fast stealth, finesse rogue, smoke bomb), no trace +2, poison use

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of displacement*, shadow essence (6 doses); **Other Gear** masterwork chain shirt, masterwork katana*, shuriken (12)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fast Stealth (Ex) The ninja can move at full speed using the Stealth skill without penalty.

Ki Pool (Su) A ninja has a pool of *ki* points, supernatural energy she can use to accomplish amazing feats. As long as she has at least 1 point in her *ki* pool, a ninja treats any Acrobatics skill check made to jump as if she had a running start. By spending 1 point from her *ki* pool, a ninja can make one additional attack at her highest attack bonus, but she can do so only when making a full attack. In addition, she can spend 1 point to increase her speed by 20 feet for 1 round. Finally, a ninja can spend 1 point from her *ki* pool to give herself a +4 insight bonus on Stealth skill checks for 1 round. Each of these powers is activated as a swift action.

Light Steps (Ex) As a full-round action, a ninja can move

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up to twice her speed, ignoring difficult terrain. While moving in this way, any surface will support her, no matter how much she weighs. This allows her to move across water, lava, or even the thinnest tree branches. She must end her move on a surface that can support her normally. She cannot move across air in this way, nor can she walk up walls or other vertical surfaces. When moving in this way, she does not take damage from surfaces or hazards that react to being touched, such as lava or caltrops, nor does she need to make Acrobatics checks to avoid falling on slippery or rough surfaces. Finally, when using light steps, the ninja ignores any mechanical traps that use a location-based trigger.

No Trace (Ex) A ninja learns to cover her tracks, remain hidden, and conceal her presence. The DC to track a ninja using the Survival skill increases by +2. In addition, her training gives her a +2 insight bonus on Disguise skill checks and on opposed Stealth checks whenever she is stationary and does not take any action for at least 1 round.

Poison Use (Ex) A ninja is trained in the use of poison and cannot accidentally poison herself when applying poison to a weapon.

Smoke Bomb (Ex) As a standard action, a ninja can throw a smoke bomb that creates a cloud of smoke with a 15-foot radius. This acts like the smoke from a smokestick. The ninja can center this smoke on herself, or throw the bomb as a ranged touch attack with a range of 20 feet. Each use of this ability uses up 1 *ki* point.

* See *Ultimate Combat*.



MIYARO

MIYARO

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 53 (see page 56)

AN UNEXPECTED ALLY

After the battle, Miyaro introduces herself to the PCs. She is an ally of the kami of the Forest of Spirits and has walked a long way to meet the PCs and offer Ameiko and her companions safe passage through the forest. The kami are aware of the PCs' arrival in Tian Xia and the precious treasures they bear with them—the *Amatatsu Seal* and a true *Amatatsu* scion. The ancient nature spirits are anxious to see the Five Storms destroyed and the rightful empress return to the throne of Minkai, but the kami are bound by ancient agreements not to directly interfere with the world of mortals, and so they have sent Miyaro as their herald and ambassador.

Miyaro informs the PCs that the Five Storms control much of Minkai, as well as the Spirit Road from Hongal to Minkai. If the PCs wish to enter Minkai secretly, they need

a less obvious way to enter the empire than the main road. Fortunately, however, the PCs have allies. Miyaro offers to guide the PCs through the Forest of Spirits, the vast “haunted” forest that grows between Hongal and Minkai, via a secret route that bypasses the heavily patrolled Spirit Road. Once there, she promises to introduce the PCs to these mysterious allies and bring them to a place that may aid them all in the battle to come.

The PCs have likely already learned about the existence of the Five Storms—whether from defeated agents of the group, from *Suishen*, or from visions received from the *Amatatsu Seal*—but if they are still ignorant of their foes, Miyaro can fill them in on exactly who has been trying to stop them from reaching Minkai.

If pressed about the Forest of Spirits or her unknown allies, Miyaro is reluctant to give too many details, but she promises that all will be revealed when the PCs reach the forest. She is very anxious for the group to leave as soon as possible—the following morning at the latest—for if one group of Five Storms agents is in the city, others are sure to follow. Miyaro worries that the next attack might be from a much larger group, or that the Five Storms might use political pressure to convince Prince Batsaikhar to take action against the PCs himself.

If the PCs seem reluctant to trust Miyaro, she does her best to convince the PCs to go with her (as do the PCs' NPC allies), but ultimately it is their choice. If the PCs choose not to go with Miyaro, they can attempt to take the Spirit Road or make their own way through the Forest of Spirits, but they will likely encounter more agents of the Five Storms sent to stop them. In this case, Miyaro will attempt to secretly follow the PCs' caravan, aiding them when she can, and hopefully convincing them at a later time to visit the House of Withered Blossoms.

If the PCs wish to know more about the kami who inhabit the Forest of Spirits, they can learn the following information with Diplomacy checks to gather information or Knowledge (planes) checks.

DC 10: Kami are spirits tasked with protecting parts of the physical world that cannot defend themselves, in order to protect the natural order of things.

DC 15: Kami can manifest physical bodies, but doing so makes them “mortal” and susceptible to being killed—the price they must pay if they wish to physically protect something.

DC 20: A kami's power depends upon the nature of its ward—a rock kami or a frog kami might be weak, but a blue whale kami or a mountain kami is quite powerful.

FOREST OF SPIRITS

DC 25: Although seen as good spirits, kami are not mortal and thus think differently. Tales tell of kami tearing people apart for felling trees while ignoring a raging murderer.

LEAVING ORDU-AGANHEI

Whether or not the PCs go with Miyaro, they soon find they have worn out their welcome in Ordu-Aganhei. News of the ninja attack on the PCs soon reaches the ears of Prince Batsaikhar, who is well aware of the Five Storms and the danger they represent. Not wishing to anger Minkai, the prince decides to have nothing more to do with the PCs, and strongly encourages the PCs to leave. It would be impolite to actually ask his guests to leave, of course, but the prince no longer invites the PCs to gatherings, and refuses to even see them (even the object of his fixation). To drive the point home, the prince sends one final gift to each of the PCs: a tooled, gold-filigreed riding saddle worth 200 gp. Each saddle also comes with a famed Hongali horse—a combat-trained light horse with the advanced simple template—worth 300 gp.

If the PCs fail to take the hint, they soon find themselves ejected from their lodgings in the palace (accompanied by the prince's most profuse apologies, of course, delivered through Chua). If the PCs remain in Ordu-Aganhei, the prince orders all the shops and inns closed to them, making it plain the PCs are no longer welcome in the city.

Once the PCs leave the city, it is a 500-mile journey southeastward through the steppes and outlying villages of Hongal to reach the northern fringes of the Forest of Spirits. You can enliven this journey with caravan encounters, or keep up the pace of the chase by having another group of Five Storms ninja attack the PCs en route.

PART TWO: THE FOREST OF SPIRITS

The Forest of Spirits is a vast subarctic pine forest separating Minkai from mainland Tian Xia. It is a dense forest with massive trees and virtually no undergrowth, almost continuously shrouded in snow. Beyond the outer fringes, there is a paucity of human and other civilized life in the forest, though it teems with animals and the spirits that give the wood its name. Minkai lies over 1,200 miles from the forest's border with Hongal, though the PCs' journey will not take them straight through the forest.

SPIRITS OF THE FOREST

Countless incorporeal spirits wander the Forest of Spirits, and are attracted to those living creatures that wander inside the forest's boundaries. Something between ghosts and haunts, these spirits are actually neither, though they have abilities similar to both. A spirit can possess a living creature, but it cannot control the body as a ghost does. A spirit does have an effect upon a body it possesses, however, sometimes beneficial and sometimes detrimental.

Spirits are incorporeal, but they are not creatures that can simply be destroyed in combat. They function more like haunts (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 242), but are not limited to a specific location and are not necessarily evil or vengeful. All spirits have a fly speed of 30 feet with perfect maneuverability.

Spirits are difficult to detect since they are typically invisible until they manifest. *Detect undead* or detect alignment spells of the appropriate type allow an observer a chance to notice a spirit before it manifests (allowing that character the appropriate check to notice the spirit, but at a -4 penalty).

A spirit manifests in a surprise round, rolling initiative as normal (spirits have an initiative modifier of +0). All characters in the spirit's proximity can attempt to notice the spirit at the start of this surprise round by making a notice check. All spirits can detect life sources and manifest as a result of the approach of or contact with living creatures.

Once it manifests, a spirit tries to possess a living host. This is a supernatural ability. Spirits are drawn to similarly aligned creatures, and attempt to possess those creatures first, but if no such characters are available they go for the next closest until they find a suitable host. Attempting to possess a body is a full-round action, and the spirit must be adjacent to the target. The target can resist the possession with a successful Will save. A target can willingly fail this save to allow possession by a spirit. A creature that successfully saves is immune to that same spirit's possession for 24 hours. A protection spell of the correct alignment prevents a spirit from possessing a creature's body for the duration of the spell. A possessed creature can make a new saving throw each day to throw off the possession.

Once it successfully possesses a host, a spirit has an ongoing effect on its host. The spirit whispers in its host's mind, creates empathic urges and impulses, and appears in daydreams or moments of slumber. In addition, a spirit provides either a boon or a bane to its host. Unless otherwise noted, these effects last as long as the spirit continues to possess the host. A *greater restoration*, *heal*, or *miracle* spell removes all permanent effects.

Once a spirit manifests, it can be damaged by positive energy (via channeled energy, cure spells, and the like). A spirit never gains a Will save to lessen the damage done by such effects, and attacks that require a successful attack roll to work must strike AC 10 (modified by the spirit's size) in order to affect the spirit. Unless the spirit has an unusual weakness, no other form of attack can reduce its hit points. If the spirit is reduced to 0 hit points by positive energy, it is destroyed.

Once a spirit possesses a host, however, positive energy no longer harms it. It must be driven out of its host, either with a protection spell of the proper alignment (allowing

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the host a new saving throw to end the possession), or with a *dispel* spell of the proper alignment, which destroys the spirit (the spirit's Will save modifier is equal to its CR + 3).

More than one spirit can possess the same host, but the more spirits a creature hosts, the more confusing and distracting the babble of voices in the creature's head is. A possessed creature takes a cumulative -2 penalty on Will saves and on all Wisdom-based checks for each spirit possessing it beyond the first.

ELEMENTS OF A SPIRIT

Spirits are presented in the following format.

Spirit Name: The spirit's name, followed by its CR.

XP: This is the amount of XP to award the PCs for destroying the spirit, as determined by its CR. The PCs do not earn XP for destroying a good spirit or a spirit that provides a boon.

Alignment and Race: This line gives the spirit's alignment, gender, and race. A spirit is never simply neutral in alignment; it always has at least one other alignment component on either the good-evil and/or lawful-chaotic axis.

Notice: This indicates the skill check and DC required to notice the spirit in the surprise round before it manifests. The sensory input for what a successful check notices—such as a muted ghostly wailing, an almost imperceptible wavering in the air, or the faint smell of decay—is listed in parentheses after the DC.

hp: This line lists the spirit's effective hit points for the purposes of resolving positive energy damage. A spirit's hit points are equal to its CR × 4.5 (round fractions down).

Will Save: The DC of the Will save to avoid possession by the spirit. The save DC is equal to the spirit's CR + 9.

Ongoing Effect: This line describes the ongoing effects a host experiences while possessed by the spirit. These effects last for as long as the spirit possesses the host.

Boon or Bane: This describes the boon or bane the spirit grants its host.

Dismissal: If the spirit can be damaged or affected by effects other than positive energy or *dispel* spells, those effects are listed here.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE FOREST OF SPIRITS

The PCs will encounter a number of spirits and other denizens of the wood as they journey through the Forest of Spirits. With the exception of the first and last encounters—Guardian of the Way, which takes place when the PCs first enter the Forest of Spirits, and Ancestral Spirits, which takes place just before the PCs reach the House of Withered Blossoms—these encounters do not have set locations or times. You should place these encounters at locations of your choosing along the PCs' route, in an order that best fits the needs of your campaign. They should be used to enliven

the PCs' journey and impress upon the PCs the unique character of the Forest of Spirits and its inhabitants.

GUARDIAN OF THE WAY

A narrow dirt path disappears into the dark edge of the forest ahead. The boughs of the trees hang heavy with fallen snow, and an almost preternatural silence reigns over the area. Ahead, a small stone pillar engraved with strange symbols has fallen across the path, blocking the way forward.

The fallen pillar is a waymarker, but also a warning to those who would enter the Forest of Spirits naively. The waymarker's function can be easily determined by anyone who speaks Tien, or with a DC 15 Knowledge (local) or DC 20 Linguistics check. Although the fallen waymarker is blocking the path, it is easy to simply go around it. However, Miyaro informs the PCs that such markers often have guardian kami who watch over them. If the PCs were to set the waymarker back upright and leave an offering for the kami, they might gain its blessing or favor.

Creature: The waymarker is indeed the ward of a shikigami kami named Shunkichi, who is currently invisible, watching over his ward from behind a nearby tree. Shikigami kami are the protectors of minor works of civilization, and though the least of the kami, they are courageous and steadfastly loyal. Should the PCs attempt to desecrate or destroy his waymarker, Shunkichi leaps out of hiding to attack, even though such an action is likely to be fatal for him. Otherwise, Shunkichi watches the PCs without revealing himself.

If the PCs set the waymarker back into place (it weighs only 100 pounds) and leave a small offering (a bit of food, a few coins, or the like), they feel a sense of satisfaction and well-being settle over them. A moment later, Shunkichi comes out of hiding. He appears as a wizened, 2-foot-tall man in homespun robes. He bows to the PCs and thanks them in Tien (Miyaro offers to translate if none of the PCs speak Tien), and informs the PCs that because they helped him, they have earned the blessings of the local spirits—the sense of gratification that they feel. Each of the PCs gains a +1 luck bonus on all saving throws for the next week. Miyaro then introduces the PCs to Shunkichi, and tells him of their purpose in entering the Forest of Spirits. The little man nods sagely, and offers his blessing for their journey, but warns them that the wood contains many dangerous spirits and creatures, and that mortals should not tread carelessly beneath the forest's boughs. Nevertheless, he promises to inform the other kami of the PCs' coming. With that, he once more merges with his waymarker and disappears from view.

SHUNKICHI

CR 2

XP 600

Male shikigami kami (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 163)

hp 19; fast healing 2

TACTICS

During Combat Shunkichi throws rocks at attackers, hoping to drive them off. He knows he has little chance of defeating a large group of foes in melee combat, but he tries to do so anyway if he has no other choice, grabbing a tree branch to use as an improvised club.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 10 hit points, Shunkichi merges with his ward. If enemies attack the waymarker itself, Shunkichi manifests again, fighting to the death to defend his ward.

ENTERING THE FOREST

Once the PCs enter the Forest of Spirits, they soon have the feeling of being watched, though they can see no signs of anything following them. Strange noises occasionally ring out through the forest, though it's impossible to discover their source. These occurrences only increase as the journey progresses.

Spirit: Soon after entering the forest, the PCs encounter the first of many spirits in the wood. Li Xu was a young poet and lyricist who died in her sleep while camping in the forest. She does not realize she is dead, however, and believes her entire existence as a spirit is just a vivid dream.

LI XU, THE WANDERING SONG

NG female human spirit

Notice Perception DC 15 (to hear a tuneful humming)

hp 22

Will Save DC 14

Ongoing Effect Epic songs.

Li Xu sings Tien epics and recites complex poetry while possessing a creature. These tales grant the possessed creature a +2 bonus on Knowledge (history), Knowledge (local), and Knowledge (nobility) checks, and the possessed creature can make such checks untrained.

Boon Speak Tien. As soon as Li possesses a creature, the host begins to learn the Tien language. The process takes 1 week, but if Li has not been dismissed by the end of that time, the creature learns to speak Tien, and retains that knowledge even if Li is later dismissed. If Li possesses a creature for 1 month or more, the creature permanently

gains a rank in Perform (sing). If the creature already has ranks in Perform (sing), it instead gains a permanent +1 bonus on Perform (sing) checks.

Dismissal Magic only.

AMBUSH AT THE RIDGE OF CHILL BREEZES (CR II)

This encounter occurs as the PCs are following a line of high tors that rear above the forest.

Creatures: Three stone giant brothers have built a home atop the tors, where they hunt great birds by hurling rocks. The giants are loafing as the PCs approach, but they likely hear the noises of the PCs' caravan. If they detect the PCs, one giant makes a strange bird call to alert his brothers. The PCs can make a DC 10 Perception check to hear the call, but DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check recognizes that the sound was not made by an animal. The giants take up positions flanking the PCs or their caravan; the biggest, Feng, marches ahead of any opponents, while his brothers sneak up from behind to hurl rocks with surprise. If not alerted, Feng simply wanders into the PCs on the trail. He shouts to alert his brothers, who come rushing to help him in 1d4 rounds, and he immediately attacks.

YU, YE, AND FENG

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Male stone giants (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 151)

hp 102 each

TACTICS

During Combat The giants are somewhat simplistic in battle. They hurl rocks, then move in to bash opponents with their clubs.

Morale A giant flees to the brothers' house atop the tors if reduced to 20 hit points or fewer.

Treasure: The giants' house is built on top of a tor not far from where they ambush the PCs. The house is a crudely built mishmash of wood and stone, but it offers the giants a warm and dry place to sleep. There are six comfortable rooms in the house, each heated with a great fire. In addition to plenty of salted meat and cured meat (equivalent to 20 cargo units of caravan stores), the house contains a 25-foot-long woven tapestry worth 300 gp, two white tiger skins worth 250 gp each, two bolts of fine silk worth 140 gp each, and three barrels of very good sake worth 50 gp each.



SHUNKICHI

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THE ANGER OF STORMS (CR 8)

Spirit: The spirit of an angry samurai named Onashi Taisuke drifts into the area. Known for his cruelty to prisoners, Onashi was killed by his escaped convicts during a revolt.

ONASHI TAISUKE, THE ANGER OF STORMS CR 8

XP 4,800

LE male human spirit

Notice Perception DC 25 (to hear the crack of a whip)

hp 36

Will Save DC 17

Ongoing Effect Disturbing dreams. The possessed creature must make a DC 17 Will save each night to fall asleep, or the creature is unable to get proper rest because of vivid dreams of Onashi's acts of rage and brutality against prisoners. A creature that does not sleep properly is fatigued the following day. Three or more days without sleep make the creature exhausted.

Bane The possessed creature must make a DC 17 Will save when Onashi is dismissed, or his anger remains and the dreams, albeit milder, continue. Although the creature no longer wakes, it needs an extra hour's sleep each night to gain the full benefits of a night's sleep.

Dismissal Magic only.

THE AGONY OF GRIEF (CR 8)

A tiger kami named Gushiang recently died nearby, and its death has driven its ward, an albino dire tiger of great age named Tieqing, insane with grief. The huge tiger now stalks the forest, attacking any who trespass on its former kami's territory.

Creature: Tieqing simply appears out of the forest, rushing toward the PCs from a distance of 300 feet away. It roars at the PCs' caravan, but it almost seems as if the sounds contain half-formed words. A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) or Sense Motive check reveals that the tiger is not acting naturally (Miyaro can make this check for the PCs if they are unable to), while a DC 20 Knowledge (planes) check allows the PCs to realize that such tigers are sacred to the kami of the Forest of Spirits.

The tiger charges the PCs, but suddenly halts and sniffs at the air when it reaches them. Although it appears hostile, Tieqing is considered unfriendly. It eyes the PCs suspiciously for 3 rounds. During this time, the PCs can attempt to improve the tiger's attitude with wild empathy or magic. If the PCs make Tieqing at least indifferent, the tiger departs as suddenly as it arrived. If the PCs fail to improve the tiger's attitude, or if they do nothing or attack the tiger, Tieqing immediately becomes hostile and

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attacks the PCs. The tiger fights until killed, an event that has unforeseen consequences (see Development below).

TIEQING CR 8

XP 4,800

Dire tiger (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 265)

hp 105

Development: If the PCs kill Tieqing, proceed to The Consequences of Hasty Actions (see below).

Story Award: If the PCs avoid killing Tieqing, award them 9,600 XP.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF HASTY ACTIONS (CR 8)

This encounter only occurs if the PCs killed the dire tiger Tieqing (see The Agony of Grief, above).

Spirit: The death of Tieqing enrages the spirit of an ancient hunter named Kungang. Kungang spent his years killing tigers, until one day the hunter became the prey, and Kungang finally understood the meaning of the proverb, “he who rides a tiger is afraid to dismount.” Filled with regret for his actions, Kungang’s spirit now wanders the forest admiring the tigers that inherit the area, particularly Tieqing. Kungang tries to possess the PC who struck the killing blow against Tieqing, or who dealt the most damage to the tiger. He does not attempt to possess any character who did not fight Tieqing, and he is unable to possess a character who has no regrets about any of her actions (such as a paladin, for example).

KUNGANG, THE ENDLESS HUNT CR 8

XP 4,800

LN male human spirit

Notice Perception DC 27 (to catch a glimpse of a stalking tiger through the underbrush)

hp 36

Will Save DC 17

Ongoing Effect Regret hasty actions. The possessed creature is racked with guilt about hasty actions that it now regrets. The creature becomes indecisive, and takes a –2 penalty on initiative checks.

Bane The regret of hasty actions never leaves the creature. The possessed creature must make a DC 17 Will save when Kungang leaves or is dismissed, or it takes a permanent –1 penalty on initiative checks.

Dismissal If the possessed creature truly regrets its actions and atones for them (such as through an *atonement* spell), Kungang is dismissed.

THE FIRE SPIRIT (CR 10)

Spirit: A pyromaniac wizard named Mieko once tried to burn down the Forest of Spirits, but was killed when her own fires grew beyond her control. She now wanders the

forest looking for a host so she can burn again. Mieko prefers to possess arcane spellcasters above all others.

MIEKO, THE ARSONIST CR 10

XP 9,600

CE female human spirit

Notice Perception DC 25 (to smell smoke on the wind)

hp 45

Will Save DC 19

Ongoing Effect Pyromania. The possessed creature has the urge to burn things, and the DC of all evocation spells cast by the possessed creature increases by +1.

Bane The possessed creature must make a DC 19 Will save when Mieko is driven out, or the DC of all evocation spells cast by the creature permanently decreases by –1.

Dismissal Magic only.

BERRIES OF MADNESS (CR 11)

Spirit: An angry spirit named Bokeghan is drawn to the PCs as they pass through this area. After eating poisonous wild berries, Bokeghan went mad and killed his beloved family with an axe. He now seeks to vent his rage on any living creature he finds.

BOKEGHAN, THE BREAKER CR 11

XP 12,800

NE male human spirit

Notice Perception DC 30 (to hear the sound of an axe hitting flesh)

hp 49

Will Save DC 20

Ongoing Effect Unfathomable anger. Bokeghan’s rage makes it difficult to concentrate. The possessed creature takes a –2 penalty on all Charisma-, Intelligence-, and Wisdom-based skill checks.

Boon or Bane If the possessed creature identifies the berries that drove Bokeghan mad (see Dismissal), the spirit leaves a portion of his love for his family in the creature before departing. Once per day, the creature can call upon this love as a free action to gain the effects of a *heroism* spell (duration 10 rounds). If driven away by magic before identifying the berries, some of Bokeghan’s anger remains. The possessed creature must make a DC 20 Will save when Bokeghan is driven out, or every time that creature rolls a natural 1 on a Will save it becomes confused for 2d4 rounds.

Dismissal Identifying the berries that drove Bokeghan mad. The berries are not uncommon in the forest, and the possessed creature can make a DC 30 Perception check each day to spot some and realize that something is amiss with the berries. A (DC 20) Knowledge (nature) check identifies the berries as being poisonous (causing madness in some) but very similar to a nutritious berry. If this knowledge is passed along to the possessed creature, Bokeghan is dismissed.

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ANCESTRAL SPIRITS

After almost a month of travel through the forest, Miyaro guides the PCs to the clearing where the kami are waiting for them.

The trees part to reveal a twilight clearing, the thick leaves blocking most of the sunlight from the sky above. A giant, wooden torii gate, unpainted and unvarnished, stands before the entrance to the clearing.

Creature: As the PCs approach the torii, an armored figure appears beneath the gate, floating just a few inches above the ground. This is Noburo, a zuishin kami—guardians of gates and doorways and sworn enemies of the oni. Noburo hails the PCs (using telepathy if necessary) and demands they explain their presence in the Forest of Spirits. Miyaro explains in hurried whispers that Noburo is the guardian of this grove and that all must face him before they are allowed to enter. He is not an enemy, but the PCs must respectfully ask permission to enter.

Allow the PCs to introduce themselves and state their business. Noburo listens to them impassively, but if any of the PCs are currently possessed by evil spirits, Noburo can see them with his *detect evil* ability, and refuses to allow them to pass while so possessed. Regardless of whether or not they are possessed, the PCs must convince Noburo to allow them to pass through the gate (Miyaro can aid another to assist them, if necessary). Noburo has a starting attitude of unfriendly. If he is made indifferent, he grudgingly allows them through the gate, but keeps a close eye on them while they are present. If made friendly, he bids them welcome and steps aside, allowing them to enter the clearing. If made helpful, Noburo welcomes them and offers to dispel any evil spirits possessing them (with *dispel evil*), or to use his spell-like abilities to heal them or remove a spirit's boon or bane from a character (with *heal*).

If the PCs decide to attack Noburo, the kami responds in kind. Whether or not the other kami then approach the PCs (as described in Development below) is left to your discretion. If not, the PCs will have to make their own way to the House of Withered Blossoms.

NOBURO CR 10

XP 9,600

Male zuishin kami (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 165)

hp 123; fast healing 5

TACTICS

Before Combat Noburo casts *alarm* on his torii every day.

While merged with his ward, Noburo casts *true seeing* when the PCs approach his gate.

During Combat Noburo prefers to make ranged attacks, attacking evil characters or those possessed by evil spirits in preference to other foes.

Morale Noburo fights to the death to defend this sacred grove.

Development: Once the PCs enter the clearing, the rest of the day passes quietly until they make camp for the night in the still air of the forest. Slowly, the kami begin to arrive. The PCs gradually become aware that something is gathering in the darkness—a family, an army, or both. They can make out vague, strange shapes in the shadows, and palpable sense of fear and curiosity permeates the forest twilight.

Gradually, a few kami hesitantly approach the PCs to look upon them—most of these kami are merged with their animal wards, but others inhabit the trees, the rocks, or the snow, or simply manifest in a variety of forms, both humanoid and other. If the PCs earlier helped Shunkichi, they might catch a glimpse of the little kami among his fellows. Miyaro urges the PCs to remain still as they may terrify the spirits into fleeing.



NOBURO

FOREST OF SPIRITS

Be careful when handling this encounter—you should try to create an atmosphere of mystery and wonder, while impressing upon the PCs that they are gaining a rare glimpse into what is almost another world. The kami are fascinated by the PCs but also afraid of them, and stay at the edge of sight at the fringes of the clearing. If the PCs make sudden moves, the kami back away, then gradually creep forward again. The intent is to make the PCs aware of the ancient spirits' numbers and power without frightening them.

The kami begin whispering strange words, which Miyaro translates for the PCs. She tells them that the kami swore an oath long ago to guard the oni of the Five Storms, who were imprisoned in a pagoda called the House of Withered Blossoms. For centuries, the kami kept the Five Storms contained, but one night, 160 years ago, most of the oni somehow escaped their prison. The kami do not know how, but they do know that at least one oni still remains in the House of Withered Blossoms, for their oath forbids them from stepping over the threshold while even one oni remains inside, and the way is still barred to them.

The kami ask the PCs to enter the pagoda to learn what happened to the Five Storms and, if necessary, to defeat the last oni within. They know that the PCs seek to depose the Jade Regent, and that he is allied with the Five Storms—an exploration of the oni's former prison might give them information and weapons they can use against their enemies.

If the PCs agree to go to the House of Withered Blossoms, an audible sigh passes through the kami gathered in the clearing. At length, a single kami approaches the PCs, a tiny ancient warrior with a tree branch growing from the top of his head. This is Akumi, a fukujin kami (see page 84). He bows to the PCs and introduces himself, and humbly asks them for one more favor. Akumi's ward, a small bonsai tree, was recently stolen by hobgoblins who took it inside the House of Withered Blossoms. Bound by his oath, Akumi was unable to follow, but he can feel that his bonsai is still alive somewhere within or beneath the pagoda. He has tended his ward for centuries, and should it die, Akumi believes he will die as well. He begs the PCs to go into the House of Withered Blossoms and recover his precious tree for him.

PART THREE: HOUSE OF WITHERED BLOSSOMS

If the PCs agree to investigate the House of Withered Blossoms on behalf of the kami, they may leave the next morning. The pagoda stands in a blighted section of the forest only a day's travel from the kami's clearing. Miyaro agrees to guide the PCs to the House of Withered Blossoms, but she refuses to go inside with them. Instead, she promises to wait with the PCs' caravan in the kami's clearing. She wishes the PCs luck, and if they did not attack the tiger Tieqing, she gives them her magic fan, *Kikuya's sensu*, to help them inside the pagoda (see page 61).

When the PCs are ready to enter the House of Withered Blossoms, read or paraphrase the following.

The animal calls soften to a whisper as the forest parts to reveal a vast bowl, the ground sinking from the forest tangle into descending rows of frozen terraces. At the center of the depression stands a towering porcelain pagoda, its walls and eaves smothered in thick, clinging vines and draped with heavy webs, soaring to a golden rooftop. Stylized representations of forgotten creatures and beasts dance upon the pagoda's walls, and a band of huge thorny spines juts from its midsection. A decaying garden surrounds the pagoda, a frozen echo of past magnificence. Broken statues litter the garden, and icy clouds of violet blossoms drift through the ruin. The overpowering scent of death and decay hangs in the air.

The pagoda and its subterranean dungeons form the House of Withered Blossoms, named for the strange, flowering vines that cling to the structure. Currently, two opposing factions vie for control of the ancient palace: the aranea followers of the sorcerer Akinosa, and the hobgoblin forces of the ja noi oni Munasukaru. The araneas, most of whom are neutral evil in alignment, inhabit the aboveground levels of the pagoda, while the hobgoblins occupy the dungeons below.

FEATURES OF THE HOUSE OF WITHERED BLOSSOMS

The House of Withered Blossoms has the following features.

Exterior: The outer walls of the House of Withered Blossoms are choked by the vines of the withered blossom plant (see below). Many of these vines are covered in sticky webs and several entrances into the pagoda are trapped. The araneas frequently use the exterior walls as a way of ingress and egress, however, and signs of this use are plainly evident. The outer walls of the pagoda can be scaled with a DC 15 Climb check.

Interior: Each level of the pagoda is 20 feet high, with stone ceilings supported by stone beams, though some of these ceilings have been removed to create large, multilevel chambers. Large portions of the pagoda have been destroyed over the years during the war between Akinosa and Munasukaru, but the pagoda's four central support pillars remain intact. These pillars, wreathed in stylized pictures of dragons eating hosts of people, are 5 feet in diameter. Even if these pillars are destroyed, the pagoda is likely to remain standing, because of the withered blossom vines encircling its walls (see below).

Teleportation: Because of the strictures placed on the House of Withered Blossoms by the gods, extradimensional travel (such as *dimension door*, *gate*, *plane shift*, *teleport*, and the like) into or out of the House of Withered Blossoms or the Penance is impossible. Such movement within

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the confines of the pagoda or the dungeons below is unaffected.

Webs: The araneas have erected webs in several sections of the pagoda to make progress more difficult and to conceal the various traps they have set. Araneas can move across the webs at their climb speeds and pinpoint the location of any creatures touching the webs. As the web from area **A8a** upward is essentially one large, single web, the araneas in those areas can pinpoint the location of any creature touching the web. Most of these webs are thick and easy to spot, requiring no Perception check to see. The webs are sticky, and any creature touching them or attempting to move through them becomes entangled. Entangled creatures can escape with a DC 14 Escape Artist or Strength check. Each 5-foot-square section of web has 5 hit points and DR 5/—.

Withered Blossoms: The thick, woody vines of the withered blossom plant cling to every exterior wall of the House of Withered Blossoms. These vines bloom every night, bursting into life at sunset and growing steadily until, by midnight, the pagoda is cloaked with violet blossoms the size and shape of human hands. At midnight, the blossoms fall from the vines, drifting in great clouds through the garden surrounding the pagoda, obscuring vision and providing concealment equivalent to fog (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 439) in a 100-foot-radius area around the pagoda for 1d3 hours. During that time, fleshy ochre fruits develop like cancers on the vines, growing with alarming swiftness until they burst 1d3 hours later with a stench like honey and horse sweat. Both the flowers and fruits of the withered blossom vine are completely harmless.

A1. RAIN OF FLYING DAGGERS (CR 10)

The huge bronze door is marked with stylized pictures of dueling dragons. Hundreds of open-mouthed dragon faces surround the doorframe, all leering out hungrily.

The paranoid aranea Akinosa has rigged up several locations on this level with traps, including the main entry to the pagoda.

Trap: The stone door is barred on the inside (hardness 8, hp 60, Break DC 30) and trapped. Anyone opening the door triggers a spray of deadly flying daggers from the door.

RAIN OF FLYING DAGGERS TRAP **CR 10**
XP 9,600

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 29; **Disable Device** DC 29

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** manual

Effect Atk +20 ranged (6d6); multiple targets (all targets in a 15-ft. cone)

A2. FLOOR OF LONG KNIVES (CR 7+)

This corridor runs along the perimeter of the pagoda and is choked with aranea webs. Stairs in the southeast corner lead up to area **A5** on the next level.

Trap: Among the webs in the eastern corridor, the araneas have set a trio of dangerous traps at the locations marked **T** on the map. A creature that steps into one of these squares is attacked by several long knives that jut up from between the floorboards.

FLOOR OF LONG KNIVES TRAPS (3) **CR 7**
XP 3,200 each

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 29; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** manual

Effect Atk +15 melee (3d4 long knives for 1d4+5 damage each)

A3. THE FUNNEL (CR 8)

The core of the pagoda on this floor has been gutted. The few remaining walls in this area are crumbling, and only the presence of four huge stone pillars, carved with pictures of battling dragons, seems to keep the building up. Thick webs fill the four corners of the room. The central section of the pagoda has suffered the most, with a great rip in the floor creating a steep-walled pit sloping down to a dark shaft choked with webs.

The Funnel marks the hinterland between the pagoda and Munasukaru's Penance below. As the main entrance from the dungeons below, this area is seen by the araneas as the frontier of their domain. The pit slopes down 10 feet to the top of the Throat (area **A4**).

Creatures: Four araneas watch the chamber at all times from webs near the ceiling.

ARANEAS (4) **CR 4**
XP 1,200 each

hp 37 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 30)

TACTICS

Before Combat The araneas cast *mage armor*, renewing it as needed. If alerted to intruders, they cast *invisibility* and *mirror image*.

During Combat The araneas are on guard against invaders coming up the shaft, and generally keep their attention on the Throat (area **A4**). Once they detect intruders, the araneas raise the alarm by blowing their horns. They prefer to attack using web-slinging (see sidebar) from their high vantage point near the ceiling. If their webs seem ineffective, the araneas cast attack spells (such as *magic missile*) before entering melee combat.

Morale Akinosa has assigned his most loyal and foolhardy followers to watch the Throat, and they fight to the death.

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A4. THE THROAT

A warm breeze carrying the unpleasant smell of decay wafts upward from this web-filled shaft.

This long shaft is 100 feet deep, finally emerging in area **B1** in Munasukaru's Penance. The top 20 feet of the shaft has completely smooth sides, created by a *stone shape* spell, making it impossible to climb by normal means, and it is filled with aranea webs. Beyond that point, very narrow, short stone steps have been carved in the walls of the Throat over long years by the countless followers of Munasukaru. These steps spiral down to the bottom of the shaft, and require a DC 10 Climb check to descend.

A5. WALK OF LACQUERED SCREENS (CR 10+)

Tall black lacquered screens with prancing dragon designs turn this corridor into a twisting maze.

The corridor that runs along the perimeter of this level is divided into a maze by numerous lacquered wooden screens (hardness 5, hp 10, Break DC 10). Each screen is 5 feet wide and 8 feet tall. Akinosa and the araneas find it amusing to drop prisoners into this corridor and watch as the creatures within stalk and devour them. For even greater amusement, the araneas have built metal grilles into the ceilings of this level so they can more easily view the carnage below. These grilles are 3 feet in diameter, blocked with four iron bars (hardness 10, hp 30, Break DC 28). Small creatures can clamber through the gaps between these bars with a DC 30 Escape Artist check. Smaller creatures or those in *gaseous form* can pass easily through the bars. Two of these grilles (to the east and west) are also trap doors, and are locked with average locks (DC 25 Disable Device check to open; Akinosa has all the keys).

Creatures: Two mohrgs stalk the screened corridor. The mohrgs have become extremely adept at stealth, sneaking up on their prey using the screens for cover.

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MOHRGS (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 91 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 208)

TACTICS

During Combat The mohrgs stalk opponents using stealth, and try to draw opponents into the raining shuriken traps to weaken them.

Morale The mohrgs withdraw to area **A6** if reduced to fewer than 45 hit points.

Traps: To add more amusement, and to create a more effective attack deterrent, the araneas have rigged up traps that launch poisoned shuriken when pressure pads on the floor are triggered in several locations, marked **T** on the map. The mohrgs know the location of the traps and avoid them. Because of the large number of these traps, you should no longer award XP for them once the PCs realize their danger and are able to bypass them. Likewise, if the players are getting bored with repeated encounters with these traps, you can simply allow them to bypass the traps automatically, unless they are lured into traps by the mohrgs.

STORM OF RAINING SHURIKEN TRAP

CR 6

XP 2,400

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** manual

Effect Atk +15 ranged (2d4 shuriken for 1d2+1 damage each plus aranea poison [*save* Fort DC 15; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Strength damage; *cure* 1 *save*])

Treasure: Each of the 5-foot-by-8-foot black lacquered screens is worth 20 gp, if undamaged and safely removed from the pagoda.

A6. HALL OF UNBREAKABLE SCREENS

More screens fill this chamber, but they are made of metal, and depict writhing dragons in bas-relief devouring hidden prey.

The screens in this chamber are metal (hardness 10, hp 30, Break DC 26) and fixed to the floor with hefty bolts. Noise within this room has the potential to alert the other mohrgs on this level (see areas **A5** and **A7**).

Traps: Several storm of raining shuriken traps have been rigged in this chamber as well.

A7. CHAMBER OF IRON CAGES (CR 10)

Four great columns carved with depictions of dragons overlook a gruesome scene in the center of the pagoda. Four gibbets hang from an iron column in the center of the chamber, next to a steep stone spiral stair that climbs to the ceiling.

ARANEA TACTICS

The araneas in the House of Withered Blossoms use the following tactics in battle.

Sorcerer Spells Known: Unless otherwise noted, the araneas know *grease* (DC 14) and *magic missile* instead of *silent image* and *sleep*.

Web-Slinging: A favored tactic of the araneas involves creating a web and then using that web as a swinging rope to fight from. Generally speaking, the aranea is considered to be on higher ground for these attacks (+1 on melee attacks). To use this tactic, an aranea must first throw a web to a nearby fixed point (usually a ceiling or beam, both of which are generally Large, with an AC of 9). The araneas make one of three attacks using their webs in this way.

Angry Falling Leaves: In this attack, an aranea uses its web to break its fall as it suddenly drops up to 30 feet downward into combat, treating itself as a falling object that crashes into an opponent from above. This attack requires a melee touch attack, and deals 3d6 points of damage. The aranea itself takes 1d6 points of damage if this attack is successful.

Attack of the Lotus Whirlwind: In this attack, an aranea puts itself into a spin as it descends from its web. If the aranea descends 20 feet or more using this attack, its descent counts as a charge.

Graceful Descent of the Flying Blade: An aranea can swing up to the web's length (moving up to the aranea's speed) and make a single melee attack action without provoking an attack of opportunity, similar to the Spring Attack Feat. Doing so requires an Acrobatics check with a DC equal to the opponent's CMD. The aranea then releases the web and drops to the ground.

The araneas usually try to entangle opponents in their webs and aim to capture rather than kill (a standard tactic used against the followers of Munasukaru to learn more about the Penance). Prisoners are taken to Akinosa to decide what to do with them.

Recently, two Tian peasants, a man and a woman, had the misfortune to wander near the House of Withered Blossoms and were captured by the araneas. Finding the peasants of little use in his war against the oni, Akinosa released them into the Walk of Lacquered Screens, where they were caught by the mohrgs and dragged here to be imprisoned upside down in the cages in the middle of the room. The spiral stairs lead to area **A8a** above.

Creatures: Two more mohrgs lurk in this chamber, tormenting their prisoners to madness until the undead tire of them. If alerted to the presence of intruders in area **A6**, the mohrgs split up—one stalking the intruders from the south,

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the other coming from the north—using stealth while trying to draw opponents into the raining shuriken traps.

MOHRGS (2) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 91 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 208)

TACTICS

During Combat The mohrgs attacks with their tongues, attempting to paralyze opponents. If successful, the mohrgs drag their paralyzed victims to the gibbets, locking them shut to play with their prisoners later.

Morale If more than half of the mohrgs are killed, the survivors attempt to escape so they can continue hunting their prey later. If cornered in this room, the mohrgs fight until destroyed.

Development: The gibbets are locked with average locks, with the keys still in the locks, but the cage bars are so tight that a DC 25 Escape Artist check is required to unlock them from the inside. The two prisoners, **Junzo** (N male human expert 1) and **Udtsetseg** (N female human commoner 1), are obviously petrified, and if released, prostrate themselves at their saviors' feet. During their captivity, the pair overheard frequent discussions between Akinosa and his aranea followers, and have a reasonable idea of the general layout of the pagoda on the levels above this one. If freed, they happily share this information with their rescuers.

A8A. CARPET OF SPINES (CR 10)

Hundreds of stone needles and spikes jut from the floor of this large, open chamber. A row of iron grilles in the floor runs around the perimeter of the room, providing views into the level below. Thick webs sweep upward from the jagged floor toward the roof some sixty feet above, ending in a dark and shadowy funnel that slopes upward into the farther reaches of the pagoda. On each wall, a round window surrounded by iron barbs looks out over the garden surrounding the tower.

Two floors of the pagoda were destroyed to form this large area, leaving a single web-choked space 60 feet high. Akinosa has created a floor of stone spikes using *stone shape*, and the entire floor (with the exception of the immediate 5-foot-square sections around the grilles) is considered to be covered with caltrops for the purposes of movement and combat (*Core Rulebook* 155). Creatures falling onto the floor of this chamber take normal falling damage, plus 1 point of additional damage per 10 feet fallen from the spikes.

Anyone attempting to climb the webs is automatically entangled, but creatures can fly or levitate safely through gaps in the webs or climb the walls. The walls are relatively smooth, requiring a DC 25 Climb check to climb. However, the dragon pillars in the center of the room are easier (DC

20 Climb check). See area **A5** for details on the grilles. A stone spiral stair leads down to area **A7** below.

The windows are circular openings 5 feet in diameter, resembling open mouths with iron barbs that point inward. A Medium or smaller creature can safely pass through the windows to the east and west as a move action that provokes attacks of opportunity.

Traps: The north and south windows are trapped, and bite down on any creature attempting to pass through them.

VICIOUS BITING IRON TRAPS (2) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** automatic (immediate)

Effect Atk +20 melee (8d6 damage)

Development: Eight aranea guards dwell in the webs 20 feet above this room (see area **A8b**). Excessive noise or touching the webs in this chamber alerts them to the presence of intruders, and they lower themselves down to attack.

A8B. THE OPEN WEB (CR 10)

The thick webbing continues to rise and expand through this open space within the pagoda.

Like the areas below and above, this floor has been opened out to better suit the araneas. This area is 20 feet above the floor in area **A8a**.

Creatures: Eight araneas guard this chamber.

ARANEAS (8) CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 37 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 230)

TACTICS

Before Combat The araneas cast *mage armor*, renewing it as needed. If alerted to intruders, they cast *invisibility* and *mirror image*.

During Combat These araneas attack intruders in both area **A8a** and area **A8b** using web-slinging to move, attack, and withdraw, attacking with bites and webs. The araneas prefer to cast *invisibility* and *mirror image* before entering melee combat.

Morale Once half their number are slain, the araneas retreat to area **A9b** to guard Akinosa and defend him to the death.

Treasure: Several cupboards and concealed storage areas are hidden within the web on this level. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check discovers a hidden shelf near the western ceiling containing a trio of small bamboo chests. The first chest contains 3 flasks of *elixir of tumbling*, the second is filled with saffron worth 200

gp, and the third holds four simple opium pipes and 8 doses of opium, worth 25 gp each (*GameMastery Guide* 236). A PC who makes a successful DC 25 Perception check locates a small hidden cupboard high on the south wall containing an ancient string of coins worth 200 gp.

A8c. THE FUNNEL

The webbing rises to become a black curtain draping the ceiling of the chamber, with only a single brooding funnel of webs rising farther upward. Numerous humanoid bodies hang in the webs here, shriveled and desiccated.

The pagoda narrows at this level, which lies 40 feet above the floor at area **A8a**. The desiccated bodies hanging in the webs are former victims of the araneas, mostly unfortunate travelers and hobgoblins. The web funnel is 10 feet across and leads to area **A9a** above, passing through an opening in the stone floor between the two levels. If the webs are removed, a successful DC 30 Climb check is required to climb along the overhang to reach the opening.

Treasure: A DC 15 Perception check discovers the following treasures among the various bodies: masterwork nunchaku, a *potion of cure serious wounds*, a fine teak carving of a Tian dignitary worth 75 gp, a battered breastplate, and a pair of fine leather shoes, one of which contains a small white opal worth 300 gp hidden in its toe (DC 10 Perception check to find).

A9a. THE FIRST WEB (CR 9)

The webs on this level appear older, more festooned with decay and withered husks. The floor bristles with stone teeth. While most of the ceiling has been destroyed, part of the level above remains in place where the dragon pillars rise.

The spiked floor of this chamber is similar to that found in area **A8a**. The ledge above (area **A9b**) lies 20 feet up. Thick, ancient webs hang between the floor and the ledge, created by Akinosa himself (DC 16 Escape Artist or Strength check to burst).

Creatures: Akinosa has encouraged a strain of giant spiders native to the Valashmai Jungle to infest the webs here. These large hunting spiders have blue-and-white bodies and bright iridescent blue legs, and their venom is particularly toxic.

GIANT SAPPHIRE SPIDERS (8) CR 3 XP 800 each

Advanced giant spider (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 258)
N Medium vermin

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 15, flat-footed 11 (+5 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 32 each (5d8+10)

Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

Immune mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +5 (1d6+3 plus poison)

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 21, **Con** 14, **Int** —, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 20 (32 vs. trip)

Skills Acrobatics +13, Climb +18, Perception +5, Stealth +9 (+13 in webs)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 16; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Str damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Treasure: Various trivial oddments hang among the hundred or so bodies in the webs here. A DC 25 Perception check locates a beautifully delicate silver snuff box in the shape of a turtle (worth 200 gp); a rhinoceros horn drinking vessel depicting herons in flight (worth 90 gp); a jade belt hook (worth 300 gp); and a silver altar set with lotus flower decorations in a leather traveling case, consisting of a candle stand, flower vase, and incense burner, each depicting a crane standing on a turtle's back (worth 500 gp in total).

A9b. AKINOSA'S PARLOR (CR 11)

The thick webs converge around the ceiling of this shattered chamber. Ancient skulls grin down from their last, terrible resting places, and skeletal arms seem to reach out for succor. The sagging remnants of the floor hang over the rest of the web below. A great ornamental palanquin stands on this dark ledge, next to a huge war drum. Above, another webbed funnel leads upward.

Most of this level's floor has been destroyed to create a broad, open area, leaving only a ledge in the northwest corner, 20 feet above the floor of area **A9a**, from which Akinosa views his subjects and smites his enemies below. The web funnel is 10 feet across and leads to area **A10a** above, passing through another opening in the stone floor between the two levels. If the webs are removed, a DC 30 Climb check is required to climb along the overhang to reach the opening.

Creature: The aranea leader Akinosa lives in this area. In human form, Akinosa is a corpulent figure swathed in filthy silk robes, which look as though they haven't been changed in decades. Insects and spiders scuttle in and out of the folds of his robes and skin, and he occasionally plucks one up to chew as a crunchy snack. Akinosa spends much of his time lounging in the large palanquin, sleeping, eating, and indulging in opium and

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sake, drawing the latter from his *flask of endless sake* (see page 60).

When intruders enter this level, Akinosa shouts for his Gossamer (see area **A10b**) to defend him. If they don't respond (because the PCs have already defeated them), he attempts to speak with the PCs. Although he suspects any invaders are agents of Munasukaru, he is always on the lookout for allies of his own. If attacked, Akinosa fights to defend himself.

AKINOSA CR 11

XP 12,800

hp 125 (see page 54)

Trap: A secret door in the western wall leads to Akinosa's hidden treasure vault (see Treasure below), but the door is trapped with an insanity mist trap that triggers when the door is opened.

INSANITY MIST TRAP CR 8

XP 4,800

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25;

Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset repair

Effect poison gas (insanity mist [save Fort DC 15; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d3 Wisdom damage; cure 1 save]); never miss; onset delay (1 round); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area)

Treasure: Akinosa's palanquin is an open, gilded, thronelike litter with a silk roof and four poles for bearers, worth 2,000 gp for its workmanship alone. Inside the palanquin are a red lacquered wedding trunk containing three bags of silver (250 sp in each) and two sacks of gold (250 gp in each), a tooled leather document box containing a *scroll of blade barrier*, a plain wooden box containing 10 doses of opium (worth 25 gp each; *GameMastery Guide* 236), and an elaborately carved silver-and-jade opium pipe with matching opium lamp (worth 225 gp as a set).

Next to the palanquin is a huge drum the size of a barrel, held on an iron stand. This Hongali war drum, or *guangu*, functions as *drums of panic*, though it is a single instrument that weighs 20 pounds.

A DC 30 Perception check discovers the secret door concealing Akinosa's hidden treasure vault in the western wall. The door is disguised as a feature of the wall and is trapped (see above). The vault contains six strings of gold coins (each containing 400 gp), a silk purse embroidered with an arched bridge containing three diamonds (worth 600 gp each), a black lacquered opium box containing 32 doses of opium (worth 25 gp each), and a magnificent

bone-and-silver chalice set with jet (worth 900 gp) that holds three handfuls of *dust of disappearance*.

A10A. WEFT OF UNSEEN WELCOME

The entirety of this level has been cleared of obstructions save for the four dragon pillars, which rise upward into more webs hanging in the rafters far above. More stone teeth cover the floor here.



AKINOSA

The floor between two pagoda levels has again been removed, creating a 40-foot-high chamber. The spiked floor of this room is similar to that found in area **A8a**. This entire level is draped in sheer webs spun by the Gossamer. Approaching creatures must succeed at a DC 20 Perception check to notice such webs; otherwise they stumble into them and become entangled. Entangled creatures can escape these webs with a DC 16 Escape Artist or Strength check.

Development: Akinosa's honor guard, the Gossamer, occupy the level above, but keep a keen eye out for prey below. Touching any of the webs in this chamber alerts them to the presence of trespassers, and they quickly attack such intruders.

A10B. CATHEDRAL OF LONG SHADOWS (CR 12)

Thick webs cling like sinews among the roof beams above this level. A narrow, jagged hole exits through the roof.

This level is 20 feet above the floor in area **A10a**. The central 10-foot-square portion of this level contains more gauzy webs designed to trap the unwary (see area **A10a**). The hole in the roof is 5 feet in diameter and requires a DC 10 Escape Artist check to clamber through to reach the pagoda's roof (area **A11**). The hole in the roof illuminates this area with only dim light.

Creatures: Akinosa's personal elite guards, four aranea shadowdancers known as the Gossamer, lurk in the webs on this level, along with their four shadow companions. Like their master, the Gossamer are addicted to opium, and spend much of their time in indolent repose in their webs. When alerted, the Gossamer languidly move to engage intruders. The opium makes them listless, but they are still Akinosa's personal guards, and are ready to fight to defend him. The Gossamer usually stay in spider-humanoid hybrid form, but the black porcelain masks they wear completely cover their faces, preventing them

from using their bite attacks. The Gossamer attack anyone entering areas **A10a** or **A10b**, or anyone they encounter if sent elsewhere in the pagoda by Akinosa.

THE GOSSAMER (HYBRID FORM) (4) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Female aranea shadowdancer 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 30)

LE Medium magical beast (shapechanger)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural)

hp 75 each (9 HD; 5d10+4d8+32)

Fort +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +1

Defensive Abilities evasion, uncanny dodge

Weaknesses opium addict

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (cannot run or charge)

Melee mwk dagger +14/+9 (1d4+1/19–20 plus aranea poison [DC 14])

Ranged mwk dagger +14 (1d4+1/19–20 plus aranea poison [DC 14])

Special Attacks web (+13 ranged, DC 16, 5 hp)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +8)

2/day—shadow illusion (DC 15)

1/day—shadow call (DC 18)

Sorcerer Spells Known (caster level 5th; concentration +9)

2nd (5/day)—*false life*, *mirror image*

1st (7/day)—*charm person* (DC 15), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *vanish**

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 14), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *mage hand*, *message*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 14)

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

TACTICS

Before Combat The Gossamer cast *false life* and *mage armor* before combat, and poison their daggers with their own poison.

During Combat The Gossamer initially use their shadow call abilities to summon 1d3 shadowy giant spiders to attack enemies, hoping to draw their opponents' attention while they try to outflank them. The Gossamer use their shadowdancer abilities and spells such as *mirror image* and *vanish* to confuse their enemies, always attempting to flank their enemies with each other or their shadow companions. They reserve their shadow jump abilities to escape if they are cornered.

Morale The Gossamer fight to the death to protect their lover and master Akinosa.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 20, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 25

Feats Ability Focus (web), Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Eschew Materials⁹, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Weapon Finesse

OPIUM FIENDS

Both Akinosa and his beloved Gossamer (see area **A10b**) are severely addicted to opium, a highly addictive drug. While under the effects of opium, they gain +1d8 temporary hit points and a +2 alchemical bonus on Fortitude saves for 1 hour, but they are also fatigued during that time, and take 1d4 points of Constitution damage and 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. They must inhale opium every day, or take a –2 penalty to their Dexterity, Constitution, Strength, and Wisdom scores and be unable to heal ability damage caused by the drug until they take another dose. While the exact time the araneas take the drug is not detailed, assume that they are under the effects of the drug during any period of alarm.

Rules for drugs and addiction can be found on pages 236–237 of the *GameMastery Guide*.

Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +11, Climb +8, Escape Artist +12, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Perception +10, Perform (dance) +15, Sleight of Hand +12, Stealth +16

Languages Common, Minkaian, Sylvan, Tien

SQ change shape (humanoid; *alter self*), hide in plain sight, rogue talent (finesse rogue), shadow jump (40 feet/day), summon shadow

Combat Gear *potion of blur*, *potion of cure serious wounds*;

Other Gear masterwork daggers (8), black porcelain mask, black silk kimono embroidered with dark draconic figures (worth 75 gp), necklace of Akinosa's hair

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Opium Addict (Ex) The Gossamer are addicted to opium (see the sidebar above). While under the effects of the drug, they gain +1d8 temporary hit points and a +2 alchemical bonus on Fortitude saves for 1 hour, but they are also fatigued. In addition, they have taken 2 points of Constitution damage and 2 points of Wisdom damage from the drug (already reflected in the stat block).

SHADOW COMPANIONS (4) CR —

Female shadow (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 245)

LE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 12 (+2 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 35 each (3d8+6)

Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities cannot be turned or commanded, channel resistance +4, incorporeal; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee incorporeal touch +10 (1d6 Strength damage)

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STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23

Feats Dodge, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Fly +11, Perception +8, Stealth +8 (+12 in dim light, +4 in bright light)

Treasure: The webs in the upper reaches of this level contain many years' worth of treasure and gifts from the Gossamer's beloved master Akinosa. A DC 30 Perception check locates the main cache—a narrow wooden shelf hidden just below the roof which holds a magnificent small lacquered screen (worth 30 gp), a bolt of very fine turquoise silk (worth 200 gp), an ancient tapestry depicting a lion embroidered on blue silk (worth 100 gp), a pair of embroidered silk lotus shoes set with opals (worth 750 gp), a blue silk robe with a dragon figure embroidered in gold thread (worth 95 gp), a porcelain tea set depicting eagles with silver and platinum handles (worth 450 gp), a carved jade dragon brooch (worth 200 gp), four jade hairpins (worth 20 gp each), a carved soapstone pig (worth 25 gp), a jade belt buckle depicting a demonic



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face (worth 75 gp), and a jade belt hook in the shape of a heron (worth 60 gp).

AII. ROOFTOP

The rooftop lies strangled in the grip of withered blossoms but is clearly made of gold. A hole has been punched into one section of the roof, opening into the pagoda's dark interior.

The hole in the roof leads to area **A10b**.

Treasure: The roof is covered in gold leaf, though the gold is so thin that even if it is all scraped off, it is only worth 100 gp total.

MUNASUKARU'S PENANCE

Beneath the House of Withered Blossoms lies Munasukaru's Penance, the lair of the ja noi oni Munasukaru and her hobgoblin followers, who have fought the araneas in the pagoda above to a stalemate for 60 years. The Penance is Munasukaru's toil, her physical devotion to her demented mind. Her insane thoughts and anger have not only been vented upon those unfortunate enough to cross her, but on the very fabric of the dungeon itself, a honeycomb of twisted corridors, tortuous confines, and corrupted architecture. These broken and convoluted subterranean chambers are confusing to follow—their stone walls are cracked and tilted, and the floors are ruptured and uneven, requiring a DC 10 Acrobatics check to run or charge across them. Unless otherwise noted, ceilings in the Penance are 20 feet high, and all areas are dark.

The entire dungeon area is carved and decorated in the most unpleasant way. The most numerous images involve themes of those pleasures of the flesh craved by all oni, such as food, drink, sex, and violence. Several chambers detail these insane glimpses of oni madness and desire, giving an idea of Munasukaru's deranged thoughts. Graven images of oni—obvious from their huge size and twisted shapes—are also present in many places, but each such figure has been defaced and disfigured, reflecting Munasukaru's anger at her fellows who left her here. You may add other descriptions to sections of the dungeon as you wish. Remember that Munasukaru has had a long time to inflict her insanity on her surroundings, which she transformed into her own personal work of art.

The majority of the rank-and-file hobgoblins who once served Munasukaru have long since been sacrificed to the ongoing war effort against Akinosa's araneas, as the oni has proclaimed that any force leaving the Penance returns in glorious victory, or not at all. As a result, only Munasukaru's best and most loyal warriors remain. If these troops were to make an all-out offensive against the araneas, they would likely prevail, but Munasukaru's insanity does

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not lend itself to effective command. The oni is far more concerned with keeping the araneas out of the Penance, and is easily distracted by her madness, sometimes ordering her troops to fight each other for her amusement while ignoring the araneas above. The hobgoblins worship Munasukaru as something akin to a god, however, and their fear of the oni and her offspring keeps them from rebelling or striking out on their own. The hobgoblins are extremely well organized, and are constantly on guard, expecting attack at any moment from their enemies in the pagoda above.

SECRETS OF THE HOUSE OF WITHERED BLOSSOMS

As the PCs explore the House of Withered Blossoms and Munasukaru's Penance, they should discover a number of clues about the nature of the Five Storms, their escape from the House of Withered Blossoms, and their weaknesses. Rather than identify specific locations for these clues in the adventure, they have been left for you to place where you see fit to best meet the needs of your group and your campaign. The clues should be spread out, and the method of finding them should vary (for example, the PCs could learn single clues from piecing together notes in an old book, talking with freed slaves, interrogating captured prisoners, deciphering a wall carving, receiving warnings from spirits, and so on). Some suggested locations and sources for this information are in areas **C5**, **D4**, **D6**, **D9**, or **E5**; questioning the prisoners in areas **B1**, **E1**, or **E4**; interrogating Buto Futotsu in area **B12**; or interrogating any of Munasukaru's Chosen or Spawn.

The specific pieces of information the PCs can learn are detailed below.

- The Five Storms, while powerful, are disorganized and easily distracted, and the oni who make up the organization are constantly at odds with each other. Yet despite these internal conflicts and disruptions, the leader of the Five Storms has always been the same—a powerful wind yai oni named Anamurumon, with power over storms and lightning.
- The Five Storms, long trapped in their prison-palace at the heart of the Forest of Spirits, have always lusted over the lands of Minkai, intending to remake that nation into an empire of excess and horror in which to indulge their twisted pleasures and appetites.
- The Five Storms can't just simply conquer Minkai. Just like the kami, the gods set in place strict laws preventing the oni from taking direct action to seize worldly power. In order to create their private empire, the oni need to do so subtly, infiltrating all levels of society.
- The linchpin to the Five Storms' plan is the extinction of the five imperial families of Minkai. If no one can claim descent from the divine line of emperors, then no one can challenge the claim of the pretender the Five Storms place on the throne.

- Many different varieties of oni make up the Five Storms, but all of their best warriors escaped the House of Withered Blossoms many decades ago, taking most of their resources with them.
- Munasukaru was one of the weakest oni of the Five Storms, known as Munasukaru the Least among her peers. To keep the kami in the forest outside from learning their plans, Anamurumon commanded her to stay in the House of Withered Blossoms while the other oni fled using the kimono, a magical demon gate powered by living souls.
- While the oni of the Five Storms are powerful, Anamurumon also commands mortal agents. The oni often promise mortals great rewards for their service, and the Five Storms are well known to honor those promises.
- Beyond relying on hired mortal agents, Anamurumon was also obsessed with siring half-human progeny. He needed the "perfect" grandchild—a tiefling who would not only be unquestioningly loyal to Anamurumon, but could also pass as human. Such a child would be the perfect agent to infiltrate the imperial families of Minkai, but all of Anamurumon's descendants were deemed "unsuitable" and killed by the oni.
- Despite his power, Anamurumon has an unusual weakness to weapons imbued with royal honor—such as the ancestral weapons of the five imperial families of Minkai, including *Suishen*, Guardian of the Amatatsu.

BI. THE THRESHOLD

After a dizzying descent, the seemingly endless shaft finally ends. The tortuously narrow steps in the shaft broaden into huge, stone-flagged stairs that descend sharply into a wide, smooth-walled chamber. The room widens as it slopes upward to the northeast, ending at a vast wall of huge stone blocks. Rusting double iron doors, bristling with bloody spikes, offer the only passage through the wall. The air is hot, and smells of sweat and toil.

The frontier of Munasukaru's Penance starts at the foot of the 100-foot-deep shaft known as the Throat (area **A4**). This area forms the first line of defense for the oni and her followers, who lurk behind a fortified rampart known as the Great Wall. The spiral stone stair from the Throat opens directly into this chamber. The floor is made of hefty stone slabs worn smooth, and rises a little over 5 feet from the base of the stairs to the wall, and offers no cover from defenders on the wall.

The Great Wall is nearly 120 feet across and stretches 20 feet high from floor to ceiling. The lower 10 feet of the wall is 10 feet thick, while the upper 10 feet is 5 feet thick. Numerous arrow slits overlook this chamber from the top 10 feet of the wall (connecting to area **B2**). A creature at the

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foot of the wall is out of sight of the arrow slits, but sloping murder holes beneath the arrow slits still allow defenders to pour boiling oil on attackers at the base of the wall.

The iron doors in the wall are each 10 feet wide and 10 feet high, barred with iron (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 30). The outsides of the doors bristle with iron spikes caked with dried blood, and open on a 20-foot-wide arched passage through the wall.

Creatures: Two Tian slaves (N human commoners 1) hang impaled on the door spikes, close to death. The slaves are both disabled with 0 hit points, and weakly twitch and moan, unable to free themselves. If rescued and healed, they can describe the layout and inhabitants of this level, having worked here for some time before being chosen to decorate the door.

Development: The hobgoblin guards in area B2 are always on alert, watching the approach to the wall and

taking 10 on their Perception checks at all times. The watch is changed every 12 hours. If they detect intruders, they immediately attack.

B2. THE SHADOW OF THE WALL (CR 11)

A broad stone-floored courtyard lies on the other side of the wall. A stone parapet runs behind the arrow slits atop the wall, connected by a wooden bridge that crosses above the door.

A 5-foot-wide walkway runs along the wall 10 feet above the floor, with arrow slits and murder holes overlooking area B1. Steep stone stairs lead up the parapet on both sides, and a 4-inch-thick wooden bridge crosses the gap 10 feet above the door. Four iron braziers with cauldrons bubbling atop them lie on iron rails running the length of the walkway.

The cauldrons hold boiling pig fat and oil and can be tipped through the murder holes onto intruders on the other side of the wall. A pair of hobgoblins can move a cauldron 30 feet per round, and tipping a cauldron is a standard action that provokes attacks of opportunity. Creatures directly beneath a tipped cauldron take 6d6 points of fire damage (DC 15 Reflex save for half). In addition, all creatures within 5 feet of the target take 2d6 points of fire damage from the splash (DC 10 Reflex save negates).

Creatures: Four of Munasukaru's guards, hobgoblin sentries known as Withered Blossom Warriors, are on watch on the wall's battlements, and attack anyone trying to breach the wall's defenses.



WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIOR

WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIORS (4) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

Hobgoblin fighter 5/rogue 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175)

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+5 armor, +3 Dex, +2 shield)

hp 82 each (8 HD; 5d10+3d8+37)

Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +2; +1 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +1, evasion, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk morningstar +13/+8 (1d8+6)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +11/+6 (1d8+3/x3)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6, weapon training (flails +1)

TACTICS

During Combat The hobgoblins on watch fire arrows at intruders until the intruders reach the wall, at which point they attempt to pour boiling oil on the attackers (see above). The warriors are well organized and fight as a unit once their defenses are breached, flanking with one another to make

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sneak attacks when possible. In combat, the hobgoblins attack araneas and elves in preference to other creatures.

Morale The hobgoblins worship and fear Munasukaru, and they fight to the death, knowing that if they flee, their treatment at her hands will be unimaginably brutal.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23

Feats Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (morningstar), Weapon Specialization (morningstar)

Skills Acrobatics +11, Climb +11, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +6, Perception +11, Stealth +15

Languages Common, Goblin, Tien

SQ armor training 1, trapfinding +1

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*; **Other Gear** masterwork do-maru*, masterwork heavy wooden shield, masterwork composite longbow with 20 arrows, masterwork morningstar

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

B3. FALSE CHAMBER (CR 10)

This chamber contains a false door built to lure the unwary inside.

Trap: The entire floor of the room is a pressure plate that triggers a trap. One round after someone first steps on the floor, the outer door slams shut and locks (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25, Disable Device DC 25) and the room fills with whirling blades.

CHAMBER OF BLADES TRAP

CR 10

XP 9,600

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Duration** 1d4 rounds; **Reset** repair

Effect Atk +20 melee (3d8+3); onset delay (1 round); multiple targets (all targets in 20-ft.-square chamber)

B4. MUNASUKARU'S EMBRACE (CR 12)

Grotesque carvings of sex, gluttony, violence, and oppression decorate the walls of this chamber, seeming to leap from the walls. The broken bodies of half a dozen humans, their flesh seared, hang among the vile imagery.

The bodies are the remains of human slaves tortured and killed by Munasukaru's hobgoblins. Eight arrow slits are concealed among the horrible carvings on the walls, noticeable with a DC 15 Perception check. The eastern door is of strong wood and is barred on the opposite side (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25).

Traps: Four 5-foot-square spiked pit traps have been constructed in the floor of this chamber.

CAMOUFLAGED SPIKED PIT TRAPS (4)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** manual

Effect 50-ft.-deep pit (5d6 falling damage); pit spikes (Atk +15 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d6+5 damage each); DC 20 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

Development: The hobgoblin guards in area B5 fire arrows through the arrow slits at any intruders in this room.

B5. ENVIOUS WATCHERS (CR 11)

More vile carvings and figures decorate this long corridor, this time depicting acts of envy. To the east, stone stairs climb to a balcony lined with pillars.

Creatures: Four Withered Blossom Warriors stand on guard in this corridor. They fire arrows at any intruders in area B4 through the arrow slits overlooking that room.

WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIORS (4)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 82 each (see page 32)

Development: When intruders enter the room, the hobgoblins join in melee combat, with the support of the hill giants in area B6.

B6. BALCONY OF PILLARS (CR 9)

A stone-pillared balcony overlooks the room below, the columns decorated with revolting scenes of vice and violence.

Two large piles of rocks have been heaped up on the balcony on either side of the stairs.

Creatures: Two hill giants watch area B5 from the balcony and throw rocks at anyone other than a hobgoblin entering that room or approaching the stairs. The giants give no consideration to hobgoblins in melee combat with intruders, and fight until killed.

HILL GIANTS (2)

CR 7

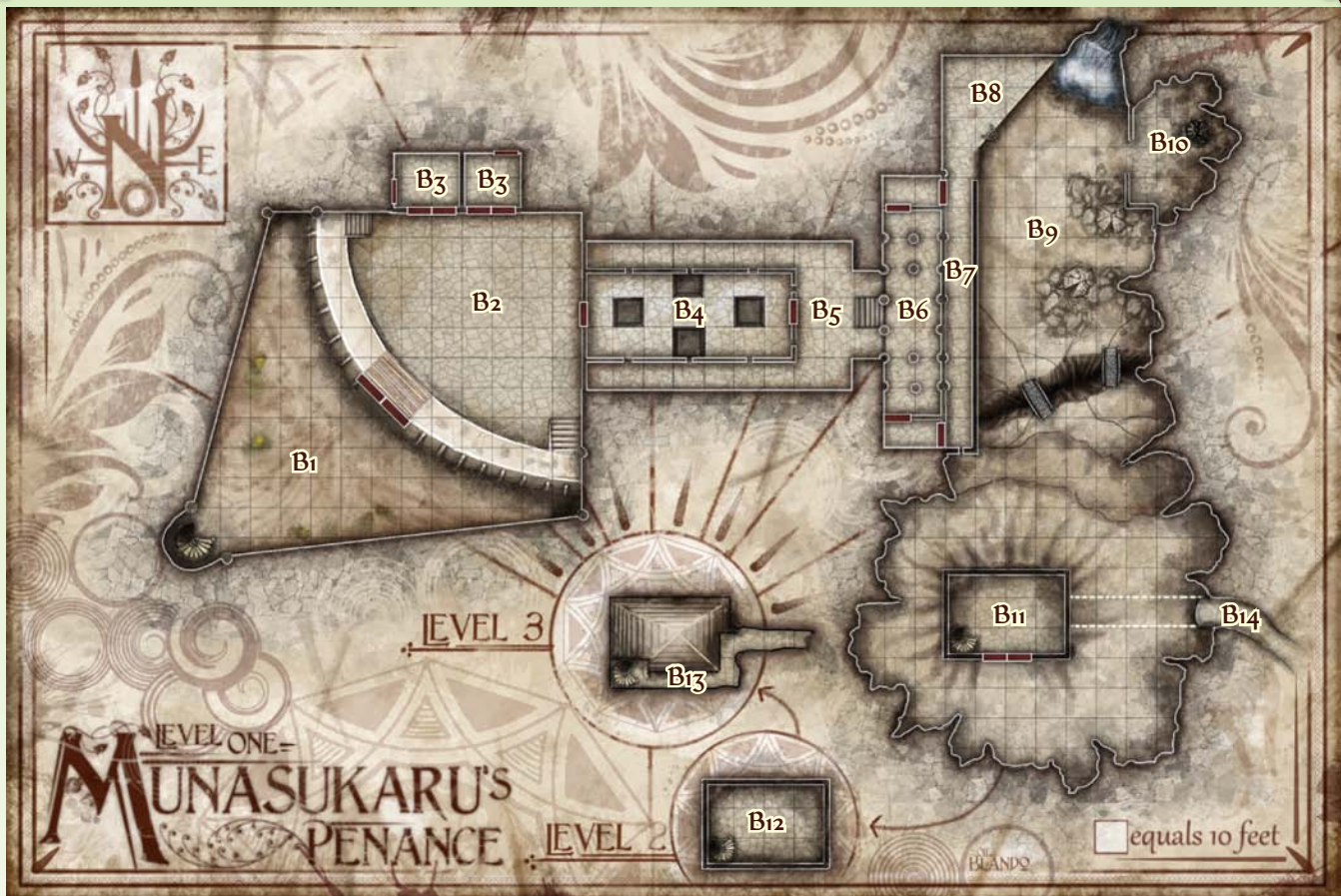
XP 3,200 each

hp 85 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

B7. HALLWAY OF ENDLESS AGONIES

Broken bodies, some of which seem to have died where they were tormented, line the walls of this long, arched corridor amid carvings and figures of torture and anguish.

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This passageway links the Penance's outer defenses with the rest of the complex, and as such has been worn smooth with the passing of feet. Much of the corridor's walls are smothered beneath more of Munasukaru's twisted thoughts given shape, mixed with the remains of the oni's tortured victims. These unfortunate victims have been dismembered in such horrifyingly varied ways that anyone closely examining the walls or bodies must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d10 rounds.

A narrow metal grille (hardness 10, hp 30, Break DC 28) sits in the wall at the southern end of the corridor. The grille is only a foot wide, and sits some 60 feet above the floor of area B9 below, but a Small creature could squeeze through it with a DC 30 Escape Artist check.

Spirit: The broken body of one of Munasukaru's victims, the monk Kusatsu Yuka, hangs mangled on the wall of the corridor. Her restless spirit now haunts this corridor, attempting to possess a similarly aligned creature.

KUSATSU YUKA, THE SOUL OF UNENDING MISERY

NG female human spirit

Notice Perception DC 30 (to hear the sound of breaking bones)

hp 49

Will Save DC 20

Ongoing Effect Seek vengeance. If, while possessing a creature, Yuka sees her own mangled body, she begins to sob in grief, and constantly urges her host to slay her killer Munasukaru. If Yuka possesses a good-aligned creature, she grants her host the use of her still mind monk class ability. The possessed creature gains a +2 bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells and effects for as long Yuka possesses it.

Boon If Yuka witnesses the death of Munasukaru, she offers her host her blessings and knowledge before she departs. The possessed creature gains Exotic Weapon Proficiency or Martial Weapon Proficiency in a single Tian weapon as a bonus feat.

Dismissal Killing Munasukaru dismisses Kusatsu Yuka.

B8. THE LEDGE

The corridor ends at a stone shelf perched above a large cavern. A shaky-looking wooden ladder climbs down from the ledge to the floor of the cavern. The overwhelming roar of a waterfall to the east of the ledge echoes across the huge chamber.

The ledge has no railings and stands 60 feet above the floor of the great cavern below. The unstable ladder requires a DC 5 Climb check to safely ascend or descend.

B9. THE GREAT CAVERN (CR 12)

Strange hovels constructed from assorted debris clutter the floor of this vast natural cavern. A large waterfall crashes into a pool along the north wall while a deep pit runs through the southern portion of the cavern, bridged by two stone arches. So large is this chamber that a small stone keep has been constructed far away in the gloom to the south. Freshly fallen rocks litter the floor of the cavern, amid a profusion of animal droppings and fungi.

This cavern serves as the main living quarters for the hobgoblins in the Penance, with the exception of their leader, the Swine Shogun Buto Futotsu, who lives in the small keep to the south (area **B11**). Dozens of pigs wander through the chamber, feeding off the leavings of the hobgoblins.

The cavern's floor is uneven natural stone and liberally sprinkled with pig manure, increasing the DC of Acrobatics checks by 5. Some of this filth has been heaped into piles to form a breeding ground for a particularly ugly variety of fungus, which the hobgoblins (and their pigs) eat. Between these piles, the hobgoblins have constructed a cluster of unpleasant huts, each generally with a roof (to keep out the dripping water and mist from the waterfall) and a rudimentary door. A seam of coal follows the eastern wall, and piles of coal lie throughout the cavern.

The waterfall plummets 80 feet from the ceiling above into a small, deep pool that quickly drains away. The large pit crossing the cavern is 30 feet deep and filled with dirt, filth, and rusted weapons. Creatures that fall into the pit take falling damage as usual, and must make a DC 20 Reflex save to avoid taking 2d6 points of additional damage from falling onto rusting spikes and discarded metal, which exposes them to filth fever as well (*Core Rulebook* 557). The stone bridges over the pit are 3 feet wide, requiring a DC 10 Acrobatics check to cross at full speed. The cavern floor on the south side of the pit rises in two shelves of stone, each of which is 10 feet high (DC 15 Climb check to scale).

Creatures: At any given time, half a dozen Withered Blossom Warriors are resting in this area, usually in their squalid huts. Six more hobgoblin fighters tend to loiter in the area, idolizing the more powerful warriors. The hobgoblins attack any intruders in the cavern. In addition, the pit is home to countless rats, which form into swarms and attack any creature that falls into the pit.

HOBGOBLINS (6) CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 17 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175)

TACTICS

During Combat The hobgoblins support the Withered Blossom Warriors with ranged attacks.

Morale If more than half of the warriors are killed, the hobgoblins flee to the relative safety of Buto's Keep (area **B11**).

WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIORS (6) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 82 each (see page 32)

RAT SWARMS (3) CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 16 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 232)

BIO. KITCHEN (CR 6)

A blazing fire pit burns in the middle of this chamber, which smells of blood, sweat, and misery. Several dirty workbenches stand around the pit.

The hobgoblins' food is prepared in this chamber—primarily pork, rats, stew made from the rather revolting fungi that grow in the cavern outside, or rarely, slaves captured from the forest above. The meat is crudely slaughtered and smoked by hanging it from metal hooks high above the fire pit. Much of the food here is edible, if revolting. The chamber is crammed with cooking utensils, most of which are bent and rusty.

Creatures: A dozen hobgoblin drudges toil away in this chamber working as butchers and cooks for the rest of the hobgoblins. Many of the females are mothers as well, their offspring playing and fighting at their feet, ready to replace those warriors who fall fighting the araneas. Nevertheless, these hobgoblins have still been trained for war, and while they attempt to get out of the way of the fighting, they fight back if attacked.

HOBGOBLINS (12) CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 17 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175)

TACTICS

Morale As soon as any trouble starts, the hobgoblins attempt to flee to Buto's Keep (area **B11**).

B11. BUTO'S KEEP (CR 10)

A stone keep sits on an outcrop of rock in the belly of the huge cavern. Several of its walls have clearly seen better days—the structure sags in places, and heaps of rubble line the keep's flanks. From the building's roof, which almost touches the ceiling of the cavern itself, a stone bridge arches across to a precarious rocky outcrop high above the cavern floor.

This small keep is the home of the ostensible general of Munasukaru's hobgoblin followers, Buto Futotsu, who has styled himself the Swine Shogun. Buto rarely sets foot in the northern portion of the great cavern, for not only would doing so sully his feet, but it would also invite assassination from those who might seek to supplant him.

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Buto's keep is falling down—its 3-foot-thick masonry walls are crumbling (hardness 8, hp 90, Break DC 35) and relatively easy to climb (Climb DC 15). The keep has no windows, but a great ironbound wooden door sits in the south wall, though it is kept barred (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25).

The ground floor of the keep is squalid and foul, little more than a sty for the Swine Shogun's precious pigs. Three iron cages and a wooden stall fill the rest of the chamber. Both the cages and the stall doors are fairly well rotted (hardness 3, hp 10, Break DC 15), and held closed by a simple latch. Ordure seeps though the stone floor of the Swine Court above (area **B12**), creating a rain of foul smelling rot, and the floor is covered in an unpleasant mix of filth and rolling pigs. This layer is 3 feet deep and slippery. The entire floor is considered difficult terrain, and the DC of Acrobatics checks is increased by 5. A teetering stone spiral staircase climbs clumsily upward out of the muck in the southwest corner.

Creatures: Two hill giants, who switch shifts with those on the Balcony of Pillars (area **B6**), sleep in the pigsty along with a dozen or so squealing pigs. The wooden stall houses Buto's dire boar mount, Tonkatsu. The cages hold the shogun's three pet snow leopards, captured long ago. Buto often takes the leopards with him when he leaves his keep, chaining the animals to his saddle horn. The animals break out of their stalls and attack if prolonged combat (more than 6 rounds) occurs here.

HILL GIANTS (2) **CR 7**
XP 3,200 each
 hp 85 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

TONKATSU **CR 4**
XP 1,200
 Dire boar (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 36)
 hp 42

SNOW LEOPARDS (3) **CR 2**
XP 600 each
 Leopard (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 40)
 hp 19 each

Treasure: Buto's saddle hangs in the boar's stall. The saddle is huge and ornate, with a leather base and lacquer overlay set with small bloodstones, and is worth 850 gp. The three leopards wear collars that are inlaid with gold and worth 75 gp each. Next to each cage hangs a 10-foot-long chain with a leather handle.

B12. THE SWINE COURT (CR 12)

The floor of this open chamber runs with filth and refuse and swims with scores of cockroaches and rats, as well as over a dozen pigs. A huge table rises crookedly from the waste, holding

the putrid remains of a huge feast on a tarnished silver salver, including a half-devoured pig's head with a hand thrust into its mouth leering out from the center of the revolting meal. Numerous war trophies hang from the walls, while countless rusted weapons dangle on hooks from the ceiling above. The stone stairs continue to stagger upward in the southwest corner.

The Swine Shogun Buto Futotsu runs a bizarre court where his word is law, and with every word, he sings the praises of pigs and boars, who he believes provide for the hobgoblins' every need. The Swine Shogun rules his hobgoblins with an iron fist, and his followers are careful to keep on his good side, aware that the bullying shogun has not only a terrible temper but also a copious appetite. For all his strength and bluster, however, Buto is mortally petrified of Munasukaru, who he believes is immortal. He is aware that the oni has the ability to use *scrying* and perpetually acts as though playing to an audience, singing out the oni's divine qualities and righteous justice.

Creatures: The Swine Shogun is normally found in this chamber, either eating or sleeping, guarded by three Withered Blossom Warriors. Buto is a large hobgoblin with a great belly and a cloak made from the sewn skins of piglets. He wields a mighty greataxe and frequently carries a piglet around with him. The swollen belly of the large hobgoblin is matched only by his fury when crossed or disturbed. When angry or in combat, Buto squeals and snorts like the pigs he loves so much. The Swine Shogun occasionally leaves his keep mounted on his dire boar Tonkatsu and accompanied by his pet leopards, but only when he is very angry and sure that it's safe outside for him to administer his own peculiar justice. In addition to Buto, his guards, and over a dozen pigs, a harem of four female hobgoblins inhabit this chamber to attend to Buto's needs.

BUTO FUTOTSU, THE SWINE SHOGUN **CR 10**
XP 9,600

Male hobgoblin fighter 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175)
 LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 21 (+10 armor, +3 Dex, +1 luck)
hp 120 (1d10+55)
Fort +13, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5; +3 vs. fear
Defensive Abilities bravery +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee +1 *thundering greataxe* +21/+16/+11 (1d12+12/19–20/x3)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +16/+11/+6 (1d8+4/x3)
Special Attacks weapon training (axes +2, bows +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Buto assumes that Munasukaru is watching him, so he tends to be flashy in combat, using his Dazzling

Display feat before entering combat or when there is a lull in the fighting.

Morale Buto drinks *his potion of cure serious wounds* when reduced to fewer than 30 hit points, but if he then reaches 10 hit points or fewer, the Swine Shogun screams an oath to Munasukaru's glory and commits seppuku (ritual suicide by performing a self-inflicted coup de grace with his dagger).

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 29

Feats Dazzling Display, Great Fortitude, Greater Weapon Focus (greataxe), Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Shatter Defenses, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe)

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +15, Perception +2, Ride +10, Stealth +5

Languages Goblin, Tien

SQ armor training 3

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*; **Other Gear** +2 *o-yoroi**, +1 *thundering greataxe*, dagger with gold hilt (worth 400 gp), masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str) with 20 arrows, *belt of giant strength* +4, *cloak of resistance* +1 (made from the skins of 47 piglets), *jingasa of the fortunate soldier* (see page 60), bronze rice bowl worth 15 gp, carved horn box with 6 spinels worth 100 gp each, horn libation cup worth 75 gp, 22 gp

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIORS (3)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 82 each (see page 32)

TACTICS

Morale So close to their lord, the hobgoblins dare not flee for fear of retribution, and fight to the death.

FEMALE HOBGOBLINS (4)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 17 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 156)

TACTICS

During Combat The female hobgoblins throw themselves at attackers to defend their beloved shogun.

Morale More sensible than the warriors, the females flee when reduced to 5 hit points or fewer.

Spirit: Buto's addled mind is possessed by the spirit of a wereboar ranger cannibal named Ha Jau. If the Swine Shogun is slain, Jau looks for a new host.

HA JAU, THE WILD HOG

CR 10

XP 9,600

NE male wereboar spirit

Notice Perception DC 25 (to smell the aroma of roast pork)

hp 45

Will Save DC 19

Ongoing Effect Gluttony. The cannibal Jau delights in feasting on pork but is happy just to eat. The possessed creature must make a DC 19 Will save every morning or be compelled to immediately consume a meal of the most unpleasant things available (rotten food, dirt, worms, or slugs are a good start) and be sickened for 1d6 hours. At the GM's discretion, such meals might also expose the creature to afflictions such as filth fever (*Core Rulebook* 557).

Bane The unpleasant hungers continue even after Ha Jau is dismissed, but the creature need only make a DC 19 Will save to avoid the compulsion to eat once per week, rather than every day.

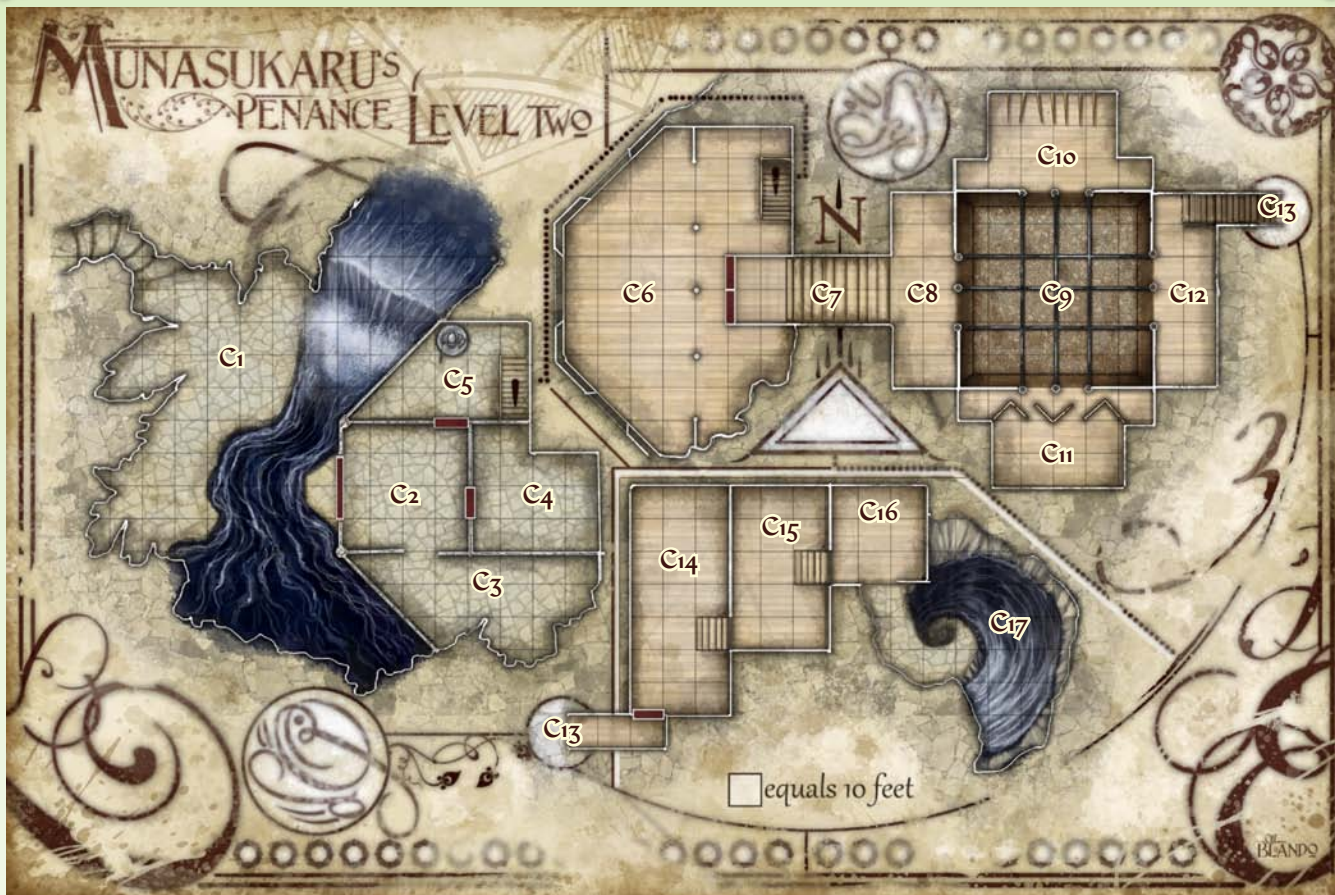
Dismissal Fasting for 3 consecutive days dismisses Ha Jau.

Treasure: The silver salver and feasting set on the table are worth 800 gp in total. Among the trophies on the wall are a foot-tall



SWINE SHOGUN

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gold-and-bronze dragon figure (worth 200 gp), a silver inlaid box containing hobgoblin teeth (worth 200 gp), a kukri inlaid with gold leaf decorated with superb filigree depicting herons (worth 100 gp), and a fine silver and copper candleholder (worth 65 gp). In addition, two masterwork glaives hang among the many useless weapons dangling from the ceiling.

B13. ROOFTOP AND BRIDGE

The spiral stairs stumble to the roof of the keep, which lies barely ten feet from the cavern ceiling. A narrow walkway clings to the rooftop and eventually reaches a stone bridge that gracefully arches from the roof of the keep to a small stone balcony on the far cavern wall.

The stone bridge is narrow and slippery, and rises to within only a few feet of the cavern ceiling, requiring a DC 10 Acrobatics check to cross.

B14. THE JOINING

The bridge ends at a narrow shelf of rock high above the cavern floor. At its rear, a corridor descends steeply into the rock.

The stone shelf is barely 5 feet wide, but the corridor beyond soon opens up. Crude stone steps have been worn into the floor of the corridor, which descends over 200 feet to arrive in the Mockery Pagoda (area C1).

C1. THE MOCKERY PAGODA (CR 11)

The thundering roar of another waterfall fills this chamber. The water falls from a subterranean river some ninety feet above to the north, plunging into a cold, deep lake. On the far side of the lake stands a crooked pagoda, carved with the forms of twisted animals, as if in mockery of the pagoda in the daylight high above. A raised drawbridge hangs from the front of the pagoda.

This pagoda serves as a temple to the worship of the oni Munasukaru. The pagoda's walls are easy to climb (DC 15 Climb check) and are covered with obscene representations of animals and creatures, caricatures of those on the pagoda above. The drawbridge is currently raised, blocking entry into the pagoda. It is only lowered for groups returning from assaults on the araneas above, but the PCs might be able to trick their way past the guards in areas C2 and C6 by pretending to be a returning team of combatants. The pool is 60 feet deep,

with a swift current (DC 15 Swim check or DC 15 Strength check to avoid going under).

Creatures: Two greater water elementals are bound in the waters of the lake, and attack anyone attempting to cross the water.

GREATER WATER ELEMENTALS (2) CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 123 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 127)

Development: The Withered Blossom Warriors in area B6 fire arrows at any invaders attempting to cross the lake.

C2. DRAWBRIDGE (CR 11)

The walls of this room are carved with more obscenities: bas-reliefs of half-human, half-beast creatures copulating with and feasting on each other, creating an endless panorama of lust and gluttony.

This square chamber contains the controls for lowering and raising the pagoda's drawbridge. The drawbridge mechanism is old but kept in excellent condition by the hobgoblins. The drawbridge can be lowered by means of a simple lever that can be pulled as a move action that provokes an attack of opportunity, but it takes 3 rounds for the drawbridge to lower completely. Raising the drawbridge requires three DC 25 Strength checks (up to six creatures can grab the lever at once).

Creatures: Four Withered Blossom Warriors stand watch in this room, ready to raise or lower the drawbridge as needed, or defend the pagoda against attack.

WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIORS (4) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 82 each (see page 32)

C3. THE FUNGAL PILE

A repulsive pile of waste and rot fills this chamber, home to a large number of ugly fungi.

The fungi are a staple diet of the hobgoblins when they can't get fresh meat. Any creature searching in the pile must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or contract filth fever (*Core Rulebook* 557).

C4. STOREROOM

This well-stocked storeroom serves to feed the pagoda's occupants in case of emergencies or sieges.

Treasure: The storeroom contains enough dried food (mostly badly cured meat of dubious origin and dried fungi) to feed 50 creatures for 10 days (equivalent to 50

cargo units of stores for a caravan), as well as mundane materials such as backpacks, fishing nets, picks, poles, spades, 12 flasks of oil, 100 feet of silk rope, and a small crate holding 5 flasks of alchemist's fire.

In addition, one of the Withered Blossom Warriors has been thieving from her companions for years. Hidden behind a loose stone at the back of the room (DC 25 Perception check to discover) are a *potion of invisibility*, a *fan feather token*, and 97 gp.

C5. SHRINE OF MUNASUKARU

A revolting statue of a repulsive, strangely goblinoid creature dominates this chamber.

The hobgoblins worship their "goddess" Munasukaru in this shrine. The statue depicts the ja noi oni in all her glory, but the hobgoblins have embellished her image. The statue stands on a bed of nails and has four demonic heads—one smiling, one angry, one eating, and one screaming. The statue is obscenely pregnant, with multiple teats sagging over her swollen belly, and is shown giving birth to monstrous creatures, some humanoid with demonic goblinoid features, others wormlike with human faces—Munasukaru's children. A DC 15 Knowledge (planes) check identifies the statue and the humanoids as ja noi oni, while a DC 19 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check recognizes the human-headed worm creatures as spirit nagas. A set of stairs along the east wall lead up to area C6.

Treasure: A pile of offerings is heaped on the floor in front of the statue, including the mummified arm and head of an aranea, numerous dead giant spiders, a *brooch of shielding* (that can only absorb 13 more points of damage before melting), a *scroll of spike growth*, a set of masterwork artisan's tools (Craft [armor]), a pair of good locks with keys, a gold-plated merchant's scale worth 100 gp, 11 obsidians worth 10 gp each, 91 gp, and 203 sp.

C6. LAKE OVERLOOK (CR 11)

A broad balcony with wide openings overlooks the lake from the pagoda's upper floor. The walls of this room are covered with carvings of bound prisoners being subjected to agonizing tortures.

A barrel containing 100 arrows stands in the center of the room.

Creatures: Four more Withered Blossom Warriors are stationed here, watching the lake in case of attack. They are particularly mindful of potential climbing attacks by the araneas and have plenty of arrows on hand to repel such assaults.

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WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIORS (4) CR 7

XP 3,200 each
hp 82 each (see page 32)

C7. GUARDIAN OF THE STAIRS (CR 10)

A steep staircase climbs upward. Bas-reliefs of faces distorted by pain cover the steps and walls.

Creature: A clay golem sculpted in the form of a Tian temple guardian guards this passage. The creature has orders simply to watch the area for attack and defend it. The golem fights until destroyed.

CLAY GOLEM CR 10

XP 9,600
hp 63 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 159)

C8. LEPER COLONY (CR 10)

A simple, bare chamber with an arched doorway depicting tormented dragons opens into a wider area beyond.

Creatures: To amuse herself and to ensure compliance from her other followers, Munasukaru keeps a handful of leprous hobgoblins within her Penance. Three of the lepers reside in this chamber. Should any of the oni's subjects fall out of line or displease her, Munasukaru imprisons them in this chamber with the contagious lepers. Always trying to gain Munasukaru's favor, the lepers attack anyone entering the room.

LEPERS (3) CR 7

XP 3,200 each
Withered Blossom Warriors (see page 32, with the following changes)
hp 82 each

TACTICS

During Combat The lepers try to afflict their enemies with their disease, either as part of a successful melee attack or with simple touch attacks. The lepers flank with each other to make sneak attacks whenever possible.

Morale The lepers believe that Munasukaru will cure their affliction if they show proper devotion. Equally terrified and worshipful of the oni, they do not flee combat.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) The hobgoblins are afflicted with leprosy (*Core Rulebook* 557), and each has taken 1d6 points of Charisma damage. Creatures making unarmed attacks or touch attacks against the lepers, or who are injured or touched by the lepers, must make an immediate DC 12 Fortitude save to avoid contracting the virulent strain of leprosy afflicting the hobgoblins.

Development: Sounds of combat in this area have a chance of alerting the monks in area C10, who move into area C9 to face the invaders.

C9. THE LATTICE (CR 10)

A wide, open pit fills this chamber, with arched openings in each wall above the pit. Six thick iron bars crisscross the pit, from which a greenish-gray, bitter-smelling mist rises.

The chamber serves two purposes—defense, and to test the Sisters of the Broken Path (see page 41) on their balance and concentration (one of the easier challenges the monks must face in this chamber is standing with one foot on one of the bars for 24 hours). When less agile troops or important visitors must pass through this room, the monks lay a bamboo floor across one section of the bars (the floor is currently rolled up and stored in area C12).

The iron bars are each 6 inches wide (DC 15 Acrobatics check to cross). The pit is 80 feet deep, with natural rock walls (DC 25 Climb check), though the pit's bottom cannot be seen through the thick mist. The bottom of the pit contains numerous petrified victims of the pit's inhabitants. All of the petrified corpses are female, both hobgoblin and human, and the majority of them have been trampled, shattered, and half-eaten.

Creatures: Munasukaru's firstborn son Ichirou (see area C11) has trapped two gorgon bulls (offspring of the giant gorgon in area D3) in the bottom of the pit. The mist rising from the pit is the result of the creatures' droppings and breath weapons. This mist obscures sight as fog does, granting the gorgons concealment from more than 5 feet away. The gorgons attack any creatures falling into the pit, fighting until they or their opponents are dead, petrified, or both.

GORGONS (2) CR 8

XP 4,800 each
hp 100 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 165)

Development: If alerted to the sounds of combat in area C8, the Sisters of the Broken Path in area C10 move onto the iron bars in this chamber to attack intruders.

C10. MONASTIC CELLS (CR 11)

The northern portion of this simple chamber has been divided into eight bamboo-walled cubicles.

This chamber is the living quarters for Munasukaru's most devoted followers—an order of female hobgoblin monks called the Sisters of the Broken Path. Utterly loyal to Munasukaru, these monks have risen above their lesser

kin through their dedication to the art of combat, seeking to achieve purity through their art. The monks keep nothing of value in their cells other than minor mundane objects for basic living needs, such as clay water jugs, sleeping mats, and spare clothes.

Creatures: Three Sisters of the Broken Path meditate in this chamber. All of the monks are heavily tattooed with scenes of greed, and their skin displays numerous piercings set with minor gemstones (mostly jet). If alerted to combat nearby, the monks make their way into the Lattice (area C9) to await intruders. Otherwise, they leap to attack as soon as anyone enters this room.

SISTERS OF THE BROKEN PATH (3) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Female hobgoblin monk (hungry ghost monk) 9 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 110)

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 18, flat-footed 17 (+2 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 monk, +2 Wis, +1 natural)

hp 80 each (9d8+36)

Fort +8, **Ref** +11, **Will** +8; +2 vs. enchantment

Defensive Abilities improved evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft.

Melee mwk nunchaku +10/+5 (1d6+3) or

unarmed strike +9/+4 (1d10+3) or

mwk nunchaku flurry of blows +11/+11/+6/+6 (1d6+3) or

unarmed strike flurry of blows +10/+10/+5/+5 (1d10+3)

Ranged dagger +9 (1d4+3/19–20)

Special Attacks flurry of blows, life funnel*, punishing kick* (9/day, DC 16), steal ki*

TACTICS

Before Combat The Sisters drink their *potions of blur* before combat ensues.

During Combat The monks work together, attacking as a single group flanking one or two opponents if the opportunity presents itself. They attempt to push enemies into the pit in area C9 using their Punishing Kick feat, or make flurry of blows attacks, using their nunchaku to disarm opponents. If fighting on the Lattice (area C9), the monks use their superior acrobatics skills to maneuver around and outflank foes. The Sisters think nothing of leaping the 10 feet between the iron bars.

Morale Devoted followers of Munasukaru, the Sisters of the Broken Path do not surrender, defending their living god to the death. When a monk reaches 10 hit points or fewer, she screams an oath to Munasukaru's glory and commits seppuku (ritual suicide by performing a self-inflicted coup de grace with her dagger).

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 27

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Punishing Kick*, Skill Focus (Acrobatics), Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +18 (+39 jump), Climb +15, Intimidate +10, Perception +14, Stealth +11

Languages Goblin, Tien

SQ fast movement, high jump, ki pool (6 points, magic), maneuver training, slow fall 40 ft., still mind

Combat Gear *potion of blur*; **Other Gear** daggers (4), masterwork nunchaku, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *bracers of armor* +2, 100 gp worth of jeweled studs for piercings

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.



SISTER OF THE BROKEN PATH

JADE REGENT

CII. CHAMBER OF THE LUSTFUL OVERSEER (CR II)

High black lacquer screens shield this chamber from view, set between twin archways carved to resemble beheaded humanoid figures.

Beyond the lacquer screens lies a chamber wallowing in excess, an extension of the vices and lusts of its occupant. The walls are carved with explicit carnal scenes and a dozen statues of similar nature stand throughout the room among several lacquer and bamboo cabinets. A magnificent bed, decorated with similar erotic carvings, dominates the room.

Creatures: Munasukaru's firstborn son, a ja noi oni named Ichirou, oversees the Mockery Pagoda from his lair in this chamber. As one of Munasukaru's lesser spawn, Ichirou has endured agonizing abuse and torture at the hands of his mother and sisters. His body is disfigured with countless scars, brands, and tattoos, but Ichirou's twisted mind views these savage mutilations as symbols of his mother's love and favor. Ichirou prefers to enjoy the fruits of his position rather than exercise its responsibilities, and spends most of his time indulging in dissolute vices in this room, leaving the hobgoblins stationed in the pagoda to oversee themselves. Currently, Ichirou shares his bed with two Sisters of the Broken Path, who fight to the death to defend the offspring of their living goddess.

ICHIROU, SPAWN OF MUNASUKARU CR 9

XP 6,400

Male ja noi barbarian (scarred rager) 4 (see page 90, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 29)

LE Medium outsider (oni, goblinoid, native, shapechanger)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+5 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural, -2 rage)

hp 123 (10 HD; 6d10+4d12+64); regeneration 3 (acid or fire)

Fort +15, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities scarification*, tolerance*

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee +1 *nodachi** +21/+16 (1d10+16/18-20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +15/+10 (1d8+6/x3)

Special Attacks rage (14 rounds/day), rage powers (auspicious mark*, roused anger)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +10)

3/day—*command* (DC 15), *doom* (DC 16), *fly*, *magic weapon*

1/day—*bull's strength*

TACTICS

Before Combat Ichirou has little interest in helping the monks defend this area, but he casts *bull's strength*, *fly*, and *magic weapon* if alerted to the presence of intruders.

During Combat Ichirou orders the two Sisters of the Broken Path to engage opponents while he remains in the rear watching the fray and using his spell-like abilities. If enemies get past the monks, Ichirou rages and attempts to bull rush foes into the pit in area C9.

Morale A lustful coward, Ichirou withdraws from combat once he is reduced to 60 hit points or fewer. He attempts to bargain for his life with information, preferably with an attractive female. Ichirou knows the general layout of the Penance, although not many specifics (he's far more interested in sating his lusts than paying attention to such mundane matters as personnel and staffing). If his parlay is refused, Ichirou rages once more and fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 18, **Con** 22, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +20 (+24 bull rush); **CMD** 34 (36 vs. bull rush)

Feats Cleave, Dodge, Greater Bull Rush, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Skills Acrobatics +17, Bluff +15, Climb +18, Fly +16, Intimidate +17 (+19 vs. non-barbarians), Perception +9, Stealth +17

Languages Goblin, Tien

SQ change shape (Small or Medium humanoid; *alter self*), serene fighter, terrifying visage*

Gear +2 *studded leather*, masterwork composite longbow (+6 Str) with 20 arrows, masterwork *nodachi**, *ring of protection* +1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Auspicious Mark (Su) Ichirou's impressive scars and tattoos mark him as touched by the spirits. Once per rage, as a swift action that costs 2 rounds of rage, Ichirou can call upon the spirits' favor, granting him a +1d6 bonus on one d20 roll he has just made. Ichirou can call on the auspicious mark after seeing the result of the d20 roll.

Scarification (Ex) Ichirou can ignore 1 point of bleed damage per round.

Terrifying Visage (Ex) Ichirou adds 1/2 his barbarian level (+2) on Intimidate checks against humanoids who are not members of barbarian tribes. When dealing with barbarians, Ichirou may add this bonus on Diplomacy checks instead. The DC of any fear effect created by Ichirou also increases by +1.

Tolerance (Ex) If Ichirou fails a save against an effect that causes him to become nauseated, sickened, fatigued, or exhausted, he can make a second save to negate the effect on the start of his next turn. Only one additional save is allowed. If the effect does not allow a saving throw, its duration is halved instead (minimum of 1 round).

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

SISTERS OF THE BROKEN PATH (2) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 80 each (see page 41)

Treasure: The three lacquer screens are bulky (each is 10 feet across and weighs 20 pounds) and worth 50 gp each,

FOREST OF SPIRITS

while the ornately carved bed is worth 150 gp. A DC 20 Perception check made while searching the cabinets in the room locates a beautiful silver and enamel ring decorated with the Tien characters for wealth and luck worth 110 gp, a silver foo dog brooch worth 75 gp, a pendant made from interlocking jade rings worth 60 gp, a silver hairpin with a kingfisher feather worth 50 gp, a carved ivory-and-coral bracelet worth 40 gp, and four silver wedding rings worth 10 gp each.

C12. STORAGE

This chamber is crammed with objects relating to combat, including wooden practice weapons, wooden dummies, breaking boards, and similar martial arts training accessories. Two 12-foot-wide, 40-foot-long segments of bamboo flooring are rolled up against the eastern wall. Each weighs 30 pounds and can be unfurled across the iron bars in area C9 to form a stable walkway across the Lattice to area C8. It takes 3 full rounds to unfurl each section of floor.

Treasure: A DC 25 Perception check discovers a lacquer box containing a set of silver acupuncture needles worth 50 gp beneath a pile of fighting equipment.

C13. WALK OF ANGER

A short flight of stairs leads to a long corridor decorated with scenes of anger, illustrating humanoid figures suffering in scenes of shockingly brutal violence.

The corridor is 200 feet long and leads to the Mockery Pagoda's barracks, and the passage to the next level of Munasukaru's Penance beyond.

C14. HOBGOBLIN BARRACKS

This room was a barracks for hobgoblins in Munasukaru's service, but their last assault on the araneas was unsuccessful, and none of the hobgoblin troopers returned from the battle. The fur bedrolls scattered throughout the room are currently unoccupied, and there is nothing of value here. A dark hole in the corner, which serves as a latrine and midden for the hobgoblins, drains into a small cavern fed by an underground stream below.

C15. WITHERED BLOSSOM BARRACKS (CR 11)

This barracks houses the Withered Blossom Warriors stationed in the Mockery Pagoda. In the event of attack, this unit is sent out to deal with threats, under the command of the ogre mage Fujai (see area C16). There are enough collapsible bamboo cots here for a score of hobgoblins, though only 14 are in current use. Even so, this chamber doesn't see much use, as the Withered Blossom Warriors are never off-duty.

Creatures: Four Withered Blossom Warriors currently rest in this room. They still wear their armor, and snatch up their weapons to attack intruders.

WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIORS (4) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 82 each (see page 32)

Treasure: Among the few mundane personal items scattered throughout the room are 143 gp and 206 sp, casually tossed about as if the coins had no value.

C16. COMMANDER'S QUARTERS (CR 11)

Several trophies and art objects are proudly displayed in this room. A simple military cot rests against the north wall. The south wall opens into a broad natural cavern, through which can be heard the sound of roaring water.

This chamber is the quarters for the officer commanding the hobgoblins of the Mockery Pagoda.

Creatures: The ogre mage Fujai resides in this room. He is one of Munasukaru's Chosen, three ogre mage samurai that serve as her generals. Fujai has been forbidden by Munasukaru to keep his mount, as she delights in placing her followers in such dilemmas. Fujai is a brutal taskmaster, and ignores the sounds of combat from area C15—his warriors should be able to handle themselves, but he immediately attacks any intruders who make it past the hobgoblins in that room. In addition to Fujai, two Withered Blossom Warriors—Fujai's lieutenants—are present in the room, discussing strategy with their commander.

FUJAI, MUNASUKARU'S CHOSEN CR 9

XP 6,400

Male ogre mage samurai 1 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 221, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 18)

LE Large outsider (giant, native, oni, shapechanger)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 21 (+7 armor, +2 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 113 (9d10+64); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +15, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

SR 19

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee mwk katana* +18/+13 (2d6+9/18-20) or

mwk silver wakizashi* +18/+13 (1d8+13/18-20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +11/+6 (2d6+9/x3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks challenge (+1, 1/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +12)

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MUNASUKARU'S SPAWN

Over the years since she was trapped in the House of Withered Blossoms, Munasukaru has repeatedly mated with her hobgoblin followers, displaying a peculiarly swift and particularly loathsome ability to reproduce. Most of her spawn are twisted abominations that soon fall prey to the oni's prodigious appetites, but those that survive their birth and subsequent tortures at their mother's hands are given positions of power and become her most devoted disciples. Munasukaru's offspring are not merely loyal to her; they love her, hate her, worship her, and fear her.

Munasukaru's spawn fall into two types—her sons and her daughters. Like their mother, Munasukaru's sons are ja noi, fiery-skinned hobgoblin oni with ape-like arms. The sons enjoy the respect and adulation of their mother's hobgoblin servants, but their standing is significantly lower than that of Munasukaru's favored and adored daughters—horrid, wormlike spirit nagas, who occupy positions of status second only to Munasukaru herself.

Munasukaru's violent method of reproduction has resulted in only two such daughters, but she has given birth to countless sons. Fortunately, so great is her offspring's hatred of each other that only a handful of her sons remain alive today.

Constant—fly

At will—darkness, invisibility

1/day—charm monster (DC 18), cone of cold (DC 19), gaseous form, deep slumber (DC 17)

TACTICS

During Combat Fujai lets the Withered Blossom Warriors engage opponents first, while he assists with his spells before joining in melee combat himself.

Morale Fujai does not allow dishonor among those under his command. If any hobgoblins attempt to flee combat, he ignores enemies to slay them for their cowardice. Fujai refuses to dishonor his living god and liege Munasukaru by failing her or surrendering. He fights to the death, even if he must commit seppuku with his wakizashi.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 15, **Con** 25, **Int** 14, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 31

Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Bluff +16, Disguise +14, Fly +7, Intimidate +16, Perception +16, Ride +9, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +14

Languages Common, Giant, Goblin, Tien

SQ change shape (Small, Medium, or Large humanoid; *alter self* or *giant form I*), flight, mount (currently none), order of the warrior*, resolve* 1/day

Gear Large masterwork tatami-do*, Large masterwork katana*, Large masterwork composite longbow (+9 Str) with 20 arrows, Large masterwork silver wakizashi*, lacquer opium box set with pearls (worth 40 gp) containing 2 doses of opium (see page 29)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Challenge (Ex) This functions as the cavalier ability of the same name (*Advanced Player's Guide* 32).

Order (Ex) Fujai belongs to the order of the warrior. Whenever Fujai declares a challenge, he receives damage reduction 1/— against attacks made by the target of his challenge.

Resolve (Ex) Once per day, Fujai can call upon his resolve to endure wounds and afflictions in a number of ways.

Determined: As a standard action, Fujai can use his resolve to remove the fatigued, shaken, or sickened condition.

Resolute: Whenever Fujai is required to make a Fortitude or Will save, he can use his resolve as an immediate action to roll twice and take the better result. He must decide to use this ability before he rolls the saving throw.

Unstoppable: When Fujai is reduced to fewer than 0 hit points but not slain, he can use his resolve as an immediate action to instantly stabilize and remain conscious. He is staggered, but he does not fall unconscious and begin dying if he takes a standard action. He does fall unconscious if he takes additional damage from any source.

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIORS (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 82 each (see page 32)

Treasure: Among the items displayed in the room are a trio of very fine bearskins worth 100 gp each, a bronze dagger set with jets worth 130 gp, a ceremonial elephant dagger in a silver and lapis lazuli scabbard worth 250 gp, and several bleached aranea skulls.

C17. THE DRAIN (CR 11)

A stone walkway plunges into the heart of a large cavern that is itself a roaring shaft of water, so that the steep and narrow stone pathway descends like a corkscrew along the edges of the shaft, with a waterfall roaring through the center.

Called the Drain, this cavernous shaft is 220 feet deep and leads to a steppingstone in the Lake of Broken Stones (area D1) below. The 5-foot-wide walkway was created by several *stone shape* spells. Because of the cascade of water all around it, the walkway is wet, slippery, and dangerous to fight on, requiring a DC 7 Acrobatics check to descend at full speed. The corkscrewing walkway descends straight downward, making it difficult to see directly up or down the path.

Creatures: Three Sisters of the Broken Path guard the Drain, usually positioned halfway down the stone walkway. The Sisters carry *potions of levitate* to use the nature of the pathway to their advantage. When first entering combat, the monks drink their potions, leaving one monk in front of any attacking group while the other two Sisters levitate to the rear, sandwiching attackers between them.

SISTERS OF THE BROKEN PATH (3) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 80 each (see page 41)

Combat Gear In addition to their normal gear, each of the Sisters carries two *potions of levitate*.

D1. LAKE OF BROKEN STONES (CR 12)

The waterfall drops into an underground lake, its surface broken by jagged boulders that form makeshift steppingstones from the pathway to an arched doorway. Hundreds of screaming, leering faces cover the walls of this cavern.

The path from the Drain above ends at the northernmost boulder in the lake. The steppingstones are broad, but steep and slippery, and Acrobatics checks to jump between the stones are made with a –7 penalty. The lake is 60 feet deep; its waters drain into four underground streams, creating strong currents in the water (DC 15 Swim check). A narrow side passage leads off of the north stream, connecting to the water trough in area D6. A DC 30 Escape Artist check enables passage between the two places.

Creatures: Two Sisters of the Broken Path guard the passage between the two levels, usually from area D2, where it's drier and safer, but they leap onto the steppingstones to confront any intruders coming down the Drain. The monks always plug their ears with melted wax to avoid effects of the choir of screaming voices traps (see below). In addition, Munasukaru has placed a pair of giant gars in the lake. The gars attack anything edible and moving that falls into the water, but ignore dead meat.

GIANT GARS (2) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 73 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 128)

SISTERS OF THE BROKEN PATH (2) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 80 each (see page 41)

Traps: Anyone treading on the steppingstones marked T on the map triggers a trap. The carved faces that cover every wall of the cavern begin to scream (courtesy of a *major image* spell), creating a *confusion* effect throughout the whole chamber. The spell only affects those who can

hear it, and creatures who have plugged their ears (such as the monks) or are underwater (such as the giant gars) gain a +5 circumstance bonus on their saving throws.

CHOIR OF SCREAMING VOICES TRAPS (3) CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Type magic; **Perception** DC 29; **Disable Device** DC 29

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Duration** 7 rounds; **Reset** none
Effect spell effect (*confusion*, DC 16 Will save negates); multiple targets (all targets in area D1)

D2. WATCHWAY

A low stone shelf forms a natural harbor carved with screaming figures with distended jaws. Ten-foot-high natural stone ledges rise in tiers to the southeast. A set of stone steps climb from the middle ledge to the topmost ledge and into area D3.

Development: If the PCs somehow made it through area D1 without being detected by the Sisters of the Broken Path, the two monks are on guard here.

D3. GUARDIAN OF THE BRIDGE (CR 11)

The natural stone walls of this chamber become worked stone to the north, decorated with carvings of figures being torn apart by beasts.

Creatures: Another of Munasukaru's Chosen, an ogre mage named Ryosanjin, waits in this room, guarding the approach to area D5. Ryosanjin has dwelt in the Penance since before the Five Storms escaped 160 years ago, and he is clearly very old. In those days, Ryosanjin was just a foot soldier, but Munasukaru rewarded his unwavering loyalty over the years by making him one of her Chosen. As Munasukaru's favorite, only Ryosanjin, alone among the other Chosen, has a mount—a giant gorgon named Jiaogu—but the gorgon was given to him by Munasukaru, not chosen by Ryosanjin. As a result, Jiaogu does not gain the standard abilities of a samurai's mount, though Ryosanjin does not take an armor check penalty on Ride checks while riding Jiaogu.

RYOSANJIN, MUNASUKARU'S CHOSEN CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 113 (see page 43)

Skills Ride +14

TACTICS

During Combat Ryosanjin forgoes using his *invisibility* and enters combat mounted on Jiaogu. On the first round of combat, Ryosanjin issues a challenge to an honorable opponent—preferably another warrior—and charges. He reserves his spells for spellcasters or rogues, rather than sully his honor by fighting such lowly opponents in hand-

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to-hand combat. If Jiaogu is killed, Ryosanjin uses *gaseous form* to honorably withdraw if the odds are greatly against him (such as when he is outflanked or reduced to half his hit points) so that he can take up a better defensive position.

Morale A haughty combatant, Ryosanjin fights with the honor of his order. He would rather die than dishonor Munasukaru, so he does not surrender.

JIAOGU

CR 9

XP 6,400

Giant gorgon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 165, 295)

hp 116

D4. RYOSANJIN'S QUARTERS

A huge, lice-covered bed squats in the center of this chamber, which is decorated with curious, somewhat disturbing objects. Hundreds of beetles form a living carpet on the floor.

When not on duty, the ogre mage Ryosanjin (see area D3) resides in this room. The beetles on the floor are disturbing, but harmless.

Treasure: The chamber is cluttered with objects from the oni's past, all of which show signs of great age. A DC 10 Perception check discovers the following items of value among the various aged figurines, statues, and other curiosities: a *headband of alluring charisma* +2, an offering bowl decorated with gold leaf and set with a pair of poor quality rubies (worth 300 gp), a gilded elephant tusk (worth 125 gp), a fine jade and silver rooster funerary figure (worth 100 gp), and a superb 10-panel painted landscape screen depicting the House of Withered Blossoms in its heyday, weighing 30 pounds (worth 750 gp).

D5. BRIDGE OF FEASTING KIRIN

This magnificent stone bridge is carved with enraged kirin devouring a bridal feast. Swift, dark waters flow under the crossing.

The bridge stands 20 feet above the river, whose waters flow from area D1 toward area D8. The river is 20 feet deep and fast-moving, requiring a DC 15 Swim check to navigate.

D6. HALL OF LOST GRANDEUR (CR 11)

The bridge leads to a stone ledge overlooking a cobbled stone plaza in a huge chamber. Forty feet above the ledge, a vaulted ceiling soars over the room, supported by great columns, some of which have collapsed. At one time a stone bridge crossed the chamber from the ledge to the opposite wall, but both the span and the enormous archway it led to have collapsed, leaving a pile of shattered rubble on the floor twenty feet below. Frescoes depicting blinded ettins pulling obscene creatures on

vast golden wagons, surrounded by slaves averting their eyes, cover the walls in a riot of extravagant colors.

Long ago, during the heyday of the House of the Withered Blossoms, this room was an antechamber to the central lair of the Five Storms, a vast subterranean palace filled with magnificent chambers and temples to the oni, maintained by hundreds of slaves. After the Five Storms escaped, leaving Munasukaru behind, the complex fell into disrepair and eventually began to disintegrate, helped along at times by Munasukaru's insane rage. All that remains now is this great anteroom, now fractured beneath the ledge where oni masters once tormented their slaves.

The wall frescoes depict the oni of the Five Storms, Munasukaru clearly visible among them, nursing her two naga daughters. The scenes are of luxury, extravagance, triumph, and the deification of the oni.

The wall beneath the ledge is very smooth (DC 25 Climb check), but the rubble of the collapsed bridge forms a sloping ramp down to the floor, and can be traversed with a DC 10 Climb check. A huge stone trough sits against the west wall in the plaza below, fed with cool water from area D1. A DC 30 Escape Artist check enables passage between the two places. At floor level to the east, a tunnel passes beneath the walkway to the south, leading to area D8.

Three huge grappling hooks attached to long chains hang from hooks on the south wall along the ledge. Dried blood still cakes the hooks, where victims in the plaza below were once hooked like fish and tormented by watching guards on the ledge above.

Creatures: Three Withered Blossom Warriors and a hill giant have chosen this room as their resting place when not guarding area D9 below. The hobgoblins stand atop the ledge to the south, while the hill giant wanders around in the plaza below, throwing rocks at any intruders entering the chamber.

HILL GIANT

CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 85 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIORS (3)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 82 each (see page 32)

D7. CHAMBER OF LONG REGRETS

Water slowly drips onto the damp floor of this otherwise completely bare chamber.

The wooden door to this room is swollen shut with dampness and age (hardness 5, hp 15, Break DC 16). This room was used to carry out various torments, including the dreaded

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water torture—an endless, slow drip of a water splashing on a victim's forehead to drive him mad. Rusted anchor points on the walls and floor show where manacles and torture devices once lay, but they have all since succumbed to rust and age.

Treasure: A small, wilted bonsai tree in a simple pot sits in the middle of the floor. The ward of the fukujin kami Akumi (see page 21), the bonsai was stolen from the Forest of Spirits by one of Munasukaru's Withered Blossom Warriors and stashed here. When that hobgoblin fell in battle against the aranea soon after, the bonsai was abandoned and forgotten. The endless drip of water from the ceiling has kept the tree barely alive thus far, but it will quickly wither and die without sunlight. See page 60 for details on Akumi's bonsai.

Story Award: Award the PCs 12,800 XP for recovering Akumi's bonsai and returning it to the kami.

D8. FALLEN BRIDGE

The remains of a broken bridge lie shattered in the waters of an underground river. Across the torrent, an open archway beckons.

The river is 10 feet wide and 20 feet deep, its fast waters (DC 15 Swim check) soon plunging into a shaft to the east, and gradually draining through several narrow cracks.

D9. THE GREAT PROCESSION OF MORTALITY (CR 11)

Innumerable columns depicting writhing oni feasting upon fleeing peasants support this magnificent arched corridor, which vanishes into darkness to the east.

The floor of this corridor is worn smooth with heavy traffic, its walls covered in carvings by Munasukaru depicting dragons punishing humans for their frailty and mortality. The corridor runs 600 feet east to area D10.

Recently, a quartet of destrachans has made its way from the Darklands into this area. The cruel and cunning creatures have taken great pleasure in hunting and ambushing Munasukaru's hobgoblin followers, and their destructive harmonics have collapsed many of the columns in the central portion of the corridor. Fortunately, movement between the upper levels and Munasukaru's lair below is rare, so the destrachans have mostly been left to their own devices.

Creatures: Ryosanjin has set a watch here to guard against the destrachans plaguing the area. Three Withered Blossom Warriors and a hill giant keep a close eye along the corridor east, but they attack any intruders coming from the north as well.

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HILL GIANT CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 85 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

WITHERED BLOSSOM WARRIORS (3) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 82 each (see page 32)

TACTICS

Morale If more than half their number are slain, the remaining hobgoblins flee to area D6 to join their companions.

D10. DESTRACHAN LAIR (CR 12)

The pillared corridor ends in a broad stone platform that overlooks a series of crude stone steps descending to the southeast. The mangled, rotting corpses of hobgoblins litter the floor.

The destrachans plaguing this level have made their lair in this chamber. The creatures bring their victims here to torment, and the mutilated bodies of 12 hobgoblins lie in ruin on the floor.

Creatures: Four destrachans occupy this chamber, toying with what remains of their victims. As soon as they detect creatures coming down the corridor, the

destrachans prepare another ambush, lurking behind pillars or on the first of the steps leading down to area D11

to take foes by surprise.

DESTRACHANS (4) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 90 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 83)

TACTICS

During Combat The destrachans delight in causing fear and pain.

Attacking in pairs, the creatures try to split up their opponents, either by stunning them with their pain harmonics or by collapsing the ceiling (see Hazard below). The destrachans prefer to use their destructive harmonics, but once a foe is stunned or immobile, they enjoy attacking with their claws and bites.

Morale The destrachans are cowardly, and an injured destrachan (one that has taken 20 or more points of damage) backs away from combat, only to return when it hears cries of pain or suffering again. If two of the destrachans are slain, the survivors attempt to retreat to area D9. If cornered, they fight to the death.

Hazard: The damage caused by the destrachans' destructive harmonics has weakened the ceiling in this chamber. A major impact (such as an area effect weapon or a direct attack) that delivers 25 points of damage or

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more to the ceiling (beyond the stone's Hardness of 8) has a 25% chance of causing a collapse (*Core Rulebook* 415). The destrachans know this and relish the possibility.

DII. THE FALL OF SOBS

Water cascades from narrow openings in the walls down a series of stone ledges or steps, each some twenty feet or so apart. One hundred feet below, at the bottom of the steps, the swirling waters drain into a deep black hole.

The floors are slippery but require no Acrobatics check to cross. Simple, narrow steps carved in the sides of the ledges can be traversed with a DC 5 Climb check. The hole at the bottom of the steps is a shaft leading to area E1 some 100 feet below. Again, narrow stone steps have been carved into the walls of the shaft, but the flow of water is so great that a DC 10 Acrobatics or Climb check is required to descend safely. Anyone passing through the hole triggers a mental *alarm* spell cast by the naga Mei in area E2.

EI. HALL OF SCREAMS (CR II)

The long stair leads to a flooded cavern devoted to anguish and madness. Rusted iron cages hang from stone pillars and screams of pain and anguish echo throughout the chamber.

The shaft from area D11 ends in the west of this chamber. The cavern's floor is flooded to a depth of just over 1 foot, and is treated as a shallow bog for the purposes of movement (*Core Rulebook* 427). Two of Munasukaru's sons have constructed a living garden of pain in their lair, delighting in inflicting mental and physical suffering on the living. Each of the cages holds a human, captured long ago in the forest above. The prisoners are pale from lack of sunlight, malnourished, and quite insane after years of torture. Even if freed, the prisoners are utterly unable to interact with the world or even care for themselves, unless cured. *Greater restoration*, *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* immediately cures a person of all insanity.

A hole in the floor in the southeast portion of the cavern drops 20 feet to area E2. Anyone passing through the hole triggers a mental *alarm* spell cast by the naga Yasu in area E2.

Creatures: Two ja noi oni, lesser spawn of Munasukaru, named Jirou and Saburo lurk in this chamber, tormenting their prisoners. Like their brother Ichirou (area C11), Jirou and Saburo were scarred both physically and mentally by their upbringing, but now wear their disfigurements as badges of honor.

JIROU AND SABURO, SPAWN OF MUNASUKARU (2) CR 9
XP 6,400 each

hp 123 (see page 42)

TACTICS

Before Combat Jirou and Saburo each cast *bull's strength* and *magic weapon* if alerted to the presence of intruders.

During Combat The brothers rage and attempt to flank foes with one another.

Morale When reduced to 40 hit points or fewer, or if one of them is slain, the other flees to their sisters' lair in area E2 to make a final stand.

E2. THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY SUFFERING (CR II)

The contaminated waters flooding this cavern lap against natural stone walls and pillars, every inch of which are covered with dreadful carvings and hung with burnt and mummified aranea, hobgoblin, and human corpses.

The charred and mummified remains of scores of victims litter the cavern. The cavern's floor is flooded to a depth of 4 feet and strewn with rotting body parts from the corpses on the walls. The entire cavern is treated as a deep bog for the purposes of movement (*Core Rulebook* 427).

Munasukaru's two daughters have created an homage to mental anguish and terror, decorating their lair in their own unique styles. In deference to her mother's insane devotions, Mei has decorated her half of the lair with carvings of dislocations and dismemberings, while the subtler Yasu prefers to decorate her half of the lair with images of victims having their minds and internal organs devoured. So disturbing are these vile carvings that the PCs must make a DC 10 Will save when first confronted with the images or be sickened for 1d3 hours.

To the east, a hole in the floor drops 30 feet to area E3.

Creatures: Munasukaru's beloved daughters, the wormlike spirit nagas Mei and Yasu, live in this cavern, guarding the entrance to their mother's sanctum. The sisters cast *alarm* spells in areas D11 and E1 every day; thus, they are likely to be aware of the PCs' intrusion into their lair, and use Stealth to hide beneath the water to take the PCs by surprise. The nagas can swim through the flooded cavern with ease, and creatures in the water do not have cover against the nagas' underwater attacks.

MEI, FIRST DAUGHTER OF MUNASUKARU CR 9
XP 6,400

Female spirit naga (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 213)

AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 22 (+5 Dex, +9 natural, +4 shield, -1 size)

hp 95

OFFENSE

Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +10)
3rd (5/day)—*dispel magic*, *fireball* (DC 16)

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- 2nd (7/day)—*mirror image*, *scorching ray*, *silence* (DC 15)
 1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *cure light wounds*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *shocking grasp*
 o (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 13), *ghost sound* (DC 13), *mage hand*, *ray of frost*, *resistance*, *virtue*

TACTICS

Before Combat If alerted by her *alarm* spell, Mei casts *shield* and *mirror image*.

During Combat Far more haughty than her sister Yasu, Mei attacks using brute force, throwing her most powerful spells into combat, even if her sister would be caught in the effect. She delights in casting destructive *fireballs*, and singles out one enemy, preferably a spellcaster, to target with her magic.

Morale Cowardly and in love with her own skin, Mei retreats every time she takes 20 or more points of damage. She casts *cure light wounds* on herself before stealthily returning to attack again with surprise. As Munasukaru's favorite daughter, Mei knows that she cannot fail her mother, and fights to the death.

YASU, SECOND DAUGHTER OF MUNASUKARU CR 9

XP 6,400

Female spirit naga (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 213)

AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 22 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)

hp 95

OFFENSE

Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +10)

3rd (5/day)—*bestow curse* (DC 16), *summon monster III*

2nd (7/day)—*acid arrow*, *blur*, *hideous laughter* (DC 15)

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *cure light wounds*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 14)

o (at will)—*bleed* (DC 13), *flare* (DC 13), *ghost sound* (DC 13), *guidance*, *mage hand*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 13)

TACTICS

Before Combat If alerted by her *alarm* spell, Yasu casts *blur* and *mage armor*.

During Combat Yasu casts *summon monster III* to summon a fiendish constrictor snake to aid her in combat. She uses her charming gaze as much as possible to remove troublesome spellcasters from the fray and casts spells upon remaining opponents.

Morale As cowardly as her sister, Yasu retreats every time she takes 20 or more points of damage. She casts *cure light wounds* on herself before stealthily returning to attack with her spells once more. Like Mei, Yasu knows that retreat is not an option, and fights to the death.

Treasure: Mei wears a magnificent inlaid platinum-and-jade pendant of great size worth 800 gp. In addition, a DC 10 Perception check finds three porcelain pots just underneath the surface of the water in the north of the cavern, containing a carved censer with a gold edge worth 200 gp, a pair of silver armbands worth 50 gp, a *swan boat feather token*, and 1,012 gp.

E3. THE CELEBRATION OF CHAINS (CR II)

Thick chains crisscross this chamber, attached to the walls and hanging from the ceiling, their links clinking in the fall of water from the shaft above.

The thick web of chains impedes movement through the room, made even more slippery by the constant rain of water dripping from cracks in the ceiling. A creature can walk through the room with a successful DC 12 Acrobatics check, or fly through the chains with a DC 15 Fly check. Alternatively, a creature can climb among the slippery chains with a DC 10 Climb check. Failure at any of these checks results in the creature being entangled for 1 round. The water eventually drains from the room through numerous cracks in the floor.



MEI

Creatures: Munasukaru's major-domo and the last of her Chosen—Ochiyo the Messenger—spends her days in this chamber when not serving her mistress. If the PCs have made it this far, Munasukaru realizes that she has underestimated these strangers and orders Ochiyo to instead appeal to their more base feelings. When the PCs enter the room, Ochiyo—in human form—kowtows to them and addresses them as an ambassador with a traditional Tian greeting (recognizable as such with a DC 20 Diplomacy check). The ogre mage then explains that the PCs are most welcome in these lands, but that what occurs in the House of Withered Blossoms is none of their concern. Should the PCs continue to interfere, the living god Munasukaru will see to it that they die, in a variety of particularly unpleasant ways.

Ochiyo adds that if the PCs were to turn their backs on what does not concern them and return to the Forest of Spirits, all their earthly pleasures will be indulged when the storm breaks across Minkai and the rest of Tian Xia. The living goddess offers this as her word of honor, and will never betray that word. Ochiyo then goes on to describe in explicit detail exactly what kind of pleasures the Five Storms intend to indulge in within their earthly garden of paradise. If the PCs refuse to leave, or attack, Ochiyo assumes her normal form and attacks, rebuking them for refusing such a generous reward.

In addition to Ochiyo, two advanced kytons lurk among the hanging chains. Longtime allies of the oni of the Five Storms, the kytons remained in the House of Withered Blossoms when the oni escaped, relishing Munasukaru's suffering from her abandonment and indulging in their own sadistic pleasures.

OCHIYO THE MESSENGER, MUNASUKARU'S CHOSEN CR 9
XP 6,400

hp 113 (see page 43)

TACTICS

During Combat Ochiyo flies through the chains, using *invisibility* and *darkness* to surprise or flank enemies with the kytons. She challenges the PC who refused her offer, targeting her attacks and spells at that person, unless faced with a greater threat.

Morale If reduced to 50 hit points or fewer, Ochiyo retreats in *gaseous form* to area E7 to join her living goddess. Once at Munasukaru's side, she fights to the death.

ADVANCED KYTONS (2) CR 7
XP 3,200 each

hp 76 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 185, 294)

TACTICS

During Combat The kytons are unhindered by the chains in the room, climbing through them at their normal speed without the need for Climb checks. They use their dancing chains ability to attack any opponents moving through the chains.

Morale The kytons fight until killed.

NPC RELATIONSHIPS

If you're using the relationship rules presented in the *Jade Regent Player's Guide*, the PCs have the opportunity during this adventure to further increase their Relationship Scores with the significant NPCs traveling with them. The PCs can increase their Relationship Scores with the following NPCs by the listed amount for taking the following actions or completing the following tasks.

Ameiko Kaijitsu: impressing Prince Batsaikhar enough to receive at least three gifts during his feasts: +1 for each gift; giving Ameiko the morin khuur won at the Feast of the Ancients: +1; learning about Anamurumon in the House of Withered Blossoms: +1

Koya Mvashti: taking Koya to explore the city of Ordu-Aganhei: +1; resetting Shunkichi's waymarker: +1; showing Koya the Five Storms' library (area E5): +1

Sandru Vhiski: taking Sandru to Prince Batsaikhar's five feasts to sample new foods: +1; giving Sandru the +1 scimitar won at the Feast of the Honored Visitors: +1; getting the caravan through the Forest of Spirits without losing a single wagon: +1

Shalelu Andosana: giving Shalelu the *efficient quiver* won at the Feast of Three: +1; killing the Swine Shogun (area B12): +1; recovering Akumi's bonsai tree (area D7): +1

E4. HALL OF HANGING GIBBETS (CR II)

A double row of columns runs down the center of this broad chamber. Iron gibbets hang from chains along the walls, limp forms visible through the bars of the cages.

Creatures: Only half of the gibbets still hold living prisoners (N human commoners 1); the rest have long since succumbed to torture and disease contracted from their captors, four hobgoblin lepers who torment their caged victims while they guard against intruders.

LEPERS (4) CR 7
XP 3,200 each

hp 82 each (see page 40)

TACTICS

During Combat The lepers fearlessly engage opponents in melee, confident that their living goddess will save them if they fall in battle defending her.

Morale In the divine temple of their living goddess, the hobgoblins fight to death in honor of Munasukaru.

Story Award: Freeing the eight surviving prisoners should be an emotional moment, but nothing compared to seeing their faces as they see daylight for the first time in months,

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or even years. If the PCs release the prisoners and take them to the surface, award them 12,800 XP as the freed humans fall to the ground sobbing and laughing at the sky in joy.

E5. LIBRARY OF LOST LORE

Long shelves filled with books and scrolls line the walls of this dusty chamber. A score of carved figures scowl down on the room from the walls above the shelves. Each of the images has been defaced, but they are still clearly recognizable as oni.

Treasure: This library details the history of the kami and oni of the Forest of Spirits. The collection includes carved stone tablets, calligraphic writings on bone and tortoise shell, rice paper journals with bamboo covers, silk scrolls scores of yards long, and countless other tomes, some of huge size. The entire library would fill multiple carts or wagons. Scattered among the shelves are a green jade plaque set in gold worth 1,300 gp, a pair of antique gold lions worth 3,500 gp, and a magnificent hinged silver bracelet set with turquoise and emeralds worth 6,100 gp.

E6. GUARDROOM (CR 12)

Detailed carvings and paintings of a powerful female oni decorate the walls of this otherwise simple room. Twenty feet high, the images loom over the chamber, a tribute to monstrous domination.

The illustrations on the walls depict the oni Munasukaru, lovingly rendered by her most loyal adherents, the Sisters of the Broken Path.

Creatures: Munasukaru's elite force of personal bodyguards, four Sisters of the Broken Path, guard their mistress's sanctum. They allow no one to disturb their living "goddess," attacking anyone who enters the room.

SISTERS OF THE BROKEN PATH (4) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 80 each (see page 41)

TACTICS

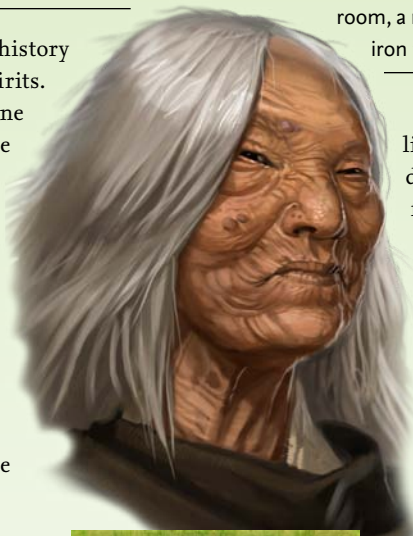
Before Combat The Sisters drink their *potions of blur*.

During Combat The monks work together to flank opponents, using their nunchaku to disarm opponents. They use flurry of blows to attack, and use their steal *ki* and life funnel abilities against foes when possible.

Morale Entrusted with Munasukaru's life, the monks fight to the death.

E7. MUNASUKARU'S SANCTUM (CR 13)

This repulsive chamber is a charnel house of death and decay, its glowering walls a vision of madness, sin, and unsated lusts. Countless figures are carved into the walls, glaring, pleading, and screaming in silence. But on closer inspection, the carved figures are revealed to be the rotting corpses of araneas, humans, hobgoblins, and more impaled on the walls, their anguished features frozen at the moment of death. To the east, a wide, open pit gapes in the floor. At the opposite end of the room, a ragged spur of stone supports a bloodstained iron frame above a bed of nails.



MUNASUKARU

A 20-foot-wide circular stone doorway lies at the bottom of the open pit 30 feet down, surrounded by a dozen golden figurines. Contorted humanoid faces and limbs lie frozen in stone within the doorway. This was the kimon, the demon gate created by Anamurumon to allow the Five Storms to escape the House of Withered Blossoms. The portal is now sealed and inactive, but it still radiates faint primal conjuration magic (determined with a DC 25 Knowledge [arcana] check). Characters studying the portal and making a DC 30 Spellcraft check understand that this is clearly the violent remains of a magic portal somehow powered by the souls of those trapped within it, and that it provided the oni a means to escape their imprisonment.

Creatures: The broken and mutilated body of an aranea hangs partially filleted on the iron frame in the west of the room. Munasukaru has made the aranea pay for Akinosa's continual insults, and has done so for a long, long time, keeping the creature alive with magic so she can inflict repeated tortures on it. The aranea is staggered, with 2 hit points remaining. It is in its hybrid form, shackled to the frame with tight iron bonds (hardness 10, hp 10, Break DC 26).

When the PCs first enter Munasukaru's sanctum, the oni is in her human form—a wrinkled, ancient Tian woman—next to the captive aranea. She cackles as the PCs enter, tearing off a strip of the captive aranea's skin and noisily smacking her lips as she eats it. Lost in her madness, Munasukaru ignores the PCs, focused on toying with her captive until the PCs attack her or interfere with her. At that point, she resumes her oni form and attacks.

MUNASUKARU CR 13

XP 25,600

hp 178 (see page 58)



Treasure: At the foot of the mangled aranea are 6 *potions of cure serious wounds* that Munasukaru has been using to keep him alive. The 12 golden figurines arranged around the kimon at the bottom of the pit depict the figures of the Tian zodiac, and are each worth 100 gp.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With Munasukaru slain and the discovery of the kimon, the kami are no longer barred from entering the House of Withered Blossoms. When the PCs exit the pagoda, the kami are waiting for them, eager to learn what they discovered. If the PCs did not learn all of the information in the pagoda about the Five Storms, the curious kami who soon begin exploring the ancient prison discover those clues and share them with the PCs. Now that they have learned more about the Five Storms and their leader Anamurumon, the PCs might wish to use methods such as *scrying* to gather even more information. Unfortunately, both Anamurumon and the Jade Regent are shielded by the wards protecting the Imperial Palace in Kasai, and at this point, such attempts fail automatically.

If the PCs rescued Akumi's bonsai, the diminutive kami is overjoyed. Before merging with his ward, Akumi allows the PCs to take the bonsai with them if they promise to

take good care of the little tree. If one of the PCs is a lawful neutral spellcaster and the PCs helped Shunkichi earlier in the adventure, the shikigami kami offers to serve as that character's familiar. The character must be lawful neutral, have the Improved Familiar feat, and be an arcane caster of at least 7th level to take Shunkichi as a familiar. As a familiar, Shunkichi treats his master as his ward.

Miyaro offers to guide the PCs through rest of the Forest of Spirits and into Minkai. She believes that rebellion is coming to Minkai, but that while many Minkaians might wish to see the Jade Regent gone, those opposed to his rule have no strong leadership, and many factions squabble among themselves. Miyaro tells the PCs that they will emerge from the Forest of Spirits in a rural area in northern Minkai, where a large group of ronin are said to have retreated to. These dishonored ronin, it is said, are ready to rebel against the Jade Regent, but they cannot do so alone. If the PCs can find the leader of the ronin, a man named Hirabashi Jiro, and tell him what they have learned in the House of Withered Blossoms, they might gain a powerful ally in their future struggle against the Jade Regent. The PCs' meeting with Hirabashi Jiro, and with other factions that can help them retake Minkai, is the focus of the next installment of the Jade Regent Adventure Path, "Tide of Honor."