



Legend of the Five Rings™

The Book of the Shadowlands™

The Writings of Kuni Mokuna



Translated by Cris Dornaus and Rob Van

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How to Use this Book

The Writings of Kuni Mokuna is the first in our series of books designed specifically for the *L5R RPG* Game Master. As this series progresses, GMs will be able to collect the most treasured volumes of lore in Rokugan; or in this case, one of its most reviled and despised.

As you read on, you will find a collection of pages (compiled by Kuni Yori and translated by our own valiant Cris and Rob), that contain the most complete collection of information ever written on the Shadowlands.

All game information, GM tips, rules and stats are in the sidebars, or "off the page." Descriptions can be found on the "pages", within Mokuna's writings. You will also find a few "notes" from Kuni Yori here and there with updates on some of the "antiquated information."

We've done our best to keep related information together to make referencing easy, and (in case you get lost in Mokuna's ramblings), there's an index at the back of this book for your convenience.

In his lifetime, Kuni Mokuna was considered a sadistic, half-mad menace whose only loyalties lay in his twisted experiments. The daimyo of the Kuni family, Mokuna stepped down a few weeks into his tenure in favor of a younger cousin. He then devoted the next forty years of his life to intense study and experimentation, the details of which are used to frighten children at night. We have all heard the tales of his bloody butchering of foul Shadowlands creatures, of apprentices driven mad, of dark rituals to invoke spirits whose very names are abominations before nature, and of plotting the overthrow of the Hantei dynasty at the hands of our eternal enemy, Fu Leng. The gruesome contents of his workshop - exposed after his untimely disappearance - have fueled his vicious reputation, and today, a scant eighty years later, he is reviled as the most infamous shugenja since Juchiban himself.

What claptrap.

Those who understand the Kuni family and the Kuni's duty to the Empire see Mokuna in a much different light. He was a man who sacrificed everything - his power, his reputation, perhaps even his soul - to further the cause of Rokugan. It is true that he spent many of his days in the Shadowlands. It is also true that he studied certain methods for summoning and controlling the fearsome oni. He did indeed touch the dead flesh of his subjects, performing dissections and experiments that make most people shudder in revulsion. He did all of these things in the name of knowledge - in an effort to uncover and catalogue as many of the strengths, weaknesses and special abilities of our unholy foes as he could. His insight has since saved the lives of countless samurai who have journeyed into the Dark Lord's Realm and led to the destruction of hundreds of feared

About the Author

Shadowlands creatures. What is the cost of a single man's good name compared to that?

Mokuna doubtless realized early on that a life of family politicking was not for him. His resignation as daimyo sent ripples of shock through the courts of Rokugan, adding to his already dubious reputation. But by severing himself from the petty intrigues of diplomacy, he was able to devote his every waking hour toward uncovering the truth about the Shadowlands. He accompanied countless patrols of Crab scouts into Fu Leng's realm, recording everything he saw and heard. He participated in the deaths of no less than seven named oni, each confrontation revealing more about their physiology and manner. He spent five years in the company of numerous rattling packs, both inside and outside Rokugan's borders. His discussions with them allowed us to finally strike the Nezumi from the list of Fu Leng's servitors. He held secret contact with certain goblin tribes, and made countless inroads into their twisted society - more than any Rokugani before or since. None of our enemies' secrets were safe from his keen eye, and he catalogued nearly everything he discovered.

Certainly, his methodology was unconventional, even dangerous. No one enters the Shadowlands without some degree of risk, and Mokuna took on more than his share in his lifetime. He had to live near the southern border, in the no man's land where none but the boldest ever entered. The subjects of his studies could very easily have found him there - and yet he chose to remain, regardless of the consequences. He would often observe individual oni for days, remaining hidden behind powerful magics to watch their habits and lifecycle. To kill a monster is one form of courage; to let it live an entirely different sort, which few choose to recognize or acknowledge. He convinced no small number of Kuni oni hunters to bring their prey live to him for dissection - a prospect that would chill the mightiest samurai's blood. Just imagine binding an Oni no Ugulu, then slicing it open with a surgeon's knife to view the still-functioning organs. What Lion bushi or Scorpion spy could summon the courage for such a task? It is rumored he even attempted to catalogue every breed of oni in the Shadowlands, from the smallest pest to the most hideous monstrosity. Madness? Perhaps. But does not true courage hold madness at its heart?

Mokuna's bibliographic pursuits were somewhat quieter, but no less

Kuni Mokuna disappeared approximately eighty years before the beginning of the Scorpion Clan Coup. Kuni Yori - the book's editor - is Mokuna's great-great grandson and heir to his ancestor's extensive library. This volume was prepared only after careful consultation of that library and comparison with standing notes already in the Kuni family's possession. There can be no doubt that the words herein are Mokuna's and Mokuna's alone.

The Dark Lord's Name

Throughout Rokugan, all children are taught never to mention the name of Hantei's dark brother.

Obviously, Mokuna never listened to his parents when he was a child.

All throughout this document, Mokuna refers to the Dark Lord by name. Either he did not believe the folk tales regarding such utterances, or he tested the adage and found it to be false.

As he was wont to do,

However, among most of the population of Rokugan, speaking the Dark Lord's name is strictly forbidden. This is another reason why shugenja are forbidden - by Imperial decree - to read Mokuna's journals.

In truth, "Fu Leng" not the Dark Lord's name, it is only an epithet. It is rumored that Fu Leng's true name is secreted away in the twelve Black Scrolls guarded by the Scorpion Clan.

important. He held regular correspondence with the Phoenix and Dragon Clans, requesting their insight on super-natural matters. Despite the great distance between our lands and theirs, he was able to procure copies of many vital texts, revealing the secret names and untold weaknesses of numerous Shadowlands denizens. Furthermore, he sent apprentices to scour the hidden reaches of the Empire for ancient tomes and manuals. True, some texts delved into knowledge forbidden by the Emperor and detailed tainted rites and incantations unseen since the days of Juchiban. But by acquiring these works and placing them under benevolent Kuni care, he ensured that they would never be used to harm the Emerald Empire. Indeed, it is only by studying them so intently that Mokuna developed the means to counter their magic, providing numerous weapons with which to face our unholy foes. One shudders to think how devastating they may have been otherwise.

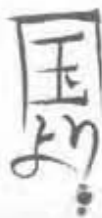
Mokuna remained energetic and enthusiastic throughout the sixty-three years of his life, which allowed him to compile as much data as he did. Many have condemned such vigor as a sign of the Taint, arguing that his longevity could only arise through unholy methods. Again, these critics ignore the ends while vilifying the means and conveniently dismiss the results his lengthy years produced. Would the forces of evil be so self destructive as to prolong the life of their greatest enemy? I think not. Indeed, the fact that he vanished without a trace midway through his sixty-fourth year suggests that the Shadowlands finally realized how dangerous he was and abducted him before he could uncover even more of their unspeakable secrets. And if this was not the case - if his disappearance was due to Rokugani forces wishing to "purge" the Empire of a threat - then why would they have left his entire library untouched amid the gore and ichor of his quarters?

But I am not asking you to judge this man or his work based on my word alone. What you hold in your hands is the culmination

of Kuni Mokuna's study: the greatest single treatise on the Shadowlands in recorded history. It contains detailed information on the habits, abilities and weaknesses of the most fearsome creatures to walk the earth. Oni, trolls, the reanimated corpses of our own comrades - all are exposed and recounted for the benefit of those who would do battle with them. The secrets of numerous odious species - the goblins, the ogres, even the misunderstood rattlings - can be found here, waiting for any samurai brave enough to challenge their might. None of it would be known were it not for the lonely efforts of this unjustly reviled man. Knowledge is power and no power used in defense of the Son of Heaven could possibly be evil.

So as you read through these pages and gain insight into the denizens described therein, say a prayer of thanks that Mokuna chose to sacrifice as much as he did. For what you gain was earned on his venerable back; your wisdom cost the untold hardships of a truly legendary shugenja. Read this text if you dare, and see if you can bring yourself to condemn him.

Kuni Yori,
family daimyo



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Chapter 1:

The Shadowlands

All of Rokugan has heard of the Shadowlands. The legend of the Fall of Fu Leng has been told countless times, changing slightly with each retelling. Elders tell chilling stories to wide-eyed children of the monsters of the Dark Lord's Realm, who will punish them if they misbehave. Sensei ignite the fire of battle in their students with descriptions of the evil foes that lurk there. There are poems and songs, woodcuts and paintings that portray dead, desolate landscapes and grotesque figures with stylized forms and traditional techniques.

These popular tales and depictions spring mostly from hearsay and legend. They are distorted, exaggerated, misinterpreted, inaccurate and twisted by the conventions of society and popular concept. I have seen Crane wall-hangings that portray oni as ridiculous figures in impeccable kimonos, surrounded by perfectly swirling smoke and flame. I have seen ogres and goblins drawn in laughable dramatic poses, their features comical masks of wickedness. I once came upon a haiku which aptly illustrated the nature of these meditations:

Dark demon oni

Eyes of flame and lashing tongues

Test of heart's courage

Indeed. One may speculate that this refers to Oni no Akuma, one of the fiercest and most powerful Oni Lords. This creature, in reality, is a deadly being with elongated, clutching arms tipped with razor-sharp claws. Its flesh is marred and leathery, its three malevolent eyes strike terror into the soul. Its three serpentine tongues flail about in frenzy, dripping foul mucus

that burns through flesh and metal. I suppose you could say it is a... test of heart's courage. But you will forgive me if I do not think of the beast in such sedate terms.



My Clan has seen the true horrors of the Shadowlands. My family has devoted itself to exploring the darkest secrets hidden there. Of the general population of Rokugan were exposed to what we face every day, their childish rhymes would melt into hideous nightmares.

The realities of this place are not for the faint of heart, nor weak of spirit. I suppose it is best for the delicate nobles and superstitious peasants to remain ignorant of the disturbing truth. Perhaps they should be left to their brightly-patterned pictures and carefully sculpted words, lest harsh reality crack their minds beyond repair.

But Fu Leng is a force that cannot be ignored, nor hidden behind pretty lies. Such an adversary must be exposed, studied, understood; only through knowledge and familiarity can we ever hope to drive him from our world. As a general pores over the history of an opponent's strategy, so must we seek to unravel the workings of our adversary's mind, realm and minions. This compendium is a collection of the knowledge that I and my fellow Kuni have worked diligently to acquire. I do not attempt to claim that all the secrets of the Shadowlands are contained within, nor that we have deciphered all of its mysteries. There are still many, many questions and unknown variables to explore, and we must continue to seek out the answers until Fu Leng is defeated.

What we have learned is here, and I believe this information will be invaluable to any who dare venture into Fu Leng's realm. Heed the warnings within, take the advice offered, and learn well the lessons I teach. The Shadowlands is a place of fear, death and pain. Armed with this meager enlightenment, you may have a chance of surviving.

Kuni Mokuna



The Demon Realm

Jigoku is the dreadful underworld of Rokugan, where – it is speculated – the oni and other foulness of the Shadowlands originates. It is *not* the afterworld where “evil mortal souls” are banished.

More information on *Jigoku* and its place in the Celestial Order will be presented in *Walking the Way*, the shugenja sourcebook.

Adventure Hook

It's rumored that diamonds are plentiful in the southern Shadowlands. A shugenja implores the party to venture into the Shadowlands to collect the gems.

For an added twist, have the successful party return with their treasure, only to find that the shugenja is intending to use the diamonds – and them – in a dark *maho* ritual.

*This land once handsome
Now nurses black, weeping wounds
Where shadows breed pain
— Hiruma Kaso*

The History and Origins of the Shadowlands

The Crane storytellers speak of Hantei's evil brother, Fu Leng, who fell to earth far to the south after being cut from the belly of his father. The force of his impact created a deep pit that sank down with him into the nightmare realm of *Jigoku* — the Demon World. There, he became twisted with hate, as foul spirits whispered encouragement and swore their allegiance to his cause. The evil of his presence spread out from the pit where he lurked, corrupting the countryside into inhospitable wasteland. Trees and plants withered and died, or twisted into carnivorous menaces. Clear, pure water turned foul and clouded with rancid pollutants. The air filled with the stench of decay and infection. The warming light of the sun was reduced to a pale, watery illumination that struggled to penetrate the miasma of noxious vapors and thick, cloying fogs. The birds and beasts that resided there were affected as well. Most simply died — their bodies unable to survive the torturous changes. Others lived on, warped into forms both malicious and deadly.

While the poets decorate the story with beautiful words and fabricated embellishments, the tale appears to be built upon a core of truth. It is obvious that some kind of blight has created the desolate region of the Shadowlands, one which grows stronger the further south one proceeds. The *Nezumi* — who claim to be native to the area — have their own history that closely parallels the Rokugani myth. Elements of the story have been confirmed by various Shadowlands creatures I have interviewed — although it should be said that none of these beings can be trusted to tell the truth. All accounts maintain that the region was once lush and green, but that the land, the living things, the very air itself was poisoned by the emanations from the Dark Lord's Festering Pit. Regardless of its origins, no one can doubt the corrupting presence that pervades the

region. A pall of unease infuses every moment spent there, and every detail reeks of the unholy. Even fires do not burn naturally — sputtering and hissing with a sickly green light — and none of the wood or other fuel in the Shadowlands will catch. Those who can manage to sleep within its boundaries are plagued with vivid nightmares that leave them shaken and drenched with clammy sweat.

Regions of The Shadowlands

The dark veil of Fu Leng's corruption is cast wide, and creeps ever further as each day passes. As the Dark Lord's evil consumes the landscape, it leaves behind a twisted, ruined mockery of what was once Rokugan's pastoral countryside. Those who have gazed across the Kuni Wastes from atop the Kaiu wall have seen but the barest edge of the landscape of Fu Leng's domain. Beyond the desolate plains, littered with rubble and the occasional lonely skeleton of a dead tree, lie many different regions — each more inhospitable than the last.

Forests that were once lush and green have been left dead and desiccated. Only the most stalwart of trees remain standing, and they have withered and blackened, their branches clutching at the gray skies like charred claws. The uneven ground is littered with fallen logs that slowly rot. These decaying husks often obstruct travel and are favored as nests by some of the Shadowlands' most bothersome creatures. I recall a case where I had accompanied a party of Oni Hunters in search of suitable specimens. We passed through one such forest, where the wind moaned through the branches like an unclean spirit. One of the young samurai, who had grown bored by the desolate landscape, leapt upon a fallen log, walking along it like a bridge.

He reached a weakened spot where the bark had rotted — then his foot broke through to the knee, leaving him struggling to dislodge it. Within seconds, his frustrated grunts had turned into a scream of panic. I stepped closer, intrigued. He frantically urged his companions to help him, babbling incoherently about stinging and burning and horrible pain. With the combined strength of three men they were able to pull him free; when his leg emerged from the husk of the dead tree, it was wrapped in what appeared to be black silk. Upon exposure to the light, however, this covering broke apart into several serpentine creatures that slithered away once more into the dark shadows of their nest. The cloth of the samurai's



hakama had been eaten away, and where the creatures had touched his flesh and there were long, strip-like welts which had already begun to fester.

He was fortunate that I had packed my balms and tinctures with me for the journey. He limped for the rest of the outing, in terrible burning pain, which he grimly suppressed. Had I not applied the proper remedies, he would have lost the leg.

We all learned something that day. I had discovered a new species of Shadowlands horror, and they had learned never to walk on fallen logs.

Vast swamps also dot the Shadowlands where the land has sunk and fetid water has seeped up through the earth. The landscape here is treacherous, with sucking quicksand and deep mud pools; many of Fu Leng's minions find the environment pleasing. Visibility in the swamplands is usually limited, for noxious fogs and mists swirl around the skeletal trees and sinking rocks. Foul emissions bubble up from the mire, and sounds are strangely

distorted by the clinging atmosphere. This effect can be quite disorienting, as cries and footsteps are muffled or amplified, ricocheting in eerie echoes. Everywhere the stench of rot and decay hangs thick, and the humid, oppressive atmosphere leaves travelers coated with a grimy sheen of sweat and muck.

The arid desert regions near my ancestral homelands stand in stark contrast to these forests and bogs. Here the soil is composed of fine, ever-sifting grains. Sinuous dunes are sculpted by the winds that howl through those lonely places, and it is difficult to get steady footholds in the hissing sands. In places, parched and cracking hardpan rock is exposed, and there are often hidden caverns carved out from beneath the rock. Numerous foul creatures reside in these caverns, waiting for the unwary to troop by overhead. Some samurai tell of flat, deceptively traversable rock planes that suddenly give way beneath one's feet, opening into deep subterranean pits full of horrifying monstrosities.






On places, great gaping canyons have been carved into the sand, where jutting spires of rock reach up to the sky like bony fingers. These rocky areas are riddled with snaking passages and caverns, some of which may be connected to the sandy pits found elsewhere.

On the south, the Shadowlands meet the Sea of Amaterasu. Along these crumbling shores the land is blackened and rugged, and the charred peaks duck in and out of thick clouds. The waves that roil along the jagged beaches are tinged black with soot, and the surface of the water glistens with a sickly sheen of greasy film. Sailors have sometimes been dragged off course into these foul waters; survivors claim to have seen huge, horrible beasts lurking below the surface.

Along this coast the earth rumbles and groans, often shifting in sudden violent spasms. Great exhalations of scalding gases and molten rock well up from glowing fissures, cooling and settling to form new ridges and mountains. Volcanos belch huge clouds of black ash into the seething sky. Often, the glow of molten rock can be seen from the Crab outposts, bathing the landscape in a hellish glow. Some of the few who have traveled here claim that diamonds litter the crusty ground like scattered raindrops.

The internal waters of the Shadowlands are no less dangerous than its coast. The



River of the Last Stand, flowing along the southern side of the Kain Wall, eventually splits and angles down into the depths of Fu Leng's Realm. The waters turn dark and stagnant as they flow through the landscape and vague shapes wriggle below the murky surface. Further downstream, the river forks once more, splitting into the Black Finger River and the River of the Dark Moon. These foul waterways twist their way through the most malignant regions of the Shadowlands. It is said that the River of the Dark Moon was named so because the waters are so murky and purulent that the moon's reflection is tinted a dark blood red. The treacherous banks of the fitful Black Finger River border the extent of our exploration into the center of the Shadowlands. The Taint is so strong here that anyone who dares to cross the torrent is driven mad, throwing themselves into the rushing waters to instant death. Until we can devise a way to shield ourselves from the Taint more effectively, the deepest reaches of the Shadowlands beyond the Black Finger River will remain an unexplored enigma.

One can only speculate what Fu Leng's lair itself is like. A few intrepid Nezumi have ventured into those dark lands, but they do not speak of what they have seen. Perhaps the fallen god has commanded his minions to build him a great fortress. Perhaps he lurks in the filth and



squalor that so many of his minions prefer. Or perhaps he simply floats in the deep, swirling miasma of Jigoku, evil spirits flitting about him like courtiers. One thing is certain, though — he is biding his time, gathering power and knowledge. He is learning about our ways, sharpening his skills, and waiting until he is strong enough to make another attempt to destroy us. If we can discover a way to explore the Festering Pit, we may be able to gather valuable information that can be used to defeat him. In the meantime, we travel as far as we dare, gleaning all we can from our experiences.

Even the southernmost Crab lands have not been spared his defiling touch. The inhospitable region just west of the Kain Wall that my family calls home is known now as the Kuni Wastes. Once it was green and healthy countryside, but the forces of darkness encroached upon it some two hundred years ago. We could have surrendered the land to the Dark Lord's foul Taint, but the Kuni would not submit. Instead, my ancestors turned their knowledge towards undoing his work. With their hard-earned sacrifices, they were able to spearhead the Crab's greatest offensive against the Shadowlands: the reclaiming of the Kuni lands. Once the Shadowlands denizens had been dealt with, my kin were able to purge the earth of the Dark Lord's poison, driving out the kansen that infested it with their powerful magics. Despite that, and despite the fact that my kin and I now occupy our ancestral home, the area remains barren and desolate. Nothing will grow here, perhaps ever again. But the corrupting effects of the Taint do not infect the Kuni land any longer. †

Many of my ancestors gave their lives to regain their homelands. But even such tremendous sacrifice does not guarantee success. The Hiruma, whose family castle was lost at the Battle of the Last Stand, have lost countless dozens of sons and daughters in their efforts, with no success. Hiruma castle is now a crumbling shell infested with hordes of Shadowlands creatures. A rule of squatter's rights prevails among the ruins: those who dwell there stay until they are driven out by stronger or more vicious interlopers. Crab forces have many times attempted to retake it, but the spiritual corruption and tenacity of the numerous beasts who arrive to defend it have always thrown them back. The forces of Fu Leng seem to covet the castle so much that they will gladly sacrifice themselves to see that it does not return to Crab hands. The ruins are an ever-present, bitter reminder of the fate all of Rokugan will suffer if Fu Leng and his minions are not stopped.

The majority of my work has been focused towards the occupants of the Shadowlands — the monsters and denizens which dwell within its borders. But the touch of Fu Leng stretches far beyond his living minions, into the very earth itself; that touch can kill as easily as an ogre's spear or an oni's maw. In our efforts to eradicate his unholy followers, we must not ignore the more subtle dangers he has wrought, and pay close attention to the landscape they dwell in. Tread carefully when you journey through the Shadowlands, my brethren, for every tree, rock and rolling hill hides death beneath its surface. Until the harmonies can once more flow freely across the landscape, our battle with Fu Leng will never be over.



You're Not in Kansas Anymore

Any spell cast in the Shadowlands has its TN increased by 10, reflecting the corrupted spirituality of Fu Leng's realm.

Those casting *maho* spells, however, may ignore this penalty – after all, they're paying an altogether different price ...

Magic in the Shadowlands

Magic is a necessity when facing many of the foul creatures of the Shadowlands — physical strength alone is rarely effective against one able to wield the perverted magic of Fu Leng's Realm. A group venturing into the Shadowlands without a skilled shugenja among them is foolhardy indeed. Unfortunately, even the most knowledgeable and experienced of my colleagues are not exempt from the disrupting power of the Fallen God. Magic is unpredictable and unreliable in the Shadowlands, and those attempting to command it must exercise extreme caution.

There are many different schools of magic, but the two fundamental concepts of creating magical effects are harmonizing one's chi with the elements and summoning the aid of kami, the invisible spirits that inhabit everything in nature. Within the Shadowlands, however, the elements do not function properly, and therefore cannot be manipulated with any certainty. Shugenja must work harder to contact and align with the elemental forces, and often they find that the energies flowing through the Dark Realm have become twisted and corrupt. A shugenja attempting this type of magic risks being exposed to the Shadowlands corruption on an internal, spiritual level. Often, a tainted shugenja does not so much bear the obvious physical signs of the Taint as the behavioral aberrations of the Shadowlands madness.

Attempts to summon the aid of kami are dangerous as well. The "nature spirits" that inhabit the Shadowlands — known as the kansen — are twisted mockeries of the kami, corruption incarnate. While the kami strive to maintain the natural cycle, the kansen seek only to pervert and defile, creating chaos and disrupting balance. Some say they are corrupted kami who succumbed to the Dark Lord's evil influence. Others believe that they are malicious spirits created by Fu Leng to infect the natural world. In any case, they are not to be trusted. Kansen are cruel, perverse, and sinister. They interpret instructions broadly, always watching for ways to cause trouble. Because they reside in the Shadowlands, kansen appear more readily

to any summoning spell cast within its borders. No honorable Shugenja would create a scroll designed to summon one, but inexperienced shugenja will often summon them accidentally — bringing disaster in their wake. During perilous situations, such as combat or some other immediate threat, the appearance of a kansens could be enough to doom the shugenja and any in his companions.

There is no easy way to guard against summoning a kansens, save care and restraint in casting spells. Experience is also helpful: the more skilled a shugenja, the more likely she will avoid contact with any harmful elements.



Elemental Magic in the Shadow- lands

Because the elements are warped in the Shadowlands, a shugenja casting an elemental spell exposes himself to the Shadowlands Taint. If the shugenja fails to cast the spell, he gains a Shadowlands Point for every 5 points his roll fell short of the TN.

Example: A shugenja is casting a spell with a 20 TN. He rolls a 10, so his spell fails. In addition to failing to cast the spell, he gains 2 Shadowlands Points because his roll was 10 under his Target Number.

Summoning Kami in the Shadowlands

A shugenja rolls his Willpower against a TN equal to the level of his Shadowlands Taint times 5. This is in addition to the usual spell casting roll and does not count against the character's number of actions for the round. If the roll is successful, the Shugenja has successfully contacted the spirit plane and can make his spell-casting roll. If the shugenja fails by ten points or less, he has summoned a *kansen* instead (see sidebar, next page). If he fails by more than ten points, the shugenja is unable to cast the spell; mark off the spell as though it had been cast.

Optional: The GM can chose to make the summoning roll a secret, so the shugenja will not know whether he has summoned a *kami* or a *kansen*.

Maho and the Tsukai-Sagasu

There are those who dare to pray to the Fallen God. These foolish shugenja practice maho, the dark blood magic made infamous by the entombed sorcerer Duchiban. Because these maho-tsukai draw their power from the Dark Lord, being in the Shadowlands often gives them an advantage. Their corrupt magic is aided by the evil energies that flow there, and they are more quickly saturated by the Taint.

Maho-tsukai have more to fear than the Shadowlands Taint, and the wrath of their Dark Master. They have human enemies, as well, and I believe that these mortal men are more threat to them than their supernatural risks. Within the Kuni school there is a very small and select group of shugenja who are chosen to become tsukai-sagasu. These relentless hunters seek out those suspected of practicing maho, judge them and eliminate them. They show no mercy to those in league with Fu Leng.

The tsukai-sagasu are among the rarest of Kuni, hand-picked to perform their duties. They begin their lives at the shugenja school, learning the fundamentals of the Taint and its effects, but then, during the annual conclave of shugenja, the master tsukai-sagasu arrive to see if any of our apprentices are worthy to learn their trade. There is no glory to be found on their path, only pain, madness and death. They will pursue their prey relentlessly, shrugging off the harshest adversities in execution of their duties. They do not wish to understand the Shadowlands as other Kuni do; they only wish to destroy it, and will use any means at their disposal to do so.

I have only had one brief experience with a tsukai-sagasu. The man arrived at my doorstep, seeking me out. He learned of me and my work from some superstitious peasants who claimed that I had caused their crops to turn bad, or some other nonsense.

This was in the early years of my studies. I had heard only second-hand tales of the witch hunters, and as the grim, ragged man asked me my name, a slight thrill of fear passed through me. I gave him my name, and the sagasu looked me over from head to foot, his dark, hard eyes not missing a detail. Then, he reached into his

kimono and drew out a jade amulet. He held the small, drop-shaped stone up between us. The amulet glowed with a strange, wavering light, and at its heart, a bit of matter seemed to pulse and shiver. The sngasu's eyes never left my own.

He stood there, motionless, the jade glowing softly, for many silent moments. I was transfixed by his penetrating gaze. Finally, he tucked the talisman back into his kimono and nodded. "Stay clean," he said.

I nodded. "I intend to." Then, he turned and walked away. I never saw him again.



Oops, You've Summoned a Kansen

Summoned *kansen* will do their best to make life miserable for the summoning shugenja. They will produce the effects the shugenja desires, but in a twisted or warped way: launching a Jade Strike at a nearby rock instead of the intended target, for example, or healing injuries by grafting goblin flesh onto the wound.

Alternately, the GM may allow the spell to function as normal, but the shugenja will gain one Shadowlands point every time it takes effect (to reflect the Tainted energies he is using).

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Chapter 2:

Corruption and the Taint

The Shadowlands Taint

The sinister force that made the Shadowlands linger there still, poisoning the area with its contaminating presence. Everything that walks and breathes among it is affected (with the notable exception of the Nezumi — whom I will discuss elsewhere). All who tread in the Dark Lord's realm are bathed in his evil and most suffer horribly from the exposure. This corruption is commonly known as the Shadowlands Taint.

My fellow Kuni and I have studied its nature for centuries, and have discovered how to defend against it, slow its progress, and even heal the damage it causes — to a certain degree. It is not an easy task. The Taint affects the body, mind and spirit. It mars the flesh, maddens the brain, and poisons the soul. It blocks the natural flow of the elements through the body, enabling Fu Leng's contamination to seep into the blood and tissue. It curdles the vital fluids, causing unnatural growth and infusing the flesh with virulent cancers. It slows the flux of chi through the body, making it sluggish and polluted. Some claim that the Taint can imbue the victim with supernatural strength, but I have found that this is rarely the case. If left unchecked, the Taint can transform its victims into corrupted puppets: tattered husks under control of Fu Leng. Only by recognizing the extent to which it reaches — on every level of its victim's existence — can a shugenja hope to halt or reverse its effects.

Physical corruption can take an infinite variety of forms — all of them nightmarish. It typically starts slowly, much like a disease or other infection, then spreads with increasing rapidity. The first indications include a general feeling of imbalance and illness; nausea, vomiting and trembling spasms soon follow. Sores will often break out across the skin in malignant clusters, oozing with blood, pus, and other noxious fluids. I have seen liquid and other emissions pour from such ulcers in impossibly large amounts. One samurai brought to me for care bore a bulbous canker on his neck that pulsed and shivered with a life of its own. When I sliced it open, a swarm of horrible insects scurried out, spreading across his body to bite and sting without mercy. His screams echoed across the wastes as I and my assistants attempted to remove the creatures. But it was futile — the insects burrowed into his flesh, giving rise to a new rash of cankers as harmful as the first. His only consolation was the quick death offered by his brother's sword.

As the Taint sinks deeper into the flesh, digits may begin to fall off or fuse together. Skin becomes thin and fragile, stretched over swollen abscesses like parchment. In advanced cases, the slightest touch can cause the flesh to burst, leading raw, bleeding

Tainted Characters

muscle exposed beneath. An aura of decay will surround the tainted person, which can be smelt some distance away. Teeth abscess and begin to fall out, eyes become clouded or reddened as the vessels burst, and bits of flesh begin to wither and rot, eventually falling away. Severe cases display horrific deformations of the body including the growth of extra limbs or extremities on inappropriate parts of the body. I have even witnessed an especially critical case in which the victim had begun to grow a second head from a hump on his shoulders. He did not live long enough for the head to fully develop, but committed seppuku — claiming that the voice of his “second self” was driving him mad.

Eventually, the Taint grips so much of the victim that he or she is unrecognizable as human. Such miserable specimens, if they live this long, will wander back into the Shadowlands, wretched monsters with no connection to their former lives.

The Taint affects the mind as well as the body, causing terrible madness in its victims.

Initially, their dementia follows a predictable course, much the same way as physical symptoms do. The first signs are an unshakable irritability and increasing aggressiveness, difficult to detect in many cases. The Crab have learned to recognize these early signs and send those that display them immediately out of the Shadowlands, to prevent further deterioration.

This irritability soon escalates into paranoia, at which point most people lose the



The first time a character becomes infected with the Shadowlands Taint, he gains 1-5 Shadowlands Points (roll a die and divide by 2). There are advantages and disadvantages for being infected with the Shadowlands Taint. A character may add his Shadowlands Rank to any Strength, Agility, Stamina or Reflexes rolls, but this trick adds another Shadowlands Point to his total. Also, characters must subtract a number of dice equal to their Shadowlands Taint from any social interaction rolls.

If the Shadowlands Element ever becomes a character's highest Element, he is overcome by the Taint and becomes a slave of Fu Leng (an NPC under the direction of the Game Master).

Game Masters can employ the Taint effects (next page) every time a character furthers his own corrupt state. When a character gains 5 Shadowlands points, give him a Mild effect.

If he gains a new Shadowlands Rank, give him a Moderate effect. If his Shadowlands Rank becomes higher than a Ring Rank, give him a Severe effect.

Taint Effects

Physical:

Mild:

- Nausea, vomiting
- Pain in joints
- Skin thickens, cracking and turning leathery
- Skin seeps greasy, yellowish "sweat"
- Eyelid swells, obscuring vision
- Hair goes white
- Phlegmy, wracking cough
- Pale, grayish dead complexion
- Sunken eyes, cracked lips

Moderate:

- Bones begin to warp and thicken, inhibiting movement and affecting skills
- Black lichen-like growth across skin itches incessantly
- Reddened, burn-like sores and scars

Eye(s) clouds or bloodvessels break, obscuring vision

Lips shrink back from gums

Gums swell, bleed and rot.

Bleeding From:

- Eyes
- Nose
- Mouth
- Ears
- Lips

Hair falls out.

Uncontrollable seizures that wrack the body with spasms

Eruption of painful sores

Sores Ooze:

- blood
- pus
- black, foul-smelling ooze
- spiders or insects
- thick, curdled paste-like substance
- maggots
- greenish slime that burns like acid

Severe:

Flesh of nose rots away, leaving skull-like openings

Mutated, deformed:

- fingers



control necessary to maintain their honor. Many pristine reputations have been ruined by Taint-related outbursts, misdiagnosed as simple insanity. I can assure you, however, that such... social matters are by far the least of the Tainted's concerns. Soon the victim will begin to have aberrant thoughts, or claim to hear tormenting voices, his paranoia increasing beyond the rational. (I believe these voices are evil spirits in the service of Fu Leng, sent to weaken the Tainted, I have no evidence beyond an educated assumption, however.) The Taint weakens the victim's chi and upsets the elemental balance, ultimately infecting the mind. Some caught in the advanced stages claim they can hear Fu Leng himself whispering foul secrets and encouraging unspeakable deeds. I have not been able to confirm this, but it is a harrowing possibility.

The more severe stages of madness are as individual as each victim, but all are extremely dangerous and disturbing. Most victims exhibit extreme homicidal mania, attacking their closest relation with any weapon that comes to hand. Some mutter and scream obscene babblings before swallowing their own tongues, a process too shocking to describe. I have seen honorable men reduced to scuttling things, feeding off of refuse or even swallowing small animals whole. I knew of

Taint Effects (continued)

- toes
- leg
- arm
- head
- ear
- eye
- teeth

begin to grow on inappropriate parts of the body/shrivel, begin to rot and eventually fall off. Spine twists, back hunches. Severe warping of skeleton, skull enlarges and deforms. Great swollen growths on the body.

Tongue rots away.

Lungs eaten away from inside - wet, labored, painful breathing.

Eye falls out, leaving gaping socket that glows with eerie green light.

Skin peels off in papery sloughs at the slightest touch, leaving red, raw flesh beneath.

Fingers/toes begin to web and fuse.

Mental:

Mild:

Mild paranoia.

Disorientation.

Mild hallucinations.

Increased aggressiveness.

Moderate:

Hears voices of evil spirits.

Severe paranoia.

Fits of uncontrollable, disturbing laughter.

Disregarding of hygiene and cultural mores.

Weakened will.

Severe:

Hears voice of Fu Leng.
Irrisistable murderous urges.

Reduced to primitive behavior.

Eats inedible and/or still-living things.



Shadowlands Taint Points

Shadowlands Taint points are ranked just like Honor and Glory – from 1 to 5, each Rank made of 10 Shadowlands Points.

For every 24 hours spent in the Shadowlands, a character must make a Simple Earth roll. The TN for the roll is 5. If the character succeeds, his Earth has successfully resisted the corruptive effects of the Shadowlands Taint. If he fails, he has been Tainted. For every additional 24 hours, the TN goes up by 5.

Example: A samurai spends 24 hours in the Shadowlands. The GM calls for a Simple Earth roll at a TN of 5. The player rolls a 5, so he escapes the corruptive effects of the Shadowlands. At the end of 48 hours, the samurai must roll again, but this time, the TN is 10. At the end of 36 hours, the TN raises to 15. This process continues until the samurai is no longer exposed to the Shadowlands.

one man who refused to bathe and covered himself in the rancid mud of the Shadowlands swamps, convinced that this would protect him from the terrible demons that haunted his nightmares.

The madness further affects the victims' senses, causing gross distortions and hallucinations. It fills the brain with terrible images and thoughts, leaving the victim huddling and whimpering in abject fear, or striking out with misplaced fury.

All who display signs of the Taint should be considered a threat. They are under Fu Leng's influence and cannot be trusted. It is a sad thing to see a once-noble samurai fall into disgraceful behavior, but the threat they pose is undeniable. We Crab generally regard the onset of the Taint as a prelude to death; if possible, we try to convince the victim to commit seppuku so they will not endanger their comrades and Clan. If the victim is uncooperative, a family member is often called on to dispatch them with proper speed. This can be a difficult thing, especially when a loved one is involved.



Common Zombie

EARTH: 0

Stamina: 5

WATER: 1

Strength: 3

FIRE: 1

AIR: 0

Rolls When Attacking: 1k1

Rolls For Damage: 5k2

(Improvised weapons – many do only 4k1)

TN to be Hit: 5

Armor: 7

Wounds per Level: 60: Dead (see below)

Special Abilities:

Immune to Pain: Zombies take half damage from slashing weapons (round down) and 1/4 damage from crushing weapons.

Invulnerable: Whenever a Zombie loses a Wound Level, it loses a random limb:

1-2: Left arm

3-4: Right arm

5-6: Left leg

7-8: Right leg

9: Cut in half

10: Decapitated

If a zombie loses an arm or leg, the arm or leg slithers behind the zombie, keeping up the best it can.

The zombie cannot reattach the limb. If it is an arm, the hand will try to attack anyone within reach.

If the zombie is disemboweled (cut in half), the top half will continue to claw after its targets. If

the zombie is decapitated, it collapses and dissolves into black ooze the next morning.

Despite such precautions, there are often Tainted madmen who escape honorable death and wander off into the Shadowlands. These pitiful creatures can live several years in horrible agony and torment. In their demented state, they are extremely dangerous; any madmen you come across should be immediately decapitated and a prayer of blessing offered to the Fortunes. Whether this will allow their souls entrance into heaven, I do not know. Perhaps by then, the Dark Lord's grip has grown too strong to break and the madman's destiny is eternal torture in the presence of Fu Leng.

Zombies and Skeletons

One of the most harrowing aspects of the Taint is its effect on the recently dead. Any human who dies within the Shadowlands' borders will rise within hours to become a mindless minion of the Dark Lord. These zombies are simply shells of their former selves — their souls having (presumably) fled at the point of death. I believe that their souls are replaced by malevolent spirits controlled by Fu Leng. Or perhaps they retain some ghost of their former selves — now utterly corrupted and bound to the Dark Lord's service. None know for certain, save the damned, and they do not divulge such secrets. In any case, the bodies continue to rot and decay as time goes on, eventually becoming no more than animated skeletons. But these slow, seemingly brittle creatures possess an unnatural strength.

For all their mindlessness, zombies are fixated on the destruction of Fu Leng's enemies, and attack with unrelenting relentlessness. They feel no pain and attack without pause, even as their limbs are severed from their bodies. Nothing save utter destruction will deter them. They will only cease their advance if completely dismembered, and even then, the limbs themselves will continue to attack of their own accord. The only way to dispose of them permanently is to decapitate them and

Crab Protocols for the Shadowlands

The Crab have learned that there are certain rules of thumb that should be followed in the Shadowlands. Below are a few of these wise precautions and practices.

- Immediately decapitate fallen comrades
- Remove wounded or Tainted individuals from the Shadowlands as soon as possible
- Immediately treat (preferably with jade salve, see page 33) and cover wounds
- Always bring an adequate supply of jade



Note-

Certain spells exist which allow shugenja to create and control their own zombies. Such spells are quite perilous, and those working them run the risk of becoming corrupted themselves, but there are some who believe that power is worth any price. These spells usually require that a porcelain mask, which will serve as a focus for the animation, be placed over the zombie's face.

Once summoned, a zombie will obey simple commands and follow the directions of its controller. In combat, they act identically to their Shadowlands brethren; however, their masks are a key source of weakness, one which a bushi engaged with them should exploit. If removed, the zombie will immediately collapse into a puddle of muck, its animating spirit severed from the physical plane.

-Kuni Yori

Blessing of Cleansing

This spell can be used to stave off the Taint and purify food and water that has been Tainted. It can also be used to "sanitize" a bandage and give the wounded some extra time to get out of the Shadowlands before the Taint sets in.

Base TN: 10

Casting Time: 20 minutes
(minus 3 minutes per raise)

Duration: Instantaneous

Mastery: 3

Concentration: None

Raises: Casting Time, Aid for the Honor check.

Effect: Calling upon blessings of Amaterasu and the other Fortunes, the shugenja attempts to cleanse the target object or substance (this spell is not effective on people) of the Taint. If the spell is successful, the target makes a Honor roll against a TN of 10. The shugenja can give the target an additional die to roll with each raise. If the target's Honor roll is successful, the target is purified and made fit for consumption. This effect is temporary, and food and water will begin to deteriorate again as usual from this point.

If a the caster happens to summon an uncooperative *kansen*, the spirit may cause the target to rot instantly and permanently.

bury the head — doing so seems to interrupt the flow of energy to their body, rendering it unmoving. Some samurai might find this practice distasteful, but in the Shadowlands, survival outweighs aesthetics. The Crab have made it common practice to remove the head of a fallen comrade and bury it if possible, thus preventing them from rising as zombies.

It should be noted that the disease spread by the creature known as Oni no Byoki also transforms its victims into contagious Plague Zombies. Unlike ordinary zombies, these Plague Zombies are infectious corpses covered with oozing sores and pustules and do not deteriorate as far as skeletal form. I will discuss this type of zombie further in my writings on oni.

Infection and Its Prevention

Infection is accelerated in the Shadowlands, and the simplest injuries can be deadly if not treated properly. Any break in the skin should be immediately bandaged. If possible, first clean the wound with untainted water and apply Jade Salve (which has the same effect as a Blessing of Cleansing) to the area to protect it from corruption. If a wound is left exposed, it will begin to fester within the hour as the Taint invades the open flesh. It will become increasingly painful and foul, limiting movement and giving off a noxious stench. If allowed to progress, only amputation may save the victim's life. It should also be noted that many Shadowlands creatures are attracted to the putrid odor, and can follow such a spoor for miles. Injured samurai should therefore be removed from the Shadowlands as quickly as possible.

If a wound taken in the Shadowlands is not properly cleansed and protected immediately, the Taint will infect it and it will not heal naturally. These Tainted wounds should be healed with a Purification spell. If they are not magically treated, the infection may eventually lead to loss of limbs or even death.

Food and water spoil more rapidly in the Shadowlands, and can contaminate those who consume them. The corrupted water that flows through the Dark Lord's Realm should never be swallowed, as

Jade Absorption

A single piece of jade (about the size of a man's finger) is enough to protect the samurai from all corruptive effects for about a week. This means that after the week has passed, the Earth rolls start up 24 hours later at TN 5.

Multiple pieces of jade provide extended protection, but only to a point.

- One piece
7 days
- Two pieces
12 days
- Three pieces
16 days
- Four pieces
19 days
- Five pieces or more
21 days

All times are approximate.

it is poisoned and will simply come back up again, leaving the drinker sick and Tainted.

Clean water will stay drinkable for up to a week, but food will usually begin to rot within three days, becoming infested with vile maggots. These tiny creatures will remain in the stomach, becoming painful parasites that drain vital energies. Anything ingested after the rot has set in will cause nausea and convulsive spasms.

Protection from the Taint

On the course of our studies, the Kuni family has discovered some preventions against the Taint. Jade is by far the most effective method thus far perfected, and remains a vital part of keeping the corruption at bay.

This mineral, known in legend as the Tears of Amaterasu, possesses remarkable qualities that are indispensable to anyone venturing into the Shadowlands.

Natural jade is composed of a mystical combination of elements, balanced in such a way as to achieve divine purity. Some shugenja, especially those who study at the Agasha school, have developed methods of transmuting one substance into another. These techniques have produced stone that resembles jade in almost all aspects. However, this "artificial" jade does not possess the same divine purity as the stones mined from the earth, and does not have any effect in the Shadowlands.

True jade has the ability to absorb the evil influence of the corrupted Lands, shielding the bearer from its terrible effects. As it is exposed to the Taint, the jade slowly darkens and shrinks, growing soft and warm to the touch. Once it has reached this state, it is "full", and will not absorb further. It is always wise to carry an ample supply of jade when traveling in the Shadowlands. Wise samurai will always inspect their jade carefully before trusting their health and lives to it.

I have experimented with methods of rejuvenating jade so it can be re-used after it has absorbed the Taint. With help from the Agasha, I have begun to decipher the exact balance and structure of the elements within jade. If we can calculate this balance, perhaps this knowledge, in combination with a ritual petition for Lady Sun's

Man-Made Jade

A shugenja who knows the Agasha **Transform** spell can conceivably create a piece of jade, but it will not be effective, because it is not natural jade. Only natural jade mined from the earth will absorb the Taint. Mokuna experimented extensively with jade created by his Agasha compatriots, but no samples proved effective.



purifying touch, can renew jade after it has absorbed the Taint.

The soulless beasts of the Shadowlands — such as ogres and goblins — are not vulnerable to jade. However, the oni, spirit beings bound to fleshly forms, are susceptible to jade's power. The searing purity of the stone burns them like molten embers — causing their skin to blister and smoke on contact. Jade also has a mild weakening effect on oni, as it drains the evil energy that flows through them. Usually, this is so subtle as to be inconsequential — one would need an impossible amount of jade to absorb enough energy to noticeably weaken an average oni. Still, a piece of jade that touches them will cause them some degree of pain, even as the stone immediately transforms into a soft black lump. Such a distraction may be enough to defeat it, or distract it for long enough to make a hasty escape.

Jade can be ground into a fine powder that can be used in many helpful ways. I have developed a topical ointment — made with powdered jade, water from the Dragon Lake and a combination of secret oils and plant extracts — which can be used to treat and protect wounds taken in the Shadowlands. It will help stave off the

Healing the Taint: Purification Spell

Base TN: 10 +
Shadowlands Rank of
Target x 10
Casting Time: 1 hour
Duration: N/A
Mastery: 8
Concentration: Total
Raises: Shadowlands
Points Destroyed
Effect: This complicated and complex ritual demands at least an hour's worth of concentration and effort in order to cast properly. If casting is successful, a number of Shadowlands Points equal to the number of shugenja in the ritual are destroyed. However, all shugenja involved in the ritual automatically gain one Shadowlands Point. Each raise will destroy one extra Shadowlands Point outright.

accelerated infection the Taint causes and promote healing. (It should be noted, however, that even with the use of Jade Salve, wounds exposed to the Taint will inevitably leave an unattractive scar.) I have shared this recipe with my Kuni brethren and we have begun producing batches of the salve on a regular basis for our clan. Oars can be purchased from certain Yasuki merchants, but the recipe is quite complex and mixtures made by inexperienced shugenja may not be effective.

It should also be noted that the effectiveness of protections against the Taint weakens the deeper into the Shadowlands one goes. This accounts for our scouts' inability to penetrate too far into Fu Leng's realm, and our lack of progress in determining the exact whereabouts and secrets of the Festering Pit.

Healing the Taint

There has been some progress in our search to lessen the effects of the Taint, and the Kuni shugenja have worked with other schools to develop a permanent cure to this most noxious infection. While we have not yet reached that lofty goal, we have devised several means to slow its effects.

The most effective "cure" for the Taint is a

Purification spell the Kuni have developed in cooperation with the shugenja of the Phoenix clan. This spell can reduce and often eliminate corruption from the Tainted.

However, in many cases the victim is too far gone to be saved.

Currently, victims suffering from severe Taint effects cannot be cured, only treated.



Tea of Jade Petals

Those with lesser symptoms can often be aided and soothed with a recipe that I have been instrumental in developing - it is a magically infused elixir poetically dubbed "Tea of Jade Petals" by my Crane apprentice, Daidoji Nazoko.

This tincture is made from the petals of a specially grown lotus flower. These rare blooms are grown exclusively by the Crab Clan in specially prepared pools. In a process developed under the supervision of Kuni Kabu, the plants are grown in water blessed with purifying spells and infused with finely ground jade powder. The resulting blossoms are harvested, the petals plucked and dried according to the traditional tea-making process. The prepared petals are then steeped in boiling water and sipped hot.

Tea of Jade Petals will speed recovery from mild taint effects suffered in the Shadowlands, and accelerate healing of Tainted wounds. It will also help soothe the tormenting pain of Taint effects.

These few precautions and treatments are our only current defenses against the horrible corruption of the Taint. I continue to strive to find more effective means of guarding ourselves from the Dark Lord's influence, for if we can find a way to move freely about the Shadowlands without deterioration, we will be better able to explore this mysterious realm and possibly one day safely send our armies in to defeat the Fallen God.

Genuine Jade Petal Tea is a rare commodity. It requires delicate cultivation and careful processing. Happily, it only takes a spoonful of the shredded emerald leaves to brew a cup, which is the equivalent of one dose. However, it takes the leaves of one Jade Lotus to make one dose, making Jade Petal Tea expensive.

Characters affected by the Shadowlands Taint, whether in or out of the Shadowlands, can temporarily negate a number of points equal to the potency of the tea. The strength of the tea depends on the quality of the plant and the brewer's art. Roll Intelligence + Herbalism at TN 20.

This is not a permanent effect, rather lasting for eight hours, at which point either more tea must be consumed or the character regains the points.

When in the Shadowlands, characters cannot regain lost Wound Points. The body's natural healing processes do not work in these lands. Wounds continue to fester and drain until the character is beyond Fu Leng's influence. Tea of Jade Petals, however, counteracts this effect. Consumed prior to a night's rest, the wounded character heals the normal amount of damage.

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Chapter 3:

Goblins

Common Goblin

EARTH: 2
FIRE: 2
WATER: 1
AIR: 1

Rolls When
Attacking: 3k2
Rolls For Damage:
4k2 (sword)
TN to be Hit: 10
Armor: 3
Wounds: 6: - 1; 12:
- Dead

Goblins are ubiquitous throughout the Shadowlands.

These unsavory creatures populate every region of the corrupted Lands - from the desolate plains to the stinking, waterlogged swamps. They are exceptionally hardy and adaptable creatures — their survival depends on it, since they are too stupid to move to better living conditions.

Legend maintains that the goblins were Fu Leng's first failed attempt to create a powerful race of minions. Unfortunately for him, the Dark Lord's experimental soldiers turned out to be less than perfectly suited to his needs. They were small, stupid, vulgar, unorganized and prone to mass and singular hysteria. They were physically weak and easily outmaneuvered. Their misguided mimicry of human behavior ran to little beyond the most rudimentary skills and talents. Despite these flaws, however, Fu Leng allowed his creations to survive. They took root in his foul kingdom and prospered there.

Of all the denizens of the Shadowlands, I have studied the goblins most extensively — mainly due to the inexhaustible supply of easily acquired research subjects. I have explored the physical and elemental mechanisms of their bodies, and observed their behavior and tactics. I have attempted to delve into their minds — to understand and therefore arm my Clan with the knowledge they need to be finally rid of these infuriating pests. It has not been easy.

Most attempts to communicate with goblins are met with dismal failure. Their entire society is a haphazard, twisted mockery of our own, down to their dreadful parroting of any word they hear. Their most common reaction to humans, aside from blindly attacking, is to mimic whatever we say, screeching it out without reason or comprehension. They apparently have a language of their own, but it is too guttural for humans to understand. I have my doubts that they can even communicate effectively with each other in this garbled tongue; perhaps that is one reason that they have so much trouble organizing.

Thankfully, there are some rare, exceptionally adept goblins which have managed a rudimentary grasp of our language. Basic communication with these individuals is possible, though hardly reliable. Much of my insight into the goblin species has come through discussions

with them — in particular one extraordinary individual known as Basher. Basher was a truly ancient goblin — the only one of his kind I have ever known who was intelligent enough to reach old age. He was some twenty-five years old when he first came to me. Wise beyond the normal means of his race, Basher had a limited mastery of Rokugani speech and sought me out in an effort to engage another intelligent creature in conversation.



My astonishment at his arrival was great. I was disturbed from my studies by an insistent pounding on the door of my workshop. Irritated at the interruption, I opened the door to see this bent, wizened goblin standing on my step. I raised my measuring rod to swat it away, but then hesitated. This goblin was alone. It was not screeching with rage or hopping about or gibbering in panic. It was standing erect, its squinted eyes peering at me without fear or malice. Its face and body were more wrinkled and spotted than any I'd seen before: scraggly white hair sprouted from its ears and chin, it was dressed in relatively clean clothing, and a short, wicked-looking club lay in one gnarled hand. It stood there for a moment, then bowed. Its bow was not the usual, exaggerated mockery that most goblins perform, but proper and discreet. I lowered my rod and gazed at the creature with new interest.

"We talk now," it said in a gruff, reedy voice. It waved its club toward the door behind me, indicating it wished to enter. I stepped aside, letting it pass into my workshop with shuffling steps. It peered around, its face crinkling up even more into a crooked smile. It seemed bemused, curious, observant. It found a place on the floor that was clear of clutter and stains and squatted before me.

"You like know much," it said, still grinning in its ugly fashion. It pointed around the lab, its finger stopping at a goblin skull upon one shelf. "You like know much of bakemono." It patted its own sunken chest. "Like me."

"Bakemono," I whispered. So the goblins had their own name for themselves, or at least this one did. I slowly knelt down in seiza before it, our eyes almost level.

"I am Kuni Mokuna," I said.

Basher

Basher was indeed a rarity among goblinkind, born with both intelligence and insight. He realized how self-destructive goblins were at a very early age, and quickly abandoned his family to live on his own. He attributed his long lifespan to that early decision.

Since that time, he wandered throughout the eastern Shadowlands, relying on his wits and low profile to stay alive. He eventually settled in Big Stink, where he became renowned as a sage and scholar among the denizens there. Sadly, his fellow goblins could not offer the intellectual stimulation he craved, and he would occasionally journey to the Kuni wastes to converse with the shugenja there. Kuni Mokuna was a particular favorite of his and Mokuna credits him for numerous insights into the species. Rumor has it that Mokuna bargained with the Big Stink goblins for Basher's corpse when the old goblin finally passed, and reverently enshrined the remains in a small cairn outside his workshop.

Basher earned his name for the gnarled wooden club which he carried with him at all times.

(continued)

The old goblin chuckled softly. "You Tall Pain-Magic Man, Scary Watcher, Quiet Traveler. All know run away from you." His eyes sparkled with cunning and wit, a fact that awed me to no small extent. "Mokuna."

I had apparently developed a reputation among his kind.

"I am Basher." He suddenly brought his club down upon a nearby table with enough force to make the jars and bones upon it jump and clatter. "Bash heads of loud, stupid, smelly, mean. Bash all of them all the time. All know run away from Basher."

How such an intriguing anomaly was born of the goblin race is a mystery,

but I learned much from the subsequent conversation.

He confirmed many



Basher (continued)

of my theories and findings and offered me new insights into the goblin world. He eventually left, but returned many times to speak with me again; I have not seen the like before or since.

But as I said, Basher was a unique case. In the vast majority of instances, human words or phrases spoken by goblins are just mindless regurgitation of things they have heard humans say. Trying to communicate with common goblins through hand signals or sign language results in frustrating circles of imitation. They seem to enjoy the anger their antics bring, drawing their lips back away from grinning teeth and nodding furiously at the slightest hint of human frustration. Many goblins will also use phrases and sayings that make no sense, repeating things mindlessly with no thought as to their meaning or context. For example, "die, you odious little squeaker" and "return to your festering father, foul Shadowlands spawn" are common goblin warcries when attacking humans.

Physiology

Goblins range in size from about one ken-an tall (three feet) to almost two (five and a half feet). They are bipedal and their normal mode of locomotion is an ungraceful upright gait. Despite this, they can move quite quickly for short spurts — scrambling and scuttling close to the ground like a dog. I have observed a few instances of fleeing goblins going down on all fours in an animal-like lope, which seems to facilitate their retreat immensely. However, they lack the physical stamina to endure any prolonged runs at top speed.

The proportions of the goblin's body are a warped, exaggerated reflection of our own form. A goblin's head is excessively large, with a skinny neck that would seem unsuited for the task of holding it up. The ribcage is narrow and the torso is often pitched forward from the weight of a bulging potbelly. Many goblins have crooked spines, resulting in hunched or uneven shoulders. Limbs are spindly and sinewy, the muscles bundled and knotted in unattractive lumps. Arms tend to be overly long and legs a bit too short. Hands and feet are excessively large, with long, gnarled fingers and toes tipped with claws.

The skeletal structure of the average goblin is rather fragile, and limbs or ribs can be snapped with a relatively weak strike. However, their skulls are quite thick and tough, making them harder to kill than their relative fragility would suggest. A goblin can take an astounding number of hard blows to the head and

He would often assault fellow goblins for real or imaginary indiscretions, and those around him used the name to warn others away from him. Basher's contempt for his own species was boundless — he saw them as a horrendous waste of potential, a species capable of conquering the world but who could barely aspire above the squalid muck of their surroundings. Still, he could never bring himself to utterly condemn his race, and occasionally spoke of the great deeds they would accomplish once they finally gave up their self-destructive ways.

EARTH: 1
FIRE: 2
Intelligence: 3
WATER: 2
Perception: 3
AIR: 2
Awareness: 3
VOID: 1
Attack: 4k3
Damage: 3k2
TN to be Hit: 10
Armor: 0
Wounds: 10; -1 20;
Dead

suffer only temporary disorientation. My Kuni brethren often marvel at this particular aspect of the creatures' design, for it would seem that there is little of value within the skull to warrant such reinforcement.

Goblin leaders, or warmongers, are physically distinguished from common goblins by their increased size and sturdier construction. Their skeletons are thicker and stronger, they are more powerfully muscled and they are more aggressive, commanding and intelligent. Whether this is the result of specific breeding patterns or merely the natural rise of the strongest specimens to leadership positions has yet to be seen.

The facial characteristics of goblins resemble those of ugly, wizened old men. Their noses are large and uneven, often hooked downward or upturned in piglike snouts. Their pupilless eyes are sunk into fleshy pockets, glaring from beneath their bony brows. The lips are thin and stretched, contorted always into fiendish grins or malevolent scowls. Chins tend to be small and pointed. Their flesh is mottled grey-green, with spots, warts and wrinkles. Wiry hair peppers their hide and sprouts from their ears and armpits. Most goblins have little hair on their heads, though some have enough to sport feeble topknots of matted strands.

Their ears are large and wedge-shaped, ending in a twisting point. They are very flexible and can be swiveled much the same way as a cat's. Goblin ears often bear nicks and tears from fighting and squabbling; their large size makes them favorite targets for harsh tugs or even bites. They are





quite sensitive to abuse, and I have observed that encouraging captured subjects to follow my commands often requires no more than a pinch or twist in the right location. Goblins with excessively mangled ears are likely to be either very brutal and aggressive or among the most wretched members of their species. Goblins' ears can indicate their owners' mental state by their position and attitude. Swivelled forward and fanned out, they suggest intense concentration or curiosity, whereas fear or submission is indicated by laying them back along the skull and down. (Lower-ranking goblins often flatten their ears in the presence of superiors, indicating their obedience.) When angled back and out, they signal aggression and anger.

Goblins' teeth are small and cone-shaped, with sharp points. A bite from a goblin can be quite painful, though usually not serious (however, any goblin bite suffered in the Shadowlands should be treated with Jade Salve and bandaged as soon as possible). Goblin teeth regenerate quite rapidly, which is fortunate considering that they are lost, broken or knocked out almost as quickly as they are grown. The Nezumi actually have a fondness for goblin teeth in ornamentation, divination, music and games. I myself have found them useful as pegs or pins to hang notes and diagrams, and some Yasaki traders even sell them to curious customers as "souvenirs" from the dread Shadowlands. (I would recommend against purchasing such curiosities for any reason other than serious intellectual inquiry. Any remains of Shadowlands creatures kept in my workshop are carefully cleansed and

ritually purified to banish any lingering influence of the Taint. Those sold in the markets may not be so properly treated. While it is true that such a small token would not have a significant effect, its presence may still impede elemental balance and chi flow.)

Goblins possess the obvious physical differences between genders, though they are often subtle and it can be difficult to distinguish between the two. Females tend to be more rounded and fleshy, males more stringy and gaunt. Females are usually slightly smaller than males, though the margin is almost negligible. Females can sometimes be distinguished by their ponderous pregnant bellies, since the majority of females are pregnant a majority of the time. However, males often display ponderous bellies as well.

Breeding and Life Cycle

The mortality rate among goblins is quite high, but it is nothing compared to the alarming rate at which they reproduce. They breed prodigiously, living in communities that consist of many hundreds of individuals. There is no discernable mating season, although there does seem to be a quasi-annual period during which they actively seek mates. This period is distinguished by rather strange rituals which I still do not fully understand. I have observed males attempting to court females with displays of prowess such as precision urination and explosive fits of shrieking. The latter most often simply startles the females, which usually results in the male being cuffed or scratched. They also participate in what appears to be a sporting competition in which the males face off inside rings and pummel each other mercilessly with long sticks. These "contests" most often end with both competitors crumpled on the ground, semi-conscious. They are then dragged unceremoniously from the ring and the next pair steps up. As far as I can tell, no "winner" is determined, which would seem to run counter to its purpose as a fertility ritual. The only reasonable explanation I can conceive is that it amuses the females, who gather in giggling, screaming crowds to watch.

Relationships secured during this period do not usually last long. Goblins are by no means monogamous, nor demure. There is no "family" unit among goblins. The state of mating arrangements changes so often that I have given up attempting to keep track of it. It is even more difficult to discern paternity among goblins, for they do not claim their young. Despite this, many goblins claim to have long and distinguished family lineages. They will rattle on and on, barking out a list of

names, some of which are repeated several times. I believe that this is another example of their mimicry of human society, repeated verbatim in order to impress others. Basher once introduced me to a goblin who claimed Hida Bantano as one of his forefathers, an insult I declined to mention to the Hida family. I noticed that it certainly impressed the other goblins present at the time.

Females give birth to litters of four to six young. The gestation period is approximately four months, and a healthy goblin female will most likely be pregnant once again within two weeks of giving birth.

The newborn "goblins" are squalling, piteous little beasts, hairless and blind, who wail and grab onto any living thing within reach. Once attached, they will demand sustenance with their constant keening. Goblin parents take no





interest in the welfare of their young whatsoever, and I believe that the only reason the whelps survive is because of their incessant noise. The easiest way to get them to cease their squealing is to stuff food into their mouths; swatting at them only increases the pitch and fervor of their cries and attempting to pull them off results in bloody wounds from their sharp little claws. Fortunately for the surrogate parent, this state of helplessness only lasts a few days. By then the goblins have doubled their size and will actively seek food and water on their own.

Goblins get no formal education, training or guidance while maturing. They simply absorb what goes on around them and attempt to apply it to their own existence. There is no discernable gempukku period, or transition from youth to adulthood, and they reach adult size within two months. I have not been able to accurately determine an average natural goblin lifespan, since Basher was the only specimen I found who had survived to old age. My calculations suggest that the common goblin lives approximately six years, although Warmongers, shamans and the like tend to live a bit longer.

The Goblin Mind and Society

Some would surmise that because goblins behave so foolishly, they must have childlike or even animalistic minds. This is not the case, however. Goblins possess a certain kind of primitive intelligence - they absorb information and have the ability to learn from experience. They could not survive in the wilds of the Shadowlands were it otherwise. The problem is that they misinterpret so much of what they see. Combat they can understand. Hunting and the basic skills of survival are not a problem. Anything beyond that is subject to gross distortion in the course of their parroting. What they comprehend and repeat may bear little resemblance, if any, to what is actually being observed.

Goblins are cruel, malicious, selfish and violent by nature. They quarrel among themselves constantly and murder among their own kind is a common, acceptable activity. They simply toss out the bodies of their dead with the garbage - which usually means shoving it against the far wall or heaving it from the doorway to rot where it lands.

At the most recent Kuni symposium, the subject of attempting to regain the overrun ruins of Hiruma castle came up. I made the suggestion that we simply have the Kain put up a wall around the entire place, sealing the goblin inhabitants within. From my studies I estimated that it would take approximately two weeks for the majority of the occupants to kill each other. The remaining, weakened goblins could then be easily cleared out. The suggestion was rejected, but I remain convinced that it is a viable plan.

Goblins, despite their inability to coexist without constant conflict, are truly social animals. There does not seem to be any established system of justice among the goblins, although there is a definite social hierarchy determined by size, strength, aggressiveness and intelligence. An individual of higher rank can pass judgment on their inferiors without dispute: I have seen goblin warmongers order the stoning of a lackey simply because the unfortunate thing picked its nose without permission. The goblin mob carried out the order instantly and with great enthusiasm. This interesting social dynamic results in excessively meowing and obsequious behavior around superiors and cruelly arrogant conduct towards those of lower rank. Thus, the social order of a group of goblins can be quite easily discerned.

Goblins with enough cunning and ambition to lead are quite rare. These individuals ascend quickly and ruthlessly to command positions and take on the roles of warmongers, shamans or even "kings" (on which I will elaborate in a moment). A force of goblins led by such an individual is much more dangerous than the average band of wandering goblins. When confronting a group of goblins led by a warmonger or shaman, dispatching the leader is the soundest strategy. It usually throws the group into complete disarray, as the next goblin in the "chain of command" is suddenly expected to lead and is completely unprepared for the role. The resulting panic can cause a confused scramble that is quite entertaining to view. I know of a group of young apprentice oni hunters who purposefully seek out patrolling goblin squads and snipe the leader from cover, just to watch the ensuing chaos.

As I have already described, warmongers are remarkable for their size, strength, and brutality. These individuals can be formidable

Goblin Warmonger

EARTH: 3
FIRE: 3
WATER: 2
AIR: 1

Rolls When Attacking:

5k3

Rolls For Damage: 5k2

(sword)

TN to be Hit: 15

Armor: 5

Wounds: 10: - 1; 20:

Dead

Goblin Warmongers are bigger and smarter than their counterparts. They are clever enough to figure out how to put on the armor and swing the swords. When the Goblins raid Crab Castles, the Warmongers always lead the way.



opponents. Some ambitious warmongers rise to power among their tribes and establish themselves as goblin "Kings". Kings often bring some semblance of order and purpose to their charges, making them more dangerous.

I have never encountered a King myself, but I have heard some curious tales from samurai who have faced them in combat. They speak of relentless attack, ruthless tactics and seeming indestructibility. No samurai who has battled a goblin King has vanquished their opponent. These are truly remarkable reports from reliable sources; I am not sure what to make of them. Perhaps the goblin Kings have found a way to empower themselves, or their Dread Father has granted them some gift of dark power. If he has, we can only hope that the number of goblin Kings is extremely limited.

A few goblins have managed to tap the power of magic. While they

are by no means highly skilled, they can nonetheless cause much trouble and harm. Exactly how they work their magic is somewhat of a mystery; I interrogated a small number of "shamans" and they do not seem much smarter than the average goblin. They understand nothing of magical theory, the elements or spirit summoning, and obviously do not revere the kami. They seem to know only particular spells, apparently acquired through theft and the careful repetition of ritual. This is one instance where their mimicry of human behaviors seems to have been beneficial. They wave their arms and chant and repeat the spell, and incredibly, results are forthcoming. I can only theorize that

the kansen play a role in the magic's success, for I cannot fathom kami coming to the aid of one of Fu



Goblin Kings

The rumors about "indestructible" goblin kings have a basis in truth. In a last ditch effort to bring some order to the chaotic goblin tribes and shape them into a viable fighting force, Fu Leng created powerful oni in the shape of goblin warmongers. These creatures take control of the goblin tribes and rise to king status. These oni "Goblin Kings" are indistinguishable from true goblins save for their superior intelligence, strength and legendary stamina.

Awareness+ Shadowlands Lore at TN 20 will give the samurai a sense that something is different and more threatening about this goblin. Shadowlands detection spells could reveal the true oni nature of the beast.

Treat Goblin Kings as Goblin Warmongers with the **Invulnerability** trait.

Goblin Magic

Goblins practice a primitive form of magic that resembles *maho*.

If you wish to use Goblin shamans, simply use the *maho* rules provided in the GM Screen, or use the advanced *maho* rules in the forthcoming *Walking the Way* sourcebook. If you do not have either of these text, use the spell rules in the basic rulebook. Goblin shaman "schools" are always Rank 1, and no goblin can cast a spell with a mastery level greater than 3.

Goblins, sadly, aren't very good at magic. Every time a goblin shaman attempts a spell, increase his target number by at least 5 - by 10 if he's trying to do something complicated at the same time, like walk, or remember what he's aiming at.

Goblin Shaman

EARTH: 2

FIRE: 2

WATER: 2

AIR: 1

School rank is considered 1.

Rolls When Attacking: 3k2

Rolls For Damage: 4k2

TN to be Hit: 10

Armor: 2

Wounds: 10: - 1; 20: Dead

Leng's minions (and goblins' corrupt nature would prevent them from manipulating the elements themselves.)

Fortunately, though the shamans are often successful at casting spells, the results are unreliable and often surprise them as much as their foes. Canny humans can use their hesitation to strike back, or retreat if the situation calls for it.

Goblins who manage to obtain scrolls and learn how to work them are revered with almost as much fear and respect as warmongers. They ascend to leadership positions, often working under the warmongers as advisors or generals.

Goblin Dwellings

Goblin "villages" are filthy, pestilent places, devoid of cleanliness and sanitation. Goblins do not bathe or groom themselves beyond their feeble imitation of human fashions, and have no designated areas for refuse or sewage. They thrive on the foul water that flows through Tainted rivers or bubbles up from fetid springs with no ill effects.

Food and water is scavenged from the areas surrounding the village, or brought down during combat. A few enterprising goblins have discovered the fungus that grows in great putrid masses upon their refuse, and set up farming operations of a sort.

Villages typically consist of shabbily constructed shacks and tents fashioned to resemble our houses and temples. They are built from whatever materials they have available - dead trees, stones, mud and dried dung, and generally, they do not possess any furniture (although some warmongers have been seen upon thrones, and reports have observed others being carried upon litters). Most sleep in stinking nests of moldy straw, or squat upon the ground like animals.

Some tribes have managed to grasp the concept of fortifications and a few goblin villages are surrounded by walls of rocks and bones. Such constructions are invariably crude, but they seem capable of protecting the village from attack until the adults can be mustered into some sort of defensive unit. One can hardly fault the means if the end serves such a useful purpose.

Big Stink, the Goblin City

Unfortunately, these defensive walls are not the limit of goblin ingenuity. The ruins of the Kappa fortress provide a much more impressive spectacle.

Few Hida generals or Hiruma scouts recall the Kappa castle, another fortress which fell to the Shadowlands at about the same time Hiruma castle did. While serving a great tactical purpose, there was little history or tradition embodied in the Kappa — it was a fortress of war, no more no less. In the ensuing centuries since it fell, it has been written off by Crab strategists completely, considered unworthy of attention in the face of more pressing concerns.

How wrong they are.

Here, within a few days march of Kain Kabe, a phenomenon has arisen unlike anything else I have seen. Heiko no Kappa has been claimed by the goblins, swarming with untold numbers of the filthy beasts inside and out. But rather than destroy each other with bickering and infighting, as they do elsewhere, they have worked together, achieving something resembling a coherent society. A twisted miracle of sorts has risen from the ashes of Kappa Castle — a city run by goblins that actually functions.

I first learned of this place through my goblin liaison, Basher. After several sessions of enlightening discussion, he offered to lead me to "Big Stink", a place where many thousands of goblins congregated and thrived. Though skeptical, I could not refuse such a tempting offer.

Basher led me to the gates of Heiko no Kappa, where I viewed Big Stink for the first time. It was astonishing. The castle and surrounding area had been converted into a cityscape, complete with city blocks, thoroughfares, and neighborhoods. Members of a hundred different tribes rubbed shoulders with each other, buying, selling, conducting trade, and generally behaving like any city of human inhabitants. Or, rather, a twisted parody of a human city; a bad joke taken to its furthest extreme. Crudely-built shacks fought for space beside the hastily repaired ramparts, each packed with goblin businesses or living space. What had been the castle dojo had been converted into an open-air market, where stalls and wagons cobbled together from who knows what sold goods that only a

"Magic Mud" Attacks

Goblins engaging in a "magic mud" attack (see page 57-58)

augment their stats as follows:

- Strength and Reflexes are raised to 5
- TN to be hit is raised to 15,
- Armor is raised to 5.
- No wound penalties while engulfed in magic mud.
- Starting the fourth round after being ignited, they will take 5 wounds of damage every round until dead. The bodies will continue to burn long after death, releasing a horrible stench; anyone in the vicinity of a burning goblin carcass must make a Stamina or Honor roll against a TN 10 to avoid becoming violently ill for the next two rounds (no other actions).

You Saw Nothing...

The only humans permitted on the streets of Big Stink are members of the Kuni family, whom the goblins have learned to give a wide berth to. Players should be discouraged from approaching the city unless they have a Kuni with them, and then only if they have pressing business within. The Kuni will be most displeased should anyone reveal Big Stink to the remainder of Rokugan, and will therefore exact binding oaths to those wishing to travel there.

goblin would want: Dead rats on a stick. Disused scraps of armor. Trinkets and cast-offs galore, plus strange substances that could only have come from the glands of some hideous oni. There were sake houses serving vile brew, geisha houses offering the temptations of goblin flesh, even a temple of sorts to Fu Leng, built from the desecrated remains of the Shinsei shrine. All of it functioned with a hideous logic and efficiency, moving in a rhythm reminiscent of the largest human cities.

"This," Basher told me, "is Big Stink."

Certainly, the name fit. The stench coming from so many goblins in such close proximity was overwhelming, and I was forced to plug my nose up at several locations to avoid succumbing to it.

Considering what they call the metropolis, it is obvious that even the goblins are aware of its olfactory characteristics (although I wager they will never determine why).

After a few unfortunate encounters and Basher's rigorous display of his namesake activity, we were able to move through Big Stink unmolested. The goblins here all conducted their activities with utmost seriousness, and did not seem overly disturbed by a human amongst them. Every so often, a disagreement would arise, in which the concerned parties would screech hideously at each other before launching a furious series of blows. But such outbreaks rarely



perurbed the surrounding goblins, who would placidly go about their business, ignoring their bloody-minded brethren. At most, bystanders would watch with amusement or make wagers upon the fight's outcome.

Many denizens maintained that a "city guard" was present to contain such outbreaks, although what constituted a guard varied from goblin to goblin. For some a particular type of headgear symbolized the guards; for others, a strip of cloth or piece of armor. A few vigorously maintained that any goblin with a weapon belonged to the guard and must be treated with the greatest respect. Considering how prone goblins are to attacking their brethren, it seemed the most pragmatic of observations.

I myself saw no signs of an established civil order. And yet, the Big Stink functioned. It worked. It moved with a precision and order despite its chaotic inhabitants. As if to punctuate the point, there were groups of Nezumi scattered here and there, trading or conducting other business. Knowing their survivalist philosophies, they would not waste their time unless they had something to gain.

I asked Basher why so many goblins chose to congregate here, and how they managed to maintain some semblance of society despite all signs to the contrary. "Dunno," he replied roughly. "Hear of king sometimes, never seen one. If we gonna replace humans, we gotta act like them. Good place start. Want fish?" I did not see a fish, nor did I want to know where he might be keeping it.

Since that first exploration, I have returned to Big Stink on several occasions, to observe goblin activity and occasionally procure specimens for examination. The denizens do not trouble me, and have even engaged in small business transactions with myself and other Kuni. My brethren and I have developed a reputation among the goblins, and most of the creatures give us a wide berth. An unspoken agreement has emerged: since we do not reveal Big

Note-

Big Stink has remained hidden to this very day; our family's wisdom has held up well in the past eighty years. I myself have journeyed to it no less than six times, each visit revealing more about the Bakemono than I could ever dream. I have been able to convert these findings into tangible benefits, advising the Hida daimyos on goblin tactics and tribal politics (such as they are). We would be remiss if we revealed the source of our information prematurely, losing the potential for even greater revelations in the future.

-Kuni Yori

Stink's existence to the Hida, we are allowed to travel there unmolested. Those few goblins who have pestered us on our way there have been viciously turned on by their brethren, who will invariably produce their bloodied carcasses to us as a sign of good faith. In exchange, we have woven several powerful spirit wards around the area, hiding Big Stink from human sight and keeping it a secret from those who would destroy it.

In truth, however, we would probably protect Big Stink regardless of their attitude towards us. It displays a side of goblin behavior unheard of anywhere else, and represents a unique opportunity to study and learn their culture and habits. We can procure supplies there with a minimum of difficulty and even begin to engage the goblins in something resembling a dialogue. Should it ever become too dangerous, we can simply reveal it to the Hida and allow our armies to overrun it. But why dispose of such a tool until it is absolutely necessary?

Goblin Tactics

Do not make the mistake of thinking that these awkward creatures are not dangerous. A lone goblin is no threat, but lone goblins are rare. Their main asset is strength of numbers, which they use to devastating effect. They attack in screeching swarms, overwhelming opponents with sheer numbers and berserker enthusiasm. Goblin combat tactics are laughably simple, but at the same time should not be underestimated. Lone goblins are easy prey, but those traveling in groups can be quite dangerous, and in large numbers have proven devastating. Many Crab bushi make the fatal mistake of assuming that goblins' stupidity makes them harmless. Nothing could be further from the truth. As the rank-and-file members of Fu Leng's army, knowledge of their methods of conduct is imperative to defeating them.

The most important aspect of goblin bushi is their berserker enthusiasm in battle. Goblins in combat have no regard for their own lives; they do not understand the concept of death. Accordingly, they demonstrate no compunction about throwing their lives away on the battlefield. Most work themselves into a foaming frenzy before the engagement and attack with a gleeful abandon, heedless of safety or of the enemy's relative threat. A common mistake made by inexperienced samurai is thinking that slaughtering the first ten goblins that attack will convince the rest to retreat. Not so. In full mob attack, they are too frenzied and too stupid to stop the assault. A goblin village that has been mobilized for combat will attack until every last member has been slain. However, the goblin village will most likely win before that happens.

To this factor, we must add the tremendous lack of goblin intelligence. Most see their stupidity as a sign of weakness, and in many ways it is. But on the field of combat, it becomes a strange asset. Most generals rely on their opponents acting in a fairly sensible manner — retreating if losses are heavy, surrendering if retreat is impossible. Such assumptions are useless with the goblins. Merely breaking the milling hordes that pass as their formations is not enough. Every last individual must be destroyed in order to stop them. Shattered goblin mobs have wreaked untold havoc behind the lines, stalling offensives and even contributing to defeat simply because they were not utterly stamped out.

The standard goblin fighting technique involves a sort of mad rush to the target. Goblins will bite, claw, pummel and kick. If they have weapons, they will slash and swing with manic abandon. Individuals will be pointed out by the Warmongers or designated leaders, and attacked in overwhelming numbers until defeated. The mob then moves as one to the next target, whom they attack until slain, and so on.

An intriguing example of the goblin's idiotic enthusiasm for battle is their so-called "magic mud attack". Basher explained that his kin have discovered a certain type of "magic mud" — black and thick, that caught fire with the slightest spark. I assume this to be some type of foul pitch. They presumably realized that they could reproduce our flaming arrows attack by dipping their projectiles in the stuff. It is not difficult to see how their twisted logic progresses from there: if arrows can be dipped in pitch and ignited, how much better it would be to dip an entire goblin and ignite it. An individual covered in the substance and set alight certainly gives opponents pause. I witnessed one such attack near the Kain wall. After gleefully rolling in the "magic mud," the chosen goblin was set alight by his fellows. Howling in agony, the incendiary goblin rushed toward the enemy, arms waving in frenzy. He broke through the



astonished front line of the opposing forces and killed or badly wounded six bushi before collapsing in a smoldering heap.

This has been an especially favored technique among certain goblin tribes. They are extremely proud of this innovation, and it is considered a great honor to be slathered with the black goo and set alight. Those who participate are considered great heroes, believing that the "magic mud" grants them the battle fury of Fu Leng himself. What we see as agonized screams and panicked thrashing are viewed by the goblins as divine warrior rage. They line up at the pitch barrel like children waiting for sweet rice cakes.

Foolhardy? Certainly. But under the guidance of a Warmonger, and against a party unprepared for such an onslaught, such tactics can be devastating. If their leader can identify a field officer in the opposing army, he will order his troops to engage that officer at all costs. On small engagements, this usually means very little; the goblins will expend themselves trying to reach their target.



In a large-scale battle, however, with hundreds of flaming goblins charging at once, the tactic can be devastating. It severs the chain of command, separating units from their commanders and commanders from their generals. With the breakdown comes a loss of group coordination or even the splintering of a given unit. When combined with a more disciplined force, the goblins' suicide charges can cripple an opposing offensive.

Fortunately, such epic battles are rare, as goblin armies of sufficient scale are hard to come by.

In closing, I wish to stress the very real dangers goblins pose. While devoid of intelligence and self-destructive in the extreme, their simplistic antics can have a devastating effect. As comical as they may seem at times, they are driven by malevolence and a fanatical hatred of their Dark Lord's enemies. In conjunction with the more fearsome Shadowlands inhabitants, their assaults can be devastating.

Perhaps one day we will be able to rid ourselves of these pests once and for all. Until then, heed the wisdom and warnings of these pages, and your journeys through the Shadowlands will be much less arduous.



山人



山子

Chapter 4:
Ogres and Trolls

Common Ogre

EARTH: 2

Stamina: 6

FIRE: 3

WATER: 1

Strength: 6

AIR: 1

Rolls When

Attacking: 4k4

Rolls For Damage:

8k2 (big club, maybe
small tree)

TN to be Hit: 20

Armor: 7

Wounds per Level:

15: - 1, 30: - 2, 45: - 3,

60: Dead

Ogres

Fu Leng's first creations, the goblins, are vile and dangerous, but they were not the merciless tools of destruction that the Dark Lord desired. He decided to experiment and redesign in order to create a more threatening minion. The results were the ogres.

Much more intimidating than their diminutive kin, ogres stand nearly three ken-an (eight feet) tall, brutish beasts with thick hides, sharp tusks and more brawn than brain (unlike goblins, who have little of either).



Physiology

Ogres' bodies are strong and powerful, bulging with muscles and knotted veins. They are less ill-proportioned than the goblins: an exaggeration of sturdy, strapping human men. Every feature of the ogre suggests power. They have broad, barrel-like chests, long, powerful arms and legs, and large meaty hands. Their necks are thick and roped with straining tendons. Their skin is tough and gray, with mottled spots and scars from past battles. Black, pointed claws sprout from their fingers and toes, and their oversized lower jaws bear tusks that point to the sky. Some ogres have horns or bony knobs protruding from their skulls, others have full heads of shaggy, tangled black hair. The latter often pull their hair back into scraggly topknots.

To my knowledge, no one has ever seen a female ogre. My own theory is that there are no females and that the ogres cannot reproduce themselves. While an accurate count of the population would be impossible, my research and estimations suggest that a rather small number of ogres exist. I suspect that Fu Leng was not prepared for the explosive, rabid propagation of the goblin species, and when creating his next children, decided to limit their reproductive abilities. The truth may never be known, although it is not inconceivable to think that he possesses other means to create new ogres.

Ogre Behavior

Ogres are generally solitary creatures. I have only once witnessed an encounter between two ogres: the scene was brief, and only one survived... barely. They are fiercely territorial, establishing an area that they patrol diligently and defending it against others, including their own kind. They are unbiased in their hatred of others — any creature entering their domain is considered a trespasser, prey to be hunted and destroyed. My Kuni brethren have reported extremely rare incidents of ogres working together. From what I have learned, this would be contrary to their nature. I would venture to guess that if there were such a "gang" of ogres, surely a more powerful ogre had enslaved the others to do its will. There may also be ogre "Kings," like those among the goblins, that are capable of uniting their kind. In any case, incidents of ogres cooperating with each other are rare in the extreme.

As far as I have observed, ogres have no true, structured language. They manage a crude form of communication through body language, bellows, and frightening exhibitions of strength. This "ogre vocabulary" consists mainly of threatening displays and howls of victory. Ogres are mainly scavengers. They patrol their territories, destroying any intruders. After disposing of the offender, they will take what they want from the body, including nourishment. Though I have not witnessed an ogre dining on a goblin carcass, I have reason to believe

Adventure Hook

One of the player's family members was killed by an ogre in the Shadowlands. Their remains and possessions (including an important family heirloom – sword, helmet, etc) are now part of the ogre's trophy wall.

they may be a mainstay of the ogre diet. Ogre lairs are always littered with bones and decaying corpses — the majority of which are goblin, although there are often human bones as well. I believe the ogres prefer to eat in solitude, dragging their prey back to their lairs to devour in private. I have not yet discovered the reason for this peculiar "shyness".

Once, I commissioned a troupe of samurai to fetch me a living ogre, so that I could study it in my workshop. Three days later they returned with the prize, along with many broken bones and festering wounds. I cleaned and wrapped the wounds quickly and sent them to my cousin, Kuni Miko, for healing. I did not have time to see to it myself; I was eager to begin my experiments.

They had brought the beast in with a huge, reinforced net. It took all four of them to drag the monster to my quarters, straining all the way. Two additional men were required to heft the beast onto my stone table, and a shugenja among them had to cast a Command the Mind spell on the thing to keep it subdued. As I tied its limbs down with sturdy rope, mumbling spells to make the twine stronger, the ogre let out low grunts and growling moans.

When it awakened, it was confused by its surroundings. After blinking and peering about, it tried to sit up and discovered its bonds, which sent it into an immediate frenzy. I beseeched the kami within the ropes to hold fast and whispered a short prayer to Amaterasu for assistance. As the ogre continued to scream and thrash, my patience began to wane until finally, I took up my measuring rod from its place on the wall and struck the beast square on the head. To my surprise, this stunned it and it ceased its infernal clamor. It seemed to notice me, then, watching me with dull, beady eyes. Such empty eyes, full of pain and confusion. It was then that I realized that the creatures of Fu Leng were in essence sad, pitiful things.

The Lord Fu Leng is a cruel father. The creatures he births seem designed to be not only frightening and powerful bringers of pain, but bearers of pain as well. Their forms are ill proportioned, their bodies malformed and twisted against the balanced symmetry of nature. They live in pain; they breathe it and move through it every day of their lives. The evil essence that flows through their veins burns them always, and their gnarled, shrunken hearts beat angrily against the torment of their existence. They know only pain,

anger, fear and wretchedness. Their only escape is to share this horror with others, to cause pain instead of feeling it. They live to hurt and maim and kill, to torture and abuse as they are tortured and abused by their Dark Master. This, I believe, is a fundamental truth of the Shadowlands, one that must be understood in order to defeat its inhabitants. And though this revelation may engender in some a small sense of sympathy for the creatures of Fu Leng, do not mistake my observations of their unfortunate circumstances for pity or concern. All minions of the Fallen God are unnatural abominations that must be eradicated in order to return the world to its former state of balance. What greater mercy can we show these miserable beings than to end their pain and torment?

The bound ogre alternated between states of sullen calm and fits of furious tugging and straining. I tested its pain limits, took samples of its vital fluids, and inspected its features as best I could with its stinking, snapping mouth mere inches from my face. When I had finished my preliminary tests, I cast a Command the Mind spell upon it once more to coax it into fitful slumber, then summoned several of my Crab brothers to drag the ogre to the large iron cage that fills one corner of my workshop.

I kept the ogre for almost a week this way, performing various experiments and trials. I was surprised to find that the beast refused to eat. I offered it rice and gruel, fish and vegetables, even raw horseflesh. All of these it smashed away with



disdain. Having suspected the goblins as a food source, I had my apprentices fetch one for me. They brought the goblin in, already struggling against its captors. When it saw the ogre, it froze and began to tremble like a dried leaf in the breeze. Then a wretched, high-pitched wail burst from it and my assistants had to wrestle it to the ground to halt its frenzied thrashing. The ogre's reaction to the goblin intrigued me. The brutish beast bolted upright in rapt attention as the goblin was brought in. It gripped the bars of its cage, pressing its face against them and snorting at the air hungrily. It tried to wedge its hands between the bars to make a grab for it, but its massive paws were too big. As the goblin began its wailing cry, the ogre's lips twisted into what I took to be a grin and it bounced up and down in apparent amusement. Then it began to drool.

Thus encouraged, I ordered my assistants to bring the gibbering goblin forward. I prepared to open the gate and signaled for the goblin to be thrown in. As it flew forward, I quickly opened the gate door, then locked it again the instant it had passed. The ogre seemed far more interested in food than escape at that point. It surged forward, easily catching the hapless creature in its crushing grip. The sound of grinding bones could be heard under the senseless, formless whining of abject fear that continued to bubble forth from the unfortunate goblin. The ogre brought the goblin up before it, both hands wrapped around its squirming torso, and with one jolting shake, the goblin's fragile neck was snapped and its hysterical keening brought to an abrupt end.

The ogre crouched over the still-twitching body, clearly eager to devour it, when suddenly it stopped, its dull eyes turning toward me. It lowered its head and slunk into the corner of the cage, leaving the dead goblin in a flaccid heap on the other side of its prison. It did not touch the corpse after this. I cannot fathom that such a primitive beast, forged by the evil of Fu Leng, could feel remorse or shame, but I have no other explanation for its modesty. It simply refused to eat, letting the goblin carcass rot until the smell compelled me to have it removed.

It took the ogre almost two weeks to waste away and finally die of starvation. The entire time it simply squatted in its cell and refused any offering of nourishment.

Once the creature's life had ebbed, I was able to examine the body at my leisure. I took diligent measurements, compiling them with my other findings, which I plan to assemble into a comparative survey. I found the internal organs to be similar to their human equivalents, though as with all Shadowlands creatures, the tissue is foul and misshapen.

Within the stomach I did indeed discover fragments of goblin bones, as well as traces of toxic plant matter that would bring instant death if ingested by a man. (I am currently testing the possibility of using extracts from the secretions of ogre stomachs as antidotes against poisons.) Perhaps the most intriguing gastronomic discoveries were several links of well-made chain mail and a severely masticated bit of leather armor laced in the sugaki style.



Ogre Dwellings

Ogres usually reside in a small, dingy cave or tunnel with barely room enough for the creature to squat or curl up to sleep.

Like their goblin cousins, they



seem to disregard sanitation and live in squalor, littering their lairs and surrounding area with refuse. An ogre lair can often be found by simply following the stench.

They often have a pile, stack, or even a "wall" of bones and other items built up near the entrance. This is mainly made up of the skulls of victims — goblins, a few human skulls here and there, and the occasional minor oni skull. To acquire the skulls, ogres wrench the heads from the corpses of their victims with disturbing ease. There are sometimes weapons, bits of armor and other possessions arranged within or around the structure.

This particular "constructive" aspect of ogre behavior astonishes me; in contrast to the garbage around them the piles are often quite neatly arranged. Their exact purpose is not entirely clear. Perhaps they are trophies, to commemorate the ogre's deeds. Maybe they are signals to other ogres who may pass — a warning and show of prowess. Some have speculated that they are meant as shrines and altars to Fu Leng and there have even been

suggestions that it is a form of "ogre art." Whatever the reason, this ritual seems to be important to the ogres, and anyone who damages or "defiles" their mounds risks the creatures' wrath. It is amusing to note that most ogres would rather display a scavenged weapon than use it.

Ogres in Combat

Ogres are not subtle beings. They may not be the sons of Osano-Wo, but "their rage trembles the earth as the storm shakes the sky." So my Crane acquaintances say. I say they are big, ungraceful and loud. You can more often than not hear an ogre long before it comes into view. Their grunts, growls and bellows echo across the desolate landscape of the Shadowlands, often accompanied by terrified screams. Their heavy footfalls evince no concern for stealth.

Their fighting "style" consists mainly of smashing, crushing and ripping. They do not employ "techniques"—they do not possess the intelligence, discipline, or finesse to develop such concepts. Despite the ogre's unrefined tactics, an unfortunate individual caught by their mauling hands will often be crushed into paste. I have seen overconfident samurai broken like twigs after maneuvering too close to an ogre's grasping limbs.

Ogres sometimes use their surroundings as tools and weapons. I have seen them hurling boulders the size of ponies and swinging entire trees like massive clubs. Occasionally I will observe an exceptionally bright ogre using weapons and wearing bits of human armor that they have scavenged from human or Nezumi victims. Of course, as stated previously, they are not versed in the proper schools of combat, so their skills are no match for a well-trained bushi. Nonetheless, an enraged ogre swinging a broken katana at your head like a tetsubo is still a threat.

Some travellers claim to have seen ogres strap the entire dead body of a slain samurai or Nezumi to themselves, effectively using them as a sort of "body armor." Given the ogre's level of intelligence, I do not completely dismiss the possibility. I could postulate that an ogre, having difficulty deciphering the complex fixtures of our armor, may have simply given up and decided it would afford even more protection while still attached to the body.

Ogres are extremely tough creatures, and can sustain an enormous amount of

damage before falling. Injuries often only enrage them and makes them more formidable. Ironically, the more injuries one inflicts, the more dangerous an ogre will become. Tenacity and stamina are required when engaging these beasts, for they do not stop, or even slow, until they have suffered truly massive amounts of damage.

Trolls

Trolls are much more reclusive than their territorial kin and studying them has proved frustrating. I believe these lumbering beasts were conceived in the same period as the ogres, as they possess many similar qualities. Whether they are merely an offshoot of the ogre breed or an entire species unto themselves has yet to be determined.



Physiology

Like ogres, trolls are large and solidly built, designed mainly for pure brute force and physical power. But while the ogres are rather lean — their bulk being made up of almost solid muscle — trolls possess more fatty tissue. Their sickly green flesh is flabby and corpulent, with a moist sheen that gives them a slippery appearance. They are more misshapen and move less gracefully than the more properly proportioned ogres, and do not stand as tall, measuring a little more than two ken-an (between six and seven feet). They have great hanging jowls with protruding fangs and their beady, glowing eyes can be seen gleaming in the darkness from a good distance. Their arms are abnormally long, with grossly stretched fingers possessing multiple joints and deadly claws.

Unlike the ogres, trolls do have two obvious sexes, and unlike the goblins, they tend to live together in "family units" of up to five individuals. Troll females only seem to reproduce once every several years; I have not been able to observe the birth or juvenile stages of these reclusive creatures, so I do not know the particulars of that process. I assume, however, that like all other Shadowlands creatures, the mothers do not show affection or care for their offspring. Survival to adulthood is most likely based on rapid maturation and inborn survival instincts, not on any care provided by the parents.

Habitat

Trolls tend to linger in the swampy regions of the Shadowlands, preferring a humid, moist environment. I believe they are amphibious — able to breathe both air and water. They often lurk just below the murky surface of the mire, ready to spring upon a passerby. They can remain underwater for many hours without emerging, and exercise inhuman patience while waiting for their prey. In addition to hunting, troll "families" will also roam the swamps foraging for food: picking bits of rotting matter from the muck and rooting about in the mire for the foul wriggling creatures that populate these regions. Unlike ogres,



trolls have no compunctions about what they consume, and will greedily devour even the most repellent morsels.

I have not been able to locate or identify a troll lair. I speculate that they may have submerged dens in the brackish marsh pools, or perhaps they simply sink into the putrid mud for shelter. Either way, they are able to disappear into the swamps in a matter of moments. They are rarely found

Common Troll

outside of their territorial domain, and it is reasonable to assume that most troll families remain close to a permanent lair of some sort. Beyond that, I cannot speculate.

Attacks and Tactics

As a rule, when trolls spot humans entering their area, they will scatter and vanish into the swamps, leaving nothing but rapidly disappearing footprints. They will then wait for the interlopers to venture further into the swamp, where the trolls ambush them from their hiding places. When springing an ambush, they move with blinding speed, emerging from total concealment and overwhelming their victims in the blink of an eye.

Trolls attack by striking out and raking with their razor-sharp claws. They are surprisingly fast for their cumbersome outward appearance and can strike with dexterity that belies their misshapen appendages. It is best to stay out of a troll's reach, for it takes only a second for one of their arms to lash out and rip bloody gashes across an opponent.

When attacking, trolls become quite agitated, bouncing and hopping about while emitting terrible, ear-splitting screeches. I believe this is a deliberate tactic used to disconcert and confuse the enemy. It can certainly be distracting and often provides them with a decisive edge in combat.

If faced with superior forces, trolls will disappear and remain out of sight until their foes are gone. They will fight with all the ferocity they can muster until at least one of their number has been slain. When traveling through the Shadowlands swamps, it is imperative to maintain constant vigilance for these dangerous foes, and to give them a wide berth if at all possible.

EARTH: 2

Stamina: 5

FIRE: 3

WATER: 1

Strength: 5

AIR: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When

Attacking: 4k4

Rolls For Damage:

6k2 (big club, maybe
small tree)

TN to be Hit: 30

Armor: 7

Wounds per Level:

10: - 1, 20: - 2, 40: - 3,

55: Dead

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Chapter 5:

Omi

Oni no Chi

Rank 5 Shugenja

EARTH: 6

WATER: 4

FIRE: 9

AIR: 5

Attacking: 9k9

Damage: 10k7

TN to be Hit: 25

Armor: 4

Wounds: 90; -1;

70; -2; 120; -3; 200;

Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear: 4

Invulnerability

Oni no Chi can

cast any Fire spell in one round, as long as

it is in the

Shadowlands. If it's

outside of the

Shadowlands, it can

cast any Fire spell

normally. (Note: Oni

no Chi has no

compunction about

using "Inflame" on

spell scrolls, either.)

Oni of the Shadowlands

Unlike the other great clans, the Crab have had substantial experience with the Shadowlands. We have seen the oni who inhabit that dark realm and know how much more terrible they are than those brought forth by the magical workings of human shugenja. They are the creations of Fu Leng, the Fallen God, a powerful supernatural being possessed of innate might that even the most skilled shugenja can only dream of.

The Dark Lord has developed many unique oni monstrosities. Each is deadly in its own way and all bear limitless hatred for their human foes. Their unknown qualities make predicting their behavior difficult, if not impossible, and most experienced Crab bushi will avoid confrontation unless a conflict is inevitable. I have no doubt that our Eternal Foe delights in the confusion his one-of-a-kind minions produce, which is why their numbers are as great as snowflakes in the winter.

I have documented some of the unique oni that I have encountered. Below is a compilation of information my family and clansmen have assembled. While we do possess some useful knowledge, I must reiterate that purposefully challenging these abominations is foolish in the extreme.

Unique Oni

Oni no Chi

One of the most fearsome Oni encountered by my clansmen, Oni no Chi is a powerful and terrifying foe not to be trifled with. Brash young samurai who think themselves invincible are humbled quickly and permanently with little effort on this oni's part. Physically it is very strong, with reddened flesh and long, muscular arms. It stands nearly five ken-an (fifteen feet) tall with black horns and bristles sprouting from its head and shoulders. Its perpetually grinning mouth is filled with dagger-like teeth, but it prefers to use its magical powers in conflict, which are even more fearsome than its brute strength.

Many, many foolish samurai have been slaughtered by this creature, destroyed in an instant by its mighty magic. Normal weapons and attacks cannot harm it; only several highly skilled shugenja working together can defeat it. They must combine their powers to fend off its attacks until it finally grows weary and its magic begins to falter. Then a concentrated magical assault might be able to banish it. Few, however, have the knowledge and willpower to attempt such an undertaking.

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Oni no Genso

EARTH: 3

WATER: 3

FIRE: 4

AIR: 4

Attacking: 2 attacks,

6k4

Damage: 6k2

TN to be Hit: 20

Armor: 3

Wounds: 15: -1; 30: -

2; 50: Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear 4

Invulnerability

While attacking, the Oni no Genso delivers a series of taunts and challenges designed to strike at the secret fears of its opponents. The effect disrupts its foe's concentration, allowing it to attack with greater ease. Void points may not be used within twenty feet of an Oni no Genso and all characters' School Ranks drop by two (minimum of 0) in its presence.

Oni no Genso

One of the more intelligent oni, Genso is one of the few oni who have mastered refined combat techniques. Oni no Genso is humanoid in form, but with a demonic face constantly twisted into a hideous, leering grin. It wears an impeccably clean hakama, which it gleefully boasts of as a mockery of the samurai it so disdains. It will spar with a warrior, taunting and insulting as it effortlessly fights with considerable skill.

I have seen even the most focused warriors break and founder under Oni no Genso's cruel chiding. It is utterly relentless and will not let its opponent rest for a moment, but presses the attack until the samurai is overcome. It can only be defeated by persistence, unflinching focus and strength of spirit.



Oni no Ianwa

Fear: 6

The Fear Aura generated by Oni no Ianwa is greater than any other Oni in the

Shadowlands. A contested Fear vs.

Willpower roll is required in order to overcome it. If it is successful, the target suffers no ill-effect from the Oni, and it disappears to find a more suitable victim.

If the Fear takes control of the victim, he must spend one Void point per day in order to disobey the Oni's demands. If he does or can not spend a Void point, he has no choice but to do whatever it takes to fulfill the oni's demands.

The only way to overcome the Fear Aura of Oni no Ianwa is to make another Fear vs.

Willpower contested roll. There are two conditions, however.

First, the victim must be at full Void. Second, the victim's Willpower is considered one Rank lower. If the roll fails, the victim suffers a loss

of one Rank of the Void Ring and one Rank of Willpower. Such a test can only be made once per day.

Samurai with an Honor Rank of 3 or greater may substitute their Honor for their Willpower ... but a failed roll brings a loss of one Honor Rank in addition to a loss of Void, as above.
(continued)

Oni No Danwa

One of several unique oni identified by the Hiruma scouts,

Oni No Danwa is a lazy, slothful being who thrives on fear.

While it presumably originates in the Shadowlands, it has the power to travel far and wide in search of victims. It seeks out weak-willed people when they are alone and vulnerable, threatening to consume them unless they offer up a sacrifice. This can be any offering that the oni specifies, from an ancestral sword to a single rose petal; often the oni will initially accept a small, trivial object and disappear. But once it has made contact, it will continue to plague its victim mercilessly, escalating its threats and demanding more and more

valuable sacrifices each time it appears. It does not actually need or value the payment it demands; it feeds on the fear and panic that its threats inspire.

Many people have been driven mad by Oni No Danwa's torments. The creature will never reveal itself to anyone other than the victim, giving him or her the visage of madness — babbling about an invisible tormentor, going into desperate debt for no apparent reason, or undertaking absurd and dangerous quests to fulfill the oni's impossible requirements. Many victims, too spiritually weak to fight back, will take their own lives when the threats become too much. The proper defense against the Oni no Danwa is to simply refuse its requests — a prospect easier said than done. Its visage is often so horrid and its threats so intimidating that even brave samurai find themselves succumbing to its demands.

It is rumored that Oni no Danwa has a lair deep in the Shadowlands, filled with all the offerings it has collected from its victims.



Ianwa's Demands

The Oni no Ianwa will always begin its demands with relatively trivial material things - a tanto, article of clothing, food or drink. Players should be given the impression that it would be easier to just give it what it wants - then it will go away and leave them alone. As it returns and begins demanding more sacrifices, the stakes will increase; often, the demands will necessitate a loss of honor - stealing from a friend or superior, for example, or behaving inappropriately during a Clan feast. Eventually the oni will ask for truly terrible deeds like the destruction of ancestral artifacts or the murder of loved ones. Keep in mind that the Ianwa is a coward at heart, and will flee if seriously threatened (usually disappearing in a puff of smoke).

Common Oni Subspecies

Fu Leng has also spawned many subspecies of oni, endlessly replicating particular servants who have performed exceptionally well, or which would benefit from an increase in numbers. Each individual is exactly like its brethren, performing with the same abilities, the same skills, and the same amount of intelligence. Such oni form the shock troops of the Shadowlands army, sent against us in unending waves. Presumably, this repetition serves a specific purpose known only to the Dark Lord. It does have the advantage of making them easy to predict, which has allowed us to learn a great deal about them. While information on unique oni remains elusive, time and tenacity have uncovered the weaknesses of numerous subspecies, allowing us to combat them much more effectively.

We do not know how exactly the subspecies procreate. Some among my family suggest that Fu Leng creates one every time one is vanquished, so that the population of a given subspecies stays the same. Others have speculated that they spawn somehow, that the parasites which tend to cluster around them are actually young of a sort. Whatever the reason, the details of their origin and exact form of reproduction remain a mystery, and they flourish despite the best efforts of my clansmen. The answer may never be clear, but they have no shortage of numbers, and no single subspecies has ever been declared extinct.

Following is the compilation of knowledge of the oni subspecies we have been able to analyze. This list is by no means complete - there are untold other subspecies that roam the Shadowlands that we have not yet encountered. But what we do know is written here. Study this information carefully and it may prolong your life.

Oni no Ashi

EARTH: 5

WATER: 4

FIRE: 5

AIR: 3

Attacking: 5k5

Damage: 1k1 plus
poison (see below)

TN to Hit: 15

Armor: 6

Wounds: 20; -1; 40;

-2; 60; Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear: 3

Oni no Ashi can make one attack on each of its opponents every round. Each point of damage it does is one "thorn" fired from its tentacles.

These thorns are poisonous; when a samurai gets hit, make an Earth-roll. The TN is 5 X the number of thorns struck (i.e., the number of Wounds taken). If the roll is failed, the samurai's Agility, Stamina, Strength or Reflexes are reduced by 1 for an hour (GM chooses one attribute to be reduced).



Oni no Ashi

Oni no Ashi haunt the desert and canyon regions of the Shadowlands, where they can slither under the shifting sands or lurk in shadowy caves. Their bodies are grub-like, their bellies armored with tough plates, and their skin is thick and leathery, able to deflect most missile weapons. Multiple tentacles sprout from their sides, undulating in serpentine rhythms. Spines and spikes send the body and arms, and at the tips of the tentacles are long thorny darts. These darts are imbued with a debilitating poison that weakens and paralyzes the target. Oni no Ashi can shoot these darts with terrifying velocity, with a range of five ken-an (fifteen feet). Full samurai armor will deflect these darts, but lesser armor is easily penetrated.

If one can get in close enough to strike with a bladed weapon, the tentacles are easily severed and the oni's flesh can be penetrated. It is also vulnerable to successful magical attack.

Oni no Byoki

EARTH: 4
WATER: 4
FIRE: 4
AIR: 4
Attacking: 4k4
Damage: 4k4

(special)
TN to be Hit: 20
Armor: 4
Wounds: 60: -1;
80: -2; 100: Dead

Special Abilities:
Fear 4

Whenever Byoki is struck, it spatters blood and matter in a five foot radius. Anyone hit has to make an Earth roll against TN 20 or be infected. If infected, the samurai has three days to undergo a purification ritual (such as Blessing of Purity). Otherwise, the unfortunate victim becomes a plague zombie. The same roll against infection has to be made by anyone who takes damage from Byoki.

Plague Zombies

A plague zombie has the same stats as a common zombie, except anyone struck by it has to make an Earth roll against TN 10 to resist infection (see above).

Common Zombie stats are on page 31.



Oni no Byoki

Oni no Byoki are virulent, disease-ridden creatures that spread sickness with a touch or by any contact with bodily fluids. This brittle, shuffling abomination is covered with bulbous pustules that weep foul pus and blackish, oily fluid. The stench of their infection can often be smelt long before they are sighted. Oni no Byoki are not terribly skilled, fast or strong, but they do not need

to be. Their purpose is to infect anyone around them with their wretched disease, turning them into a mindless, diseased zombie that will spread the blight further.

Oni no Byoki can pass their dread malady with but the slightest touch. They can also cough up vile masses of phlegm and mucus that cling to anything they touch, also transmitting the disease. Overzealous warriors have become infected by heaving mighty blows upon Oni no Byoki — their tetsubos smashing down to break open the swollen sores and spatter the contagious pus on themselves.

Those who have been exposed to the disease must undergo a purification ritual (such as Blessing of Purity) within three days or the disease will be too far gone to cure. By that time, the disease reaches the victim's brain and the Oni will exert control over his mind, turning him into a senseless, contagious minion. These transformed victims strongly resemble the common zombie, but are able to spread the disease like their unwholesome masters. These Byoki Zombies, or Plague Zombies, can be differentiated from common zombies by the oozing sores that cover their decaying bodies, and the sour, rancid-milk odor that surrounds them. If the Oni that spawned the zombie has been slain, the infected shell of the victim will wander aimlessly until Fu Leng takes notice and exerts His will upon it, or until evil kansen invade the body and take control.

Oni no Doro

These malleable creatures make their home in the fetid swamps and wet, muddy regions of the Shadowlands. Their form is so perfectly camouflaged by their habitat that hunting them is virtually impossible.

Oni no Doro appears as a structureless mass of flowing, burbling mud. While waiting motionless for victims, it cannot be discerned from its surroundings by normal senses. This allows it the advantage of surprise attacks, and makes for extremely tense and fearfully cautious treks through the corrupted swamps.

Oni no Doro attacks when an unwary traveller steps into it. The mud at his feet suddenly comes to life — squeezing and sucking and swarming up his legs to eventually engulf him. The foul matter of the creature surrounds the victim, even forcing its way into the ears, nose and mouth. Someone being attacked in this manner cannot be cut out; bladed weapons have no effect on Oni no Doro due to the liquid nature of its body. An attempt to slice through the "mud" will most likely only wound the victim within. Fire can prove an effective weapon, however, as can jade.

Oni no Doro kills by suffocation. After death the victim's body sinks into the mire to be digested and absorbed — increasing Oni no Doro's size with every successful attack. A decimated regiment of Hida bushi once told me of their journey through a swamp near the River of the Dark Moon. Out of twenty men, eight made it through the harrowing experience. The survivors claim that the entire morass is actually a single Oni no Doro — stretching for several square miles, and undoubtedly bigger now since the acquisition of the twelve Hida soldiers.



Oni no Doro

EARTH: 5

WATER: 4

FIRE: 5

AIR: 4

Attacking: 5k5

Damage: Special (see below)

TN to be Hit: 20

Armor: 0

Wounds: 30: -1; 60: -2; 90:

-3; 120: Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear: 2

Invulnerability

- When Oni no Doro successfully strikes someone, it does no damage, but that person is partially engulfed. The Oni no Doro takes three rounds to completely engulf its victim. In the first round, the samurai can try to break free by wrestling out of its grip (jijutsu or sumai; resolve it as an attack against Doro's TN to be Hit). The second round, the samurai is at -1 die to escape. If the samurai doesn't escape in two rounds, Doro has covered his mouth and engulfed him.

An engulfed person rolls Earth against a TN of 5 the first round. Next round the TN is doubled (10) and this continues to double each round (20, 40, 80, etc.). Every time one of these rolls is failed, the suffering samurai loses a Wound Rank. These immediately return if the samurai gets free of Doro.

When Doro consumes someone, it immediately gains another point of Earth (maximum 10) and another 5 wound points to every Wound Rank (no maximum).

Smaller Doro have been encountered; just take off a point of Earth and 5 wound points from every Wound Rank to make a "baby Doro."

- Doro take normal damage from fire.

Oni no Gekido

EARTH: 4/6/2

WATER: 3/7/2

FIRE: 5/7/3

AIR: 4/5/2

Attacking:

5k5/7k7/5k2

Damage:

3k3/7k7/2k2

TN to be Hit:

20/25/10

Armor: 3/8/0

Wounds: 40: -2; 50: -

2; 60: -3; 100: Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear: 2 in normal state, Fear: 4 in Rage

Oni no Gekido usually has the first set of stats – Earth 4, Water 3, Armor 3, etc. Keep track of each time Oni no Gekido rolls a 10. When it's rolled five 10s, it rages for 1-10 rounds.

While in its Rage state, Gekido uses the second set of stats -- Fire 7, Armor 8, etc. For the first two rounds of Rage, it is immune to normal weapons and all spells cast at it have their TN increased by 20. Once the Rage ends, the third set of stats are used (Earth 2, Fire 3, etc.) for 1-10 rounds.

Oni no Gekido

When in a normal state, Gekido is a tough opponent, but when it flies into its fits of Rage, it is nearly impossible to kill. The Rage starts randomly and without warning — there is not necessarily a trigger. Rages usually last from 5-10 minutes. On the first two minutes, Oni no Gekido is unstoppable and immune to all attacks, physical and magical. It will destroy anything in its path. As the Rage subsides, it becomes increasingly vulnerable and weak. After the Rage has ended, Gekido is at its most fragile for a period of about two minutes. In this state it will attempt to keep its distance and gather its strength. A relatively weak attack could possibly destroy it in this state.

Oni no Gekido delights in the destruction it causes when enraptured in its terrifying rage, flinging itself about to smash buildings, trees, anything in its way. Entire villages have been destroyed by Oni no Gekido's fury. Those fortunate enough to survive tell tales of its high-pitched, maniacal laughter, and its slithering, hissing voice as it whispers fervent praise to its Dark Master.



Oni no Kiri

EARTH: 6
WATER: 5
FIRE: 6
AIR: 6
Attacking: 8k6
Damage: 10k6
TN to be Hit: 30
Armor: 6
Wounds: 50: -1;
100: -2; 150: Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear: 4

Oni no Kiri can make three attacks per round.

Any time Oni no Kiri is struck by a non-*nemuranai* weapon, it does damage normally, but Oni no Kiri has a chance to break the weapon. Oni no Kiri rolls Water against TN 35; if it succeeds, the weapon is broken. This TN is reduced by 10 for Poor weapons, raised by 5 for Fine weapons, and raised by 10 for Excellent weapons.



Oni no Kiri

Oni no Kiri is an enormous arachnid creature with many gleaming eyes and long, jointed limbs. These limbs are covered with razor-sharp ridges, and taper down to blade-like claws that slash without mercy. These "blades" can easily slice through leather armor and a hard blow can even cut through metal. I have seen katana blades halved in a shower of sparks by a powerful swing from Oni no Kiri. With the profusion of deadly outstretched limbs, it is almost impossible to get close enough for an attack with a melee weapon. Ranged weapons can be effective, but Oni no Kiri's tough shell often deflects projectiles.



Oni no Kiri

EARTH: 6
WATER: 5
FIRE: 6
AIR: 6
Attacking: 8k6
Damage: 10k6
TN to be Hit: 30
Armor: 6
Wounds: 50: -1;
100: -2; 150: Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear: 4

Oni no Kiri can make three attacks per round.

Any time Oni no Kiri is struck by a non-*nemuranai* weapon, it does damage normally, but Oni no Kiri has a chance to break the weapon. Oni no Kiri rolls Water against TN 35; if it succeeds, the weapon is broken. This TN is reduced by 10 for Poor weapons, raised by 5 for Fine weapons, and raised by 10 for Excellent weapons.



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Oni no Manesuru

While it may not possess the obviously repulsive features of most of its kind, Oni no Manesuru can nonetheless be one of the most disturbing and harrowing foes a samurai will ever face. Its shadowy humanoid form flickers and shifts, making it hard to focus on. When it faces an opponent, it takes on the shape of that person, mirroring height, weight and build. Whatever weapon it is faced with it will reproduce out of its amorphous flesh, exactly replicating the heft, strength and effectiveness of the weapon. Details surface across its swirling flesh and melt away — flashes of its opponent's own features. Physical attitudes — stance, gait, mannerisms — are all mirrored flawlessly. It will even mimic its opponent's voice — casting it back at them in perfect, mocking echoes.

Oni no Manesuru will also take on whatever skills, strength and stamina the opponent possesses. Each attack a warrior attempts will be unfailingly deflected, and a counterattack immediately launched. Its frustrated enemy finds it difficult to maintain focus and concentration through a seemingly endless, perfectly matched fight, especially when the opponent is a darkly shimmering shadow that taunts you with your own techniques. Manesuru will use its opponent's frustration against him, gaining the advantage. To defeat Oni no Manesuru, a samurai must draw upon his inner strength, channel his chi in order to maintain focus, and fight with all the skill he possesses.

Manesuru is adept at matching shugenja opponents as well as bushi. Instead of trading blows, Manesuru will counterspell and reflect any magical attack.

Oni no Manesuru are one of the few oni who work together in groups. They always appear in exactly the same number as the party they face, so each individual has an opponent. This effectively prevents individuals from helping each other, as they are occupied with their own battle. Some have speculated that these Manesuru "groups" are actually only one being, split into however many forms are needed to keep all members of a party busy.



Oni no Manesuru

EARTH: as opponent

WATER: as opponent

FIRE: as opponent

AIR: as opponent

Attacking: as opponent

Damage: as opponent

TN to be Hit: as

opponent

Armor: as opponent

Wounds: as opponent

Special Abilities: Each Oni no Manesuru will remain in one form as long as its opponent is alive. Once it dispatches its opponent, it will disappear, leaving its oni companions to destroy their respective foes. Characters who destroy their matching oni may assist their companions in any way they see fit.

Instead of attacking, the

Oni no Manesuru can automatically parry any attack thrown at it — they do not need to roll to parry or counterspell. It will always launch a counterattack (rolled as normal) on the round following any attack.

Oni no Manesuru do not have and cannot spend Void points, even those used by the character they are mirroring. Void points spent by a character against them are not reflected in the oni's subsequent rolls, giving characters at least one advantage on their inhuman *doppelgänger*. Oni no Manesuru may not parry an attack that is augmented with Void points.

Oni no Sanru

EARTH: 4

WATER: 3

FIRE: 3

AIR: 4

Attacking: 5k3

Damage: 5k3

TN to be Hit: 20

Armor: 3

Wounds: 10: -2; 20: -3; 40: -4; 60: Dead.

Special Abilities:

Sanru can fly, though not spectacularly well. They have the option of forgoing an attack for one round to gain altitude; treat this maneuver as a Full Dodge, but they cannot be struck with hand to hand weapons on a round in which they climb. The round after they climb, they can make a Full Attack and roll 8k4 to attack. If the swooping attack is successful, the damage is also 6k4.



Oni no Sanru

Oni no Sanru are unusual among oni because they tend to work together in small groups. They are approximately man-sized, though their extra set of arms makes them a little taller (two feet) than a normal man, and their five ken-an (fifteen-foot) wingspan gives them the illusion of greater size. If unarmed, they attack mainly by swooping down upon their victims and delivering powerful kicks to the head and shoulders. If they have managed to scavenge weapons, they will use them as well, though they are unskilled and use brutish slashing and bludgeoning techniques.

I have seen them in groups of two or three, and on rarer occasions up to five. Their flight is rather slow, and a volley of well-aimed arrows can usually bring them to the ground.

Oni no Sodatsu

Oni no Sodatsu

This oni's form is a shifting, pulsing, hideous mound. It slumps along, rolling over the ground in rippling waves of gelatinous flesh, constantly changing and reshaping itself as it moves. This effect is quite disturbing, even to my jaded eyes. The creature extrudes stringy tendrils at will, using them to direct devastating blasts of magical energy that mercilessly wear down its opponents. It can also send out broad planes of force that deflect the strikes of conventional weapons. If a shugenja manages to successfully cast a spell at Oni no Sodatsu, it will absorb the power, its writhing form growing both in size and power. The more magic sent its way, the stronger and more deadly it grows. Magical attack is useless — detrimental, in fact.

The only course of action that can disable or slay this creature is to time physical attacks carefully. The creature can only strike out with its magic one blast or block at a time. If a group of warriors can surround the beast and distract it on one front, while another strikes as it readies for another attack, an advantage can be gained. But if the oni has been fortified with a shugenja's misguided attacks, it can take many wounds before it will succumb. An encounter with Oni no Sodatsu is an exhausting, arduous experience.

EARTH: 4
WATER: 5
FIRE: 5
AIR: 4
Attacking: 5k5
Damage: 8k5
TN to be Hit: 20
Armor: 4
Wounds: 40; -1; 80; -2; 120; Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear: 2

Sodatsu can forgo its attack in order to place its shield. For the two rounds after it has placed its shield, it cannot be attacked from that side. (The shield covers about half of its body.)

If a bushi is facing its shielded side, that samurai can either spend an attack maneuvering around it, or move and attack, which requires a raise.

Any spell cast on Sodatsu automatically fails. The oni can use the energy spent by the spell to immediately do one of the following: 1) Increase its armor by 1 for three rounds. 2) Regain ten Wounds. 3) Keep an extra die for its next attack and damage.



Oni no Ugulu

EARTH: 6

FIRE: 2

WATER: 2

Strength 8

AIR 1

Rolls when attacking: 4k2

Roll for damage: 8k3

(claws) 8k4 (tree club)

TN to be Hit: 10

Armor: 16/special

Wounds: 25: -1, 45: -2, 60: -3, 70: -4, 80: Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear: 4

Immune to all arrows except armor piercing

Each Ugulu is immune to one and only one spell. Each Ugulu is different and the attack spell in question must be determined by rolling on the following chart:

d10	Spell
1	Curse
2	Bo of Water
3	Earth's Stagnation
4	Weapon of Earth
5	Stealing the Soul
6	Sympathetic Energies
7	Tomb of Jade
8	Jade Strike
9	Touch of Death
10	Katana of Fire

Oni no Ugulu

Towering over four ken-an (thirteen feet) tall, Oni no Ugulu is a big, ugly brute with a nasty temper. Its footsteps shake the ground and its bellows and growling laughter echo across the land as it approaches. It has a thick purplish hide, covered with coarse hair. Normal arrows bounce harmlessly off it, though armor piercers can sometimes penetrate if fired from close range. With its great horns, glowing eyes and tongue like a serpent of flame, Oni no Ugulu strikes terror in all who lay eyes upon it.

It attacks mainly with great sweeps of its massive, clawed hands. A

solid strike by Oni no Ugulu can crush a man's bones to powder. While it lacks skill and strategic cunning, its strength and stamina are great, and it may take a dozen or more men to bring it down by normal means.

Fortunately, it seems to have no defense against magical attack — at least none that we have discovered.



Oni no Wakeru

At first glance, Oni no Wakeru seems to be little threat. Its form is unimposing — a hunching, humanoid shape with a skittering gait and over-long, hanging arms. It attacks mainly by slashing with its claw-tipped hands, which are quite sharp but can be avoided by any well-trained samurai. Wakeru seems to have no concept of defensive moves or retreat, and will allow an opponent to hack off its arms without showing more signs of distress than a hiss or grunt.

Unfortunately, its vulnerable stance is nothing more than a ruse. Dismemberment does not hinder this oni, but helps it. A few moments after a limb is removed, it begins to spasm and shake, then the flesh begins to melt and reform, until a duplicate of the original Wakeru forms from the severed appendage. This new oni will be considerably smaller than the original, but no less vicious. It will quickly surge to attack, distracting opponents from its larger duplicate with its own set of razor-tipped claws. Dismembering it will only produce more, even

smaller oni, which press the attack with gleeful screeches. At this point, the wounds they inflict lose their lethal force (unless one falls prey to corrupt infection), but can still wear a samurai down with persistence. The increasingly tiny pests will not leave their opponent alone until he is overwhelmed or manages to stamp out every last one, a task which can exhaust even the mightiest bushi.



Oni no Wakeru

EARTH: 5/4/3/2/1

WATER: 5/4/3/2/1

FIRE: 5/4/3/2/1

AIR: 5/4/3/2/1

Attacking:

5k2/4k2/3k2/2k2/1k1

Damage:

5k3/4k2/3k2/2k2/1k1

TN to be Hit:

10/15/20/25/30

Armor: 0

Wounds: 10: -1; 20: -

2: 30; Splits (see below)

Special Abilities:

When first encountered, Oni no Wakeru has the first rank of stats (all the fives). Once it takes 30 Wounds, it doesn't die; it splits into two half-sized simulacra of itself. These duplicates have the second rank stats (the fours) and have the same amount of undamaged wound points as the initial Wakeru. When they're killed, they split into a pair of "threes" — each. When they get reduced to 1 in each rank, they can finally be killed.

The natural progression is as follows:

1 at 5

2 at 4

4 at 3

8 at 2

16 at 1

Oni no Yattoko

EARTH: 5

WATER: 6

FIRE: 5

AIR: 4

Attacking: 6k5

Damage: 6k6 or special

(see below)

TN to be Hit: 20

Armor: 7

Wounds: 50: -1; 100: -2;

150: Dead.

Special Abilities:

Fear: 3

Invulnerability

Yattoko is immune to the Lion Precision Strike. It takes two raises to ignore Yattoko's armor.

If Yattoko has struck someone successfully, it can attempt to draw them into its belly on the next turn.

Yattoko can make this attack in addition to its normal attack. If the attack succeeds, the victim cannot attack, and on the next turn digestion begins.

The victim's armor is destroyed first. (Unarmored meals immediately begin taking damage.) Every round the victim spends inside Yattoko, he or she drops a Wound Rank.

It is impossible to cut someone out of Yattoko; they can escape if the jaws are forced open. Prying Yattoko's jaws open requires a jujutsu or sumai roll against TN 20 (TN 30 if Yattoko's still alive). Anyone who tries to open the jaws risks being swallowed next turn (whether Yattoko hit him or not).

If a character manages to inflict 25 Wounds upon a single limb, the limb snaps off.

Oni no Yattoko

In the desert regions of the Shadowlands, where the shifting sands pile in deep dunes, lurk Oni no Yattoko. They shake themselves up from the sand suddenly, towering almost five ken-an (fourteen feet) over their victims before striking with their long, pincered limbs. Oni no Yattoko has the form of an enormous mantis, with chitinous flesh and huge, bulbous eyes that glitter with a thousand reflections. It has six extended legs with three joints apiece, each tipped with sharp, serrated pincers capable of snapping a katana in two. Its armored carapace is split down the center in a jagged mouth that yawns open to swallow anything the oni can grasp.

Oni no Yattoko's tough, gleaming shell is impossible to pierce with any kind of edged weapon, and it seems especially resistant to Water and Fire spells. However, its legs are rather brittle and can be snapped if proper leverage and sufficient power is used. Once relieved of its pinching limbs, it presents little threat, and may be dispatched by striking at the brain through its open mouth or bulbous eyes.



The Oni of Jigoku

Most Rokugani who have encountered oni have encountered this type — a spirit being summoned by a shugenja from the Demon Realm, given form and tasked to perform a specific purpose. These supernatural lackeys can be powerful weapons — charged to dispose of enemies without implicating the instigator, sent to spy on or steal from its controller's enemies, or assigned any one of a thousand other tasks. A powerful shugenja with an entourage of sinister, obedient oni can be a deadly foe indeed.

However, shugenja who think they can manipulate the malevolent beings of Jigoku at their whim are usually mistaken and are often taught a deadly lesson. The task of summoning oni from the nebulous depths of Jigoku appears deceptively simple; it can be performed by any shugenja willing to seek out the forbidden *maho* knowledge and scrolls required and take the risks involved. According to some, the oni summoned from Jigoku are weak and easily controlled by their master. Most of the powerful spirits of Jigoku can resist the spells meant to invoke them; those that do not are either too weak to resist or willing to temporarily give up their independence in exchange for a physical form. Thus, oni brought from the Demon Realm tend to be less powerful than those spawned by Fu Leng.

Putting too much faith in this belief can lead to very bad fortune. My research has led me to conclude that most oni summoned from Jigoku are indeed weaker than their Shadowlands kin, but there is no guarantee that the oni which appears within the circle of bones will be weaker than the summoner.

The evil spirit beings of Jigoku have no natural material form or physical shape as we understand it. As the elemental *kami* spirits are creatures of pure energy, charged with positive or negative furies, these beings are formed from the invisible twining of corrupt energies. Therefore, when one of these dark beings is brought to our World of Forms, it must have its shape defined. It must first be granted a name, one to which it can cling and bind its corporeal identity. Naturally, one cannot simply pull a name out of thin air and expect it to function. It must be imbued with the essence of the world, with a form already existing on this plane. The proper name of a person, a human being, is the only sort which can grant the oni physical form, for only it contains enough power for the spirit to subsist on.

Summoning Oni from Jigoku

To summon oni from Jigoku, a shugenja must first obtain the necessary maho spell scrolls and find a namer (either themselves or another). A circle of powdered bones is drawn upon the floor, the proper blood sacrifice is made and the ritual described on the scroll (see sidebar on page 96) is performed – the ritual destroys the scroll.

This will open a door to Jigoku and bring a spirit being forward. The shugenja must grant the oni the chosen name, declare power over them and make their demand. The naming will allow the oni to take physical shape. This form can never be predicted by the shugenja (see the charts on page 110 for tips on creating oni).

(continued)



Summoning Oni from Jigoku (Continued)

From this point there are several things that can happen:

1. Oni agrees to fulfill request and goes about its task with no trouble.
2. Oni refuses to be commanded and engages shugenja in a battle of wills.

Shugenja must make a Contested Roll of their Willpower + Shadowlands Rank against the oni's Willpower.

If successful, the oni must comply with the shugenja's demand.

If the oni wins, it escapes back to Jigoku, but remains connected to the namer.

3. Oni tries to negotiate for payment or favor:

- a. Shugenja agrees to payment and oni goes about its task, returning later to collect its debt.

- b. Shugenja refuses to make a deal and engages in a battle of wills with the oni. See #2, above.

This name, the key to summoning the oni from its realm, must be given to the oni willingly by its owner, or at least without the the owner's active resistance. Many shugenja seek out volunteers for this purpose, though I find that such brave (or foolish) individuals are hard to come by. Often, shugenja will use their own names, having faith in their strength of will and superiority to the oni.

The oni is brought through the portal from Jigoku, and granted a name. It takes form, drawing substance from the essence of the name and the elements of this plane. One can never predict what this form will be; the denizens of Jigoku take shapes as varied and twisted as the foul creations of Fu Leng.

The oni's namer — whether the summoner himself or some accomplice — becomes bound to his or her namesake in numerous ways. This connection is the most subtle — and most dangerous — weapon in the oni's arsenal. Namer and named spiritually intertwine upon summoning: drawing from the same essence and infused with shared chi. They have the ability to see through each other's eyes and sense each other's feelings as if each were present at the location of the other. They will each know where the other is and will be able to track their "twin" from any distance. All of these traits are shared by the namer and named equally. Beyond that, however, the situation changes.

Oni dwarf humanity with their spiritual power and usually assume the dominant position in the relationship. The effects are quite disturbing. The namer cannot hide any part of himself from the oni: it will know his every secret, understand his every mood. It will permeate the namer's dreams and give him or her horrifying glimpses of "life" in the Demon Realm. It will whisper its thoughts into the namer's ear, becoming a definable presence within his or her thoughts.

All of this begins slowly, almost imperceptibly. The namer may not even be aware of the invasion until the oni has taken root deep within his soul. The symptoms grow gradually worse as time goes on, the oni siphoning more and more of the namer's chi for its own use. The namer will usually exhibit symptoms of the growing imbalance: irritability, fatigue, headaches, loss of sleep, loss of appetite and numerous others. In many ways it is similar to the Shadowlands Taint.

Eventually, the oni may gain total control of the namer. How long

Maho Spell: Summon Oni

Base TN: 20

Casting Time: 10 Actions

Duration: See below

Mastery Level/Wounds

Required: 5

Concentration: Complete

Raises: Casting Time

Effect: Brings forth an oni

from Jigoku to be commanded. A sacrifice of blood (5 Wounds) is required as well as a name. The procedure is as follows:

First, the caster must make a circle of bones. Second, the caster must place a scroll within the circle. Written on the scroll is the name of a living man or woman. The caster speaks the necessary words and chants as he spills blood on the scroll within the circle.

If the ceremony is performed correctly, the oni is summoned within the circle and bound to the name written on the scroll. The mortal whose name was written on the scroll is also bound to the oni. The oni and the mortal share a symbiotic relationship from that point on, until the scroll is destroyed. Slowly, the mortal loses strength to the oni. In game terms, when an oni is given a samurai's name the samurai begins to gain Shadowlands Points. The rate of corruption depends on the Earth Rank of the samurai:

Samurai's

Earth

Rank:

- | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 Shadowlands Point per 36 hours |
| 2 | 1 Shadowlands Point per week |
| 3 | 1 Shadowlands Point per two weeks |
| 4 | 1 Shadowlands Point per four weeks |
| 5+ | 1 Shadowlands Point per eight weeks |

this subjugation takes depends on the namer and the relative strength of the oni bound to him. Namers with a strong mind and forceful personality are usually better able to resist the oni's influence.

Regardless of willpower, however, the namer's behavior will continue to deteriorate if he remains bound to the strengthening oni.

Sleeplessness leads to sleepwalking, fatigue to amnesia, irritability to flashes of murderous temper. I have even heard of cases where the namers exhibited signs of possession: they spoke in voices not their own, promising painful and dishonorable death to those around them and describing distant caverns where maggots crawled through the bodies of the damned. Whether such displays were actually communications from the demon or merely the onset of madness is frankly irrelevant; it is clear that the unnatural connection brings the namer's mind to the point of snapping.

Because of the dangers attendant upon sharing a name with an oni, wise shugenja will limit their use of oni — or resist the temptation altogether. Some will attempt to calculate how long the oni's task will take; making sure it is not enough time for the oni to gain control.

Unfortunately, oni are not easy to predict. They are intuitively devious, and will often attempt to trick their summoner to gain an advantage. They will twist the shugenja's words around to mean something completely different. Summoners should take care to word their orders carefully, lest the oni perform some mischief under the pretense of obedience. Oni will not resist any chance to lie or hurt. Above all else, an oni cannot be trusted, even if you are sure you have it completely under your command. The beings of Jigoku are evil by nature and that cannot be changed by a magical ritual, nor the force of even the most powerful shugenja's will.

Once the oni has been summoned, named and made flesh, the shugenja will attempt to command it to perform whatever task it has been called for. Sometimes, for reasons that only it understands, the oni will readily accept without protest and go about its task without causing trouble. These are unusual instances, however. Oni are rarely so obedient.

Some will try to bargain for payment — asking for a sacrifice of some sort. These requests are as varied and diverse as the forms oni take. Some demand money, some ask for blood or human organs to feast upon, some

Banishing Summoned Oni

Once the oni has completed its task, it must be properly banished back to Jigoku, or the namer will eventually be subverted and taken over by the oni. This spell can only be performed by the shugenja that summoned the oni.

Spell: Banish Oni

Base TN: 15

Casting Time:

5 Actions

Duration:

Instantaneous

Mastery

Level/Wounds

Required: 5

Concentration:

Complete

Raises: Casting Time

Effect: Properly banishes oni to Jigoku, severing the link to the namer and freeing him or her from the oni's influence.

request even more unspeakable things. They will claim that they need these things in order to fulfill their master's wishes.

It is often wisest to grant the oni this demand, if it is not too abhorrent. The oni will then agree to the bargain and go about the business of carrying out its orders. Once the oni has completed the task and fulfilled its end of the bargain, the shugenja must properly banish the oni with a second ritual, sending it back to Jigoku. This will sever the link between oni and namer and allow the namer to go on with his life without the harrowing presence of the oni haunting his every breath. If not properly banished, the namer will remain connected to the oni and continue to suffer its torments until the oni finally gains control and the namer becomes an empty puppet.

There are many tales of shugenja who refuse to pander to their oni lackeys (after all, they were summoned to serve, not make demands). These shugenja must have the will and sufficient focus of chi to overcome the power of the oni. If they fail, and the oni emerges victorious from this battle of wills, the creature will escape back to its Realm, its wicked laughter slowly fading.

Unfortunately for the namer, if the oni successfully flees, there is usually not enough time to banish it properly, and the connection remains. Again, the oni will slowly exert its will on the namer, eventually overtaking their soul and gaining control. Once under the oni's control, the namer becomes a pawn that the creature can manipulate from the safety of Jigoku. This fate can also befall the namer if the oni simply refuses to comply with the summoner's wishes and wins the battle of wills to escape back to Jigoku.

Fortunately, the link can be severed by a powerful Blessing of Purity. If the ritual is successful, the namer will be set free, though their dreams will still be haunted by the terrible visions of Jigoku for a long time.

Many (myself included) believe that excessive invocation of oni corrupts the shugenja's soul, opening them up to the Shadowlands Taint, madness, and eventual death.

Rogue Oni Lords

Four times in recorded history, powerful oni summoned by foolish shugenja managed to not only gain control of their namers, but somehow break their bond and roam Rokugan freely. No one knows how the oni accomplished this, nor the final fates of the namers they escaped. Some speculate that the oni somehow devoured their namers' souls. Others maintain that the oni somehow banished the namers' souls to Jigoku in their place. Whatever the reason, once the oni overtook the souls, they destroyed the namers' bodies as well. In all cases, the remains of the unfortunate namers were found horribly mutilated. Some say the gaping wounds looked as if they had been made by something bursting out from within. The destruction of the namer made the oni physical forms on earth permanent, and severed any bonds that the summoner had over them. They were now free, with physical bodies to move through our world as well as their inborn spirit energy. These rogue oni went on terrifying rampages, destroying farms, villages, even entire provinces in the revelry of their newfound freedom. Eventually, the call of the Festering Ple drew them to the Shadowlands where they established themselves as powerful "oni lords."

Crab scouts in the Shadowlands soon reported an influx of "new creatures" assaulting their walls — armies of monsters who appeared identical to the recently unleashed terrors. Cooperative Nezumi and hastily summoned *kami* referred to a "new overlord," one who had just appeared in the Shadowlands and wished to make its presence known. It was apparent that these Oni Lords had the power to replicate themselves.

Subsequent spiritual communion and my own substantial research has confirmed this hypothesis — once free of its namer and summoner, the oni's power increases drastically, granting it new status among Fu Leng's unholy horde. It gains the ability to spawn lesser copies of itself at will, and send them to do its bidding. It becomes capable of independent decision-making, and while still enthralled by the coil power of Fu Leng, can act with a freedom that none of the oni spawned by the Dark God are capable of. The temptations of such a position may drive many spirits to accept servitude under a human master, in the hopes that slavery will lead to both freedom and power. In any case, the lesson of these freed oni is clear: when binding an evil spirit, one must take care to keep its influence contained and limited. Its duties should be brief and contact with its namer kept to an absolute minimum.

The longer one holds it in thrall, the greater its chances of wresting itself out of the shugenja's control.

The names of those who paid the ultimate price for their folly — Osawa Akuma, Kuni Tsuburu, Hiruma Shikibu and Agasha Kyoso — have been stricken from the records of their respective Clans. But some of us remember them, and all who stand watch on the Kain Wall feel the bite of their terrible legacy. We must keep them in mind before proceeding in our discussion.

We have been able to learn quite a bit about these Oni Lords, or at least about their spawn. The original rogue oni have established strongholds far beyond where humans can safely tread (our ratling allies have occasionally reported as such). I have not seen one of the original Oni Lords myself, and for that I am often grateful. If anyone has had the misfortune of meeting them in combat, they did not live long enough to recount their experiences.

In their lairs deep in the Shadowlands, they presumably assist Fu Leng in his plots against humanity, or perhaps pursue sinister agendas of their own. No one can say for certain. They have never deigned to personally attack the Kain Wall, a fortunate thing indeed. These creatures have almost become minor gods of a sort, and should be treated as such by those who study them.

It is quite possible that other oni lords exist, in addition to the ones I have detailed here. It is also possible that the spawn of these unseen overlords have been mistakenly defined as a Fu Leng-created species. Should such speculation prove true, these secretive lords should be granted the same respect and wide berth as their better known compatriots. Please keep in mind that the information presented here details the identical oni spawned from the original Oni Lords. The Oni Lords themselves have never been encountered and therefore can only be chronicled through legend and hearsay. One can only assume that their power is far greater than their progeny's.

Oni no Akuma (spawn)

EARTH: 5
FIRE: 4
Agility: 5
WATER: 5
AIR: 4
Reflexes: 5
Rolls When
Attacking: 6k5
Rolls For Damage:
HTH: 5k3; Burning
Tongues: 2k2 (see
below)
TN to be Hit: 25
Armor: 8
Wounds per Level:
20: -1; 40: -3; 80: Dead
Shugenja Rank: 3
Spells Available: 5
Fire, 4 Earth, 3 Water, 2
Air

Special Abilities:
Fear: 5, Invulnerability,
Fire Tongues
When they touch
flesh, the fire tongues of
the Akuma leave a
burning saliva that
causes an additional die
of damage each round
until the saliva is
washed away. Simple
water will not wash off
the saliva; vinegar or
alcohol are usually
applied to the burning
solution.



The Four Known Oni Lords

Oni no Akuma

The Akuma overlord is a terrifying combination of wanton destruction and cunning insight. Created to answer countless questions the Osawa had about the Underworld, it developed a fanatical hatred of its captors — and through them, humanity at large. When it claimed its name (the powerful shugenja who summoned it in the first place), it unleashed its power in an explosive wave — destroying the entire province. Now, it serves as Fu Leng's general, organizing and commanding his infernal forces of the Shadowlands. It displays a vast knowledge of combat tactics, giving the mindless hordes of oni that batter the Kain Wall a sense of purpose and direction. Its cunning should not be mistaken for objectivity, however. The very thought of human beings going about their business unmolested fills it with rage — a rage it can barely hold in check. To alleviate the frustration, it often orders its underlings to bring it live humans for torturing; those brought before the Akuma Overlord experience an eternity of untold pain before it finishes with them. On personal combat, it is equally horrifying, laying waste to anyone and anything in its path. The discipline required to

marshal an entire army of oni is all that has prevented it from attacking the Kain Wall by itself.

Akuma expends a great deal of strength in creating its spawn. The Oni no Akuma are thus quite powerful, but also rarer than most other oni — a fact for which we can thank the Fortunes.

Oni no Shikibu

Hiruma Shikibu, a samurai of great renown, was left devastated by the death of his lovely wife Hiruko. With the help of a Kuni cousin, he summoned a stunted dwarf of an oni who was charged with restoring Hiruko to life. The cunning spirit took the form of Shikibu's beloved and lived as her for several weeks — just long enough to take control of the Hiruma's soul. It then changed forms, acting as Shikibu to assure the Crab court that all was well. Over the course of the next few weeks, it moved throughout the Hiruma lands, spreading corruption and decay to those who came contact with it. Finally, the Kuni shugenja who summoned it was able to pierce its masquerade and reveal "Shikibu's" true form. A great magical duel followed, one which left the Kuni dead and the oni banished into the Shadowlands. It has resided there to this day, occasionally sending minor versions of itself out to haunt the graves of the recently deceased.



Oni no Shikibu (spawn)

EARTH: 2

WATER: 2

Strength: 3

FIRE: 2

Agility: 3

AIR: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When

Attacking: 2k2

Rolls For Damage:

2k1

TN to be Hit: 15

Armor: 7

Wounds per

Level: 8; -1; 24; -3;

50; Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear: 3, Invulnerability

If Shikibu takes

lethal damage, it can

send its spirit into

another body, twisting

the body into a shape

that can hold it. It

must, however, find a

body to transfer its

essence into. In its

spirit form, Shikibu

can move very

quickly, but it cannot

move through jade

while in its spirit

form. It can only

remain in its spirit

form for a number of

rounds equal to its

Willpower x 5.

Gaining control over a

prepared body takes

only one round, while

taking control over an

unprepared body

takes anywhere from

one to five rounds

(roll one d10 and

divide by 2, rounding

down).

Oni no Tsuburu (spawn)

EARTH: 1
Stamina: 7
FIRE: 1
Intelligence: 2
WATER: 1
Strength: 7
Air: 1
Rolls When Attacking:

1k1
Rolls For Damage:
HTH: 3k2; Teeth: 3k1;
Stomach: 1k1
TN to be Hit: 5
Armor: 20
Wounds per Level: 28:
-1; 56: -3; 150: Dead

Special Abilities: Fear:
5, Invulnerability,
Teleportation

Tsuburu's most common attack is a grappling attack. He must win a successful Contested Strength roll with its opponent in order to grapple them. Once grappled, Tsuburu may devour them. Once in Tsuburu's belly, a character takes one die of Wounds for every round he remains there. He may do nothing while in Tsuburu's belly but scream for help.

Dying in Tsuburu's belly means the Oni has also devoured the character's spirit. Tsuburu gains much from devoured spirits. Despite its weight (or, perhaps because of it), Tsuburu has found a more convenient method of moving. Tsuburu may vanish from its current location and re-appear in another. Tsuburu may only transport himself to a location that is within sight.

Oni no Tsuburu

The Tsuburu overlord was created to stand guard over its namer's cache of scrolls. In exchange, it demanded a living victim to on which to feed each day — victims its would-be controller was more than happy to provide. Several weeks later, Kuni Tsuburu himself was devoured after his supplies of apprentices, riding horses and captured goblins finally ran out. The newly-freed oni transported itself to Fu Leng's realm, where its feasting could begin in earnest.

The Tsuburu overlord now dwells in the volcanic plains along the eastern edge of the Shadowlands, squatting amid the volcanic ash and noxious gases. Its followers bring it a never-ending supply of new victims to devour. While it has the ability to teleport wherever it wishes, it usually remains rooted to one spot. (It finds it much easier for underlings to bring it what it needs, rather than make the effort of procuring it itself.) Its spawn — dropped from it in a grotesque hermaphroditic budding — are more self-sufficient, actually going through the trouble of capturing their prey themselves. Even so, the "Lord of Gluttony's" indulgences are made even more infamous by the activities of its lesser imitations.



Oni no Kyoso (spawn)

EARTH: 3

Willpower: 4

FIRE: 3

Intelligence: 4

WATER: 3

Perception: 4

AIR: 3

Awareness: 4

Rolls When Attacking:

5k3

Rolls For Damage: HTH:

2k1; Unholy Fire: 3k2 (see

below)

TN to be Hit: 15

Armor: 10

Wounds per Level: 12:

-1; 24: - 3; 60; Dead

Shugenja Rank: 2

Spells Available: 4 Earth,

4 Fire, 2 Water, 1 Air

Special Abilities:

Fear: 3, Invulnerability,

Multiple Attacks (3
attacks per round),

Unholy Fire

Kyoso may attack up
to three times per round.

They are known for the
"Unholy Fire" they throw
from their many limbs.

This black fire does not
burn the flesh, but the
soul of the target. The

fire ignores armor
penalties. When a
character is hit, he must
make a Simple Void roll

vs. 10. Void Points cannot
be spent on this roll. If
successful, there is no
effect. If he fails, he loses

a Void Point. If his last
Void Point is taken - or if
he cannot lose a Void

Point from a hit - he is
knocked unconscious
regardless of Wound

status.

Oni no Kyoso

Unlike its three brethren, the demon Kyoso keeps to itself, a stark contrast from the fawning hordes surrounding the others. Created by a jealous Dragon shugenja to dispose of a rival, its original purpose has remained with it throughout the ensuing centuries. Kyoso is a hunter, a solitary predator who delights in the chase and kill. It burrows through the earth like a great worm, sensing its prey through vibrations in the ground. When the time is right, it surfaces, breaking through the earth and taking its victims by surprise. Its offshoots are a little more conversational, often cornering and communicating with their prey before destroying them. In any case the explosive missile volleys demonstrated by both overlord and underling are as spectacular as they are deadly. Nothing targeted by Kyoso for a hunt has ever survived its devastating attack.

Oni Special Abilities

Fear

When characters encounter a creature with Fear, all who view the creature must make a Willpower roll against the creature's Fear Rating x 5. Those who fail cannot use Void Points while combating the creature and also must drop dice lower than the Fear Rating while taking actions against the creature.

Multiple Attacks

Some creatures may attack more than once per round. A creature which has the Multiple Attacks ability will have the number of attacks it may make per round listed.

Invulnerability

Creatures who have this Trait are immune to the effects of normal weapons. When struck by mundane weapons, a creature with Invulnerability only takes a single Wound of damage. Only weapons of crystal or jade, or nemuranai, may harm it fully. Particularly nasty GMs may decide that only one of the vulnerabilities (crystal or jade) will affect the creature.

Combating Oni

Most oni, unfortunately, are immune to normal attacks. The process which binds them to the physical plane also grants them supernatural resiliency; ordinary weapons often fail to pierce their scaly hides and even the mightiest blow may be shaken off like a child's slap.

Despite this unfortunate fact, there are several ways to effectively battle an oni — ways which seem universal to the species as a whole. As I have previously discussed, oni are highly vulnerable to the mystical effects of jade. Merely touching a piece of jade causes an oni's skin to blister and burn, as if seared by flames. A weapon forged of jade will cut through the beasts as if they were made of soft clay, inflicting terrible wounds with every blow. A skilled samurai armed with a jade katana has a distinct advantage when venturing into the Shadowlands.

Shadowlands creatures wounded by jade weapons will not heal — the terrible, scorched wounds remain open and bleeding. Many successful oni hunters seek to wound their prey from a distance and follow it for a few days until it has sufficiently weakened, then attack. This saves much needless effort and is far less risky than a direct conflict with a healthy oni.

While arrowheads are not uncommon, other jade weapons are rare and difficult to make; I know of only four jade katana in existence, all in the possession of Hida daimyos or Kuni witch-hunters. However, my brethren in the Crab Clan have developed other ways to supply our troops with the power of jade. Tetsubo clubs and other pole arms can be studded with the mineral, increasing their effectiveness against our enemies. Bladed weapons are more difficult



to augment, but the Kain have devised an ingenious way to add the power of jade to ordinary blades - if only temporarily.

Before going into battle, Crab troops rub their ordinary steel weapons with a sticky oil, then dip them in jade powder, coating the blades and granting them the ability to harm their supernatural foe. Thus augmented, the Crab's great bloodletting weapons — naginata, axes and the like — can inflict devastating damage on Fu Leng's minions. Unfortunately, the coating of precious powder inevitably rubs off as combat continues, and coated weapons become less and less effective during extended engagements. During lengthy sieges, runners are employed to keep fresh supplies of jade powder along the front lines.

Crystal, too, is an effective deterrent, able to burn an oni's flesh. My own studies have been enhanced immeasurably by crystal and blown glass containers, generously provided by our allies in the Unicorn clan. These containers allow me to store the organs and ichor of our unholy foes, preserving them for further inquiries. The oni's viscous internal fluids often eat right through other materials — including wood, metal and stone. I shudder to think how much of this volume would be left empty without such tools. It is truly a pity that the shugenja of the other Clans do not see the advantage of such tools. No one trusts the Unicorn enough to profit from them.

Tools, however, are not weapons, and it takes more than a glass jar to hold back the minions of Fu Leng. Fortunately, crystal can be used in that arena as well. Certain shugenja of my family are adept at creating crystal katanas and other such weapons. The binding process places a helpful spirit within the blade, a *kami* which guides and focuses its owner's chi every time the weapon is drawn. Through the substance of the blade, the balance of five elements magnifies, spreading out to surrounding air and matter. The effect is devastating against the oni, causing hellish agony with even the slightest touch. The weapons begin to glow when in proximity to a creature infused with the Shadowlands Taint. This radiant aura blinds the oni, and the will shy away from its brightness in terror. Such crystal weapons are quite rare, though not as precious as jade weapons.

It is said that weapon nemuranai are effective against Shadowlands creatures. I lack first-hand experience of this, but it is a possibility. I

have also heard tales of samurai whose swords have "awakened" during particularly grueling battles with oni — the powerful spirits that reside within the blades coming to life and granting incredible strength and skill to the wielder. Again, these are but stories related to me by others, but perhaps there is some truth to them.

There are other means to enchant or bless ordinary weapons, allowing them to damage or otherwise harm Fu Leng's minions. Knowledgeable shugenja can call upon the Fortunes, entreating them to assist a brave samurai heading into the Shadowlands. The elemental Tetsubo of Earth, Bo of Water, Katana of Fire and Yari of Air spells will function as well, although none of these incantations are as effective as jade.

Of course, if they can overcome the obstacles of elemental corruption and wicked *kansen*, shugenja have their own ways of dispatching oni, ways which do not require a sword or spear. The infamous Jade Strike, an entreaty to the spirits of the Earth, will wound or maim even the most powerful oni. Tomb of Jade removes the Taint from their bodies — evidently a most unpleasant experience for any creature sustained by Fu Leng's corruption. Creatures of magic may be fought with magic, and a group wishing to challenge these nefarious beasts would do well to include a shugenja or two in their war party.

There is no one combat tactic or method of attack that is universally successful against oni, as each different type has its own strengths and vulnerabilities. Many of these strategems can be found within these pages, and as I have reiterated many times, knowledge is often the most powerful weapon. Take care to study these documents — for they provide the secrets needed to emerge victorious from a battle with an oni.

Despite all that we have learned about these fearsome beings, despite the ingenious methods we have developed to use against them, only the most foolish would dismiss their terrible power. Were it not for the diligent efforts of the Crab clan, they would have overrun Rokugan long ago. They continue to threaten the Emerald Empire by their very existence. One must harbor a healthy respect for the oni's strength, temper one's courage with caution, and exercise patience and accurate timing in one's strikes against them. Pay attention to their ways and heed the warnings and precautions I have revealed to you. Though the Dark Lord's offspring are fearsome, their evil power cannot prevail over the strength of spirit, purity of honor and inventiveness of mind that each of us can achieve if we try.

Jade Weapons

Jade katanas or weapons studded with jade are able to do normal damage to oni, even if they possess Invulnerability.

Also, when Shadowlands creatures are wounded by such weapons, the gashes do not close and heal.

Jade Powder

Blades coated in jade powder will do normal damage the first strike to a creature with Invulnerability, but the effectiveness diminishes with each attack until it is once more an ordinary blade.

1st strike: Full Damage

2nd strike: ½ Damage

3rd strike: ¼ Damage

4th strike: ⅛ Damage

5th + strike: 1 Wound

Crystal Weapons

Crystal katanas and other weapons have powerful spirits bound within the blades.

The spirits sleeping in the crystal react when in the presence of the Shadowlands Taint. The crystal begins to glow with a powerful white aura. The strength of the aura depends on the strength of the spirit within the crystal.

Crystals have a strength rating from 1-5. The strength of the crystal determines the radius of the crystal's power, which is one foot per point of strength. When a crystal encounters someone (or something) with the Shadowlands Taint, both make a roll: the crystal against a TN of 15, and the creature against the crystal's strength rating x 5. If the strength of the crystal is not enough to overcome the Shadowlands Taint, the crystal has no effect on the creature. If the strength of the crystal overcomes the creature, however, it will keep the creature out of the aura of the crystal.

If crystal ever comes in contact with a creature with the Shadowlands Taint, another contested roll is made. This time, if the crystal succeeds, the wielder of the crystal rolls a number of damage dice against the creature equal to the strength of the crystal. If the crystal fails, it does no damage at all.

Oni Lair

To the right is a map of a "generic" oni lair, with some notes scribbled here and there describing the place. The Oni Nesting Chamber has been purposefully left blank so the GM can furnish and populate it however they like.



in alcoves and
passes their

Partially
submerged passage -
water level about
hip-deep

Tunnel ceiling dips below water level
for about 10 feet -
must submerge to pass

Tunnel narrows
and angles
downward in
slippery chute

Drop of
about 5 feet

are
paw alcoves -
most uninhabited

Bubbling
pool of
undetermined depth -
possibly
inhabited

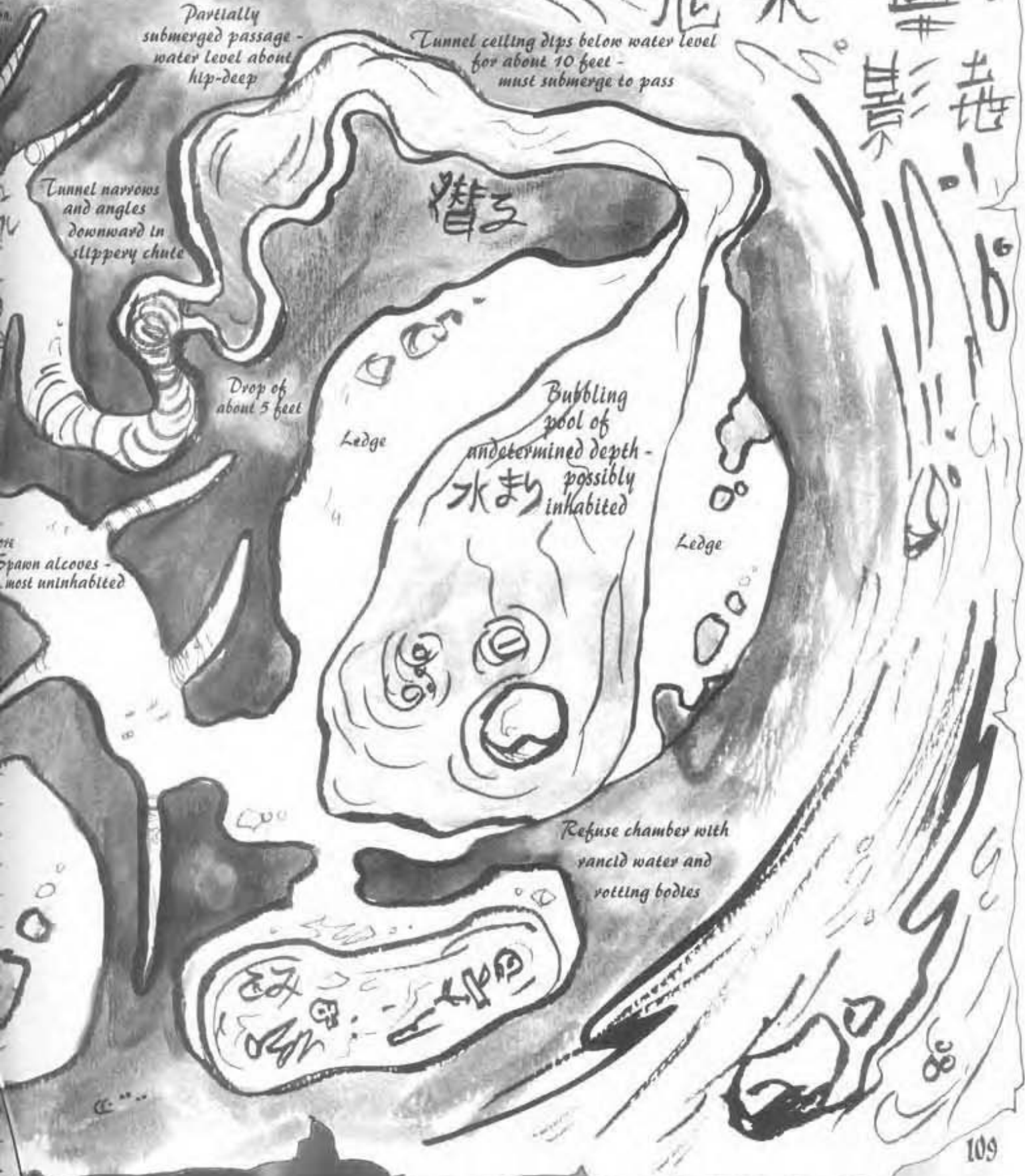
Refuse chamber with
rancid water and
rotting bodies

鬼巢 (Oni no Iro) 窟 (Kud)

潜室 (Senjitsu)

水抄 (Mizushō)

水抄 (Mizushō)



Creating Oni

For all the oni "species" documented here, there remain countless other one-of-a-kind oni, unique unto themselves. Canny GMs may wish design one of their own oni, or send a one-shot monster against players who think they have seen it all. In any case, the charts below may be used as an aid to spark the imagination, or as an on-the-fly way of creating an oni from scratch. The three groups of statistics are general guidelines based on the relative strength of the oni. They should be tailored to fit the GM's particular needs. The charts below them reflect the oni's physical countenance and overall appearance. Choose or roll randomly as you desire to create a suitably nightmarish image.

Relatively Weak Oni (can be defeated by most parties)	Fairly powerful oni (causes problems for most parties)	Extremely powerful oni (will eat most parties like popcorn)
EARTH: 3	EARTH: 4	EARTH: 6
WATER: 2	WATER: 4	WATER: 7
FIRE: 2	FIRE: 4	FIRE: 7
AIR: 2	AIR: 4	AIR: 6
Rolls When Attacking: 4k2	Rolls When Attacking: 5k3	Rolls When Attacking: 6k5
Rolls for damage: 5k2	Rolls for damage: 6k3	Rolls For Damage: 8k4
TN to be Hit: 15	TN to be Hit: 25	TN to be Hit: 35
Armor: 4	Armor: 7	Armor: 9
Wounds Per Level: 10: -1;	Wounds Per Level: 20: -1;	Wounds Per Level: 30: -1; 60:
25: -2; 50: Dead	40: -3; 80: Dead	-3; 120: Dead
Abilities: Fear: 1,	Abilities: Fear: 2,	Abilities: Fear: 4,
Invulnerability	Invulnerability, one special ability equivalent to any shugenja spell.	Invulnerability, two special abilities equivalent to any shugenja spell

Oni Appearance Charts

BODY TYPE	NUMBER OF TOTAL LIMBS	DIGITS? Yes/No #per limb	SKIN COUNTENANCE
2-5 humanoid	2		2-4 chitinous
6 centaurian	1-2		5-7 smooth
7 bovine	3-5		8-10 slimy
8 ursine	6-7		11-12 furred
9 porcine	8		13-14 scaled
10 feline	9		15-16 spiked
11 rodent	10		17-18 plated
12-13 reptilian			19-20 bristled
14 amphibian			
15 serpentine			
16 avian			
17-18 insectoid			
19 combine any 2			
20 combine any 3			
	NUMBER OF GRASPING LIMBS	LIMB TYPE	ARMOR RATING
	1 None	1-2 segmented (specify # of segments)	0-10
	2 1	3-5 tentacled	
	3-6 2	6-8 haunched	FEAR RATING
	7-8 4	9-10 jointed (specify # of joints)	1-5
	9 8		
	10 Countless		

HEAD AND FACE

- 2-4 humanoid
- 5 bovine
- 6 ursine
- 7 porcine
- 8 feline
- 9-10 reptilian
- 11-12 amphibian
- 13 serpentine
- 14-15 avian
- 16 rodent
- 17-18 insectoid
- 19 combine any 2
- 20 combine any 3

EYES

- | | |
|------|----------|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2-5 | 2 |
| 6 | 3 |
| 7 | 4 |
| 8-10 | hundreds |

EYES

- | | |
|-------|--------------------|
| | type |
| 2-5 | human |
| 6-10 | animal (no whites) |
| 11-14 | insectoid |
| 15-17 | reptilian |
| 18 | glowing red |
| 19 | glowing white |
| 20 | glowing green |

MOUTH

- 2-3 hinged
- 4-6 canine snout
- 7-9 porcine snout
- 10 none
- 11-13 beak
- 14-16 leech-like tube
- 17-18 insect proboscis
- 19-20 spider-like masticator

TEETH

- 2-3 none
- 4-7 sharp - piercing
- 8-11 sharp - tearing
- 12-15 sharp - needle like
- 16-18 sharp - jagged
- 19-20 blunt - grinding

TAIL

- 1-4 none
- 5-8 short
- 9-10 long

USED FOR

- 1-5 balance (heavy)
- 6-8 grasping (monkey-like, etc.)
- 9-10 weapon (scorpion's stinger etc.)

PRIMARY METHOD OF ATTACK

- 1-4 teeth
- 5-7 claws
- 8-9 charging
- 10 magic of some form

NECK

- 1 None
- 2-5 thick and sinewy
- 6-8 jointed
- 9-10 serpentine

SECONDARY METHOD OF ATTACK (reroll if the same as primary)

- 1-4 teeth
- 5-7 claws
- 8-10 charging

DOES IT HAVE MAGIC ABILITIES?

- Yes/No
- Type (specify effect)

HABITAT

- 1-3 mountains
- 4-6 plains
- 7-9 hills
- 10-11 valleys
- 12-14 bogs
- 15-17 riverbeds
- 18-20 desert

WOUNDS - from 25 to 200

RING RATINGS - from 3 to 7

Adventure Hooks

- Someone the players know (a lord or perhaps a beautiful romantic interest) gets the Shadowlands Taint. They've never been to the Shadowlands, and nobody knows how they got it. The players have to find a cure, but how? Perhaps the Kuni know.

- One of the players manages to land a bride with a large dowry. Too bad her flesh is starting to peel...

- The character receives a gift from his daimyo, an ancient family heirloom. It's a box or bottle whose origins have been lost. When they open it, it releases a bound Oni who wants to fulfill their every wish...

- A family heirloom (your great-grandfather's sword) has been lost in the Shadowlands. He carried it with him into Fu Leng's dark realm and lost it in a battle at Hiruma Castle. And it's *your* destiny to go into the Shadowlands and bring it back... to restore your family's honor.

- A daimyo's daughter has run away to elope with a man who is secretly (as a friendly Scorpion explains) a *maho-tsukai*. The daimyo wants her back alive.

How (Not) To Use Oni in Your L5R RPG Campaign

by Ree Soesbee and John Wick

As you look through the Traits and Skills of the Oni that Mokuna has listed here, you're probably thinking, "Gee. Oni are pretty tough. I bet just one of these would take out my entire adventuring group."

You are absolutely right.

Oni are big, mean and nasty. They bleed red hot blood that burns human skin, have talons as long as katana, employ the darkest magics, and do all sorts of really nasty special techniques that break the rules right in half. They are *not* nice things.

However, that doesn't necessarily mean that your group doesn't stand a chance to take one out... they'll just have to be really clever about it. And a little lucky.

This essay is for all the folks who have written us with a very understandable complaint: The Shadowlands is not a nice place to visit. *L5R* characters are fragile enough without having to face a territory that will swallow them down without even noticing. So, here's some advice about using oni – and the other creatures of the Shadowlands.

1) Wandering Monsters Cause Wandering Damage

I'm thinking that you've gotten the point that Shadowlands critters are tough. With that in mind, let's consider the fact that many GMs like using "wandering monster" tables. These tables are used by GMs who like to throw a little random action into a game. The GM doesn't have any control over the roll, which means the party could encounter anything from a hungry goblin to a Greater Oni Lord.

Spontaneity is nice, but remember that random encounters take the control of the game right out of a GM's hands and give it to a *truly* arbitrary force: the dice. The dice don't care if the players live or die, they just make random numbers. So, by throwing random monsters at your party, you can kill off a couple of characters before you even notice folks are taking damage. This screws up your game, slows down the plot with dice rolls and can even kill a character whose skills are absolutely necessary to the survival of the party, thus making the entire evening an exercise in futility.

2) Careless Characters Clean Up After Themselves

On the other hand, characters who go wandering aimlessly through the Shadowlands without a plan deserve to get their heads whacked. They are intruding into the territory of a fallen god, and he doesn't like uninvited guests.

If characters take the Shadowlands lightly, it's because you haven't done a good enough job of showing them its true and horrid face. Let them travel with a Crab scouting party for a week. Let them spend long, cold, rainy nights (wood doesn't burn, remember), catch a little Taint and nearly get killed by something they couldn't even describe if they tried. All they remember is that it spit something that smelled like battery acid and swallowed men with a single gulp.

And you heard him scream... all the way down.

If they don't take the Shadowlands more seriously, get *real* nasty.

I'd like to show you what Oni look like in *my* campaign, but our Standards and Practices Editor won't let me print it.

There's another point that Ree pointed up to me as I was writing this. Folks seem to think that going to the Shadowlands is something to brag about. "I went into the dark land

Adventure Hooks

and killed a big oni!" they say in Doji Satsume's court, expecting some kind of awe to fill the room.

Well, that doesn't happen.

What happens is the Crane kick him out of the court. So do the Lion. So does the Emperor. You see, they don't want to get the Taint that he might have brought back with him.

There's a reason the Crab don't care about honor or glory or anything else. They know they have the *worst* job in the Empire... and they're the only ones who want it. It's not about bravery, it's about loyalty. And duty.

3) Oni Are Smart and Samurai Are Dumb

Let's face it: players are dumb.

Okay, they're not dumb. But they *are* trusting. After all, they're depending upon the GM for all the information that their characters receive; if they're not given the right information, they're going to be in big trouble. So, with that in mind, let's talk about the behavior and intelligence of oni.

Whenever you play an NPC (like an oni), you've got the inside dope on each of the characters. You know their hopes, fears, dreams and aspirations. You know every Advantage and Disadvantage. You know every Permanent Wound.

What do they know?

All they know is what *you* tell them.

So, when you send them off after an oni – as magistrates or witch-hunters or lost little courtiers – *you* supply them with the foreknowledge they'll need to defeat it. If they charge into battle without the information they need, either they have ignored every single clue you've dropped (in which case they deserve to die), or they are armed with several clues that will point them in the right direction. If they get lost, either they need another clue, or they need a whack from the invisible rubber GM hammer.

In short, they should be afraid of the Shadowlands not because you haven't told them what they need to know, but because what you've told them scares them right down to their little samurai sandals.

4) The Shadowlands Has No Borders

Despite the best efforts of the Crab, the horrors of the Shadowlands leak out through the cracks in the Kaiu wall and ooze into Rokugan. Your players don't have to go out trucking into Fu Leng's wastes to bump into goblins, ogres and oni. Bog Hags are notorious for sneaking into Crane and Scorpion lands and stealing the skins of particularly beautiful maidens... and what Crane or Scorpion character doesn't take Benton's Blessing?

If you've scared them properly, your players won't want to be anywhere near the Shadowlands. So, in the sidebars, you'll find some quick adventure hooks to get the Shadowlands closer to your players... no matter *where* they hide.

- Another daimyo's daughter has run away – only to be snatched by goblins/bog hag/ogre and carried into the Shadowlands.

- A tribe of rattlings moves into your daimyo's province. A Crab shugenja has arrived in his court to explain the creatures aren't dangerous, but your daimyo isn't quite sure. Perhaps he should send out someone to investigate.

- A Phoenix ambassador of high Glory (but low intelligence) comes to the Crab for a tour of the Shadowlands (or perhaps he's looking for something specific). Of course, his daimyo would send along some magistrates to make sure he didn't run into any trouble.

- On the eve of some great festival, a star falls and lands to the south. It is seen as such a good omen that your daimyo asks you to seek the site that it fell: three miles south of the Kaiu wall.

- A plague sweeps through your home province, and the only cure is an herb that can only be found in the Shadowlands.

- There's a dramatic drop in bandit activity in your lord's province. Of course, it all has to do with a brothel of Pennaggolan. Not that this is a bad thing, but sooner or later, they're going to run out of bandits and start feasting on samurai.

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*Chapter 6:
Other Dangers of
the Shadowlands*

The Shadowlands are not solely populated by Fu Leng's minion "races" and the hardy Nezumi. There are countless other inhabitants as well. More "species" than races, these organisms are the less ambitious products of Fu Leng's perverse creative whims, or native plants and animals that have been warped and mutated by the Taint. Many pose grave dangers to Rokugani and some have even been found outside of Fu Leng's realm, in Rokugan proper. While I do not pretend to have an exhaustive list, I have catalogued most of the more dangerous species.

Bog Hags'

Bog hags thrive in the fetid swamps and waterways of Rokugan. Like all of Fu Leng's creatures, they originate in the



Bog Hag

EARTH: 3

FIRE: 2

WATER: 2

AIR: 2

Reflexes: 3

Rolls when Attacking:

4k2 in natural form

Rolls for Damage:

2k2 in natural form

(Claws) or weapon

damage

TN to be Hit: 20

Wounds: 8: -1; 15:

Dead

Special Abilities:

If a Bog Hag successfully scores a hit against an opponent with her claws, the opponent has a 20% chance of catching a disease. The disease is permanent until treated by a healer or Shugenja's healing magic, and causes boils, blisters, and a loss of Stamina at the rate of one rank per week.

Shadowlands, but are at their most deadly further north — where no one suspects their presence.

A bog hag's natural form is that of a loathsome green crone with sharp nails and jagged teeth. It thrives by stealing the skin of human victims, especially those of beautiful young women. It wears such a skin like a suit, and can even masquerade as a given victim for short periods of time. It will stake out a body of water — a lake, river or bog — near a human community, and wait for a potential victim. Young women coming to bathe or wash clothes are the preferred targets, but the hag will take any human readily available. It strikes with fear and surprise, rarely attacking unless its victim is alone. When an opportune moment presents itself, it will swim up behind its prey and throttle her, dragging her down to the bottom in an attempt to drown her. Once its victim is disposed of, it skins her with the sharp nails on its fingers, and leaves the body in some dark crevice where it will not be easily found. The bog hag's pores secrete a viscous substance that bonds with the victim's skin, allowing it to wear the gruesome trophy like a coat. For the next several days, it will masquerade as the woman it has killed, moving among her former community undetected if its deception skills are strong enough. It never lasts, however. The victim's skin will rot at the same rate her body decomposes, peeling back and exposing the bog hag's true identity. Within a few months, the skin will have completely rotted away, and the bog hag will have to search for a new victim.

As long as the hag can maintain a regular supply of food, its lifespan is indefinite. It undergoes a process of regeneration each time it takes a new skin, and even seriously injured bog hags can be fully rejuvenated merely by slaying a new victim.

The bog hag's major strengths are stealth and secrecy, and it will work to remain undetected by nearby humans for as long as possible. In the open, with its true nature exposed, it becomes far less fearsome. Bog hags are vulnerable to normal weapons and spells, and jade affects them as it does any other Shadowlands creature. Fire magic is particularly deadly, and a stoutly wielded torch will cause them to flee, shrieking.

When bog hags are forced to move, due to lack of victims or an alarmed human community, they take care to move undetected. They travel only at night and avoid all signs of human habitation, gliding through the

Hanemuri

EARTH: 1
FIRE: 2
Agility: 5
WATER: 1
AIR: 1
Reflexes: 4
Rolls when
Attacking: 3k2
Rolls for Damage:
2k1
TN to be Hit: 25
Wounds: 3: -1; 6:
Dead

deepest woods and loneliest byways in search of a new home. Bog hags are solitary creatures, who rarely congregate among themselves. Occasionally, two hags will compete for the same territory; the loser is usually devoured and its skin "garment" taken by the victor. They are scarce enough creatures, however, that such confrontations are rare.

Bog hags are very frequently found living in the Shadowlands, and those that do are more powerful than their kin beyond the borders of the Corrupted Lands. They show far less discretion in choosing a victim, and will slay goblins, rattlings or even minor oni if one invades their territory. Humans are still preferred, of course, and a samurai-ko travelling through Fu Leng's realm should watch her back. Shadowlands bog hags are stronger and hardier than those found in mainland Rokugan, presumably due to their proximity to Fu Leng.

Hanemuri

Hanemuri are crow-sized creatures that lurk in the creaking treetops of the dead Shadowlands forests. They have bony bodies covered with thin parchment-like skin, bat-like wings, and oversized jaws lined with thousands of tiny teeth. Alone, they are shy and retiring, but if gathered in groups of ten or more, they will swarm against any living things that enter their territory. Their ferocity is unequalled — the diminutive creatures dive, clutch and bite in a frenzy of screeching hunger. They can eventually gnaw through armor, though such a breach would take some time. Their jaws leave deep scoop-like bite marks about the size of a coin.

Hanemuri can be easily crushed by a strong man's fist, if you can get hold of one, but they are quick and agile, so catching one is difficult. Fire usually frightens them away, and sometimes loud noises or flashes can startle them into fleeing. Rolling around on the ground, although undignified, can crush many of them if done quickly enough.

Hanemuri are a lesser threat among the deadly denizens of the Shadowlands, but they can indeed be an annoyance, and despite the mild nature of the wounds they make, any wound taken in the Shadowlands can be dangerous. Keep careful eye on the number of Hanemuri around you. If they begin to gather in large groups, take cover immediately.

Mountain Goblin

EARTH: 3
FIRE: 2
WATER: 1
AIR: 2

Rolls when
Attacking: 4k3
Rolls for Damage:
5k2 (sword)
TN to be Hit: 15
Wounds: 10: -1; 20:
Dead

Special Abilities:
A Mountain Goblin regenerates 2 wounds per combat round, reattaching lost limbs within 2 rounds, so long as it maintains constant pressure between the limb and the wounded stump.



Mountain Goblins

These squat, lumpy creatures are similar to common goblins in many ways — their general features are consistent with the goblin race and they are about the same size, though more substantial in girth. I do not classify them as true goblins because

they do not function within goblin society and do not breed as common goblins do. In fact, they are completely different animals, with attributes that make them truly unique. They were mistaken as a form of goblin by those who first reported their kind, and the name has since been integrated into the common lexicon. Therefore, I propagate the inaccurate nomenclature to avoid confusion.

As their name suggests, mountain goblins prefer to lurk in the craggy areas in the northern regions of the Shadowlands. I have heard reports that these hardy beasts have been spotted outside the Shadowlands, as far north as the Spine of the World Mountains. I am reluctant to credit these claims, but the prospect does open some interesting avenues for speculation. Some have based a sensational theory on this story that is currently popular among the entertainment-hungry courts. This theory maintains that there is a subterranean network of caves and tunnels that begins near the Festering Pit of Fu Leng and extends beyond the borders of the

Shadowlands. Some say its passages riddle the deep earth throughout all of Rokugan, with secret portals that grant the Dark Lord's minions access to every corner of the Emerald Empire.

I doubt the legitimacy of this fantastic story. If such a underground "roadway" existed, creatures from the Shadowlands would be much more widespread throughout Rokugan. Some have argued that most Shadowlands creatures suffer when away from the corrupted atmosphere of the Shadowlands, and so prefer to stay within its borders. Others suggest that this network is still under construction — that hordes of minions slave away tirelessly deep below, digging out tunnels and passages. In any case, if this subterranean web were to exist, it would help to explain the sightings of mountain goblins so far from their native Shadowlands.

The characteristic that makes mountain goblins unique among Shadowlands beasts is their ability to regenerate severed limbs. Or more precisely.



re-attach them. This can be quite a shock upon initial observation. Observe: a bushi's gleaming katana neatly slices off the creature's arm. The mountain goblin grunts and hisses, its brow creased with annoyance rather than pain. The limb falls to the ground, blood barely seeping from it. Without hesitation, the creature picks the severed limb up from the ground and shoves it back up against the stump of its shoulder. The cut edges of the flesh begin to melt and stretch, melding together to heal up the wound. Within moments, the arm is as good as new and the goblin is once more ready to attack.

Of course, this can be prevented if the limb is hidden or somehow kept from the goblin. Once during an expedition to study these creatures, one of my bodyguards was engaged in combat with one such beast as I recorded the event. The samurai was a tall man, with long arms and legs. He towered over the squat mountain goblin. Upon slicing off an arm, the bushi swiftly dove for the limb and lifted it up over the creature's head, well out of its reach. The thing hopped up and down, frantically swiping at its missing arm with rising fury and dismay. The scene was so comical that I laughed hard enough to unbalance myself from my perch upon a rock. This incident proved that mountain goblins are quite possessive of their severed limbs and will not easily give up on regaining them. Distracting them in such a way makes dispatching them an easy task.

This ability is quite fascinating, and I have spent many hours in my workshop, delicately probing the flesh of specimens. It would seem that upon being wounded, the blood flow to the affected limb is instantly curbed, preventing excessive loss of vital fluids. When the detached limb is butted back up against its socket, the muscles, tendons, veins and flesh seem to somehow recognize their places and begin to twine back together. If I can unlock the secrets of this process, perhaps we can one day awaken this ability in humans. Such an innovation would revolutionize combat throughout Rokugan, to be sure, and a human army with such a power would be all the more prepared to face Fu Leng.

Mountain goblins attack with claws and teeth, and sometimes throw stones. They are only rarely seen with weapons, but in any case, their seclusion and relatively small numbers make them far less of a threat than most Shadowlands species I have encountered.

Mujina

And then there are the mujina. How can one begin to categorize such creatures? Where is the room for analysis of their mischievous pranks? How can one make sense of physiology or history in a race which defies all categories of classification? Are they a form of minor oni? Perhaps related to the goblins? Are they like the Nezumi, members a race which predates the

Adventure Hooks

Mountain goblins are rumored to inhabit the rough terrain that borders the Unicorn Clan's territory and can add a little spice to any adventure occurring in that region.

A cave entrance in any part of Rokugan could be a portal to the rumored subterranean network that extends from the Shadowlands.



rise of man by many thousands of years? I can neither confirm nor dismiss any of these ideas with conviction. Every attempt I have made to study these infuriating beasts has ended in failure. They cannot be captured by conventional means, for they have the

ability to melt into the air like spirits. Magic, too is a poor tool; its effects slide off them like water from a duck's back. Spiritual wards and sigils appear to hold them at bay, but cannot control nor harm them.

My own first-hand knowledge of the mujina is quite sparse, and has been hampered by the near-disastrous circumstances of my initial encounter with them. Almost four years ago, my then-apprentice Taki succeeded in contacting a mujina and luring back to my workshop for study. When I tried to bind it for examination, it took umbrage and floated up to the ceiling, entirely unaffected by my mystic links. We attempted to force it down, to which it responded with peals of high-pitched laughter and a rude

Mujina

mockery of our effort — all the while cooing our clutching hands with obvious ease. Eventually, its amusement turned to destructive mischief; it began grasping and hurling objects at us in an effort to keep us at bay — while continuing its maddening giggle. The glass jars and globes of my collection were of particular interest: soon the entire room was awash in shards of broken glass and the chemicals and entrails they once contained. As the Fortunes would have it, the impromptu mingling of several incendiary liquids resulted in a foul-smelling blaze that consumed both the workshop and my nearby living quarters. Luckily, I was able to secure most of my valuable scrolls before the flames reached them, and Taki was eventually placated by my assurances that the burn scars looked distinguished. I can only assume that the wretched mujina responsible escaped the fire as well, since no trace of it was ever found among the charred cinders.

Since that dismaying incident, I have focused my efforts on other, more productive endeavors, and have resolved to leave the mujina out of any serious studies — or at the very least, out of my workshop. Despite my fiery encounter, they are not a truly dangerous species, and certainly represent no threat to Rokugan as a whole. Nevertheless, I have compiled a fair amount of data on them — through documented cases, legends, and the studies of various other shugenja — and present it here for the purposes of scholarly thoroughness.

It is possible that the mujina are minions of Fu Leng, but from what I have gathered, I would deem that unlikely. I am more inclined to believe that they are a natural race, possibly older than man, that are simply inclined toward what we consider mischievous and destructive behavior. Whatever their true nature and origin, their annoying antics inspire most Rokugani to categorize them as oni, or even kansen, who serve the Dark God.

Physically, the mujina do not seem particularly threatening. They appear as squat orange humanoids with spindly limbs and vestigial bat wings. They stand approximately one-third the size of an average human. Their broad faces sport comically large glowing eyes and a grinning mouth full of small sharp teeth; a pair of horns crowns their heads. These features are common to all mujina, but beyond that, their appearance varies wildly in body shape and proportion. Some are thin and gangly, others rotund. They appear capable of dextrous flight, although their wings seem too puny to support their weight. They can move with blinding speed, and in numbers can overwhelm a man almost before he is aware of their presence.

Despite their diminutive size, they can grasp and hurl heavy objects with great strength, and tip over objects that even a man would have difficulty moving. I suspec

EARTH: 1
FIRE: 2
Agility: 6
WATER: 2
Strength: 3
AIR: 2
Reflexes: 5

Skills
Defense 5
Athletics 5

Rolls when

Attacking: 3k2

Rolls for Damage:

1k1 (rocks or hurled
objects)

TN to be Hit: -

Armor: -

Wounds: -

Mujina suffer no damage from physical blows and cannot be harmed by most spells.

Elemental Ward will keep them at bay, and is usually enough to get them to move on; they are easily bored and will rarely have to patience to wait out a warding spell.

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



some sort of magic assistance is involved, although I lack concrete evidence. If so, it would support the theory that the mujina are spirit beings.

They lack the shapeshifting powers of *hengoyokai* and other spirits, or at least, if they have them, they rarely (if ever) use them. A Phoenix *shugenja* with whom I correspond once explained that mujina are quite conceited, and view their forms as the peak of physical perfection. They do not change shape, she asserted, simply because they do not wish to, and cannot imagine existing in any form other than their given selves. Why should they improve upon "perfection?" It is the duty of other races — such as humans — to aspire to their magnificent form. She offered no corresponding evidence to support her claim, but the warped mindset of these perverse beings should never be underestimated.

Perhaps in their eyes, they are indeed the pinnacle of creation.

Mujina devote themselves entirely to elaborate pranks, which they will play on any victim available. These tricks can range from the merely irritating (stealing a valued item) to the actively harmful (replacing a washerwoman's soap with bars of lye). Most end in the destruction of some object or another, and a few actually bring physical injury to their intended victim. Despite this, they have never displayed any lethal tendencies, and I have yet to hear of an instance where one of their pranks resulted in death. The dead, of course, cannot express anger as do the living, and a live furious victim is much more amusing than a cold dead one.

With the exception of this incessant desire to commit mischief, the mujina have no discernable culture, not even a crude mockery of one like the goblins. They do congregate, though, for accomplices are often necessary for their tricks.

It would seem that they



are almost as obnoxious to each other as they are to humans, although they react much more playfully to such antics than we do. Groups of mujina left without sufficient amusement to placate them fall into bouts of cuffing, poking, tickling and trickery

reminiscent of the comedy and pratfalls of kabuki buffoons. If one encounters a lone mujina, chances are that others are hiding somewhere nearby — doubtless waiting to spring some infernal trap. Large groups of mujina are rare, but there have been reports of great mujina gatherings in the Shinomen forest and elsewhere. The purpose of such gatherings can only be speculated upon.

As far as I can tell, the mujina have no customs, nor any form of written language. They speak Rokugani fluently, but their high pitched voices become quite annoying after short periods of time. There is no evidence that they possess a language of their own, nor have they ever been observed at "home" or in a native habitat of any sort. They have not expressed a desire to create art or poetry, and appear to hold no ancestral traditions sacred. There has been some talk of mujina mentioning Fu Leng as their master, but I suspect that such statements are simply more mischief on the mujina's part — they are clever beings and have assuredly realized that speaking of the Dark God inspires entertaining reactions from their audience.

Mujina seem to view any civilized trappings with scorn and derision, making them tempting targets of their malice. They will tear apart ancient tapestries just to watch the horror on the owner's face or defile an ancestral sword because it will infuriate the daimyo who carries it. Their gleeful anarchy knows no limits; nothing is too sacred to be spared their attentions.

There has never been a reported case of mujina fighting mujina. Unlike the goblins, whose infectious anarchy drives them maliciously against each other, the mujina usually appear cooperative and even affectionate towards each other. They often work together on large "projects" or to conduct a consecutive series of pranks on some victim or another. In any case, they never operate at cross purposes, using their energy in an efficient and complimentary manner. Occasionally a leader will be present, larger and more imposing than the rest. This "greater" mujina will direct the lesser in the execution of their duties, and the lesser will follow its orders explicitly. If such mujina "teams" could somehow be tamed, or molded into a combat unit, they could conceivably make devastating allies.

Mujina magic (if it can be called such) is quite powerful, but apparently limited to but a few specific uses. As stated earlier, they exhibit disproportionate strength and quickness, and can soar like birds on their ridiculously inadequate wings. In addition, they can make themselves invisible at will, which helps them remain undetectable within the households and communities they would vex.

Occasionally, they will show themselves after some elaborate stunt, to mock and harass those they have victimized. Apparently, gloating over a given prank is almost as important to them as performing the deed in the first place.

- Note:

Mokuna's speculation about harnessing mujinas' energies for our own purposes has actually borne fruit within the past several years. The studies of my esteemed colleague, Kuni Ikashi, has revealed a way to coax the wily beasts into serving the interests of men. Ikashi claims to have devised a means of catching the creatures' shadows, thus rendering them solid and vulnerable. While I remain skeptical, Ikashi maintains that he will have an empirical demonstration ready at the next gathering of daimyos. Only time will tell if his theories have any merit.

-Kuni Yori

Their ability to wink in and out at will leads me to suspect that many of their elaborate tricks are written off as something entirely mundane. For every instance in which they make their presence known, there must be countless others in which they share their glee in private, never revealing themselves to their victims.

Mujina can be found in every part of Rokugan, and while relatively rare, do not seem bound by any geographical restrictions. They do not require any particular habitat to survive, nor do they display a need for food, drink, or rest of any sort. All they seem to require is a steady supply of victims to hoodwink, harass, and irritate. They can often be found loitering in the Shadowlands, for where else does so much trouble and chaos occur? I imagine that the mujina consider the Shadowlands a convenient center of entertainment. For those who travel there, however, a prank that may be relatively harmless in other circumstances could prove deadly.

The mujina's only apparent weaknesses are their relative harmlessness and their impossibly short attention spans. No matter how they may torment a single victim — no matter how infuriating their pranks — they quickly grow bored and move on to other prey. Those few unfortunate enough to encounter the mujina more than once are treated almost respectfully, like an old friend they are honoring with multiple visits. The peasant tales of arrogant magistrates suffering from the constant presence of a mujina or two may be very amusing, but such cases are extremely rare.

There is still so much we do not know about these creatures: their internal physiology, their life cycles, their origins and the origins of their powers. My own efforts here are woefully inadequate, and fail to describe the mujinas' purpose and essential nature. I would urge any shugenja so inclined to devote themselves to understanding these most elusive of Rokugan's denizens. To do so would be a great boon not only to the Kuni quest for knowledge, but to anyone who has ever suffered the mujinas' misanthropic attentions.

Nikumizu (heart grubs)

Nikumizu are diminutive, grub-like things. They lurk in dark, moist crevasses — among rocks, in swamps, dead trees, under fallen logs or burrowed into the earth. They are about the size of a man's forefinger, and roughly the same shape. They are worm-like, with a thin, brittle shell that can be easily crushed within one's fist.

Nikumizu wait in their hiding places until suitable prey passes near. Since they possess no discernable visual organs, I hypothesize that they sense the presence of victims through vibration, heat or possibly smell. When they detect a suitable subject near, they spring into action. With wild thrashings and frenzied wriggling they launch themselves toward the

Nikumizu

EARTH: 1

WATER: 1

FIRE: 1

AIR: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls when

Attacking: 1k1

Damage: Does 4
Wounds of damage.

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds: 2: -1; 4:

Dead

Special Abilities:

When a nikumizu has squirmed beneath the skin of an opponent, their attack is automatically successful, and deals 4 Wounds each turn. Once attached, they can only be removed by a character proficient in medicine.

The procedure itself deals 2k2 damage to the recipient for each Nikumizu to be removed.

unfortunate target. Their mandibles grab hold, sinking into the flesh like grappling hooks.

They are equipped with mouth parts designed to pierce flesh and burrow into it. If a nikumizu succeeds in getting under the skin, it begins to feed on muscle tissue, starting wherever it entered (usually somewhere on the limbs or extremities) and moving toward the torso at a rate of about three inches a minute. As this extremely painful feast continues, the



affected portions of the victim's body become useless — permanently, unless magical healing is employed. It is possible to stop or slow the creature's progress by tying off the limb, though this would of course also risk damage to the limb as well.

The creature must be cut out, the difficulty of which depends on the skill of the surgeon and the cooperation of the patient. At this point the victim is in extreme pain and most likely panicking, and keeping them still enough for the removal procedure can be quite a challenge. The wound this operation leaves depends on the location and circumstances of removal, and proper cleaning and care must be employed to avoid infection.

The nikumizu's ultimate goal is the victim's heart. If the creature is allowed to reach its destination, death cannot be avoided. Once the victim has stopped breathing, the nikumizu lays its eggs within the chambers of the heart. When the larvae hatch two days later, they have a convenient food source surrounding them to nourish them until they mature.

One must be wary when a dead body is encountered in the Shadowlands, as it may well be infested with nikumizu ready to burst from it to try their first taste of live flesh. An interesting footnote to the nikumizu's lifecycle is that even if the host body is not decapitated, and rises as a zombie, the process will continue. It is a nasty surprise to dispatch a troublesome zombie only to have a swarm of hungry nikumizu emerge from its rotting flesh.

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the victim's insides to a syrupy consistency, to be absorbed by the plant. If the spike is removed from the victim within five minutes, they will remain paralyzed for about an hour and wake up wracked with spasms of violent vomiting. Once the poison has been purged from the body, minor discomforts (slight dizziness and general weakness) will linger for another twenty-four hours.

Sanshu Denki (muck monster)

This large, lumbering salamander-like creature lurks just under the surface in swampy mud pools. When an unwary traveler passes by, it lunges at him, its gaping, tooth-lined mouth scooping up its prey. It is large enough to swallow a single average-sized human whole. It is surprisingly quick for a creature of such size, and only those who are very agile or extremely cautious can dodge the attack.

Its prey is usually swallowed whole, and can survive inside for five to ten minutes. A victim inside can cut his way out, but the space is cramped and there is little air, so accomplishing any task is difficult in the extreme. If others try to rescue a swallowed victim, they are in for a nasty surprise. Sanshu Denki's skin is infused with a type of buzzing energy. Anyone who touches the thing's slimy skin is paralyzed for five to ten seconds as this painful power courses through their convulsing body.

I myself have experienced this strange "defense" and have concluded that a single attack would not cause permanent damage, but repeated contact may have detrimental effects.

Touching Sanshu Denki with a metal object such



Sanshu Denki

EARTH: 5
WATER: 2
FIRE: 2
AIR: 3

Rolls when
Attacking: 4k2

Rolls for Damage:

Initial bite: swallowed
(no damage); Energy
attack: 3k1 each time
anyone comes into
contact with the
beast's skin, or
through metal
weapons.

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds: 10: -1;

20: -3; 40: Dead

Special Abilities:

On a Sanshu Denki's initial attack, it has a 100% chance of swallowing its victim, reduced by 10% for each point the character has in defense and an additional 10% for each rank of Reflexes. A character trapped inside a Sanshu Denki will take its energy attack each round, plus an additional 2k2 because of the digestive juices.

as a sword will result in the same burning paralyzation and violent shove.

The most effective method for dealing with Sanshu Denki is ranged attack with missile weapons. This creature's skin is extremely soft and vulnerable, so dispatching it is not difficult. Be prepared for much muddy thrashing and gurgling.

Swamp Goblin

Like mountain goblins, swamp goblins are not true goblins, but separate creatures named by unenlightened observers. In fact, swamp goblins are distinct from true goblins in many ways. They live exclusively in the swampy areas of the Shadowlands and cannot survive outside the moist atmosphere of these regions. They are too specifically adapted to their environment to live anywhere else.

Like the trolls who share their habitat, they are amphibious — possessing both lungs and gills. These latter are often mistaken for goblin-like ears, as they are situated along the side of the head. Bright pink frills line these flaps, filtering the foul sludge of the swamps to permit breathing when submerged. Their nostrils are tiny slits that can be squeezed shut tight to keep water from seeping in. Their glowing, oversized eyes bulge from their skulls and sit wide apart in their misshapen heads. Their skin is scaly and covered with an unpleasant slime; their coloring perfectly camouflages them among the mud and mist of the swamps. They are humanoid and proportioned similarly to goblins, but with longer arms and legs.

I have had two chances to study specimens of this creature in my workshop. The first time, the thing did not live long enough for me to glean any information about behavior, intelligence or awareness. Its lungs labored fitfully in the dry air of the Kuni Wastes, its fleshy gills quickly shriveling and blackening. The coating of slime soon evaporated and the creature's delicate skin cracked and peeled, leaving raw and bleeding flesh exposed beneath. It lasted only a few hours before expiring in a withered, fishy-smelling heap.

On my second try, I collected a large sample of swampwater along with the specimen. By dousing the thing regularly with this noxious liquid I kept it alive for a reasonable amount of time. During this period I learned many things about swamp goblins.

I was most surprised to learn that these creatures possess an intelligence that rivals ogres and trolls. They can be quite vicious and dangerous if they wish, but they also possess a driving curiosity which often motivates them to pass up violence in favor of exploration.

Swamp Goblin

They are capable of speech, though the words come out gurgling and mangled by the creatures' waterlogged voices. The specimen I questioned knew a tiny bit of Rokugani, but not enough to effectively communicate through words. It was a fast learner, however, and picked up a few words and phrases simply by overhearing my conversations with my assistants. It was able to make itself clear through gestures and such, and wanted to know about every little thing in my workshop. Its bugging eyes gleamed with rapt fascination as I displayed various objects before it. It attempted to grab such offerings, but I agilely dodged its clumsy groping. It was especially drawn to the shining globes and jars of glass that line my shelves, as well as any complex instrumentation and the few baubles I possess. I can imagine that its life among the grey and featureless swamps must be quite dreary, so that such things are novel in the extreme. Its last few days were spent in happy contemplation of such treasures.

When passing through the Shadowlands, swamp goblins appear as flittering shadows glimpsed in the shifting fog. They follow travelers at a distance, watching and listening to their conversations. Some have



EARTH: 2
WATER: 1
FIRE: 1
AIR: 2
Rolls when
Attacking: 3k2
Rolls for Damage:
4k2 (sword or club)
TN to be Hit: 15
Wounds: 6: -1; 12:
Dead

Tsumunagi

EARTH: 2
WATER: 1
Strength: 4
FIRE: 1
AIR: 1
Reflexes: 4
Rolls when

Attacking: 3k2 if from
above; 2k1 otherwise

Rolls for Damage:
6k5

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds: 5; -1; 10;

Dead

claimed that the creatures were bold enough to approach humans and attempt to grab at some item. There are even rarer reports of swamp goblins attempting to communicate with humans — asking incessant questions and inquiring about the various objects in the humans' possession. Some have been known to offer gifts of wriggling fish and other bog creatures in exchange for the items they are so taken with.

Given their lack of offensive weapons and relatively benign nature, I would classify swamp goblins among the lesser dangers of the Shadowlands. But as I have stated before — above all, the rule stands that no creature of Fu Leng's devising can be trusted.

Tsumunagi (blood-eels)

These objectionable creatures most commonly reside within the rotted husks of dead trees or among piles of refuse and debris. Their slick black bodies are rubbery and ribbon-like; stretched full-length, they can reach up to three feet long. Along the edges of their flattened bodies are tiny gripping hooks, and a long, gash-like mouth slits down the belly of one end. This mouth is lined with miniscule saw-like teeth. At either end of the creature are wicked claws, apparently used for grappling. When a victim passes nearby, tsumunagi will spring upon the nearest limb and wrap themselves tightly around it. The hooks along their sides serve as grips that aid in movement as well as stabilizing their positions. The claws at the end plunge deep into the flesh, making them terribly difficult and painful to remove.

Immediately upon wrapping themselves around the target, the mouths go to work, sawing into the flesh and allowing the beasts to suck at the victim's blood and other vital fluids. Tsumunagi secrete a substance in their saliva that seems to thin the blood and make it flow more easily. When removed, the wound continues to bleed rapidly for several minutes and care must be taken to stem this gush with all deliberate speed.

It is exceedingly difficult to wrest



Fudoshi

these things from their victim: their slender bodies are surprisingly strong, and their hooks and claws dig in deeper with every effort to dislodge them. A effective method is to singe them with fire — though care must obviously be taken not to harm the victim as well. A well-aimed jab with a smoldering torch will result in a fizzle of steam and a peculiar squealing noise, and the tsumnagi will contract and writhe in pain. One must immediately catch hold of it and pull it free of the limb while it is thus distracted. While I am not certain that chopping the things into small pieces is absolutely necessary, it is extremely satisfying.

Fudoshi (tanglevine)

It is only fitting that one of the few forms of vegetation that will grow in the corrupted Lands is as deadly as many of its creatures. This unobtrusive vine grows in tangled mats on the ground in many areas of the Shadowlands. If one steps into its midst, the tendrils will instantly begin to rustle and tighten, reaching up to coil around arms, legs and necks. If unable to escape its clutches, the victim will eventually be smothered by the plant's constricting coils.

As the plant seems to gain no sustenance from its victims, I speculate that the fudoshi's sole purpose is to acquire bodies to rise as zombies in the service of Fu Leng, for I have seen the vines loose their risen captives without resistance.



EARTH: 3

WATER: 0

FIRE: 0

AIR: 1

Rolls when

Attacking: 1k1 (special)

Rolls for Damage:

none

TN to be Hit: 10

Wounds: 3: -1; 6:

Dead (each vine)

Special Abilities:

When the tanglevine attacks, it rolls and keeps a number of dice equal to the number of vines (tentacles) striking at the victim, up to a maximum of 10 strikes a round — the largest fudoshi known to exist.

If the victim is successfully struck, they temporarily lose one point of Agility per attached vine. For example, a large fudoshi strikes with six vines, rolling 1k1 six times, and hits with three. The victim immediately loses three points of Agility. If the victim's Agility reaches 0, they are immobilized and will lose consciousness in a number of rounds equal to their Willpower unless freed by an outside source.

Victims will rise as a zombie approximately 24 hours after they are killed.

ねずみ



Chapter 7:

Nezumī

Among all the races indigenous to the Shadowlands, the Nezumi stand out as a singular anomaly. It is a common misconception that the Nezumi — known by the peasantry as “ratlings” — are minions of Fu Leng, or at the very least, Tainted pests. The ironic truth, however, is that they alone may hold the secret to defeating the Taint — and perhaps one day Fu Leng.

Few would take such an assertion seriously, but the facts speak very clearly. The Nezumi fill the Shadowlands in great numbers, making their homes both within and beyond its borders, yet they have somehow resisted the corrupting effects of Fu Leng. We first heard of this from Hiruma scouts, who encountered these intriguing creatures during their initial expeditions into Fu Leng's Realm. Subsequent interviews, tests and multiple detection spells confirm the Hiruma assertions; the beasts are immune to the Taint. Even a lifetime in Fu Leng's Realm will not adversely affect them. I have not yet discerned the exact nature of their immunity, although certain hypotheses suggest themselves after examination of their physiology, survival tactics and tribal culture. I have spent no small amount of time among them, and feel that I am on the path to understanding how and why they continue to prosper while so many other species succumb to the grim realities of the Shadowlands.

Physiology

Nezumi appear as bipedal, rodent-like humanoids, standing a little less than two ken-an (five feet eight inches) tall. Their faces resemble those of great rats, with long snouts, pink ears and great incisors for slicing and grinding up food. Their bodies are covered with coarse fur of varying shades, ranging from pure white, through darker shades of brown all the way to black. Some even display multi-colored coats and patterns of spots. Families of Nezumi tend to have similar color patterns, and one can often identify members of different tribes by the shade

Note:
Strangely enough, the notes on the Crab's most important ally in the Shadowlands, the Nezumi, are the most controversial. Because of this section, the Emperor decreed that Mokuna's text be outlawed (he was later convinced simply to restrict it). Mokuna's tolerant view of the heretical beliefs and practices expressed within is anathema to the vast majority of Rokugan.
- Kuni Yori



又
武士
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A Ratling Tribe: The Tattered Ear

The Tattered Ear is a sample ratling pack which you can use in your campaign. They live in the region around the Shinomen Forest, and migrate through the lands of the Scorpion, the Crab and the Sparrow (although they can be moved to nearly anywhere in Rokugan). They represent a typical group, and with minor modifications can be used to represent any ratling pack you choose.

The Tattered Ear consists of about seventy five adult Nezumi, divided more or less evenly between the sexes. Approximately one quarter are "bushi," skilled in fighting and the *de facto* leaders of the pack. The rest are hunter-gatherers who split their time among scrounging missions, scouting duties and setting/breaking camp. They are based in the Shinomen Forest, but migrate in a wide circle through the nearby human lands, scrounging, stealing and occasionally bartering for what they need. It takes approximately three years to traverse the circle, and they usually remain in the Shinomen Forest for some time after completing a circuit - making their migratory pattern four to four-and-a-half years long.

(continued)



of their fur.

A Nezumi's forearms end in digitated hands, capable of grasping and manipulating tools with great dexterity. Their legs are haunched like a rodent's, ending in clawed feet similar to their hands. The nails of all four limbs are quite sharp, and can be used as weapons if nothing else presents itself. They use

The Tattered Ear (continued)

their great tails to balance themselves while moving, achieving a sort of scuttling sprint which can reach remarkable speeds. A healthy Nezumi adult at full run can keep pace with all but the finest galloping horse.

Nezumi males stand somewhat taller than females, and tend to be slightly stronger.

The Nezumi's internal organs are much the same as a human's, with a four-chambered heart, complex circulatory system, lungs, liver and all the other viscera associated with higher life forms. The exceptions to the rule are the Nezumi stomach and digestive tract, which are considerably tougher and more resistant to injury than their human counterparts. I believe that the difference is the result of — or perhaps the basis for — their voracious eating abilities. A Nezumi can eat things that would turn the stomach of a billy goat, and makes remarkably effective use of the nutrients absorbed. One rattling I observed subsisted for over a week on a single bowl of moldy rice.

Their vocal organs are capable of emitting a wide range of sounds — many beyond our range of hearing. I believe that they often communicate with these "silent" calls during raids and attacks, for they can coordinate their movements perfectly without making a sound.

Life Cycle

Nezumi bear litters of six to eight after a gestation period of approximately six months. Nezumi infants measure between one-third and one-half ken-an (twelve to eighteen inches) in length, and are totally dependent upon their mother for their first year. Nezumi females will nurse their young for the majority of this juvenile period. Due to the Nezumi's migratory lifestyle, a given tribe cannot afford to stop for every birthing. Nezumi young usually ride upon their mother's back, grasping her fur with strength that belies their size. Female Nezumi are capable of moving at top speed with an entire litter on their backs, and will fight to the death to protect their young.

Nezumi tribes consider the welfare of their children the responsibility of all and usually keep their burdened females in the safest or most protected areas of their range. This concern for future generations is one of the key differences between Nezumi and other

Unlike many rattling packs, the Tattered Ear has established a semi-permanent encampment deep within Shinomen. Consisting of warrens, burrows, and lean-tos, the camp serves as a base for the pack — the closest thing to a permanent home they have.

The Tattered Ear's relations with nearby "pink ones" varies considerably. Tikuku the Shaman has maintained fairly good relations with the Kuni family, and most Crab peasants leave out "offerings" of food if they know that the pack is in the area. In exchange, the rattlings refrain from raiding villages or farmers' fields to meet their needs. The relationship has worked well thus far. The Sparrow Clan is not so hospitable, however, and periodically sets traps and ambushes when they know the Tattered Ear is in the area. The pack relies on snatch-and-grab raids in Sparrow lands, putting as much distance between them and their angered targets as possible. Scorpion villages vary in their approach to the tribe.

(continued)

The Tattered Ear

(continued)

Some are positively xenophobic, while others are accepting or tolerant of the rattlings' presence. It all depends on the region, and the current state of the Machiavellian politics that pervade every Scorpion province.

The Ear have a keen knowledge of Shinomen Forest, and will flee back there if they find themselves in serious danger. While they are familiar with the landscape of their entire circuit, they prefer to fight their battles in the Shinomen.

A southern Scorpion magistrate once vowed to wipe the marauding tribe out and surprised them following a raid on a nearby village. The rattlings promptly scattered to the wind, leaving the Scorpions to follow them as best they could. At the Shinomen Forest, the tribe reformed and planned a vicious counterattack. The magistrate led his troops into the tall trees, confident that they could quickly find and decimate the Nezumi.

The attack came before they had gone 50 yards, and was so fast that it utterly demoralized the magistrate's men. While few were killed, their formation shattered, and they were forced to retreat from the forest with all deliberate speed. Since then, the Tattered Ear has never been troubled by humans once safe within the confines of the Shinomen.

denizens of the Shadowlands. Most of Fu Leng's creations do not spawn as natural species do, and those that do show little or no concern for the welfare of their young.

Upon reaching their first year, Nezumi children are expected to serve as productive members of the tribe — and usually perform simple duties such as gathering berries or cleaning equipment. They also train in the skills of scavenging, weapon techniques, and guerrilla tactics, in anticipation of adulthood. A five-year old Nezumi is considered an adult, and is unceremoniously thrust into adult responsibilities and expectations.

History and Origin

When one questions a Nezumi about their history and mythology, one receives some oddly curious responses. The Nezumi's sense of their own past blends fact and conjecture with remarkable ease. The great heroes of a given tribe are spoken of in intimate, personal tones, as if their passing was a matter of months instead of centuries. Other tribes will place the same hero in entirely different circumstances, giving him a different fate and different tasks which he performed. But again, the account is personal and without the objectivity that time provides. They feel as close to the events of five hundred years ago as the events of last week; all are the same to the Nezumi.

Some historic events and figures are common to multiple tribes, existing in a similar context in all of them. Of course, each tribe has its own interpretation of the event in question, and details are rarely consistent between packs. A given hero of the Grasping Paw tribe for example, may have lived decades before an identical figure in the Chipped Tooth history. While this lends the Nezumi a strong sense of racial identity, it also makes chronicling their history an exercise in futility. How can one record facts so colored and shaded by the multitude?

The one historical element common to all Nezumi tribes is an

apocalyptic event that occurred long, long ago. This event and its ramifications provide the strongest single piece of evidence that the Nezumi are not and never were the creations of Fu Leng. Nezumi history — without exception — is divided into two phases: the world before this cataclysm and the world after. Every pack I have encountered splits their background thus, and every pack maintains the same details about the apocalypse in question. To hear them speak of it, the time before the cataclysm was paradise, when the Nezumi lived in a glorious kingdom ruled by a wise and benevolent emperor. Food and water were plentiful then, and great cities protected the entire race within their sheltering walls. That all changed on one cataclysmic day. The phrase for the event itself is unpronounceable by humans, but translates roughly as "The Terrible Day When Air Became Fire and Heaven Fell From Its Perch to Crush Our Glorious Home Beneath Its Blackened Corpse." (The Terrible Day is an acceptable contraction among most tribes.) In any case, descriptions are filled with much mock terror and the gnashing of teeth as the Nezumi describe the horror that befell their once proud empire. The land boiled like water and the trees burst into flame. The ground wrenched asunder and evil spirits poured forth from the underworld. Death, madness and destruction followed, and the survivors had to abandon their glorious civilization and adapt to a frightening new world.

They quickly fractured into individual packs, and their history becomes convoluted as each faction remembers its own past differently. Some stayed behind and adapted to their new surroundings as best they could. Other fled east and found a new race called "humans" occupying the land. But wherever they went and however each tribe remembered its past, they never again achieved the unity and might necessary to resurrect their glorious civilization.

This myth contains some extraordinary connections to the current situation in the Shadowlands. Certainly, the Nezumi have steadfastly maintained that the Shadowlands are "theirs" and that no other races belong there. We have seen how the Taint wastes and ruins lands that once glowed with health and life, so their story of a paradise destroyed is not difficult to believe. Their descriptions of The Terrible Day — passed down through

oral history since the event itself — match our own legends of Fu Leng's fall very closely. The evidence suggest that the two events are actually one and the same; that the Nezumi homeland was destroyed and corrupted by the Dark God's plummet.

If this is the case — if the Nezumi existed on earth before the fall of the gods and the rise of mankind — it would place them in the same general category as the Kenku, the Kappa and the great legendary Naga, ancient beings whose histories and origins stretch far back beyond our relatively short existence. It is possible that this distinction grants the Nezumi their immunity against the Taint. Perhaps, because they are not creations of the Kami, they are therefore not affected by their influence.

I am currently working on designing an experiment to test this theory. Exposing Kappa or Kenku to Shadowlands influence should determine whether all such ancient creatures are immune, or if the Nezumi alone are capable of resisting the shackles of Fu Leng's land. The results of this experiment will no doubt open doors to understanding and possibly adapting the Nezumi's incredible ability.

Regardless of the Nezumi's true origin, it is clear that they regard the Shadowlands as rightfully theirs. Even the northern packs maintain an affinity for Fu Leng's Realm. While they have shied away from the reclaimed Kuni provinces and will presumably do the same when the Hiruma lands are liberated, the rest of the Shadowlands may not surrendered so easily. We may find ourselves finally conquering Fu Leng, only to have a territorial dispute with the Nezumi over borders which predate humanity itself.

Society and Culture

Nezumi society centers around survival, and on the cyclical pattern of their nomadic lifestyle. Their basic social unit is the tribe or pack, usually consisting of seventy to one hundred adults. Each pack will be led by a chieftain, a shaman, or a group of "bosses," directing the others in completion of necessary duties. There does not seem to be any common way of choosing or maintaining leaders; they usually emerge through a combination of competence and goodwill. With the packs' small sizes and relatively unified purposes, this informal method of leadership is more than sufficient.

Most packs are self-sufficient and would rather steal what they need or live off the land than barter for it with other groups. While they maintain friendly relations with the Hiruma and can even be considered informal allies of the Crab Clan itself, they are not known for their trusting ways, and will shy away from direct human contact for the most part.



Stikak, Nezumi Chieftain of the Tattered Ears

EARTH: 4

FIRE: 4

WATER: 2

AIR: 3

Skills:

Athletics 4

Battle 2

Kenjutsu 2

Stealth 5

Attack Roll: 6k4

Damage Roll: 6k2

(katana)

TN to hit: 20

Armor: 7

Wounds: 15: -1; 25:

-2; 35: Dead

Personality:

Stikak is wily and pragmatic, and will always act in the best interests of the pack. He won his position by tricking the former chief into stepping down, a fact of which he is immensely proud. Stikak does not dislike humanity, but sees them strictly in terms of the tribe: what can they do for us, and are they an immediate threat? If they serve no useful purpose to him, he will avoid them, or ask them (through Tikuku) to move along if they are within the Shinomen Forest.

The Nezumi are nocturnal, as are most scavengers, and spend their waking hours scrounging for food and equipment or traveling. They make camp each morning at dawn, in an area as hidden or well-disguised as possible. Daylight hours are spent sleeping and standing guard, with movement occurring only in particularly urgent or pressing occasions. Early evening consists of eating, discussing tribal business, or conducting scouting missions of the surrounding area. Scouting — sometimes several days worth — will always precede a raid or wholehearted scrounging effort; the Nezumi never enter a situation unless they know what to expect.

Scavenging missions are the last order of business in a given area before moving on; almost all adult Nezumi will participate (the remainder strike camp and prepare to move the tribe onward). Raiders will enter villages or poorly guarded castles, remaining close to the outskirts lest an alarm be raised. From there, they cautiously move into storage facilities, garbage piles, or anywhere else where supplies might be readily found. Food is of utmost priority, followed by weapons, if needed, and other tools.

Scrounging Nezumi value their continued secrecy above all else, and will go to great lengths to keep from being detected. If discovered, they will flee back to their campsite with astonishing speed — taking different circuitous routes to keep enemies from locating their base. Escape is paramount; if prevented from escaping for some reason, they will fight their way out with wild abandon, leaping and tearing at their pursuers like a newborn oni. A cornered Nezumi is the one of the fiercest fighters in Rokugan, and wise men will allow them to escape rather than forcing them into direct confrontation.

Once supplies have been secured — or enemies are in pursuit, depending on the success of the raid — the pack will move out, putting as much distance between themselves and their old position as they can. Usually, the early evening's activities leave several hours of darkness in which to travel, and a well-supplied pack will continue moving for several days if possible. As stated earlier, they can travel with great speed, and know how to cross terrain swiftly and skillfully, even when burdened with supplies.

They can, of course, see clearly at night, and samurai who don't wish

to break a leg in the darkness should refrain from pursuing Nezumi into the night.

Packs travel in very specific migration patterns, circling the same wide range of territory over and over again. How far these migratory patterns range depends on the resources available, and how well-disposed the permanent residents are towards their sticky-fingered visitors. Most tribes will return to the same location after a period of two to five years, giving stripped resources a chance to recover and angered locals a chance to forget. Exact patterns vary from tribe to tribe, of course.

Storytelling seems to be the primary form of entertainment among them, serving to remind current pack members of their duties as well as inspiring them with tales of the great Nezumi heroes of the past. Singing is another pastime that the Nezumi seem adept at, although their songs are very different from our own ritualized harmonies. It is a wild, primal thing to hear, based on haphazard improvisation and driven by the relentless pounding of drums. During times of great celebration, the Nezumi will dance to their music, howling and chanting while whirling about in a spectacle as barbaric as it is fascinating.

The Nezumi do not have a priestly class. However, most tribes contain a "shaman" or magician, who practices a form of spiritualism not unlike our own. Nezumi do not venerate their ancestors as humans do, and do not believe that the spirits dictate their fate. Rather, they view the self as all-important: that the individual's chi is what shapes the universe, not the other way around. By focusing and pushing their "force of self" outward, Nezumi shamans are able to affect the world around them, achieving effects similar to the spells our shugenja cast.

The key difference lies in the approach. Nezumi shamans do not summon spirits, believing them inconsequential. Instead, they utilize a combination of guttural chants, body movement and in some cases bloodletting to focus their chi in the proper direction. It is a grotesque sight, watching a Nezumi shaman casting a spell, and has caused many shugenja to denounce the act as unholy. The effects, however, cannot be argued with. Nezumi shamans exercise as much command of their so-called "magic" as any human shugenja, without suffering any tainting effects.

Tribal roles are gender neutral, with females acting as warriors, shamans and even chieftains as often as their male brethren. Adult Nezumi perform a variety of duties, based on the commands of their leader and the necessities of the moment. Most concern themselves with scavenging food and supplies, either from

Tikuku, Nezumi Shaman of the Tattered Ear

EARTH: 2

FIRE: 2

WATER: 3

AIR: 2

Awareness 3

Skills:

Stealth 3

Spells:

The Ties That Bind

Reversal of Fortunes

Know the Shadows

Attack Roll: 2k2

Damage Roll: 3k1

TN to hit: 10

Armor: none

Wounds: 7: -1, 15:

Dead

Personality:

Like his chieftain, Tikuku is quite clever and difficult to catch unaware. He speaks rough Rokugani, and will occasionally venture into a human village to negotiate for what the tribe needs. He enjoys talking to Pink Ones when he can, although he does not understand their backwards thinking and frivolous lifestyle. He will sometimes question a nearby human on one observed custom or another; the answers he receives usually leave him mystified.



nearby communities (human, goblin and otherwise), or the surrounding countryside. Scouting duties are considered an integral part of scavenging and all Nezumi are expected to report anything they see or hear to their chieftain.

There is no distinctive warrior caste among the Nezumi. Obviously, some individuals are more skilled in combat than others and many clothe themselves in scavenged martial gear (thus being mistaken for "ratling bushi" by the unenlightened), but no specific group of individuals is held solely responsible for the protection of the tribe. When they must fight, they fight as an entire pack, with no "noncombatants" save their young and perhaps one or two old females.

Similarly, all members of the tribe are expected to help gather food and supplies. They are remarkably adept at locating food sources, from roots and tubers deep in the soil, to the rinds and bones found in human refuse heaps. Farmers' fields are often stripped bare of growing crops by a band that just happened to wander by.

The peasants see the Nezumi as evil spirits because of the damage they wreak. Their solution is to appease them by leaving bags of food and other supplies out in the fields — which the Nezumi are more than happy to confiscate. This, of course, only perpetuates the belief that they are "evil spirits" which can be warded off through offerings and prayers. The *heimin* inability to differentiate between supernatural malice and a simple survival tactic contributes greatly to the Nezumi's reputation as Shadowlands creatures.

Food is not the only thing which the Nezumi scrounge. They do not construct tools of their own, but are miraculously adept at procuring and adapting human equipment. A katana that would be rejected by the lowliest bandit can find new life as a walking stick, rooting tool, or fishing spear in the hands of an enterprising ratling. Of course, they prefer higher quality items when they can get them, and many of the more prosperous tribes will have sound equipment in their possession. But nothing — absolutely nothing — ever goes to waste.

Tak, Nezumi Bodyguard of the Tattered Ear

EARTH: 4

FIRE: 4

WATER: 2

AIR: 2

Skills:

Athletics 2

Kenjutsu 2

Stealth 4

Attack Roll: 6k4

Damage Roll: 6k2

(katana)

TN to hit: 20

Armor: 6

Wounds: 10: -1; 20:

-2; 30: Dead

Personality: Stikak's three "bodyguards" — Tak, Kap, and Hikapi Longsnout — are all well-armed and versed in combat. In times of crisis, the three serve as squad leaders of a sort, directing scattered tribe members in a retreat or counterattack.

Tak is Stikak's chief lieutenant and the unofficial commander of the three bodyguards. He is a meaty tower of a ratling, with black fur and a perpetual scowl. He never speaks if he can help it; talking is for the weak.

Kap, Nezumi Bodyguard of the Tattered Ear

EARTH: 4

FIRE: 3

Agility 4

WATER: 2

AIR: 2

Skills:

Athletics 2

Kenjutsu 2

Stealth 3

Attack Roll: 6k4

Damage Roll: 6k2

(sword)

TN to hit: 20

Armor: 5

Wounds: 10: -1; 20: -2;

30: Dead

Personality: Kap, the only female of the three bodyguards, is the chieftain's consort. The two have spawned some three litters between them; she translates her affection for them into a protectiveness of the entire tribe. She is very proud of her place, and will die before she allows an outsider to harm her "big swamp o' kids."

They are extremely pragmatic and see value in the most absurd bits of trash. Garbage that has been sucked dry of organic material will be taken and used in some manner — even if it is only hoarded for some nebulous later purpose. I once journeyed with a tribe that squirrelled away stockpiles of junk in carefully concealed burrows along their migratory route. Whenever they arrived at a new stockpile, there was a great commotion as members rifled through it, looking for things that they could make use of somehow. They prize shiny objects and have been known to trade information for glass beads and other such trinkets. Make no mistake: there is no item so worthless that the Nezumi cannot find a use for it.

Once the Nezumi have acquired a given object, they use it for as long as they can. However, in general, they are much less property-oriented than humans, and do not express any great regret at the loss of any equipment. Certain objects may be prized for their high quality or durability, but no Nezumi has the same fierce commitment to an ancestral sword or kimono the way Rokugani do. Since they were stolen in the first place, they can be disposed of with equal ease, and given item — no matter how valuable — can be replaced.

On the northern territories of the Scorpion and Unicorn Clans, some Nezumi packs have taken to robbing the dead. They snatch clothes, weapons, and jewelry from shrines and tombs. Since many shrines contain high quality items, the practice is very popular, despite the murderous outrage it provokes among the local humans. I once asked Seichuk, chieftain of the Tattered Ear pack, why the Nezumi continued to defile graves if they knew it made enemies of the Rokugani. Seichuk looked at me quizzically and asked "Why you leave good stuff-stuff out, then scream when we take-take it? You don't want-want us to take, don't leave-leave it out."

Here again, is another case where Nezumi scavenging tactics have been mistaken for Shadowlands menace. What Rokugani view as desecration of ancestral spirits, the Nezumi merely see as making the best use of available resources. They do not understand the concept of

consecrated objects, or why such objects would be "needed" by someone long dead. They only see an object — a particularly nice object — which they can use. It is a matter of differing perception and opinion which I fear may never be resolved due to the basic natures of our two races.

Nezumi age is hard to reckon, for they measure their lives in seasons, not in years. The length of a rattling "season" varies from tribe to tribe, some counting them as humans do, others dividing the year into two rough "Food Time" and "Lean Time" divisions. Many tribes in the Shadowlands partition seasons according to their own bizarre calendars, and mark them in ways which baffle human observers. Despite such inaccurate sources, most of us who have studied these creatures agree that the natural Nezumi lifespan is twenty-five to thirty-five years.

The native Nezumi language is a chattering combination of barks, squeaks and clicks, very similar to the noises mundane rodents emit, but with a rhythm and artifice that indicates complex communication. Their written language is barely more complicated than pictographs depicting the object or event in question. Writing is mostly used to communicate with other packs, leaving warnings of dangerous areas or directions on how to reach a specific location. For the most part, communication is limited to the spoken word.

Rattlings are capable of speaking human language, and in fact most tribes teach a strange dialect of Rokugani to their children. This intriguing version of our language is punctuated by clicks and squeaks and a peculiar stuttering repetition.

Likewise, our Hiruma scouts who patrol the Shadowlands make it a point to become fluent in the Nezumi tongue. As a result, we can communicate very clearly with each other, which has allowed us to reach common ground of sorts. The Nezumi do not understand many aspects of our culture and are baffled by its many nuances, but see the value in negotiation and are willing to come to terms on disagreements. We have been able to conduct a small amount of trading and sign basic treaties with them,

Hikapi Longsnout, Nezumi Bodyguard of the Tattered Bar

EARTH: 3

Stamina: 4

FIRE: 3

Agility: 4

WATER: 2

AIR: 2

Skills:

Athletics 2

Kenjutsu 1

Stealth 3

Attack Roll: 5k4

Damage Roll: 5k2

(sword)

TN to hit: 20

Armor: 5

Wounds: 10; -1, 20; -2;

30: Dead

Personalities:

Hikapi is very young, having gained his place after defeating a trio of wandering goblins. He is fanatically loyal to Stikak and will obey his orders without question. Lately, he has expressed a perverse interest in joining a human fighting school, if one will have him. The rest of the pack assume that his childish fascination will die down as he matures.

preventing needless bloodshed between our two races and giving our scouts an excellent source of information on the Shadowlands. No other Shadowlands race displays such open tolerance of human presence — another sign that the Nezumi are not the monsters that some would believe.

Nezumi Dwellings

Most of the time, Nezumi live in the open air, using traveling mats and lean-tos to protect themselves from the elements. There have been instances of the Nezumi building permanent structures, either forming their own burrow-like communities or repairing abandoned human ones. The tribes who make use of this are usually located in barren areas, with few other inhabitants to be concerned about. By maintaining such structures, they can concentrate more fully on scavenging duties, without concerning themselves with making or breaking camp. Such instances are rare outside the Shadowlands, however.

Nezumi Philosophy

The Nezumi's seemingly alien habits — their disregard of property, migratory lifestyle, and detached communities of small numbers — have risen from a consistent philosophy that runs throughout the species. Whether this philosophy predates The Terrible Day (and can therefore be traced to all Nezumi) or whether something in the Nezumi's elemental mixture predisposes them to it is unknown. Experiments on the subject have proven inconclusive. The tenets of Nezumi philosophy, however, are available simply by conversing with one of their number for any length of time. Its complexity is further proof that the Nezumi are not among Fu Leng's servitors, who act only out of nihilistic destruction.

The sense of the individual is paramount in the Nezumi's view of the world — the individual as a being, as a pack, and as a race. Every being has a right to survive, and no being can be faulted for doing what he must to continue his existence. They are born on this earth with only a few years to live and then die, and Nezumi have no

Nezumi Village

The map to the left depicts the Tattered Ear's base camp, deep within Shinomen Forest.

Nezumi Village



Nezumi Mound Dwelling



Making Nezumi Non- Player Characters

concept of a karmic wheel or reincarnation. The gift of life is therefore that much more precious, and should not be discarded lightly. By surviving — by staying alive as long as possible and acknowledging that nothing is so important as one's life — one makes the fullest possible use of the gift and thereby acknowledges its intrinsic value.

Once the survival of the individual has been secured, the next duty is to one's immediate family. In this case, "family" extends to one's entire pack. Since most pack members are related anyway, the difference is inconsequential. Survival of the pack means ensuring enough food for all, protecting the young ones who represent the future, and placing the pack's interests ahead of the interests of any outsiders. Under these ethical tenets, the theft for which the Nezumi are known is permissible, even encouraged. If a Nezumi must steal from a starving human to feed its own litter, it will do so without hesitation.

Conflict between Nezumi packs is uncommon, but it does happen and is permitted under their philosophy. Usually it is some territorial dispute, or a quarrel over a limited resource. Unlike the goblins, who slaughter each other with little or no provocation, the Nezumi can reach a compromise with each other more often than not. Although the survival of the family may bring two packs into conflict, survival of the species dictates that such conflicts be brief, justified and ended with as little permanent damage as possible.

Survival of the species is the third and final step in the ladder of Nezumi philosophy. Their home has been decimated, their people spread to the four winds. Yet they continue to prosper where other races would have perished. The Nezumi take great pride in this accomplishment, and the best way to display that pride is to perpetuate the accomplishment, ensuring that the Nezumi nation continues to prosper as best it can. This results in sharing supplies with other tribes, assisting in conflicts where greater numbers can tip the balance, and refraining from spilling Nezumi blood if an alternative can be found.

Each of these three steps is supported by the one before it. By surviving as an individual, a Nezumi helps keep his pack alive, and by keeping the pack alive, he is helping to perpetuate the race as a whole. The single Nezumi, therefore, becomes a microcosm of the entire species, and acting out of self-interest serves a greater purpose than

Legend of the Five Rings does not normally allow Nezumi to be played as PCs. However, GMs may want to flesh out their Nezumi NPCs to fill a more important role in their campaign. The simplest way to do this is to use the Nezumi statistics found in the basic rulebook; these are an adequate way of conveying the difference between Nezumi and humans with a minimum of fuss and effort. GMs are free to add an additional skill or two to help round out the characters. Some Gamemasters, however, will wish to invest more time on a particularly prominent Ratling NPC. Such characters may be created much the same way as human characters are:

1) Traits and Rings begin at two

2) The character is granted 20 C.P.s to spend on increasing Traits and Skills.

(continued)

Nezumi Non-Player Characters (continued)

There are other key differences between ratling and human characters, however, which must be applied when creating a Nezumi.

- The following skills are forbidden for ratling characters:

Acting, Calligraphy, Courtier, Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Horsemanship, Investigation, Law, Meditation, Shintao, Sincerity, Tea Ceremony, Theology, Commerce, Locksmith, Poison, Seduction, Torture

Furthermore, the skills Dance, Music, Painting and Poetry are limited to Nezumi works only. All ratling "arts" are simple, tribal traditions with none of the formal ritual that marks Rokugani culture. The skills are instinctive in ratlings, a matter of watching and participating rather than formal training. While performance varies from ratling to ratling (and the skills are included to reflect that variance), the dances, ballads, and songs are bizarre and alien to human sensibilities. Ratlings suffer a two die penalty when attempting to impress humans with the high skills.

- All ratlings begin with the following skills automatically: Shadowlands Lore, Hunting, Defense, Stealth. Ratling Bushi are further granted two skill points to spend on any bugei skills they choose (these bugei skills are learned through instinct and individual teachers, not through any formal school).

- Ratlings do not gain Advantages or Disadvantages.

- Ratlings cannot join a bushi or shugenja school and do not have the special abilities that such schools convey. Ratling shamans begin with three spells, which they have learned through memorized rituals rather than spirits or scrolls. In order to learn an additional spell, a ratling shaman must find another shaman willing to teach it to him or her.

- Ratlings are hardier than humans, and do not suffer from injuries as acutely. A ratling has only four wound boxes on his or her character sheet (0, -1, -2, Dead) but each box holds a number of wounds equal to four times his or her Earth score.

(continued)

the survival of one individual. Because all Nezumi adhere to these beliefs and all of them act from the same essential moral code, the potential abuse of such a system is kept to a minimum. Thus, tales of "ratling warlords" who rule with an iron fist are fabrications, and can be discounted simply by observing Nezumi behavior for any length of time. Their collective self-interest simply does not allow it.

Their consistency in philosophy should not imply, however, that all Nezumi are the same. On the contrary, each pack has its own cultural identity, myths, holy symbols and methods of dealing with the outside world. What is polite among one tribe is taboo among another, and wise samurai will never assume that the same tactics will work for two different tribes.

Combat and Tactics

Nezumi are skittish about combat and will rarely engage in direct hand-to-hand fighting. This leads many humans (most vocally, the Lion Clan) to condemn them as cowardly. The Nezumi do not dispute the claim, and will fondly extol the virtues of living over dying in any conceivable situation. To assume that they are poor fighters, however, can be a fatal mistake.

The Nezumi's favored combat tactics are quick and direct guerrilla techniques, and when engaged in battle, they fight with imagination and ferocity. Their most common tactic is a "strike and retreat". When a threat presents itself, the pack members scatter like leaves in the wind, with a stealth the Scorpion would envy. They intend to confuse the enemy and make it hesitate before choosing a target. In so doing, the maximum number of Nezumi can escape to cover, ensuring that the pack as a whole survives.

From their hidden positions, they then begin a deliberate process of shadowing the threat. They will follow it from a safe distance, watching it and attempting to determine its intentions. During this process, they will communicate with each other through an unnerving series of twittering yelps, which echo throughout the entire area disguising their proximity and numbers.

Of the threat seems intent on pursuing the pack, or if it presents a danger too large to ignore, then they will engage it in a ruthless combination of coordination and individual bravery. One Nezumi will advance, attack the enemy quickly, and pull back before the adversary can retaliate. While attention is focused on this first Nezumi, a second will advance, strike and retreat, usually from the opposite direction. This pattern will continue, with assaults coming faster and faster until the enemy is disposed of. With the Nezumi's speed and knowledge of terrain, the tactic proves blindingly effective. I once observed the Tattered Ear pack dispose of an entire gang of ruffians in this manner, picking off the brigands one by one until the survivors were too unnerved to do anything but cower and whine.

Of course, this is not the only battle strategy used by the Nezumi. They are quite adept at thinking on their feet and can develop effective battle strategies at a moment's notice. It simply represents the most oft-used and efficient method I have observed. Those who witness them in action will never underestimate Nezumi fighting prowess again.

The Nezumi race represents not only a sense of hope and irrepressible spirit, but they may possibly hold the key to final victory against Fu Leng. Within their furry forms lies the secret to Shadowlands immunity, a secret which must be unlocked if we are to defeat our unholy foe. Their ancestral ties to Fu Leng's Realm give them an uncanny knowledge of the terrain there, knowledge that we can use to strike at our enemy most effectively. Their ability to scavenge and survive — even in the most inhospitable climates — every samurai would do well to study.

While many Rokugani may decry the "ratlings" as pests and condemn their so-called "Shadowlands ways," the wise man will look beyond that. The Nezumi are one of our greatest assets, and only the dumbest fool throws away a weapon in time of war.

Nezumi Non-Player Characters (continued)

• Ratlings do not have Honor or Glory. Their tribal structure is very simple and they rarely acknowledge the status of other tribes and humanity. Treat their Honor as 0 in regards to any human dealings. It cannot be raised or lowered in any fashion. They are, however, immune to the effects of human Honor; Ratlings cannot be impressed or cowed simply because a given samurai has performed impressive deeds in the past.

Regardless of how a character is created, one trait remains universal among all Nezumi. Ratlings are absolutely immune to the Shadowlands taint. They cannot be corrupted by the forces of Fu Leng, and do not suffer any of the effects from exposure to Shadowlands terrain. They are further immune from the corruptive effects of Shadowlands spells and any "tainting" abilities of oni and Fu Leng's creatures.

They are not, however, able to cast Maho spells, summon or bind oni, or participate in any other "voluntary" process that would otherwise grant them the Taint.

• To determine a ratling's starting possessions, roll two dice. The character may spend that number of points on any the following pieces of equipment:

- 1 pt. — a shiny object of some sort (beads, a necklace, etc).
- 1 pt. — a spear or sharp stick (1k2 damage).
- 1 pt. — a storage pouch and belt.
- 2 pt. — a knapsack or traveling pack
- 1 pt. — a robe, kimono or other covering.
- 3 pt. — a knife (1k2 damage).
- 4 pt. — a wakizashi or short sword (2k2 damage).
- 4 pt. — a helmet or scrap of armor (+3 TN to be hit for each piece).
- 8 pt. — a katana (3k2 damage).

This Size Comparison Chart gives a general idea of the range of denizens one might encounter in the Shadowlands. Of course, there are also creatures much smaller and larger than the small selection shown here. The largest oni Mokuna recorded was fifteen feet tall, but I have no doubt that even more monstrous beings roam the deeper regions of Fu Leng's Realm. The smallest creatures he noted, though by no means least deadly, are the nikumizu, which only grow to about the size of a man's finger.

-Kuni Yori

Size Comparison Goblin, Man,

Average Human Male

Average Mujina



Common Goblin



*Between Mujina,
Troll and Ogre*

Common Ogre

Common Troll



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Yari-sama.

You cannot achieve anything if you are not willing to sacrifice. The greater the sacrifice, the greater the gain. Madness is the ability to answer questions which should never have been asked. Fear is the true enemy.

Of all the lessons Kuni Mokuna taught his students, these still remain with me – these shreds of memory about a man whose life meant more to Rokugan than the land itself will ever admit. As Mokuna's last living apprentice, I feel it is my responsibility to pass on his teachings – and so I write this letter to you, in the hopes that it will help others to understand the man who was my Master.

Kuni Mokuna was not a madman. He was not a barbarian. He was a scholar, a seeker of truth, and a confessor who sought to cleanse the dark heart of man. What the world will remember, no doubt, are the stories – stories of dark magic, of touching the flesh of the dead, of refusing to cover his quest with pretty words and silence. The truth of these accusations can be disputed for centuries, but what cannot be challenged is the vast wealth of knowledge Mokuna has given to the Crab, and to the defense of Rokugan against an overwhelming enemy.

I drew the portrait of my Master three years into my apprenticeship, after a lengthy dissection of a swamp goblin. Although it shows the truth of the horrors which my Master chose to face, it does not show the entire story of a shugenja whose dedication drove him into forbidden territories, seeking knowledge which would exact a heavy price. A price which, for Rokugan's sake, we were both willing to pay.

Perhaps those who see it will call Mokuna a butcher. They will see the skull upon his shelf, as it is now upon mine, and they will think only of his methods. But there is more to Mokuna than darkness. His eyes, his demeanor – in some small way, I feel that I have captured the soul of a man who was proud to give his body, his life and perhaps even his soul to the cause of knowledge. And have not his studies saved the lives of countless samurai who would fight these horrible foes?

Mokuna's darkness cannot be ignored. Yet it must be understood. I know that you will treasure his work for the value of the knowledge, but you must also prize it for another reason. Each time Mokuna went to the Shadowlands, he lost some small part of himself, but gained another chapter for his text. In doing so, Mokuna became part of something greater than himself. They say that he is truly lost to the Shadowlands, that he will never return, but I know this: The journals you hold in your hands are Mokuna's true soul. So long as his work is never forgotten, he will never die.

Daidoji Nazoko





Legend of the Five Rings™

The Book of the Shadowlands

Beyond the barricade of the Kaiu Wall lies the twisted, poisoned region known as the Shadowlands. Here, the evil of a fallen god warps and contaminates the land and all who dare tread there. Honorable samurai have been driven mad, their bodies disfigured and their spirits crushed by the corrupting atmosphere. Foul creatures roam the fetid wastes, hunting those brave or foolish enough to enter. Goblins, ogres, trolls and terrifying oni reside here, as well as mischievous mujina, mindless zombies and industrious tribes of ratlings.

Within these pages are the writings of one of Rokugan's most infamous shugenja, Kuni Mokuna. Regarded as a savage madman by his contemporaries, Mokuna devoted his life to studying the Shadowlands and its denizens. His bold explorations and research have provided Rokugan with the most comprehensive collection of information about Fu Leng's Realm ever written. The Book of the Shadowlands includes:

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