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JADE REGENT

THE EMPTY THRONE

By Neil Spicer



COILS OF THE DRAGON

Even more so than the chromatic and metallic dragons familiar to the people of the Inner Sea region, the imperial dragons of the Dragon Empires cleave to philosophies and agendas distinct to each serpentine breed. Not wholly allied with the forces of good or evil, law or chaos, the imperial dragons represent the balance of life, nature, and the cosmos. With draconic representatives embodying cavern and sky, land and sea, these potent forces endlessly dance, attacking and defending, wheeling on and on, as members of their kinds have for countless ages, around an axis of perfect neutrality in endless, savage harmony.



DENIZENS OF SHADOW

Not all residents of Golarion are natives to its reality's bright and substantial shores. In an age of night, members of a furtive people slipped the borders of shadows and emerged in a realm not wholly unlike their own. But as generations passed, the darkness lifted and the paths between their umbral realm and this brightening land faded with a worldwide dawn. None can say how many of this aloof race were stranded, made victims of a harsh and unrelenting sun. Even today, ages later, these castaways cling to the shadows of a world not quite their own, where the gigantic, day-stalking natives know them as wayangs.

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JADE REGENT

ADVENTURE PATH • PART 6 OF 6

THE EMPTY THRONE



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“The Empty Throne” is a Pathfinder Adventure Path scenario designed for four 13th-level characters.
By the end of this adventure, characters should reach 16th level.

This product makes use of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3*, *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat*, and *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic*. These rules can be found online as part of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Reference Document at paizo.com/pathfinderRPG/prd.

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JADE REGENT



NINJA VS. PIRATES

It all comes down to this. With “The Empty Throne,” the destiny not just of the PCs’ friends and allies, but of an entire nation as well, lies in the PCs’ hands. Will they be able to topple the Jade Regent from his stolen throne? Can they restore their companion Ameiko’s birthright? Will their journey of countless miles and through unspeakable dangers be validated at last? Or will it all have been for naught?

That’s all for the players to worry about. GMs who got this far should be turning their attention to an impending concern: what’s next?

After all, what do you do at the end of a campaign that’s likely taken months of real-world time and perhaps years of in-game time to complete? Does the final sword stroke fall, the final spell blast clear, and then the credits roll? What’s next for your campaign?

Well, this time around, GMs have more options than ever. In the past, we’ve tried to leave GMs with plenty of ideas on where their games might go next. The “Continuing the

Campaign” series was born from the fact that we always scheduled our highest-level content to go in the final volume of an Adventure Path. The article “Mammon” in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #30 was the first time we fired off a wide variety of new items, plots, and villains that might turn into new motivations for a campaign continuing past the pages of the final adventure. Since then, these “Continuing the Campaign” articles have set the stage for revolution in Brevoy, a serpentfolk invasion of the Inner Sea, a vampiric shadow war in Ustalav, and dozens of other plots. With the conclusion of the Jade Regent Adventure Path, GMs will again find a “Continuing the Campaign” article in this volume, but this time around the options for what the PCs might do and where a campaign might go are broader than ever before. In the past, there have been new threats to nations and agitators that might draw out a campaign’s plot, but this time GMs don’t just have a corner of the world to chart the fate of—Jade Regent ends with the PCs at the edge of two continents, the Crown of

FOREWORD

the World and Tian Xia, practically two new campaign settings' worth of countries, races, cultures, and creatures to encounter and explore. Page 62 presents an overview of the new lands beyond Minkai, a region larger than even that detailed in the *Inner Sea World Guide*. To support and fire the imaginations of GMs who might want to take their Jade Regent campaign beyond the borders of Minkai, we've thoroughly detailed this land, its peoples, its deities, and more in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Dragon Empires Gazetteer*. GMs of the Jade Regent Adventure Path who want to keep rolling with their campaign should consider that book a gigantic "Continuing the Campaign" article and indulge in the limitless dangers therein. Alternatively, like so many great fantasy and science fiction tales, the PCs' next great goal might be a simple one: to go home.

Whatever you as GM decide to do, it'll be a surprise to us, as in just a few dozen more pages we turn this entire campaign over to you. Will the rise of an untested new empress provoke a warlike nation such as Chu Ye to attack? Could offended powers of the north seek revenge upon those who trod across their icy realm? Might the strange kami of the Dragon Empires draw the PCs into a battle against the powerful oni race? It's all up to you. Best of luck, and be sure to tell us about it and share your great ideas on the Jade Regent Adventure Path forums at paizo.com.

But handing over a campaign's reigns entirely to GMs is only one of two major changes that come about at this point in an Adventure Path's life. Next month marks the launch of the Skull & Shackles Adventure Path, a campaign full of danger, deceit, and fantastic treasure in the lawless island chains known as the Shackles. For that, I'll step aside and let this campaign's infamous architect and lead designer, Rob McCreary, give you a quick preview of what's in store.

AVAST, ME HEARTIES!

Did you want to be a pirate when you grew up? Have you longed to sail the briny deeps of Golarion's oceans? Have you ever wanted to be master of your own ship and commander of a scurvy crew of pirate cutthroats? You'll get the chance next month, when Pathfinder Adventure Path sets sail for the pirate isles of the Shackles, in the Skull & Shackles Adventure Path!

The Skull & Shackles Adventure Path gives PCs a chance to play pirates of the Shackles, first as a crew of press-ganged captives on a pirate ship, then as captains of their own ship of buccaneers and freebooters. Expect swashbucklers and mutineers, parrots and monkeys, and eye patches and peg legs, as well as opportunities to follow treasure maps, explore mysterious islands, dig for buried treasure, investigate sunken ships, and of course attack and plunder ships to fill your hold with pirate booty. Along the way, the PCs face rival pirates, haunted ghost ships, deadly

ON THE COVER

On this month's cover, Ameiko Kaijitsu dons the imperial raiments and ascends to the Jade Throne of Minkai. But is this wardrobe change premature? It's up to the PCs to determine whether or not Minkai gets a new ruler in this month's conclusion to the Jade Regent Adventure Path, "The Empty Throne."

underwater menaces, and even the treacherous winds and currents of the Eye of Abendego, as they race through the fringes of the hurricane in the Free Captains' Regatta.

As the PCs gather more plunder and infamy, they become true Free Captains of the Shackles, and have the opportunity to acquire new allies and more ships under their flag. They also become embroiled in the politics of the Shackles, dealing with wealthy and powerful pirate lords and the Hurricane King himself. By the end, the PCs need to prove their worth by defending the pirate isles from an invading fleet bent on the destruction of the Shackles and all that the Free Captains hold dear.

Throughout the Adventure Path, the PCs must track their Plunder and Infamy scores, which detail just how much wealth they have stolen and how much influence they have acquired among the other Free Captains of the Shackles. In addition, we present rules for naval combat, with mechanics for both combat between single ships and clashes between entire fleets.

Skull & Shackles also features articles detailing Golarion's oceans and the sea monsters that inhabit them, the mysteries of the Shackles, and the ecology of the cyclops, as well as a gazetteer of Port Peril, the freewheeling and dangerous capital of the Shackles. More articles explore the faiths of Norgorber, Torag, and the Pirate Queen Besmara, goddess of piracy, sea monsters, and strife. As usual, each volume of the Skull & Shackles Adventure Path presents several new monsters that you can add to your own campaign, whether it's full of swashbuckling corsairs or more traditional heroes.

So hoist the mainsail and batten down the hatches, because the Skull & Shackles Adventure Path is heaving into view next month!

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JADE REGENT



JADE REGENT

THE EMPTY THRONE

PART ONE: THE IMPERIAL CITY

Entering Kasai ahead of the advancing rebel army, the PCs must win the hearts and minds of Minkai's people while avoiding capture at the hands of the Jade Regent's inquisitors.

PAGE 8

PART TWO: HONORING THE PAST

The PCs and Ameiko travel to the mysterious island called the Imperial Shrine to receive the blessings of Minkai's past emperors, but the PCs must first face the incarnations of Minkai's most evil rulers.



PAGE 14

PART THREE: HONORING THE FUTURE

As their army engages the usurper's forces outside the city, the PCs must enter the Imperial Palace to confront the Jade Regent and Anamurumon, leader of the Five Storms, and place Ameiko on the Jade Throne of Minkai.

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ADVANCEMENT TRACK

 "Tide of Honor" 
uses the medium XP track.

13 The PCs begin this adventure at 13th level.

14 By the time they leave the Well of Demons and the Imperial Shrine, the PCs should be 14th level.

15 The PCs should be 15th level before the final showdown with the Jade Regent and his allies.

The PCs should be 16th level by the adventure's end.

THE EMPTY THRONE

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Minkai has had its fair share of dark times that have left their stains on the empire's long, proud history. But one period in particular was darker than most. An age of fear, blood, and steel—a time when a single charismatic warlord named Anamurumon rose to power among the bandits of the Minkai countryside and terrorized the entire nation. In direct defiance of the emperor and the will of the gods, Anamurumon foolishly sought what his lowly birthright denied him—the very seat of power in Minkai, the Jade Throne.

Anamurumon's rise came about during the reign of Emperor Shojinawa Kenshiro. The warlord's forces raided and burned several cities, abducted and ransomed important diplomats, and slew many of the emperor's best samurai. At the height of his power, Anamurumon had seized the largest farms and threatened every trade route around the imperial capital of Kasai, all in an effort to starve the capital and force Emperor Kenshiro's capitulation. In 4247 AR (6747 by the Tian Imperial Calendar), Anamurumon managed to draw out the emperor and strike a mortal blow against him on the battlefield. But the warlord was unable to claim his stolen throne, for Anamurumon had underestimated the power and favor invested in the imperial families by the gods. With his dying breath, Kenshiro called upon the power of the *Shojinawa Seal*, one of the five *Imperial Seals* that symbolized the goddess Shizuru's blessing and the imperial families' divine mandate to rule Minkai. Anamurumon was struck down and fell victim to a terrible curse. With their leader rendered impotent, Anamurumon's forces were routed by the emperor's reinforcements, thereby preserving the empire even as Kenshiro passed away.

Anamurumon's soul was ripped from his body and cast into the void, a disembodied spirit cursed to wander the Great Beyond for eternity. Seething with jealousy and rage, Anamurumon's spirit appealed to Fumeiyoshi, god of dishonor and envy and patron of the oni. Ever jealous of Shizuru and those blessed with her favor, Fumeiyoshi heard Anamurumon's plea and answered the former warlord's prayers by returning him to the Material Plane as a wind yai oni. But Fumeiyoshi's gift proved to be a curse as well as a boon, for as an oni, Anamurumon was now bound by the *Laws of Golden Perfection*—the complex compendium of rules put in place by the gods that prevents the oni from taking direct action to seize control of the mortal world and rule over mankind. And though his new oni form was much more powerful than his previous human body, that very form now forever prevented Anamurumon from claiming the Jade Throne he so craved.

In addition, when he manifested in his new form on the Material Plane, Anamurumon found himself trapped in the House of Withered Blossoms in the Forest of Spirits.

This ancient pagoda was both a palace and a prison for the oni inside, a tenuous brotherhood of cruel, corrupted spirits clothed in flesh, who only grudgingly accepted Anamurumon's arrival in their midst. Anamurumon devoted the next 4 centuries of his unnatural life to maneuvering for power among their ranks and planning an escape from the House of Withered Blossoms, still powerfully driven to strike back at those who defeated him. He established a single identity for those oni who rallied to his cause, thenceforth known as the Five Storms, and slew all who opposed him.

When the Five Storms finally broke free of their prison in 4651 (7151 IC), Anamurumon directed them to insinuate themselves into every segment of Minkai society. This painstaking process took 50 years of deception, bribery, and blackmail. The kuwa oni found it particularly easy to pass as humans, and many took human wives, gaining access to every industry and faction, making it possible to manipulate Minkai's economy, politics, and cultural traditions. At the same time, the Five Storms focused their efforts on infiltrating or destroying the five imperial families of Minkai, thus paving the way for the Five Storms' eventual takeover of the empire.

Meanwhile, some oni—Anamurumon in particular—sought the means to sire half-fiend children and tiefling grandchildren, correctly deeming that oni-blooded tieflings would fall outside the *Laws of Golden Perfection*, and could thereby further his goal of taking the Jade Throne through subterfuge rather than direct action. The Five Storms took special care to conceal the nature of these children whenever possible, hiding any superficial evidence of their oni heritage behind armored masks, long kimonos, or the face paint of geisha as necessary. The more monstrous offspring were spirited away to serve the Fire Storms more openly. The Five Storms sent many of these more overt half-fiends and tieflings into the wilderness, encouraging and supporting them in forming bands of allied brigands. They then called upon these unconscionable misfits to manufacture external crises to occupy the emperor—a member of the Higashiyama imperial family—while their more hidden members continued the steady infiltration of his inner circle.

To this end, Anamurumon raised and trained his most promising grandchild, a young boy named Soto Takahiro. The boy's mother died during childbirth, courtesy of a poisoned cup of medicinal tea arranged by Anamurumon himself to ensure that his grandson would bond only with him. As Takahiro grew up, so too did he grow in power and status, his mind constantly shaped and hardened by Anamurumon to suit the oni's plans. Eventually, at his grandfather's urging, Takahiro joined an order of samurai devoted to protecting the Higashiyama clan, and was assigned to protect one of their younger scions, Shigure,

JADE REGENT

who Anamurumon planned to elevate to the Jade Throne by arranging the deaths of his elder siblings in the line of succession. When Shigure finally became emperor in 4708 (7208 IC), he brought Takahiro with him as his personal bodyguard—all according to Anamurumon's plan.

The days of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure proved short-lived, however. Just a week later, Takahiro manufactured a ruse with the assistance of the emperor's closest advisor—a young oracle named Renshii Meida, whom Takahiro had seduced. Takahiro and Meida claimed her divinations had revealed that there would soon be an attempt on Shigure's life, and convinced the emperor of the truth of these allegations with evidence taken from the assassinations of his predecessors. Rightfully alarmed, Shigure agreed to go into hiding at the Imperial Shrine—a magical island in Kasai Harbor where only those of imperial blood or their chosen guardians can set foot, making it a perfect location for the emperor to hide while others rooted out the assassins.

Upon taking the emperor to the island, Takahiro further convinced Shigure to give him the *Higashiyama Seal* and invest him with the regency of Minkai in the emperor's name, so that Takahiro could serve as temporary ruler in Shigure's absence. However, as soon as Shigure performed the ceremony to bequeath this power, Takahiro slew the emperor, thus fulfilling Meida's prophecy, and Takahiro and Meida threw Shigure's body into the Well of Demons at the island's heart. Returning to the mainland, Takahiro, now calling himself the Jade Regent, selected his grandfather Anamurumon as an advisor to the throne. Meanwhile, the Five Storms spread stories that the emperor had gone into hiding while the unnamed threat against his life remained.

Without the divine mandate to rule granted to the five imperial families by Shizuru, the Jade Regent can never become the legitimate emperor of Minkai. But over time, with no true heirs to claim the throne, the Jade Regent will become the de facto emperor, and Minkai will pass irrevocably into the hands of the oni, ushering in a new dark age of terror, blood, and excess.

But all hope is not yet lost. In the imperial capital of Kasai, people whisper of a lost princess, a daughter of the Amatatsu family and true heir to the Jade Throne, who has returned to Minkai. Rumors of her approach have caused the Jade Regent to withdraw to his palace, jealously guarding the seat of power while his agents actively seek her out. Dragging forth those charged with conspiracy, the Jade Regent's minions threaten to execute them one by one unless the heir reveals herself. But before she can claim her birthright, the princess must first receive the blessings of the former emperors of Minkai. Only then—with her champions by her side—can she finally challenge the Jade Regent and reclaim the empty throne.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Having gained support for Ameiko's claim to the Jade Throne from many different factions in Minkai in "Tide of Honor," the PCs finally turn their attention to infiltrating the imperial capital of Kasai and directly challenging the Jade Regent. The people of Kasai are suffering myriad hardships under the Jade Regent's rule, and the PCs have an opportunity to intervene in some of these affairs, winning the support of the common people as they try to conceal Ameiko's identity from the Jade Regent's inquisitors.

To obtain the blessings of Minkai's former emperors and legitimize Ameiko's claim, the PCs must escort Ameiko to the fabled offshore island known as the Imperial Shrine, an otherworldly place where Minkai's emperors go to commune with their ancestors for advice. There, they encounter the ghost of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure and learn the full extent of the Jade Regent's betrayal. But Shigure withholds his approval of Ameiko until the PCs recover his body from the Well of Demons. These horrifying, half-flooded caverns lie steeped in the evil of Minkai's past, and the PCs must do battle against the dark powers of that domain to fulfill the emperor's wish.

Once they've secured the blessings of the past emperors, the PCs return to Kasai, ready to confront the Jade Regent in the Imperial Palace. While their allies occupy the bulk of the Jade Regent's forces outside the city, the PCs must infiltrate the palace and navigate its many traps and defenders, including an honor-bound guardian of the imperial line who possesses powerful artifacts that can aid the PCs in their upcoming showdown with the Jade Regent. Upon finally reaching the throne room, the PCs must battle not only the Jade Regent, but also his closest advisors and the leader of the Five Storms, the wind yai oni Anamurumon. With the Jade Regent's defeat, Ameiko can claim her rightful place upon the Jade Throne and establish a new dynasty to rule the empire of Minkai!

PART ONE: THE IMPERIAL CITY

"The Empty Throne" begins with the PCs having forged alliances with Minkai's criminal, mercantile, and martial elements, represented by the ninja, the geisha, and Jiro's ronin and the samurai in "Tide of Honor." With these supporters in place, the time finally arrives to strike directly against the Jade Regent. The ronin Hirabashi Jiro advises the PCs and Ameiko to make their way to the imperial capital of Kasai, where they should make contact with an old man named Asachi Isao, the leader of a group of sympathizers to Ameiko's cause in the city. Isao can provide them with a safe base of operations in Kasai, where the PCs can learn the current situation in the capital and prepare for Ameiko to receive the blessings of the previous emperors before claiming her throne. Jiro and the PCs'

THE EMPTY THRONE

other allies will follow with the rebel army, intending to draw the majority of the Jade Regent's forces away from the city so the PCs and Ameiko can strike the final blow against the usurper.

Through their own network of spies, however, the Five Storms already know of these developments and the PCs' intentions, prompting the Jade Regent to retreat into the Imperial Palace in Kasai. The Regent has already put the city under martial law, claiming that the same assassins who once threatened Emperor Higashiyama are now spreading rumors of an Amatatsu heir to destabilize his regency and sow further chaos in the capital.

As a result, the Jade Regent's agents execute citizens who speak out against his rule, claiming that such criminals are conspiring with foreigners to put an outsider on the Jade Throne. The Jade Regent further decrees that he'll continue to kill such traitors until Ameiko and her allies turn themselves over for execution. This environment has created a tense situation in Kasai. Most of the city's inhabitants fear the Jade Regent and his soldiers, and are afraid to call attention to themselves lest they be targeted. Others believe his lies and actively turn over anyone acting suspiciously to the Jade Regent's Typhoon Guard. Into this environment, the PCs must escort Ameiko and keep her identity secret until all their allies are in place.

Read or paraphrase the following introduction as the PCs approach Kasai.

A long line of peasants, pilgrim monks, and arriving merchants extends from the guarded gates of Kasai, the capital city of Minkai. Above the din of the noisy crowd, guards question—and in some cases aggressively interrogate—each visitor before allowing him or her into the city. Some have their goods confiscated, and are led away in tears under the harsh glare of suspicious eyes. Others seemingly satisfy their examiners with honeyed words or surreptitious bribes as they pass inside.

INFILTRATING THE CITY (CR 15)

Since becoming aware of Ameiko's survival and her presence in Minkai, the Jade Regent has put his private mercenary army, the Typhoon Guard, on high alert. The PCs must come up with a viable plan to make their way past these troops if they want to avoid undue scrutiny when entering the city. More information on the imperial capital of Kasai can be found in the Kasai gazetteer on page 70.

Creatures: Each gate into the city is guarded by an ogre mage commander and four kuwa oni Typhoon guards. Similar forces also regularly patrol the city's streets, and invisible flying oni patrol the skies over Kasai as well. The Typhoon commanders are also capable of perceiving invisible creatures. Anyone attempting to enter the city invisibly or by flying over the outer walls

WHAT ABOUT AMEIKO?

Up to this point, the PCs have likely left Ameiko and other significant NPCs safely behind with their caravan during most of their adventures in the campaign. In "The Empty Throne," however, Ameiko and the other NPCs have a more active role to play. Ameiko, in particular, must receive the blessings of the previous emperors of Minkai, and refuses to sit idly by while others risk their lives for her legacy, especially once the PCs finally face the Jade Regent. Having Ameiko take a more active role at this point serves to build credibility as she wins the hearts and minds of the people of Minkai in becoming their empress. And if Ameiko is going to put herself into danger, it is unlikely that many of the other significant NPCs will be willing to let her do so alone.

The encounters in "The Empty Throne" assume that some or all of the significant NPCs whom the PCs have befriended over the course of the campaign will be accompanying the PCs throughout the adventure. As a result, these encounters are significantly more difficult than an average party of four characters would normally expect to face. You should adjust the encounters in this adventure to provide a challenge for your group, depending on which NPCs accompany them. If the PCs only take Ameiko with them, you might want to make the encounters easier by reducing the number of foes or their levels. On the other hand, if several NPCs are with the party, you might need to increase the difficulty of some encounters to match the larger party's Average Party Level (see page 397 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*).

At the same time, you should ensure that the NPCs have leveled up to a point close to the PCs, perhaps just a level or two behind. Ameiko might take levels in bard, rogue, or even aristocrat to reflect her advancement over the course of the campaign. In any case, you should use this not as a method for Ameiko and the other NPCs to steal the show and upstage the PCs in their shared task, but rather in order to further the roleplaying opportunities among your group and develop the characters the PC have most likely grown somewhat attached to.

will be met by a patrol of four Typhoon guards led by a Typhoon commander. Even if the PCs teleport into Kasai or find some other way to enter the city undetected, most crossroads and major public areas are also closely watched by oni patrols, who accost the PCs at some point while they travel through the city.

If the PCs openly enter the city through one of its gates, they can attempt to disguise themselves to escape the oni's notice. Each character must make a DC 26 Disguise skill

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check to safely pass through the gate without arousing suspicion (the oni are assumed to be taking 10 on their opposed Perception checks). Any female characters (including Ameiko) take a -4 penalty on this check, as the oni are specifically looking for a daughter of the Amatatsu family. As long as no one pierces their disguises, the PCs are free to enter.

Alternatively, the PCs can also bluff their way inside by answering the guards' questions. Feel free to roleplay this interrogation by making the players sweat it out, but in the end, each character must make a successful Bluff check, opposed by the guards' Sense Motive checks.

Other PCs may use aid another actions to help with the deception. If a PC's Bluff check fails, the Typhoon commander gets involved with the interrogation, using its inquisitor abilities to detect alignment and discern lies to further test the PCs.

Failure at any of these approaches escalates into a confrontation. The oni guards seek to take the PCs into custody and deliver them to a holding station deeper in the city. There, multiple

Typhoon commanders deepen the interrogation, liberally casting *detect thoughts* and *confess* in order to force the truth out of the PCs. The PCs can try to fight their way out of this situation, but more patrols of oni guards may arrive to join the battle if they linger too long. Regardless, this encounter should not be a dead end for the PCs should they fail to use guile or subterfuge; it should merely help illustrate the chaotic and oppressive state of the capital.

The commanders are all inquisitors of Fumeiyoshi, the Tian god of dishonor and envy and patron of the oni. All of the Typhoon guards are samurai of the order of the Black Daimyo (see page 11). They wear green armor that emulates the Jade Regent's own and carry vertical banners called *sashimonos* emblazoned with the white dragon of Minkai on a green field. Both the commanders and the guards keep their human forms unless attacked, at which point they revert to their true oni forms.

TYPHOON COMMANDER

CR 13

XP 25,600

Ogre mage inquisitor of Fumeiyoshi 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 221, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 38)

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

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, see invisibility; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 24 (+8 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 188 (13 HD; 8d10+5d8+122); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +19, **Ref** +9, **Will** +15

SR 19

OFFENSE

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

Melee +2 *naginata*** +22/+17/+12 (2d6+15/x4)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +15/+10/+5 (2d6+9/x3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (20 ft. with naginata)

Special Attacks bane (5 rounds/day), destructive smite (+2, 6/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +11)

Constant—fly

At will—darkness, invisibility

1/day—charm monster (DC 16), cone of cold (DC 17), deep slumber (DC 15), gaseous form

Inquisitor Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +8)

At will—detect alignment, discern lies (5 rounds/day)

Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +7)

2nd (3/day)—confess* (DC 14), detect thoughts (DC 14), see invisibility

1st (5/day)—command (DC 13), cure light wounds, divine favor, shield of faith

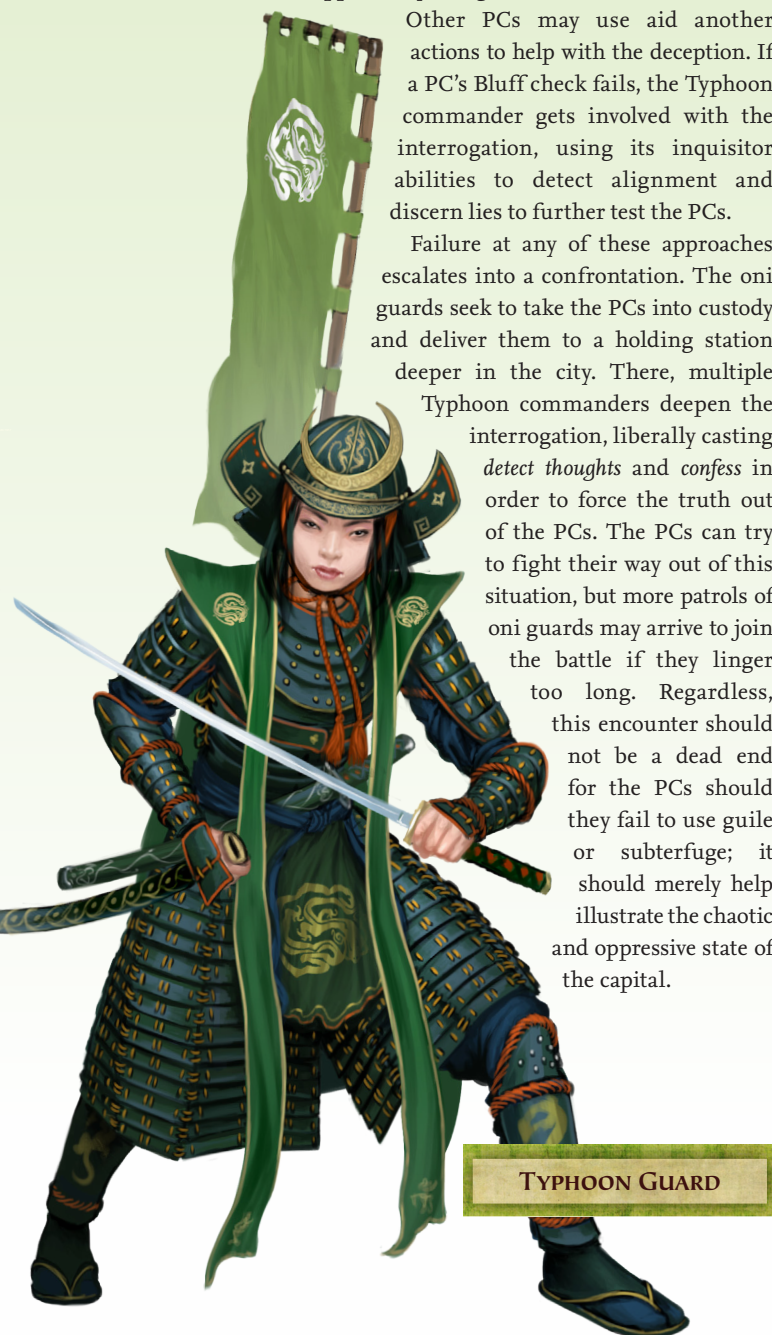
o (at will)—acid splash, bleed (DC 12), brand* (DC 12), detect magic, resistance, sift*

Domain Destruction

TACTICS

Before Combat A Typhoon commander always casts *see invisibility* before going on its guard shift, making sure to renew it every hour. Before combat, a commander also casts *shield of faith*.

During Combat Each commander generally relies on *charm monster* or *deep slumber* to subdue most would-be troublemakers. Against stronger opponents, a commander turns invisible, flying above combat if necessary, and



TYPHOON GUARD

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invokes its justice judgment ability, granting itself a +1 profane bonus on attack rolls before imbuing its naginata with the *bane* weapon special ability.

Morale A Typhoon commander fights to the death, unwilling to face the wrath of Anamurumon or the Jade Regent should it flee.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 19, **Con** 28, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +21 (+23 trip); **CMD** 37 (39 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Outflank*, Weapon Focus (naginata**)

Skills Bluff +18, Disguise +18, Fly +14, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (planes) +10, Perception +18, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +8, Survival +10

Languages Common, Giant, Minkaian, Tien

SQ change shape (Small, Medium, or Large humanoid; *alter self* or *giant form I*), cunning initiative, flight, judgment 2/day, monster lore +3, solo tactics, stern gaze, track +2

Gear +3 *do-maru***, +2 *naginata***, masterwork composite longbow (+9 Str) with 20 arrows

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

** See *Ultimate Combat*.

TYPHOON GUARDS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Kuwa oni samurai 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 208, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 18)

LE Medium outsider (human, native, oni, shapeshifter)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +3 Dex, +1 natural, +1 shield)

hp 121 each (11 HD; 5d10+6d10+61); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +14, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities resolve 3/day; **SR** 15

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk katana* +17/+12/+7 (1d8+6/18–20) and mwk wakizashi* +16/+11/+6 (1d6+3/18–20) or mwk katana* +19/+14 (1d8+9/18–20) or 2 claws +17 (1d6+6)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +17/+12/+7 (1d8+6/x3)

Special Attacks banner +2/+1, challenge (+6 damage, DR 2/—, 2/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +7)

3/day—*darkness*, *fly*

1/day—*charm person* (DC 13), *deep slumber* (DC 15), *invisibility* (self only)

TACTICS

During Combat Typhoon guards are well trained in cooperative combat tactics. One of them always takes to the air to

support the others with archery. The others attempt to flank opponents, attacking with both katanas and wakizashi.

Morale Typhoon guards fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 20, **Con** 20, **Int** 12, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 32

Feats Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (katana*)

Skills Bluff +10, Disguise +10, Fly +8, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Perception +16, Ride +10, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +6, Stealth +10

Languages Giant, Minkaian, Tien

SQ change shape (any human; *alter self*), mount, mounted archer, order of the Black Daimyo (honor in all things 2/day), weapon expertise (katana)

Gear +2 *steel lamellar**, masterwork composite longbow (+6 Str) with 20 arrows, masterwork katana*, masterwork wakizashi*, banner

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Order of the Black Daimyo (Ex) A samurai of the order of the Black Daimyo follows the teachings of General Susumu, the Tian god of war and patron of evil samurai. A samurai of the order of the Black Daimyo functions as a samurai of the order of the warrior, simply replacing the pursuit of honor with the pursuit of glory.

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to enter the city while avoiding combat with the guards, award them 51,200 XP.

A FRIENDLY FACE

After winning their way into Kasai, the PCs should make contact with their sympathizers in the city, a group led by a frail, almost ancient man named **Asachi Isao** (LG male venerable human aristocrat 9). An old friend of Jiro's, Isao has taken it upon himself to prepare rooms at his family compound to safely and secretly house Ameiko and the PCs. Isao's family is also one of the few who remember and honor the Amatatsu family. Isao knew Ameiko's great-grandfather, who left him much of the wealth the Amatatsus couldn't take with them when they fled. Isao sold many of their lesser art items over the years, reinvesting the money from each transaction and elevating his own family in status. Even so, he only views himself as a caretaker of the original funds, and can provide Ameiko and the PCs with additional funds to use against the Jade Regent should they need them. It will take Isao several days to liquidate his investments into cash, however. You can use these funds to make up any shortfall in the PCs' wealth or provide them with an additional reward for safely getting Ameiko to Kasai, but the PCs should probably remain close to their recommended wealth by level (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 399).

JADE REGENT

In addition, Isao can provide a great deal of information to the PCs. Thanks in large part to the Amatatsu family, the Asachis are now wealthy nobles. As such, Isao is in tune with much of the current happenings in the city as well as the more recent actions of the Jade Regent. In their conversation with him, Isao answers the PCs' more likely questions as follows.

Who is the Jade Regent? "A man named Soto Takahiro. He's a lifelong friend and former bodyguard of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure. They grew up together as children. Since taking the throne, however, he's changed. His hand falls heavy upon Minkai. His regency is not at all what the people expected."

Where is the Jade Regent? "Since learning of your arrival in Minkai, he's hidden himself in the Imperial Palace, under the protection of his Typhoon Guard and surrounded by his closest, most trusted allies—Anamurumon, his chief magistrate; Renshii Meida, his seer and lover; and his chief assassin, known as the Raven Prince. For now, the Jade Regent issues all of his edicts through his chief magistrate, Anamurumon."

How did the Jade Regent come to claim the throne? "Emperor Shigure must have granted him the right of regency. The Jade Throne would accept no other. Without the emperor's blessing, Takahiro would have no mandate to rule. But because the throne accepts him, so too do the people. For now."

If things are so bad, why don't the people rise up against him? "They have much greater problems worrying them. I suspect Anamurumon has devised many of these to keep the people occupied and ensure their complacency."

What kind of problems are facing the city? "Starvation for one. The Typhoon Guard collect a heavy rice tax, taking food from farmers and storing it in a large granary in the city. The soldiers gorge themselves on what others have labored to produce, leaving too little to feed the people. They claim this keeps the army well fed and ready to defend Minkai, but it also weakens those who might take up arms against him."

"The Jade Regent also holds many of our daughters captive. His guards accost women at the city gates and in the marketplaces. Surely you've seen them? That's because the Regent's seer, an oracle and diviner named Renshii Meida, foresaw your coming. They know that a daughter of the Amatatsu family holds the last of the *Imperial Seals*. And that's why they search for you in the city and across Minkai—to deny Ameiko her birthright, for it would end his reign. My own daughter, Harumi, is held somewhere in the palace, along with daughters from many other

prominent families. Officially, they are 'wards' of the Jade Regent, but they no doubt face nightly interrogations at the hands of their captors.

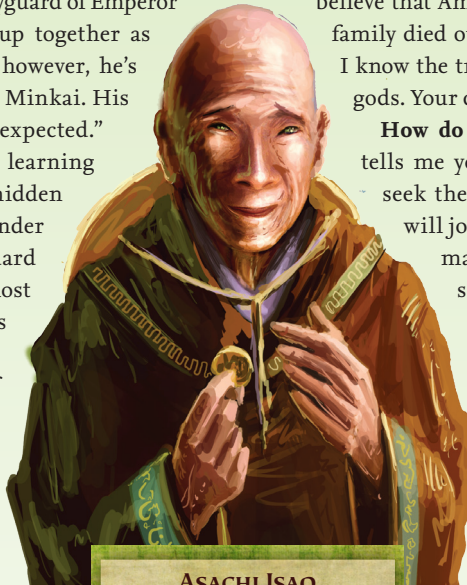
"Lastly, the people are afraid. The Jade Regent's inquisitors are everywhere. They know our thoughts when we conspire against him, and they drag off any who might stir rebellion, torturing them for information before staging public executions in the marketplace. He'd have us believe that Ameiko is an imposter, that the Amatatsu family died out long ago. But I knew the Amatatsus. I know the truth. Ameiko's return is the will of the gods. Your destiny is to make things right again."

How do we overthrow the Jade Regent? "Jiro tells me you have an army. You've done well to seek the support of so many—and even more will join your cause here in the city, once you make your presence known. If you can, sow distrust between the Jade Regent and his allies to pit them against one another and weaken their resolve."

"But all of that will mean nothing if you don't first seek the blessings of the emperors of the past. There is a magical island in Kasai's harbor, known as the Imperial Shrine. Only those of imperial blood, or their sworn guardians, may set foot on the island where they can commune with

their ancestors. Some say that Emperor

Shigure fled there. If so, you must convince him to return or ask his blessing for Ameiko's ascension. Only then can she claim the Jade Throne."



ASACHI ISAO

SETTING THINGS RIGHT

The Jade Regent and the Five Storms have created a variety of problems in Kasai, and after talking to Isao, the PCs might wish to look into some of the grievances he described. Solving and exposing some of these situations helps the PCs undermine the Jade Regent's control and win more of the people to their cause. Isao certainly encourages them to do something about each problem. Feel free to run any of these encounters in any order, either before or after the PCs go to the Imperial Shrine in Part Two. Until all of these situations have been remedied, however, for every day in which the PCs fail to resolve at least one of these situations, reduce their total Rebellion Points by 1 (see the sidebar on page 13).

FOOD SHORTAGE (CR 15)

Since secretly taking over the capital of Minkai, the more gluttonous members of the Five Storms have seized most of the nation's food supply. Feasting upon whatever bounty the outlying farms have produced, they've left

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little for anyone else. As a result, starvation has become a real problem in Kasai—those in the Imperial Palace hoard all the food and the citizens waste away.

Presumably, the PCs (and especially Ameiko) will want to resolve this situation, both to save the people they intend to rule, and also to start winning the hearts and minds of Minkaian by undoing some of the depredations the people have suffered at the hands of the Jade Regent. The easiest way to complete this mission is to sneak into the city's main granary at night, defeat the guards, and steal the rice.

Creatures: The Jade Regent has stationed four taotiehs at the granary to guard his hoarded rice. The taotiehs resemble large marble statues of tigers, but they are actually gluttonous constructs built around pockets of extradimensional space, enabling them to swallow creatures of almost any size. The taotiehs attack any creatures other than oni entering the granary and attempt to swallow them whole. The constructs fight until destroyed.

TAOTIEHS (4)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 107 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 260)

Treasure: One of the taotiehs has swallowed a *stone of good luck*, which is disgorged when the construct is destroyed.

Development: Provided the PCs win their way past the taotiehs, they must still transport the heavy bags of rice back to Isao for distribution to the people. If the PCs don't come up with a way to do this themselves, a successful DC 28 Diplomacy check is required to convince Isao's allies to manually load the rice onto carts in the middle of the night and distribute it throughout the city. Award the PCs +3 Rebellion Points for successfully ending the food shortage.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully raid the granary and distribute the rice, award them an additional 51,200 XP.

CAPTIVE HEARTS

While diligently searching for Ameiko, the Typhoon Guard have instituted a policy of checking all female newcomers at the city gates, holding them under the auspices of determining any claim they might have on the throne as the lost Amatatsu heir. In reality, they're attempting to identify Ameiko and eliminate her before she can openly identify herself and oppose the Jade Regent. The oni have also taken daughters from several important families as hostages and imprisoned them in the Imperial Palace, separating them from their families to deter their relatives from siding with a challenger to the throne.

If the PCs wish to take away this leverage and gain the support of Kasai's nobles, they'll need to find these women and free them. The women are being held in the Imperial Palace's Hall of Meditation. See area **H25** for details on the prisoners and their captors.

REBELLION POINTS

Throughout "The Empty Throne," the PCs have a chance to earn Rebellion Points (RP) to build support for Ameiko's claim to the Jade Throne while subverting the Jade Regent's authority. Most of these scenarios involve undoing the damage caused by the Five Storms and impressing the citizens of Kasai, but the PCs also gain or lose Rebellion Points for the allies they acquired (or failed to acquire) during the previous adventure, "Tide of Honor," as follows. If the PCs defeated the bandits of Seinaru Heikiko, award them +1 RP. For each ninja clan the PCs hired, award them +1 RP. If the PCs instead ensured the ninja's noninterference, award them +0 RP. For each ninja clan the PCs failed to either hire or ensure the noninterference of, they lose 1 RP. If the PCs rescued the geisha O-Sayumi, award them +1 RP. Finally, if the PCs killed Sikutsu Sennaka, award them +1 RP.

As this adventure progresses, you should track the total number of Rebellion Points accumulated by the PCs to determine how well the transition of power goes and how stable the empire is when Ameiko takes the throne (see *Concluding the Adventure* on pages 48–49).

In addition, the PCs' Rebellion Points undermine the trust and cooperation between the Jade Regent's supporters. The Jade Regent and his primary allies each have a Teamwork Score that represents the strength of their alliances with one another (see the NPC Gallery on pages 50–61). The Rebellion Points the PCs accumulate in this adventure lower each major NPC's Teamwork Score on a one-for-one basis, determining how united these individuals remain in the final battle against the PCs.

A PUBLIC EXECUTION (CR 15)

Habesuta Hatsue, the sohei who the PCs befriended in "Tide of Honor," took it upon herself to infiltrate the capital ahead of Ameiko's arrival. Her efforts to rally the citizens into opposing the Jade Regent did not go unnoticed, however. She was captured by the Typhoon Guard, who used torture and magical compulsions to draw out information about Ameiko and the PCs. Now, the oni plan to publicly execute her, both to serve as an example to the people of Kasai and to hopefully draw out her allies in a rescue attempt. If Hatsue is accompanying the PCs or died in the previous adventure, you should replace her with another minor ally of the PCs, perhaps another ronin from Jiro's band.

When Ameiko learns of the planned execution, she urges the PCs to act, believing they must demonstrate support and concern for their allies if they're to win the people to their cause and motivate their followers to strike against the Jade Regent. The execution is scheduled to occur in the

JADE REGENT

Imperial Market (area H3) just outside the Imperial Palace, where a large crowd has gathered to witness the event.

Creatures: A Typhoon commander named Katasho commands the four Typhoon guards tasked with carrying out the execution. Katasho hovers invisibly above the crowd, using *detect thoughts* and *detect alignment* to identify those who might be sympathizers. If he picks out Ameiko or one of the PCs, he uses his *scroll of follow aura* to make sure he doesn't lose them in the crowd, then calls them to the attention of the guards, who move to attack the PCs. Note that the large crowd in the marketplace counts as difficult terrain and provides cover for anyone on the ground (*Core Rulebook* 436).

As part of the execution ceremony, the guards read aloud the victim's crime of conspiracy against the throne and deride the existence of a supposed Amatatsu heir. They implore the crowd to turn in any such imposter. If you wish, Ameiko could reveal herself at this time in an attempt to challenge the guards and save Hatsue's life, but this also ensures that Katasho targets her over anyone else.

KATASHO CR 13

XP 25,600

Male Typhoon commander (see page 10)

hp 188

TACTICS

Before Combat Anticipating sympathizers intervening in the execution, Katasho casts *see invisibility* and *shield of faith*.

During Combat Katasho stays in the air to assess his adversaries.

From there, he targets at least one opponent with his *wand of dimensional anchor* to ensure it won't escape by magical means. Thereafter, he invokes his justice judgment ability and imbues his naginata with the *bane* weapon special ability.

Morale If anyone uses fire or acid against Katasho, he switches his judgment ability to resist the appropriate energy type. Although eager to capture the Amatatsu heir, he realizes when he's been overmatched. If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, Katasho casts *darkness*, *invisibility*, or *gaseous form* to escape back to the Imperial Palace and alert the Jade Regent, even going so far as to take a hostage from the crowd to prevent the PCs from stopping his retreat, if necessary.

STATISTICS

Additional Combat Gear *scroll of follow aura** (CL 10th), *wand of dimensional anchor* (7 charges)

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

TYPHOON GUARDS (4) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

TACTICS

During Combat Two of the Typhoon guards take to the air while the other two remain with their prisoner.

Morale Typhoon guards fight to the death.

Development: If the PCs successfully rescue the condemned sohei, award them +2 Rebellion Points. If they also publicly reveal Ameiko's presence to the crowd, award them an additional +2 Rebellion Points.

PART TWO: HONORING THE PAST

Sometime after arriving in Kasai, the PCs should heed Isao's advice by seeking out the Imperial Shrine. Isao discourages them from attempting to fly or teleport to the island, explaining that its unusual wards make it impossible to find unless they observe the proper ceremonies and travel there by boat. Isao tells them they must first pass through the island's five torii gates before the island's true nature is revealed to worthy visitors. He directs them to a trustworthy fisherman named **Kadei Ejigoro** (N male venerable human expert 5), who can take them to the island of the Imperial Shrine. The crusty boat captain proves just as ancient as Isao, looking like he might fall down from a stiff wind. His harbor boat, the *Weeping Willow*, makes frequent forays to check lobster traps in the bay, and Ejigoro is more than willing to drop the PCs off at the island, telling them they can signal him from shore when they're ready to leave.

THE IMPERIAL SHRINE

The Imperial Shrine is a mysterious island off the coast of Kasai that serves as a cemetery for Minkai's imperial families. When Shizuru, goddess of ancestors, honor, and the sun, created the *Imperial Seals*, she also created a magical conduit to the Great Beyond, allowing those in possession of an *Imperial Seal* to make contact with the ancestral spirits of those laid to rest on the island who were once ordained by the seals as well.

When an emperor dies and is interred in the Imperial Shrine, his soul passes on to Pharama's Boneyard, where he becomes a petitioner and is sent to his ultimate fate. Unlike most petitioners, however, the souls of Minkai's emperors retain memories of their former lives because of Shizuru's conduit, even as they transform into outsiders. This connection with the Material Plane allows Minkai's former emperors to guide their successors with lifetimes of knowledge and wisdom, even beyond death.

Unfortunately, Emperor Shigure's death and the treachery of the Jade Regent have left the island in disarray. Many of its guardians have activated and the wards that once protected the shrine against the influence of Minkai's evil emperors have failed. These malevolent spirits now hunger to extend their reach beyond the island's shores, and they pose a significant threat to the PCs' goals while there.

REACHING THE IMPERIAL SHRINE

Not just anyone can access the Imperial Shrine and seek out the ancestral spirits of Minkai's emperors. Shizuru's

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conduit keeps the island “out of phase” with the rest of the Material Plane. Anyone traveling to the Imperial Shrine without an *Imperial Seal* finds the island uninhabited, home to only a handful of birds and other wildlife.

Only a scion of one Minkai’s five imperial families, or their chosen guardians, can set foot on the true interior of island. Five distinctive torii gates rise from the shallows surrounding the island, and those wishing to visit the true Imperial Shrine must pass through each of these gates while in possession of an *Imperial Seal*. Doing so allows such scions to actually access the island’s otherworldly shrine and cemetery.

Those who go around the gates or reach the shore without an *Imperial Seal* can sense something unnatural and eerie about the otherworldly island with a successful DC 23 Wisdom check, but success doesn’t allow them to see or interact with the island’s shrine or cemetery.

A. TORII GATES

Twin vermillion posts rise from the shallow water here, about twenty feet apart and fifteen feet high, joined together by an upper lintel painted black.

Five of these torii gates stand in the waters surrounding the Imperial Shrine. Together, they ward the island from unauthorized visitors by keeping it slightly out of phase with the rest of reality. Only an *Imperial Seal* passing through all five gates can activate them, enabling those in possession of the seal to reach the island’s true interior.

B. SHIZURU’S TEMPLE

A single stone dock juts into the water from the island’s shore. A rectangular wooden building stands on the shore just behind the dock.

This small temple is dedicated to Shizuru, the goddess of ancestors, honor, and the sun, the patron goddess of Minkai and creator of both the *Imperial Seals* and the island’s magical conduit to the afterlife.

B1. ENTRANCE

Exits lead east and west from this wide room. Two small shrines sit on either side of the double doors to the west, and artistic tapestries of the celestial realm adorn the rest of the walls.

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The shrines are dedicated to Pharasma and to Tsukiyo, the Tian god of spirits and the moon. Mourners offer up prayers here to prepare themselves before laying the dead to rest, or when seeking guidance from their ancestors.

B2. CEREMONY ROOMS

Four small sitting rooms branch off this long hallway. Low wooden tables, seating cushions, and sleeping pallets stand on the tatami mats covering their floors.

These chambers provide all the necessary facilities to house and comfort the grieving families and servants of any emperor being laid to rest at the Imperial Shrine. The mourners typically gather here before journeying through the cemetery and across the bridge to the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D).

B3. MEDITATION SHRINE (CR 14)

A huge statue of a golden-scaled dragon dominates the west wall of this chamber, towering almost to the top of the twenty-foot-high ceiling. Small shrines sit to the north and south. In the corners flanking the room's only entrance, two large braziers scent the air with the tang of sandalwood incense.

This shrine is dedicated to Shizuru. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the dragon statue as a representation of the goddess. The two smaller shrines are dedicated to the ancestors of Minkai's imperial lines.

Creature: In addition to the island's normal defenses, the Jade Regent has left behind a guardian of his own, a rokurokubi—a haglike creature with an elongated neck and sorcerous powers—named Kiyomi. Kiyomi has agreed to guard the island for a period of 5 years to prevent any remaining imperial scions (such as Ameiko) from visiting the Imperial Shrine and discovering the true fate of Emperor Shigure. Using the power of the *Higashiyama Seal*, the Jade Regent made Kiyomi one of the emperor's chosen guardians, thus allowing her to freely travel throughout the island. In exchange for her stewardship, the Jade Regent promised to sire a child with Kiyomi at the end of her period of service, and the thought of such a powerful and unabashedly corrupt figure to father her child far outweighed any concerns Kiyomi might have had about the deal. For his part, Takahiro has no intention of living up to his end of the bargain, for without an *Imperial Seal* in her possession, Kiyomi is effectively imprisoned on the island, and the Jade Regent has no fear of reprisals at her hands.

When not skulking about the cemetery or Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns, Kiyomi lives here in Shizuru's shrine, daydreaming of sitting next to the Jade Regent as his empress, with all of Minkai hers to do with as she pleases. If

alerted to the PCs' arrival on the island, Kiyomi hides herself to trail after them and kill them one by one. If encountered here, Kiyomi has her neck retracted, appearing as a human woman wearing a long, hooded robe that conceals her gnarled, clawed hands and otherworldly skin tone. She attempts to pass herself off as a priestly monk of Shizuru and caretaker of the cemetery, and is more than willing to guide the PCs to the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D), only to lead them to the cemetery's guardians instead. If discovered or attacked, Kiyomi elongates her neck to make the most of her monstrous powers in battle, throwing off any pretense of disguise.

KIYOMI

CR 14

XP 38,400

Rokurokubi (see page 90)

hp 195

TACTICS

During Combat Kiyomi activates her nightfall aura and attacks foes caught within it with her bite and claws, focusing her attacks on attractive characters or those with high Charisma scores in an attempt to afflict them with her rokurokubi's curse. She casts spells to further hinder her opponents, using her elongated neck to deliver touch spells from outside melee range.

Morale Kiyomi has no wish to sacrifice herself for the Jade Regent, and flees deeper into the island's interior if reduced to fewer than 75 hit points, only to return to get her revenge, perhaps as the PCs are exiting the Well of Demons (area G). Unable to escape the island itself, Kiyomi fights to the death if cornered.

Treasure: Kiyomi has gathered a significant amount of treasure here, stolen from the graves and tombs on the island. Her horde includes a +3 *light steel shield*, a *tree feather token*, a *lesser strand of prayer beads*, and assorted jewelry and art objects worth a total of 5,000 gp.

C. MIKADO CEMETERY

Minkai's former emperors are laid to rest in the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D); the cremated remains of their trusted guardians and advisors, and the lesser scions of the imperial lines are interred in this cemetery, which takes up most of the southern half of the island.

C1. INCENSE KIOSK

A lonely kiosk stands at the entrance to this crowded cemetery.

Treasure: Among the buckets, brushes, and incense burners stored in this simple caretaker's kiosk lies a single block of *incense of meditation* left there by a visiting priest of Shizuru many years ago.

THE EMPTY THRONE

C2. YUA'S LAST ACT (CR 14)

The path through the graveyard ends abruptly before a cluster of obelisk-shaped tombstones.

Haunt: Many years ago, two evil samurai named Akio and Yua fell in love with each other while serving an equally malign emperor. Jealous of their love, the emperor arranged Akio's death to have Yua for himself. After interring Akio's ashes in the Mikado Cemetery, Yua finally learned of the emperor's treachery. When the emperor approached her that night in her bedchamber, Yua slew him and stole his family's *Imperial Seal*, taking it with her to the Imperial Shrine so she could grieve once more over Akio's grave. The chosen guardians of the other imperial families came after her and the seal, but rather than fight them, Yua committed ritual suicide with her own sword. Because of her perceived betrayal of the emperor, Yua's body was never cremated, nor were her ashes interred next to Akio's. Instead, her spirit has lingered on, festering for many years until the Jade Regent's betrayal of Emperor Shigure echoed her own, at which point Yua's spirit manifested as a haunt at the site where she committed suicide while grieving over her lost love. The haunt manifests as an overwhelming sense of sadness coupled with the vision of a lovely female samurai taking her own life, compelling those who visit Akio's grave to repeat Yua's sacrificial act.

SUICIDE COMPULSION

CR 14

XP 38,400

LE persistent haunt (20-ft.-radius centered on area C2)

Caster Level 14th

Notice Perception DC 29 (to feel a sudden rush of sadness, loneliness, and regret)

hp 63; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

Effect When triggered, the haunt compels creatures to commit ritual suicide as Yua did. Each round, a random creature in the haunt's area must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or draw its weapon and attempt a coup de grace action on itself. This action deals the creature's normal weapon damage for an attack. An affected creature must make a Fortitude save with a DC equal to 10 + the damage dealt to avoid being immediately slain by the suicide attempt. If anyone tries to prevent this self-inflicted attack, the haunted creature makes a single attack against that person with its weapon as an immediate action. If the attack is successful, the supernaturally guided strike automatically scores a critical hit. The haunt targets a new creature each round while it persists.

Destruction To permanently destroy the haunt, the PCs must recover Yua's remains from the pauper's grave in Kasai where she was buried, cremate them in the crematorium (area D2), and inter them properly next to Akio's grave.

C3. SHADOWY CROSSING (CR 13)

A soft wind blows through the gathered leaves covering this intersection of paths.

Creatures: Because of the powerful turmoil created by the Jade Regent's betrayal of Emperor Shigure, several evil spirits have manifested throughout the Imperial Shrine. This includes six greater shadows of former nobles from Minkai's imperial families, who have risen from their nearby graves. None of these nobles ever ascended to the Jade Throne, but much like the Jade Regent, they coveted its power and that of the elder siblings who outlived them. In addition, a side effect of the island's turmoil has created an *unhallow* effect (CL 15th) around the shadows' gravesites. The shadows lash out at anyone who comes near.

GREATER SHADOWS (6)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 58 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 245)

TACTICS

During Combat The shadows rely on the *unhallow* effect to protect them from channeled positive energy, never straying more than 20 feet from their cremated remains. They attack from below ground or from just within the various gravestones, using them for cover.

Morale The shadows fight until destroyed.

C4. THE GUARDIAN GRAVE (CR 14)

A strange dust hangs in the air among the gravestones here, swirling in small eddies amid the light.

Creature: One of the more potent guardians of the cemetery resides here—a gravebound warden, a construct created from a collection of small tombstones and shrines containing the urns of cremated samurai. Each of the warriors whose remains make up the body of the warden were once loyal servants of sitting emperors of Minkai, interred here not so much to lay them to rest, but to allow their enduring spirits to continue watching over the final resting place of those they protected in life. The death of Emperor Shigure, however, has the warden on high alert. No longer capable of knowing who to trust, it views all newcomers to the island as enemies.

The warden lies hidden here in its alternate form, appearing as part of the crowded cemetery (the shaded portion on the map). When a living creature enters the 40-foot-radius area of the *hallow* effect created at the time of its construction, the warden animates and transforms into its bipedal form, attacking and pursuing anyone in the area. The warden is limited in its movement, however, confined to the same 40-foot radius of the *hallow* effect.

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GRAVEBOUND WARDEN

CR 14

XP 38,400

N Gargantuan construct

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 5, flat-footed 29 (-1 Dex, +24 natural, -4 size)

hp 164 (19d10+60)

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +24 (2d10+13/19-20)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (60-ft. cone, blinded and sickened for 1d6+1 rounds, DC 21 Fortitude negates, usable every 1d4 rounds), powerful blows

TACTICS

During Combat The gravebound warden charges into opponents to attack with its slams. It uses Bull Rush, Cleave, and Overrun attacks as often as possible, pausing only to employ its breath weapon before renewing its assault.

Morale The gravebound warden fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** 4, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +19; **CMB** +32 (+36 bull rush or overrun); **CMD** 41 (43 vs. bull rush or overrun)

Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Greater Bull Rush, Greater Overrun, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack

Skills Disguise +15 (to imitate a cemetery), Intimidate +11, Perception +14

Languages Minkaian (cannot speak)

SQ alternate form, gravebound

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Alternate Form (Su) A gravebound warden can transform itself into a field of gravestones, miniature shrines, or stone coffins. While in this form, the warden gains a +20 racial bonus on Disguise checks to imitate a crowded cemetery. It requires a full-round action to change forms.

Breath Weapon (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, a gravebound warden can exhale a 60-foot cone of ash and grave dust. Any creatures within this area must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or be blinded and sickened for 1d6+1 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Gravebound (Su) A gravebound warden is assigned a specific site sacred to the dead to guard. This site is always marked by either a permanent *hallow* or *unhallow* effect, determined at the time of the warden's construction. The warden cannot willingly leave this area and defends it against all intruders except those named during the casting of the spell. This gravebound warden is bound to a 40-foot-radius emanation from a *hallow* spell (CL 15th).

Powerful Blows (Ex) A gravebound warden adds 1-1/2 times its Strength modifier on damage rolls with its slam attacks and threatens a critical hit on a 19-20.

C5. BRIDGE OF CELESTIAL INSIGHTS (CR 14)

Past an archway inscribed with Minkaian characters, a bridge of luminescent light stretches across the silver waters of a moat. The bridge leads from the cemetery to a long, tombstone-shaped island. A large torii gate stands at the opposite end of the bridge, opening into a courtyard surrounded by several stone structures peeking above the trees.

This bridge serves as the only means for the living to access the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns. An effect similar to a permanent *antilife shell* rebuffs anyone attempting a different crossing to the island, but those who pass under the archway to cross are unaffected.

Trap: The archway bears a sign in Minkaian indicating that only those close to death may visit the spirits of the former emperors of Minkai. While



GRAVEBOUND WARDEN

THE EMPTY THRONE

the arch was originally meant as a symbolic, ceremonial gesture, anyone passing under it triggers a *greater glyph of warding* that delivers a *harm* effect, putting visitors close enough to death to make it easier for them to commune with the spirits on the other side. Now, given the many dangers set loose on the island, it simply adds to the perils of the Imperial Shrine.

GREATER GLYPH OF WARDING

CR 14

XP 38,400

Type magic; Perception 31; Disable Device 31

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset automatic

Effect spell effect (*harm*, 130 damage, DC 19 Will save half, cannot be reduced below 1 hit point)

D. SHRINE OF THE HEAVENLY SOVEREIGNS

The emperors of Minkai refer to this tombstone-shaped islet as the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns. Reserved only for those who have held the Jade Throne, it is much more expansive than the narrow confines of the neighboring Mikado Cemetery. Quiet groves and gardens occupy the islet, as well as a small pond surrounded by several shrines and tombs.

D1. PERFORMER'S STAGE

This covered stage sits three feet off the ground, its roof held up by four cedar columns. Low-lying hedges and flowering shrubs decorate its base with several trails connecting it to the structures and gardens on either side. The imperial families of Minkai use this stage for elaborate ceremonies before laying deceased emperors to rest in one of the many shrines or tombs on the islet.

Treasure: The masterwork musical instruments on the stage—a biwa mandolin, a tsuzumi drum, a shakuhachi flute, and a samisen—are magical, enabling players to summon an *unseen servant* to play a routine performance on the instruments. The instruments are worth 400 gp each.

D2. CREMATORIUM (CR 14)

The air is hot and dry in this stone chamber. Doors lead both east and south out of the room.

Creatures: This crematorium is occupied by a furnace golem, a humanoid-shaped furnace of black iron with a roaring magical fire in its belly. Under normal circumstances, the golem follows a very strict procedure to complete the rites to cremate the remains of deceased emperors within its body and inter the subsequent ashes in properly prepared urns. Now, however, the dishonor the

Jade Regent committed by throwing Emperor Shigure's body into the Well of Demons has caused the elemental spirits animating the golem to go berserk. The golem activates as soon as anyone opens the crematorium's door, attempting to grab them and cremate them in its furnace interior. The golem fights until destroyed.

FURNACE GOLEM

CR 14

XP 38,400

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N Huge construct

Init -1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 7, flat-footed 29 (-1 Dex, +22 natural, -2 size)

hp 144 (19d10+40)

Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +6

DR 15/adamantine; Immune construct traits, fire, magic;

Resist cold 20

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee 2 slams +28 (4d6+11 plus 2d6 fire and grab)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (50-ft. line, 10d6 fire damage, Reflex DC 19 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), furnace interior, grab (Medium or smaller), heat (2d6 fire)

STATISTICS

Str 32, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Base Atk +19; CMB +32 (+36 grapple); CMD 41

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Furnace Interior (Ex) A furnace golem can try to shove a grabbed opponent up to two sizes smaller than itself into its interior by making a successful grapple check. An opponent thrown into the furnace golem's interior is trapped as a metal grating closes over the opening in the same round. A trapped creature automatically takes 2d6 points of fire damage each round. Escaping the creature's interior requires a successful DC 30 Strength check to bend the bars. Alternatively, a trapped creature can escape by dealing at least 25 points of damage to the bars (AC 22; the golem's damage reduction applies to attacks against the bars as well). A Huge furnace golem's interior can hold two Medium, eight Small, or 16 Tiny or smaller creatures.

Immunity to Magic (Ex) A furnace golem is immune to spells or spell-like abilities that allow spell resistance. Certain spells and effects function differently against it, as noted below.

- A magical attack that bypasses a furnace golem's cold resistance slows it (as the *slow* spell) for 3 rounds, with no saving throw.
- A magical attack that deals fire damage breaks any *slow* effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points.

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D3. STOREROOM

A multitude of clay urns, cremation trays, and iron brushes lie scattered about this storeroom, which houses all of the necessary supplies for the crematorium next door.

D4. STANDING TOMBS

The ceiling of this low tomb reaches only eight feet in height. Its anteroom is dry and dusty, while an ornate bronze door seals off an adjoining sepulcher.

In addition to the numerous shrines and graves on the islet, the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns also holds two aboveground tombs for honored emperors.

Creature: The easternmost tomb (area **D4b**) contains the remains of Empress Amatatsu Onoko, one of the few good-aligned former rulers of Minkai to return to the Imperial Shrine since the Jade Regent's treachery. Although her ashes lie within a bejeweled urn in the sepulcher, Onoko now leads a new existence as a trumpet archon in service to Shizuru. Like all emperors interred in the Imperial Shrine, Onoko retains her memories of her past life, and the goddess of ancestors and honor sent her to assess the turmoil left behind on the island by Emperor Shigure's death. While she recognizes the torment suffered by Shigure's ghost, the archon is powerless to help him, as she is unable to penetrate the Well of Demons to seek out his body.

If the PCs come here before speaking to Emperor Shigure in area **D7**, the tomb is uninhabited. If the PCs come here to commune with the Amatatsu ancestors after talking to the emperor's ghost, the archon soon makes an appearance. Onoko appears as a marble-skinned Tian-Min woman with white-feathered wings, wearing a beautiful cloth-of-gold kimono and carrying a traditional Minkai conch shell horn called a *jinkai*. Onoko represents a potential ally for the PCs on the island. She can converse with them about the shrine's purpose and history, as well as the events she's managed to piece together from Shigure's rants. She can also fill in any gaps in the PCs' knowledge if they were unable to get answers to all of their questions before enraging Shigure.

Although she was a former empress of Minkai, Onoko cannot give her blessing to Ameiko until the handmaiden devil Amatatsu Maemi is defeated in the Well of Demons (see area **G10**). However, if the PCs succeed at a DC 23 Diplomacy check while conversing with her, Onoko agrees to aid them however she can, including casting *raise dead* or other healing spells should any of the PCs fall victim to the island's dangers. A character in possession of either the *Amatatsu Seal* or the sword *Suishen* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #50 61) gains a +4 circumstance bonus on the Diplomacy check.

AMATATSU ONOKO

CR 14

XP 38,400

Female trumpet archon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 21)

hp 175

TACTICS

During Combat If attacked, Onoko teleports into the sky outside her tomb so she can release a blast from her jinkai trumpet to paralyze her foes. She casts *divine power* and changes her jinkai into a greatsword so she can attack foes with her Power Attack.

Morale Onoko doesn't wish to fight the PCs. If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, she uses *plane shift* to return to the celestial realm and report to Shizuru.

D5. KOI POND

Dozens of orange and gold fish float lifeless at the surface of this small pond, some half-covered by lily pads, water grass, and cattails. A small footpath follows a zigzag pattern along wooden planks to a small gazebo to the east.

Since returning as a ghost, Emperor Shigure has inadvertently killed all the koi fish in this decorative, peaceful pond by passing through it.

D6. ROJI GARDEN

Two cherry trees and the life-sized jade likeness of a grieving maiden occupy this sandy garden. Alternating rocks of pink and white granite mark the boundary of the garden, where a smooth path circles around to a stone mausoleum flanked by twin golden statues of kirin.

The emperors of Minkai established this quaint roji garden as a place for peaceful meditation before the mausoleum of their predecessors.

D7. IMPERIAL MAUSOLEUM (CR 14)

Behind the immense double doors of this mausoleum lie five chambers, four at each point of the compass and one smaller square chamber joining them. Each chamber holds a small shrine decorated with Minkai heraldry, bowls of incense, and dried flowers, and contains carefully stacked urns of gold, silver, and bronze.

This stone mausoleum holds the physical remains of Minkai's former emperors, mostly in the form of ashes contained in ornate urns. Emperor Higashiyama Shigure came here to be close to his ancestors when he fled to the Imperial Shrine, but he never found the safety he sought—he was brutally murdered in the mausoleum by Soto Takahiro and Renshii Meida.

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Creature: Despite the fact that his physical body lies at the bottom of the Well of Demons, the ghost of Emperor Shigure has chosen this place—the site of his murder at the hands of his chosen guardians—as his retreat. When the PCs first arrive, Shigure remains hidden to observe them, but he soon detects the presence of the *Amatatsu Seal* and manifests before them. He introduces himself as the rightful emperor of Minkai, and demands to know who the PCs are and what they are doing in the Imperial Shrine.

Shigure has an initial attitude of unfriendly toward the PCs, but he is eager to gain their help in recovering his body and laying his remains properly to rest, so he is willing to hear them out. Each round, the PCs may ask him one question by making a Diplomacy check. However, the longer Shigure is faced with the PCs' living presence, the more intense his anger and frustration grows, manifesting as a trembling of the urns upon the stone shelves and pedestals around the room. On the first round, the PCs must make a DC 25 Diplomacy check to ask their question. Each subsequent round, the DC of the Diplomacy check to ask a new question increases by 5. A character in possession of the *daikyu of commanding presence* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #53 60) gains a +4 circumstance on the Diplomacy check. If the PCs fail a Diplomacy check, Shigure's anger overcomes him and he lashes out at the living in blind, impotent rage.

Emperor Shigure's responses to the PCs' likely questions are outlined below.

How did you die? "I was betrayed by my childhood friend and bodyguard, Soto Takahiro, and my closest advisor, Renshii Meida. They told me I would be safe here, away from the assassins who killed so many of my family. But they lied. The only threat to my life came from their honeyed words and poisoned blades."

Can you give us your blessing? "I'll give my blessing to no one while my body lies with the disgraced and the dishonored! I have only curses now for those who survive me! I cannot rest! I cannot find peace! And I won't give peace to anyone else while I'm denied it!"

Where is your body now? "They cast it into the Well of Demons, a great chasm in the hills of this island. The holy waters of Shizuru pour down into the well to drown the sins of my wicked predecessors. But after the treachery and dishonor enacted here upon a living emperor of Minkai, not even the Empress of Heaven can contain their evil, which extends farther beyond the well with each passing day. Soon the spirits of the evil emperors will broaden their reach into Kasai and beyond into my stolen empire. And I may as well join them if it means I can face my murderer again. But I fear that outcome, for I know I'll lose myself to it, becoming as much a monster as the ones who took my life."

If we retrieve your body, will you give us your blessing? "Yes. If you recover my remains from the Well of Demons, and properly inter them by cremating them and placing

the ashes in one of the urns here, I'll grant you the blessing of the Higashiyama family. But my blessing alone won't be enough. You must obtain blessings from the ancestors of all five of the imperial families."

How can we get the blessings of the imperial families?

"Normally you could commune with the spirits here, in the Imperial Mausoleum, but Takahiro's crime has severed the connection and driven most of the goodly spirits away. You'll have the Higashiyama blessing if you recover my murdered remains. It's been a long time since an Amatatsu held the throne, but the tomb of Empress Amatatsu Onoko lies just west of here in one of the standing tombs—perhaps you can commune with her or one of your other ancestors there to request their assent. But you must still gain the blessings of the Shojinawa, Sugimatu, and Teikoku families, and I fear your only choice is to seek their blessings inside the Well of Demons. Those within represent the most evil and depraved of Minkai's emperors, but the Jade Throne will still honor their blessings, provided you can bargain for them. Otherwise, you must set things right by recovering my body and destroying those inside the Well. Once the sanctity of the Imperial Shrine is restored, you can properly commune with the ancestors to receive their blessings."

EMPEROR HIGASHIYAMA SHIGURE

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 161 (see page 52)

Development: If Shigure is slain, his rejuvenation brings him back 2d4 days later. By that time, his anger has cooled somewhat, reducing the DC of the initial Diplomacy check to question him to 20 (though his anger, and the DC, once again increases each round).

E. ETERNAL SPRING

When Shizuru created the conduit of power connecting the Imperial Shrine to the Great Beyond and the ancestral spirits of Minkai's emperors, she also created a magical spring on the island and placed a *suijin kami* (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #52 88) to act as guardian of its sanctity. The waters of this spring flow out of the island's western hills to fill the Lake of Tears (area F), surround the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D), and contain the malevolent influence of Minkai's most evil emperors by washing away their sins into the Well of Demons (area G). Since Shigure's assassination, however, the kami of the spring has lost focus. The waters have grown less potent and the evil emperors of Minkai have begun to taint them with their wicked influence.

F. LAKE OF TEARS

The people of Minkai named this body of water the Lake of Tears, believing that Shizuru herself cries over it with each fallen emperor. During imperial funerals, hundreds

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of floating lanterns are released across the lake's surface. The lake is actually formed from the cascading waters of the Eternal Spring (area E). Two torii gates stand where the waters empty from the lake's basin to the north and south. The southernmost stream fills the moat surrounding the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D), while the northern flow pours into the Well of Demons (area G).

G. WELL OF DEMONS

When Shizuru opened the conduit between the Imperial Shrine and the Great Beyond, she couldn't limit the access to just the celestial realms. Instead, anyone interred in the Imperial Shrine would have the means to connect with the island, including those who passed on to Abaddon, the Abyss, Hell, or beyond. To minimize the influence these creatures might exert over sitting emperors, she created a massive chasm that opened into natural caverns beneath the island's northern reaches, which soon became known as the Well of Demons, and she used the sacred waters of the Eternal Spring to contain the spirits of those evil emperors and cleanse their sins from the island. While Minkai's good former emperors can be contacted from the Shrine of Heavenly Sovereigns, one must go to the edge of the Well of Demons to commune with the spirits of these evil emperors.

Into this maelstrom of iniquity, the Jade Regent and his accomplice Renshii Meida cast the body of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure. The sheer potency of their betrayal sent a ripple through the Well's waters and across the planes, attracting the attention of foul devils, demons, daemons, and evil spirits, each one an exceptionally malevolent scion of an imperial family who once sat upon the Jade Throne. Many of these former emperors had long hungered to return to the Material Plane and use their fell powers to usher in a new age of evil in Minkai, and Shigure's death provided them with the opportunity to do so via Shizuru's conduit. Upon their return to the Imperial Shrine, however, these fiends found themselves physically trapped within the Well of Demons. The sacred waters of the Eternal Spring bar dimensional travel into or out of the Well. Spells of the teleportation subschool and spells that allow astral or ethereal travel work normally within the confines of the Well, but they cannot be used to enter or exit the Well. Summoning magic is unaffected. As a result, any former emperors who enter the Well find themselves trapped there, both physically and magically, and those emperors who now reside in the Well work feverishly to figure out a means of escape so they can spread their influence into Minkai and the greater world beyond.

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In actuality, the Well of Demons holds a variety of evil outsiders and undead, not simply demons, who have carved out their own miniature fiefdoms in the caverns of the Well. These “domains” are veiled with illusions similar to *mirage arcana* that respond to their inhabitants’ wishes, enabling them to change the appearance of the caverns to reflect their individual characters and personalities. These illusions are divine in nature and cannot be dispelled. The former rulers of Minkai inhabiting the Well continually plot and scheme against one another while they struggle to find a means of escape. The upper caves have become a battleground between the forces of the Abyss and Hell, with the demons of the nalfeshnee Shogun Teikoku Sokai set against the devils of the handmaiden devil Empress Amatatsu Maemi. Below, the lower caves are disputed between the minions of the thanadaemon Emperor Sugimatsu Nobinoru and the undead spirit of Emperor Shojinawa Ito, who currently holds Emperor Shigure’s body.

Emperor Shigure and Amatatsu Onoko can explain the origin and function of the Well of Demons to the PCs. Onoko was unable to enter the Well to recover Shigure’s remains, lest she be trapped there herself. Shigure feels drawn to the Well, and every day, his predecessors imprisoned there call for him to join them. So far he’s resisted their taint, but it’s only a matter of time until his undead condition drives him to evil and his spirit is drawn into the Well.

G1. DESCENT OF THE DEPRAVED (CR 14)

High hills stand above a gaping chasm in the ground. A narrow, muddy path descends into the abyss, winding in a spiral as it passes multiple times under a cascading waterfall from the small stream rushing down the cliffs.

The spiraling path descends 150 feet to the fiendish pool in area G2.

Haunt: A fiendish influence permeates the entrance to the Well, manifesting as a haunt beckoning visitors to willingly jump from the cliffs.

VERTIGO DROP

CR 14

XP 38,400

NE persistent haunt (5-ft.-by-70-ft. upper portion of the path)

Caster Level 14th

Notice Perception DC 30 (to feel a momentary falling sensation)

hp 28; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 day

Effect Anyone spending more than 1 round looking into the Well of Demons experiences an overwhelming sense of vertigo and feels irresistibly drawn to the bottom of the chasm, as if subject to a *sympathy* spell. All creatures on the path must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or lean forward until they fall into the pit. Anyone who falls takes 11d6

points of lethal falling damage plus 2d3 points of nonlethal damage as they plummet into the fiendish pool (area G2).

Destruction Destroying all of the inhabitants in the Well of Demons and performing a ceremony of renewal at the Eternal Spring (area E) destroys this haunt.

G2. FIENDISH POOL (CR 15)

The roar of falling water fills this massive cavern, echoing off the stone walls. The water floods the cavern before falling into a second chasm on the north side of the chamber. Several passageways exit the cavern, leading to higher ground.

The muddy path from area G1 ends at a sandy beach to the south. The outer fringes of the muddy pool are 4 feet deep, and are considered a deep bog (*Core Rulebook* 427). The depth increases to 15 feet in the center of the cavern. A strong current pulls toward the chasm to the north, requiring a DC 15 Swim check to move through the water.

Hazard: Despite the kami-influenced spring emptying into this pool, the waters have become tainted by the demons of the Well. Anyone venturing into the water is subjected to a strain of demon fever far more virulent than the norm.

GREATER DEMON FEVER

Type disease, contact; **Save** Fortitude DC 22

Onset 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect 1d6+2 Con damage, target must make a second Fort save or 2 points of the damage is drain instead; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

Creatures: Three omox demons occupy the pool, serving as sentinels for their demonic shogun Teikoku Sokai. The tainted water grants any demon fast healing 10 while immersed in it—a fact that makes the omoxes the undisputed masters of this primary cavern. The omoxes keep primarily to the deeper waters in the center of the cavern, and keep careful watch for any duplicity from the devils in the upper caverns (areas G7 through G10). The demons attack any interlopers traveling through their domain.

OMOXES (3)

CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 162 each; fast healing 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 79)

TACTICS

During Combat Each omox takes turns slinging slime to entangle victims. The demons use *telekinesis* to pull opponents into the water, making frequent use of their liquid leap ability to close on foes and attempt to smother them. If necessary, they use *acid fog* and *stinking cloud* to block off exits and keep the PCs in the water.

Morale The omoxes rely on the fast healing properties of the pool to keep them going as they fight. If reduced to fewer

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than 50 hit points, they temporarily retreat into the depths to restore themselves. Once one of the demons is slain, one of the others teleports to warn the hezrous in area **G5** before rejoining the battle.

G3. SIDE CAVERN

The ceiling of this sand-filled cavern is only 5 feet high. It is currently unoccupied.

G4. OVERLOOKS

A rocky escarpment runs the length of the cavern's western wall here, forming two ledges that overlook the fiendish pool from the south and west. These ledges stand 70 feet above the pool, opening into a series of side caverns.

G5. THE DEMONS' PLAYGROUND (CR 14)

Three tunnels open into this sunken cavern where a cloying mist seeps from the moist rocky walls, hiding most of the chamber floor. Fifty feet overhead, giant stalactites hang from the ceiling, resembling enormous teeth stretching within ten feet of the ground. Some of their ends have broken off, and now lie scattered amid the rubble at the edges of the mist.

Creatures: More loyal demon servants of Emperor Sokai live within this cramped hall, normally occupying themselves with some new scheme to spread the demonic taint of the water in area **G2**. The demons have determined that if they can corrupt and redirect the Eternal Spring so that it pours into the bay of Kasai, it will enable them to escape the Well of Demons and enter the Material Plane unchallenged. So far, however, the *suijin kami*'s influence continues to linger. Sokai has tasked the hezrous here with finding a way to entice the *kami* into manifesting so they can slay it and take over the island.

HEZROUS (3)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 145 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 62*)

TACTICS

Before Combat If warned of the PCs' approach, the hezrous all assume *gaseous form* to hide and drift among the noxious vapors in the center of the cavern, then circle behind each of the PCs to attack from surprise.

During Combat After returning to solid form, the hezrous attempt to grapple their opponents so they can nauseate them. They make liberal use of their *chaos hammer* and *unholy blight* abilities, even invoking them in mid-grapple, if necessary. If prevented from using this tactic, they rely on their claws and teeth to deal as much damage as possible.

Morale Any hezrou reduced to fewer than 50 hit points teleports to area **G6** to join Sokai.

G6. DEMONIC THRONE ROOM (CR 15)

The natural caverns give way to an opulent throne room, paved with golden tiles joined together by fist-sized rubies. A magnificent bower of silk cushions sits atop a dais at the far eastern end of the chamber.

All of the decorations in this chamber are the result of the Well's *mirage arcana* effect, which conceals the bare stone of the cavern.

Creature: This region of the Well is home to the tainted soul of Shogun Teikoku Sokai. In life, he ruled the First Kingdom of Minkai, known as the Teikoku Shogunate, taking the title of shogun rather than emperor. Sokai ushered in an age of unparalleled eugenics in Minkai, attempting to elevate certain bloodlines above all others—specifically, the five imperial families of Minkai, but most especially the Teikoku line. He subjugated lesser noble lines by seizing their property and enslaving their scions to enrich himself and his cronies. After Sokai lost his life in a violent uprising against his decadent rule, his most loyal followers transported his remains to the Imperial Shrine. When his soul passed into the Great Beyond, the powers of the Abyss welcomed him and reforged him into a nalfeshnee. Since then, Sokai has focused his efforts on returning to Minkai with the help of his demonic allies. If alerted to the PCs' presence, Sokai uses his *robe of blending* to appear as he did in life: an imposing Tian-Min man with the samurai's traditional *chonmage* hairstyle—shaved on top with an oiled topknot in back. Once in combat, however, he returns to his natural form, that of a bloated fiend with tiny black wings and a tusked boar's head.

To secure the Teikoku blessing, the PCs must either destroy Sokai and his demonic minions, or alternatively, they can negotiate with the nalfeshnee. In exchange for his blessing, Sokai requests that the PCs tear down the torii gate north of the Lake of Tears (area **F**). The demon claims this will allow him and his minions to vacate the crowded Well of Demons for the greater freedom of the open waters. While this is true, Sokai has an ulterior motive. If allowed to gain direct access to the Lake of Tears, he and his demons will ensure the destruction of the *suijin kami* at the Eternal Spring (area **E**), thereby allowing them to redirect its waters to spill down the hillside and into the bay of Kasai. This would expand Sokai's influence enough to create a direct portal to Golarion from the Abyss. Sokai does everything he can to convince the PCs that he only wants to access to the lake so he can put aside his rivalry with the devils, daemons, and Emperor Shojinawa's ghost. If necessary, Sokai offers to sweeten the deal by offering the PCs information about his rivals, which they can use to defeat them or force their acceptance of Ameiko as well. If the PCs rebuff his offer, Sokai roars and attacks.

THE EMPTY THRONE



TEIKOKU SOKAI

CR 15

XP 51,200

Male advanced nalfeshnee (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 65, 294)

hp 231

TACTICS

During Combat Sokai immediately invokes his unholy nimbus, then casts *slow* and *unholy aura* to hinder any would-be attackers. He relies on *feblemind* and *greater dispel magic* to combat spellcasters and uses *Awesome Blow* against anyone who gets close to him, trying to knock them into the northern passageway and off the escarpment. Otherwise, he fights with tooth and claw.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, Sokai teleports to the fiendish pool in area **G2**. After the waters heal him, he attempts to summon 1d4 hezrous and plans an ambush for the PCs when they return from the upper caverns. Sokai commands his hezrous to rise from the pool and grapple foes in the water while he casts *call lightning* to electrocute those in their grasp. Trapped in the Well of Demons, Sokai fights to the death.

Treasure: In addition to wearing his robe of *blending*, Sokai carries an *obsidian steed figurine of wondrous power* (his mount when he was a mortal samurai) and wears an ornate gold and jade ring worth 100 gp.

Development: If the PCs accept Sokai's offer to receive his blessing, deduct 2 Rebellion Points from their total.

G7. DEVIL'S BEACH

A sandy beach leads to a wide cavern where a passage climbs to the north.

This cavern marks the boundary of the region ruled by the handmaiden devil Amatatsu Maemi. She and the demon Sokai do not get along, fighting a proxy war through their hellish and abyssal allies to control this level of the Well. While Maemi and her erinyes have taken the high ground, the demons control the pool and waterfalls. More recently, the two have entered into a shaky truce as they consider the growing threat of rivals in the deeper levels of the Well.

JADE REGENT

G8. THE HANDMAIDEN'S HANDMAIDEN (CR 14)

High rock shelves line this narrow passageway, marred by a forest of stalactites and stalagmites that resemble nothing less than the narrow bars of a cage in the ebbing glow of the luminescent lichen growing upon them.

Creature: In life, Empress Amatatsu Maemi eschewed the company of men, always preferring women as her closest confidantes. Since becoming a handmaiden devil in Hell, Maemi has continued that trend, taking an evil outsider named Shiori Heikkaki as her own handmaiden and consort. Heikkaki is a shiko me, a Tian fiend personifying the corruption of death, and serves her empress as bodyguard, assassin, and lover. Heikkaki wears a featureless porcelain mask to conceal her fiendish features. Long, twisting horns grow from her head, and a hairless rat's tail pokes out from beneath the skirts of her blood-spattered kimono. Maemi has commanded Heikkaki to guard this approach to her territory. Heikkaki stands motionless here in her wind stance, making her effectively invisible while she studies the strongest-looking PC for 3 rounds in preparation for a death attack.

SHIORI HEIKKAKI	CR 14
XP 38,400	
Female advanced shiko me assassin 6 (<i>Jade Dragons and Hungry Ghosts</i> 42)	
LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful)	
Init +12; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +20	
DEFENSE	
AC 28, touch 19, flat-footed 19 (+3 armor, +8 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural)	
hp 205 (19 HD; 13d10+6d8+110)	
Fort +11, Ref +19, Will +11; +3 vs. poison	
Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge;	
Immune ability damage, ability drain, cold, electricity, energy drain, negative energy	
OFFENSE	
Speed 40 ft.	
Melee +1 <i>naginata</i> * +23/+18/+13/+8 (1d8+6/19–20/x4 plus poison) or	
2 claws +22 (1d4+5)	
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +26/+21/+16/+11 (1d6+5/x3)	
Special Attacks Black Lotus sorcery, death attack (DC 18), elemental stance, quiet death, sneak attack +3d6, true death (DC 21)	

Sorcerer Spells Known (caster level 12th; concentration +18)

6th (4/day)—*mislead* (DC 22)

5th (6/day)—*dispel good*, *waves of fatigue*

4th (7/day)—*enervation*, *phantasmal killer* (DC 20), *unholy blight* (DC 20)

3rd (7/day)—*displacement*, *major image*, *ray of exhaustion* (DC 19), *vampiric touch*

2nd (8/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 18), *false life*, *ghoul touch* (DC 18), *misdirection* (DC 18), *spectral hand*

1st (8/day)—*chill touch* (DC 17), *disguise self*, *protection from good*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 17), *ventriloquism*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 16), *disrupt undead*, *ghost sound* (DC 16), *touch of fatigue* (DC 16)

TACTICS

Before Combat Heikkaki casts *false life* every day and poisons her *naginata* with black lotus extract.

During Combat Heikkaki begins combat in wind stance by making a death attack with her poisoned *naginata*, then flies into the air to cast *displacement* and *dispel good*. She stays out of melee reach to attack foes with her spells, combining normal spellcasting with quickened spells such as *blindness/deafness* and touch spells delivered with *spectral hand*. If forced into melee combat, Heikkaki switches to fire stance and attacks with her *naginata*, casting *mislead* to maneuver around her opponents and make sneak attacks.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, Heikkaki casts quickened *false life* or *vampiric touch* to regain hit points. She fights to the death to keep intruders from trespassing in her mistress's domain.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 27, **Con** 20, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 41

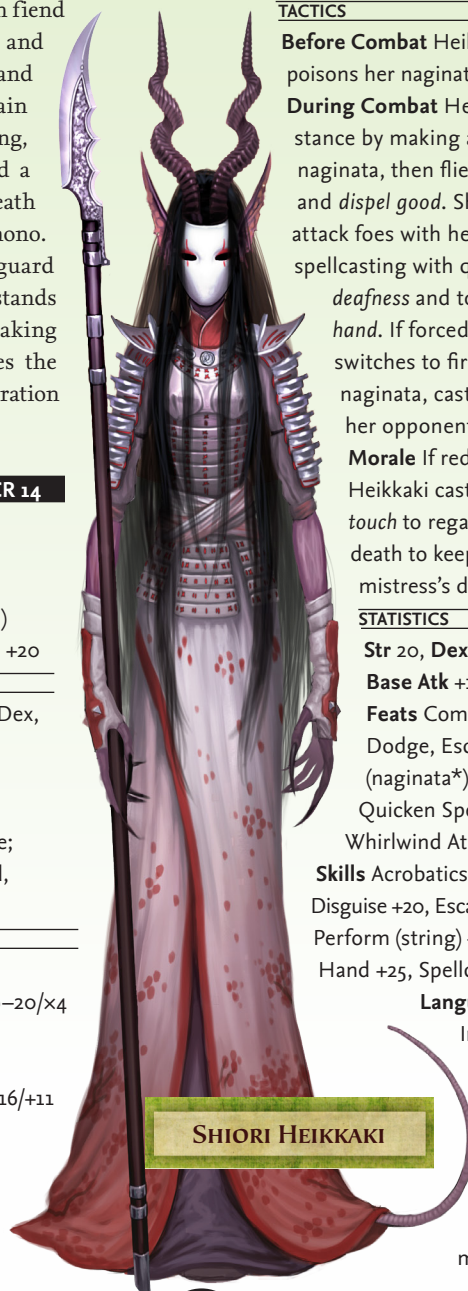
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Eschew Materials^B, Improved Critical (*naginata**), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Quicken Spell, Spring Attack, Stand Still, Whirlwind Attack

Skills Acrobatics +25 (+29 when jumping), Bluff +20, Disguise +20, Escape Artist +25, Fly +24, Perception +20, Perform (string) +20, Sense Motive +18, Sleight of Hand +25, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +25

Languages Auran, Common, Ignan, Infernal, Minkaian, Tian

SQ hidden weapons, poison use

Combat Gear black lotus extract (3 doses); **Other Gear** +2 *silken ceremonial armor**, +1 *naginata**, masterwork composite shortbow (+5 Str) with 20 arrows, masterwork samisen



THE EMPTY THRONE

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Black Lotus Sorcery Shiko me practice a dark form of magic called Black Lotus sorcery that depends on human blood and bone, black lotus powder, and the secretions of demons and oni for its efficacy. This blood magic allows Heikkaki to cast illusion and necromancy spells, as well as spells from the Evil cleric domain, as a 12th-level sorcerer. Cleric spells from the Evil domain are considered arcane spells for a Black Lotus sorcerer.

Elemental Stance (Su) Most shiko me can assume one of three elemental combat stances, but Heikkaki has mastered two of these stances. In fire stance, Heikkaki gains the burn ability (2d6, DC 21) and immunity to fire, and can cast *burning hands* as a spell-like ability at will (CL 7th). In wind stance, Heikkaki becomes effectively invisible while motionless, gains a fly speed of 80 feet (good maneuverability), and can cast *glitterdust* and *gust of wind* as spell-like abilities at will (CL 7th). Heikkaki may switch between stances as a swift action.

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

G9. THE DEVIL'S COURTYARD (CR 13)

Huge basalt columns hold up the ceiling of this mammoth courtyard. A balcony to the southwest and two elevated platforms to the east look down upon the room's ivory-tiled floor. Imperial tapestries of green and gold hang from their edges. To the south, a decorative overlook provides a breathtaking view of a waterfall as it pours into the misty depths.

Empress Maemi has manipulated the Well's *mirage arcana* effect here to make this cavern look like her favorite courtyard in the Imperial Palace where she once ruled. The raised platform and ledge to the east and the balcony to the west stand 40 feet above the floor, while the ceiling rises to a height of 80 feet.

Creatures: Maemi has garnered the support of an entire aerie of erinyes, taking these devils as trusted consorts. These winged devils prove exceedingly loyal guardians for their empress's lair. They attack anyone who intrudes upon their domain, binding and dragging them before their mistress.

ERINYES (6)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 94 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 75)

TACTICS

During Combat The erinyes use group tactics to bring down opponents, three of the devils targeting foes with their entangling ropes while the others fire flaming arrows or use their spell-like abilities. If entangled victims continue to struggle, the erinyes lift them to the ceiling to drop them to the floor. Dropped creatures take 8d6 points of damage from such a fall.

Morale Once half their number are slain, the remaining erinyes flee to area **G10** to join Maemi, using *greater teleport* if necessary to disengage from the fight.

G10. THE EMPRESS'S BOUDOIR (CR 15)

An ornate railing lines a stone balcony that opens into a small cavern. Delicate silk curtains hang from a forest of stalactites on the ceiling, and plush carpets cover the floor. A huge bed draped in satin sheets and a multitude of pillows occupies the rear of the chamber, behind a regal throne of carved jade. The stirring scent of jasmine and lotus blossoms fills the air.

The Well's *mirage arcana* effect makes this cavern appear as a comfortable and elaborately furnished bedchamber. Amatatsu Maemi treats this entire rocky shelf as her boudoir, often stealing away here with Shiori Heikkaki or a favored erinyes when not overseeing their attacks against her demonic rivals.

Creatures: Empress Amatatsu Maemi sat on the Jade Throne of Minkai for over 200 years, though she remained childless for the entirety of her reign. She lobbied the powers of Hell to extend her life and beauty as long as possible, pledging her soul to them in return. Eventually, Maemi died childless and alone, and the *Amatatsu Seal* and the Jade Throne passed to another branch of the Amatatsu line. The devils of Hell held her to her contract, and accepted Maemi into their ranks, transforming her into a gylou, or handmaiden devil. Now granted a true eternity to perpetuate her evil, Maemi has gathered more handmaidens to her side, intent on returning to Kasai and retaking the Jade Throne for her own selfish pursuits.

Maemi sits upon her regal throne here, an illusory replica of Minkai's Jade Throne, while two of her erinyes handmaidens attend to her every whim. If any of the erinyes from area **G9** escaped, they are also found here, eager to repay the PCs for their defeat. Maemi appears much as she did in life, courtesy of an *alter self* spell—a beautiful, ageless Tian-Min woman dressed in Minkai imperial regalia, though her head tentacles are visible, writhing about her elaborate coiffure. To receive the Amatatsu blessing from Onoko (see area **D4**), the PCs must slay Maemi and her erinyes playthings. Maemi offers to give the PCs the blessing herself if they spare her, however, but only to Ameiko or another female Amatatsu scion. She speaks of the glory that will return to the empire when an Amatatsu daughter once more rules Minkai, and promises to share her knowledge and advice with the new empress. Of course, Maemi wants nothing more than to sit on the Jade Throne again herself, and if the PCs accept her offer, she does everything in her power to manipulate and corrupt her descendant.

JADE REGENT

AMATATSU MAEMI

CR 14

XP 38,400

Handmaiden devil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 86)

hp 187

Weaknesses vulnerability to ancestral weapons

TACTICS

During Combat Maemi casts *black tentacles* to occupy opponents on the ground while she flies into the air. She targets those unaffected by the *black tentacles* with *charm monster*, directing charmed victims to defend her before she closes to attack any remaining foes with her claws and tentacles. Upon grabbing a victim, she immediately transfers it into her tentacle cage to keep it occupied.

Morale If her current handmaidens fall in battle, Maemi attempts to summon more erinyes. Once they're all eliminated or if she's reduced to fewer than 60 hit points, she tries to capture a victim in her tentacle cage and hold it hostage to negotiate. If she has no other option, she fights to the death.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Vulnerability to Ancestral Weapons

(Ex) Maemi is vulnerable to ancestral weapons of the Amatatsu family, such as the sword *Suishen* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #50 61). Against Maemi, *Suishen* functions as an *outsider (devil) bane* weapon.



AMATATSU MAEMI

MIU AND UME (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

Advanced erinyes (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 75, 294)

hp 112 each

Treasure: Maemi's elaborate headdress functions as a *major crown of blasting*. In addition, her jewelry and rich clothing are worth a total of 5,000 gp.

Development: If the PCs accept Maemi's offer to receive her blessing, deduct 2 Rebellion Points from their total.

G11. LOWER FALLS

The waters of the fiendish pool in area G2 drain through this chasm, plunging 150 feet into area G12 on the lower level of the Well of Demons. The noise of the waterfall drowns out any other sounds. The omoxes in area G2 tend to avoid the falls, preferring not to antagonize the daemons and undead below, while the erinyes in area G9 keep a close eye on the chasm from their aerie.

G12. LOWER POOL

Behind the rushing falls, a small skiff floats in the water, tethered to a stone ledge. The ledge climbs the cavern wall to the east and west before ending at two overlooks about fifty feet above the basin. The pool stretches farther south, where a handful of small, sandy islets dot the water's surface.

The islands and lower pool of the Well belong to a group of daemons allied with the former emperor Sugimatu Nobinoru. The daemons care little for the conflict between the demons and devils of the upper caverns, focusing instead on corrupting the Imperial Shrine into a secret repository of souls they can abduct and usher into Abaddon. To accomplish this, the daemons have transmuted the demon-tainted water flowing down from area G2.

If they can replace the waters in the moat around the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D) with this daemon-blighted water, it would alter Shizuru's conduit to trap the souls of anyone interred in the Imperial Shrine, allowing the daemons to harvest the souls at their leisure.

The ledge to the west ends before an *illusory wall* (DC 25 to disbelieve), placed there by the dread ghost of Emperor Shojinawa Ito (see area G19) to mark his territory and keep the incarnations of other former emperors from disturbing his plans.

A skiff belonging to the thanadaemon Nobinoru is moored against the north wall of the cavern. If the PCs board the skiff, it steers itself across the pool, bringing them directly to the daemon's landing (area G15) so that Nobinoru can speak with them.

Hazard: Just as in area G2, anyone venturing into the tainted water here is subjected to a disease—in this case a daemonic wasting plague.

DAEMONIC WASTING

Type disease, contact; **Save** Fortitude DC 23

Onset 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect 1d4 Con damage and 1d4 Cha damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

G13. ISLE OF SKULLS (CR 14)

A collection of stark-white skulls lies piled upon this sandy shore, each glowing from within with a soft white light, illuminating its unseeing eyes.

THE EMPTY THRONE

Creatures: Several hydrodaemons have taken over the lower pool, slipping between the islands as they work to transmute the tainted waters. Any living creature that crosses the pool or approaches the island quickly attracts their attention, as the daemons seek to harvest more souls.

ADVANCED HYDRODAEMONS (6)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 115 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 67, 292)

TACTICS

During Combat The hydrodaemons cast *summon monster V* to summon Large water elementals, then attack with a barrage of *acid arrows* and sleep spittle before using their glide ability to rise out of the water and pounce upon the PCs. They grapple foes in an effort to hold them under the water and drown them, or use summoned elementals to create vortexes under anyone pulled into the water.

Morale The hydrodaemons fight to the death.

G14. CAVES

These caves are generally uninhabited and left alone by the daemons. If the PCs have not yet encountered them, there's a 30% chance of encountering one of the hydrodaemons from area **G13** in one of these caves at any given time.

G15. DAEMON'S LANDING

A long cavern extends off this wide sandy beach, supported by three columns of water-carved rock. A single passageway leads west.

If the PCs boarded Nobinoru's skiff in area **G12**, it brings them here, making landfall on the beach.

G16. MIASMA OF SOULS (CR 15)

This long cavern is deathly silent. To the north, a wall of eldritch blue light flickers from floor to ceiling.

Emperor Nobinoru has not bothered to manipulate the Well's *mirage arcana* effect to hide or cloak this cavern in any way, preferring the dead black natural stone.

Creatures: In life, Emperor Sugimatu Nobinoru survived to the venerable age of 110, resembling a withered ghoul more than a man when he finally passed away. His last act as emperor was to command his loyal samurai to put every remaining member of his family to death so none could ever surpass his accomplishments. Before all of his kindred were slain, one of the other imperial families stepped in and stopped the slaughter, but so decimated was the family line that it would be several centuries before another Sugimatu again sat upon the Jade Throne. Nevertheless, Nobinoru almost succeeded in

destroying his family, and his heinous crime brought his soul to Abaddon, where the fell powers of that realm both rewarded and punished him by transforming his soul into a thanadaemon.

Unlike the demons and devils of the upper caverns, Nobinoru has little desire to reclaim the Jade Throne or his former life. Instead, he hungers after the souls laid to rest in the Imperial Shrine. To that end, Nobinoru has opened a tiny conduit to Abaddon, connecting this cavern to a complex weave of necromantic energies on that plane called the miasma of souls. Once the moat around the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns has been tainted by the daemons, Nobinoru can use the power of the miasma of souls to trap the spirits of anyone laid to rest in the Imperial Shrine, enabling the thanadaemon to shunt those souls directly to Abaddon rather than to whatever realms they normally would have reached. To complete the miasma of souls' activation, Nobinoru needs a soul already attuned to one of the *Imperial Seals*. For months now, the thanadaemon has tried to lure the ghost of Emperor Shigure into the Well of Demons to complete the ritual, but Shigure's will remains too strong.

Nobinoru appears as a horned skeletal figure wearing a dark kimono and carrying an ornate staff. He is accompanied by his majordomo, a piscodaemon named Ikku. When the PCs arrive, Nobinoru eagerly turns his attention to them, for any soul attuned to an *Imperial Seal* will serve his purposes. He is more than willing to negotiate and avoids combat if possible, preferring to speak with the PCs telepathically. Nobinoru offers to give the PCs the Sugimatu blessing in exchange for a piece of one of their souls—a soul attuned to one of the *Imperial Seals*. The daemon refuses to explain how it will be used, but he assures them it will cause no permanent damage, nor obligate them in any way to him, either in life or death. In exchange for this gift, he offers not only his approval of Ameiko's ascension, but also the location of Emperor Shigure's remains—Nobinoru is fully aware that Emperor Shojinawa Ito (in area **G19**) is the keeper of Shigure's body, and directs the PCs to Ito's domain to the north.

If the PCs accept Nobinoru's offer, the daemon holds up his end of the bargain. A character that parts with a piece of her soul automatically gains two permanent negative levels (no save), but these negative levels can be removed normally with *restoration*. If the PCs refuse to meet Nobinoru's terms, Ikku attacks while Nobinoru telepathically contacts any remaining hydrodaemons in area **G13**, ordering them to cut off the PCs' retreat before attacking the PCs himself.

The conduit to the miasma of souls manifests as the wall of light to the north, pulsating with an overwhelming aura of necromancy and conjuration. The effects of the miasma extend throughout the entirety of this cavern.

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Any living creature that falls below 0 hit points within this area is targeted with a *death knell* effect that transfers the dying creature's power to Nobinoru (DC 13 Will save negates). In addition, once per day, Nobinoru can use the miasma of souls to target a single individual with a *trap the soul* effect (caster level 20th, DC 22 Will save negates). If possible, Nobinoru attempts to learn such an individual's name during their conversation so he can include it when he invokes this power, thereby increasing the DC by +2.

IKKU CR 11

XP 12,800

Male advanced piscodaemon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 72, 292)

hp 159

TACTICS

During Combat Ikku casts *stinking cloud* before attacking opponents with his constricting tentacles and claws.

Morale Ikku fights to the death.

SUGIMATU NOBINORU CR 14

XP 38,400

Male advanced thanadaemon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 74, 292)

hp 202

Weaknesses vulnerability to ancestral weapons

TACTICS

During Combat Nobinoru activates the miasma's *trap the soul* power on the first round of combat. He then uses *air walk* to get above the PCs, summoning 1d4 hydrodaemons to aid him before launching *enervation* rays at anyone the daemons fail to bring down. He uses his fear gaze on any warriors who get close to him and makes full attacks with his energy-draining quarterstaff.

Morale Upon reaching 100 hit points or fewer, Nobinoru uses his soul crush ability to crush a cacodaemon's soul gem (see page 64 of *Bestiary* 2) to gain fast healing 15 for 15 rounds. Unable to leave the Well of Demons, Nobinoru fights to the death.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Vulnerability to Ancestral Weapons (Ex) Nobinoru is vulnerable to ancestral weapons of the Sugimatu family, such as the *thundering blade of the House of Sugimatu* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #52 61). Against Nobinoru, the *thundering blade* functions as an *outsider (daemon) bane* weapon.

Development: If Nobinoru is killed, his power no longer holds the portal to Abaddon open. The conduit to the miasma of souls closes, and the effects of the miasma end. If the PCs accept Nobinoru's offer to receive his blessing, deduct 2 Rebellion Points from their total.

G17. VESTIBULE OF THE UNDYING (CR 14)

Two exits lead from this large cavern, one to the southwest and another that rises fifteen feet to the northwest.

Creature: Emperor Shojinawa Ito was a master of both necromancy and illusion, commanding legions of undead raised from his own slain troops. He often disguised these undead soldiers to make them indistinguishable from his regular, living troops to unnerve and intimidate his enemies. When his own commanders questioned the rapid growth of his undying army, the emperor had them ritually slain to ensure their eternal unquestioned obedience as undead. One of these champions, a graveknight named Akatsuka Katsumoto, occupies this cavern, bound to defend his emperor in death as well as life. Katsumoto appears as a desiccated corpse wearing bloodstained o-yoroi armor of ancient make, his piercing eyes glowing red from within the shadows of his kabuto helm. He attacks any creatures who venture into his master's domain.

AKATSUKA KATSUMOTO CR 14

XP 38,400

Male human graveknight fighter 13 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 138)

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +24

Aura sacrilegious aura (30 ft., DC 20)

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 26 (+10 armor, +2 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 180 (13d10+104)

Fort +17, **Ref** +9, **Will** +12; +3 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +3, channel resistance +4, rejuvenation; **Immune** acid, cold, electricity, undead traits;

SR 25

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *katana** +28/+23/+18 (1d8+19/18–20 plus 3d6 acid) or mwk wakizashi* +24/+19/+14 (1d6+10/18–20 plus 3d6 acid) or slam +22 (1d4+12)

Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +20/+15/+10 (1d8+12/x3)

Special Attacks channel destruction, devastating blast (8d6 acid, DC 20), undead mastery (DC 20), weapon training (heavy blades +3, bows +2, light blades +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Katsumoto unleashes a devastating blast on the first round of combat, then focuses his attacks against any obvious champion of faith (e.g., a cleric or paladin), seeking to eliminate that foe first. Against grouped opponents, he releases another devastating blast.

Morale As in life, Katsumoto fights until destroyed to protect his emperor, though he rejuvenates in 1d10 days unless his armor is completely destroyed as well.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 35

Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Dazzling Display, Disruptive, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative^B,

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Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Mounted Combat^B, Ride-By Attack^B, Spellbreaker, Spirited Charge, Step Up, Strike Back, Toughness^B, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (katana*), Weapon Specialization (katana*)

Skills Climb +21, Intimidate +28, Perception +24, Ride +24

Languages Infernal, Minkaian, Tien

SQ armor training 3, phantom mount, ruinous revivification (acid)

Other Gear +2 *o-yoroi**, +2 *katana**, +1 *composite longbow* (+7 Str) with 20 arrows, masterwork wakizashi, *cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of protection* +2

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

G18. WINGS OF DARKNESS (CR 14)

This dark cavern is utterly silent, and shadows lie thick around the edges of the chamber. Sloping passageways descend to the east and west.

Creature: When Emperor Ito first manifested in the Well of Demons, he explored all of the Well's caverns in his ghostly form. In this chamber, he discovered the body of a void yai oni, bound here centuries earlier by a previous emperor. Ito used a foul necromantic ritual to transform the corpse of the fiend into an undead nightwing that would do his bidding once he broke free of the Imperial Shrine. The undead abomination lurks in the shadows near the 50-foot-high ceiling. It swoops down to attack any living creature entering the chamber, but it is unable to fly effectively in the tight space of the cavern, and must land at the end of every turn. The nightwing chases fleeing opponents throughout the Well (squeezing to exit this cavern), but is unable to leave the confines of the Well of Demons. It fights until destroyed.

NIGHTWING

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 195 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 203)

G19. THE EMPEROR'S RETREAT (CR 16)

Starry patterns grace the ceiling of this long cavern, dimly illuminating a shadow-filled hall of decorative sculptures below. A black throne rests against the west wall, below long banners depicting the Tien characters for sacrifice and death. A regal crown of black and gold sits on the throne's massive seat. A discernible chill fills the air, and the sour stench of death emanates from a long-dead corpse lying on the chamber floor.

The banners, crown, throne, and other decor in this room are all illusions, courtesy of the Well's *mirage arcana* effect. A passage to the south leads to area **G12**, hidden behind an *illusory wall* placed there by Ito. The only thing

that isn't an illusion is the decayed corpse on the floor—the bodily remains of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure.

Creature: Emperor Shojinawa Ito represents one of the greatest of Minkai's evil rulers. Descended from a bloodline steeped in necromancy and dark magics, his reign mars the history of the Jade Throne, prompting the keepers of imperial records in Kasai to all but purge his name from their scrolls. Only a handful of historians know that Emperor Ito unnaturally extended his life by becoming a lich, disguising himself with magic so no one would realize his undead nature. He even formed an undead army to defend him and expand Minkai's borders. Eventually, however, his people questioned his unnaturally long lifespan, and Ito finally met his end when the ancient sovereign dragon Daidorei, disguised as a peasant, traveled to the Imperial Palace and slew the undead emperor in a conflagration of magical fire. Daidorei also correctly divined the location of Ito's phylactery on the Mount of Seven Shrines, and destroyed it as well.

But Ito's legacy did not end with the destruction of his body and phylactery. Rather than craft a single phylactery, Ito had harnessed the energies of the Imperial Shrine to craft a second phylactery, splitting his soul as a safeguard against those who would try to remove him from the Jade Throne. The second phylactery could not return him as a lich, however, and his physical remains crumbled to ash, leaving only his spirit intact. Ito returned as a dread ghost, and because his second phylactery was hidden among his family's funerary urns in the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns, his spirit became confined to the Imperial Shrine. In time, the other imperial families removed the Shojinawa urns, dumping them into the Lake of Tears. Although Ito's phylactery still rests at the bottom of the lake, the sacred waters of the Eternal Spring drew his spirit into the Well of Demons, where he is now confined.

Over the centuries, Ito has searched for a way to break free of the Well of Demons and the Imperial Shrine so he can return to Minkai and reclaim the Jade Throne. But bodiless spirits cannot pass the torii gates ringing the island, so he's spent countless decades trying to lure visitors into the Well so he can possess them and depart the island inside a physical body. Ito thought he had found his ideal answer when the Jade Regent hurled Emperor Shigure's body into the Well, believing he could use Shigure's corpse to deceive Minkai and assume the throne again. But Ito hasn't yet been able to adapt his malevolence ability to possess a dead body, and he grows frustrated as his reanimation experiments continually end in failure.

When the PCs arrive, Ito manifests over Shigure's remains to defend them. Ito looks much as he did in life before his transformation into a lich. He still wears his imperial crown and regalia, but they are burnt and blackened, reflecting the manner of his death. Ito refuses

JADE REGENT

to give up Shigure's corpse until the PCs explain who they are and why they need the body. Once Ito realizes that Ameiko seeks to wrest the throne away from the Jade Regent, he agrees to part with Shigure's remains, but only if she (or another Amatsatsu scion) lets him possess her until they leave the island. In truth, Ito has no intention of returning Ameiko's body if she agrees. Instead, he plans to use her to put himself on the throne again. If the PCs refuse his offer, Ito attacks. If he gets the upper hand and defeats the PCs, he doesn't slay them, but rather focuses all of his attention on possessing Ameiko or another Amatsatsu scion with his malevolence ability and escaping the Well of Demons and Imperial Shrine.



SHOJINAWA ITO

SHOJINAWA ITO

CR 16

XP 76,800

Male human dread ghost sorcerer 14 (*Advanced Bestiary* 72)

NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, incorporeal)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 22, flat-footed 27 (+4 armor, +9 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 shield)

hp 206 (14d6+155)

Fort +13, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +8, incorporeal, rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits; **SR** 24

OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee corrupting touch +9 (16d6, Fort DC 26 half)

Special Attacks corrupting gaze (DC 26), it was meant to be 1/day, malevolence (DC 26), power over undead, spectral flame strike

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +23) 12/day—touch of destiny (+7)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +23) 3/day—spectral flame strike (DC 24)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 14th; concentration +23)

7th (4/day)—*finger of death* (DC 26)

6th (6/day)—*create undead*, *disintegrate* (DC 25), *mislead* (DC 27), *veil* (DC 27)

5th (8/day)—*break enchantment*, *cone of cold* (DC 24), *feeblemind* (DC 24), *shadow evocation* (DC 26), *waves of fatigue*

4th (8/day)—*animate dead*, *bestow curse* (DC 23), *enervation*, *freedom of movement*, *illusory wall* (DC 25), *phantasmal killer* (DC 25)

3rd (8/day)—*dispel magic*, *fireball* (DC 23), *protection from energy*, *ray of exhaustion* (DC 22), *vampiric touch*

2nd (8/day)—*acid arrow*, *blindness/deafness* (DC 21), *blur*, *false life*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

1st (9/day)—*alarm*, *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 20), *shield*

o (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 19), *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 21), *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 19)

Bloodline Destined

TACTICS

Before Combat Ito casts *blur*, *false life*, *mage armor*, and *shield* before any fight, doing so from within the safety of the cavern walls or floor, if necessary.

During Combat Ito uses his spectral flame strike and spells such as *cone of cold*, *fireball*, *scorching ray*, and *waves of fatigue* to target massed foes. Against individuals, he casts spells like *bestow curse*, *disintegrate*, *enervation*, *finger of death*, and *phantasmal killer*, or attacks with his corrupting touch. If his enemies seem able to hit him with any frequency, he casts *mirror image* and uses *vampiric touch* along with his corrupting touch to replenish his lost

THE EMPTY THRONE

hit points. If Ito seems too powerful for your PCs, reduce the speed with which he attacks them. Have him waste every other round, as necessary, to convey the emperor's arrogance and disdain for his opponents.

Morale Ito fights until destroyed, knowing full well that he'll re-form in just a few days. Of more concern to him is the loss of Emperor Shigure's corpse, which he strives at all costs to protect as a bargaining chip. The only way to permanently destroy Ito's ghost is to destroy his second phylactery, a funerary urn that lies at the bottom of the Lake of Tears (area F).

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 28

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 29

Feats Combat Casting, Command Undead, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Expanded Arcana* (2), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Skill Focus (Knowledge [history]), Spell Focus (illusion), Toughness

Skills Bluff +18, Fly +19, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (nobility) +7, Knowledge (religion) +10, Perception +22, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +19

Languages Draconic, Minkaian, Tien

SQ bloodline arcana (gain luck bonus to saves when casting personal-range spells), fated (+3)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Power Over Undead (Su) Ito gains Command Undead as a bonus feat, and can channel energy 12 times per day, but only to use that feat (DC 26).

Spectral Flame Strike (Sp) Ito can cast *flame strike* three times per day as a spell-like ability. Unlike normal *flame strike*, however, the spectral flames are infused with negative energy. Half the damage is fire damage, but the other half is negative energy damage and is therefore not subject to fire resistance.

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

Development: If the PCs accept Ito's offer to receive his blessing, deduct 3 Rebellion Points from their total.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE EMPERORS

Once the PCs have recovered Emperor Shigure's remains and defeated or gained the blessings of the denizens of the Well of Demons, they can return to the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns. Emperor Shigure is true to his word, and gives Ameiko his blessing if the PCs recovered his body from the Well. If the PCs defeated Amatatsu Maemi, the trumpet archon Amatatsu Onoko gives her blessing as well. In addition, once the PCs properly inter his remains in the Imperial Mausoleum, Emperor Shigure rewards them with a potent spiritual elixir called *seishinru* (see page 61) to aid them in their coming conflict with the Jade Regent. He also tells the PCs to "look behind the dragon" to find the treasure vaults below the Imperial Palace

(areas **H16** through **H21**), where they should seek out the sovereign dragon Teikono. According to Shigure, Teikono is honor-bound to serve the Jade Throne, and the PCs might be able to secure his aid as well.

If the PCs did not bargain with the inhabitants of the Well of Demons for their blessings, they can now contact the ancestral spirits of the Shojinawa, Sugimatu, and Teikoku families, thus gaining the blessing from all five imperial families. The ancestors have one final task for Ameiko and the PCs, however. With four out of the five imperial families of Minkai destroyed, the new emperor must protect the lines of succession to the Jade Throne. The families' *Imperial Seals* were stolen when the Five Storms eradicated the family lines, but the ancestors can still sense them, hidden somewhere deep beneath the Imperial Palace. If the PCs can recover these lost seals, the four extinct imperial families can be rebuilt by using the seals to invest new scions with the right to rule Minkai.

Development: Once all of the inhabitants of the Well of Demons have been destroyed, the waters of the Eternal Spring eventually wash away the fiendish taints in the pools within the Well, and the Imperial Shrine returns to normal. Although no demons, devils, or other fiends physically remain within the Well of Demon, an evil presence can still be detected within its caverns—the spirits of Minkai's evil emperors. With the Imperial Shrine again in balance, Shizuru's conduit once more reestablishes contact with the spirits of the goodly emperors, and anyone in possession of an *Imperial Seal* can once again commune with them at the Imperial Shrine. If the PCs failed to get one or more of the blessings from the ancestors of the five imperial families, deduct 1 Rebellion Point from their total for each missed blessing.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully recover Emperor Shigure's remains and lay them properly to rest, thus restoring the equilibrium of the Imperial Shrine, award them 38,400 XP and +1 Rebellion Point.

PART THREE: HONORING THE FUTURE

Once Ameiko obtains approval for her ascension, the PCs can finally turn their attention to deposing the Jade Regent. The rebel army assembled by the PCs in "Tide of Honor," commanded by Hirabashi Jiro and Sikutsu Itsuru, approaches Kasai, and the Jade Regent sends his Typhoon Guard to meet them outside the city. News of the arrival of a rightful Amatatsu heir to the Jade Throne spreads quickly through streets of the imperial capital, and the people of Kasai rise up against the Jade Regent's rule. This adventure assumes that the PCs were able to build a strong alliance between the different factions in "Tide of Honor," such that the Jade Regent pulls the majority of his forces out of the city and the Imperial Palace to face the rebel army. If this is not the case, you may want to increase the number of guards

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in Kasai and inside the palace, though you should be aware that this will make the PCs' task even more difficult.

Against this backdrop of rebellion, the PCs must secure the Jade Throne for Ameiko. With the knowledge gained from Emperor Shigure and the imperial ancestors, the PCs will likely want to seek out the treasury below the palace along the way in search of the stolen *Imperial Seals*. These potent artifacts could greatly enhance the PCs' chances against the oni. The PCs face the choice of seeking out these vaults first, or heading directly to the throne room to confront the Jade Regent. Either way, they face a harrowing series of challenges as they proceed.

ENTERING THE PALACE

The Imperial Palace is more than just a stately residence for the emperor of Minkai—it is also a fortified, multi-level castle, designed with a number of tactical and magical defenses built into the grounds of the palace. A series of moats, bridges, and causeways controls access to the Imperial Palace, all under the watchful eye of archers in the palace and surrounding towers.

It is up to the PCs how they wish to enter the palace. Openly approaching the castle through the outer gate, parks, and causeways to the palace's main gate opens the PCs to attack from the guards posted to defend these areas. The PCs might try to enter the castle stealthily, but the guards are watchful, and the Typhoon commanders can see invisible creatures. A DC 10 Swim check is required to swim any of the moats surrounding the palace, and DC 30 Climb checks are necessary to scale the castle's smooth walls.

Those using magic to bypass the normal approaches to the palace face a different array of countermeasures. While nothing prevents PCs from flying over the palace grounds, the Typhoon guards can also take to the air, and guard patrols are quickly ordered to attack such intruders in the air while archers target them from the palace's windows and towers. While nothing blocks teleportation or extradimensional travel into or within the palace walls, the Imperial Palace is warded against spells and effects of the scrying subschool, making teleportation a risky means of gaining entrance.

Once inside the palace, the PCs will have to face a series of guardians and traps. It is up to them how they move through the palace, and whether they try to avoid the guards or defeat the palace's defenders before their meeting with the Jade Regent. Because of the large number of guards present in the palace, try not to throw all of them at the PCs at once. The PCs are here to fight the Jade Regent, not get bored slogging through his lower-level guards. Remember that most of the guards are selfish oni who won't necessarily rush to their fellows' aid immediately. If the entire palace is alerted to the PCs' presence, the guards can respond in waves, interspersed with other encounters to keep things interesting. Regardless of the PCs' actions, the Jade Regent and his allies should

probably remain in the throne room (area **H33**). To claim Ameiko's title, she and the PCs must come to the Jade Throne, and the Jade Regent is more than willing to wait for her there rather than risk falling prey to an ambush.

As they explore the Imperial Palace, the PCs might be tempted to loot it for treasure, but they should keep in mind that most of the palace's riches belong to the emperor of Minkai—meaning that if they are successful, that wealth should belong to their friend Ameiko. As a result, many of the palace's rooms do not have any treasure listed, even though those rooms likely contain a wide variety of valuable furnishings and decorations, as befits the palace of an emperor. Of course, any treasure or gear carried by the palace's oni defenders may be looted by the PCs as normal.

H. THE IMPERIAL PALACE

The grounds of the Imperial Palace constitute an entire island dominated by a massive, man-made plateau upon which the fortified palace rests. Two moats separate the island from the rest of Kasai, and are kept free of boat traffic by aggressive patrols of the Typhoon Guard. Within the grounds themselves, the island includes both a public marketplace and several interconnected parks. The people are granted access to these locations during the day, but the guard maintains an unyielding curfew at night.

H1. MARKET BRIDGES

A stone bridge crosses the lower moat of the castle grounds, leading to a vast marketplace somewhat overshadowed by the massive plateau supporting the nearby Imperial Palace.

These two bridges connect the imperial grounds to the rest of the city, bridging the moat that separates the palace from the more affluent neighborhoods of Kasai.

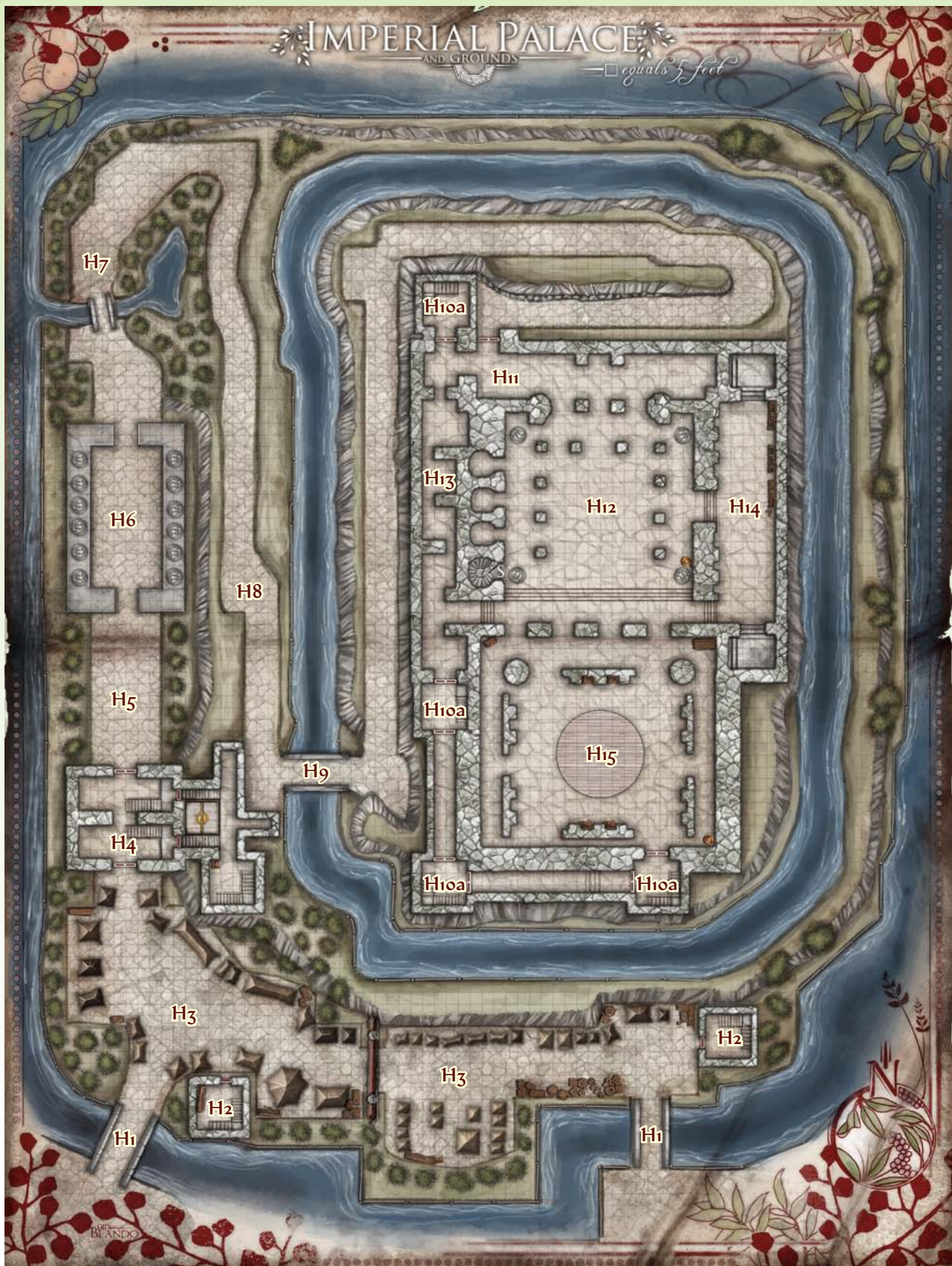
H2. GUARD TOWERS (CR 14)

This small stone tower bears a lacquered roof supported by wooden beams. Green banners depicting the imperial dragon of Minkai hang from the upper stories.

Two of these 20-foot-tall towers overlook the Imperial Market. A wooden stairway connects to the lookout post on the second floor, which is equipped with arrow slits. The towers' outer doors are made of strong wood and barred from the inside (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25).

Creatures: Four Typhoon guards are posted in each of these small towers. Two of these guards usually remain in the lookout post while the other two stay on the ground floor, watching over the outer door. During the day, there is a 50% chance that the latter two guards are patrolling the market outside (see area **H3**).

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TYPHOON GUARDS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H3. IMPERIAL MARKET (CR 14)

Dozens of open-air stalls and tents crowd the edges of this main thoroughfare, following a long path between the two moats surrounding the Imperial Palace. A red torii gate stands in the middle of the marketplace.

During the day, street vendors crowd this avenue, offering everything from food and clothing to jewelry and fine-crafted weapons to palace residents and commoners alike. At night, however, the marketplace lies deserted, dark, and silent under the watchful eyes of the tower guards.

Creatures: While the market is open, guards routinely patrol the stalls of the market, typically shaking down vendors for extra coin or some merchandise that catches their eye. The locals bear these indignities without complaint, as many who have voiced their dissent have been led into the guard towers never to be heard from again. During the day, there is a 50% chance of encountering a patrol of four Typhoon guards (two from each of market's guard towers) in the market.

TYPHOON GUARDS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H4. OUTER GATE (CR 14)

A stone gatehouse and matching tower block the way forward, the massive gates sealed from within. Several birds roost atop a bell tower rising from the middle of the structure.

This small gatehouse controls the flow of people from the marketplace to the parks outside the palace and also serves as the outermost defense of the approach to the castle. To the east, wooden stairways provide access to a 30-foot-tall bell tower and 20-foot-tall guard tower. When closed, the wooden gates are barred from the inside (hardness 5, hp 40, Break DC 30).

Creatures: Four Typhoon guards typically stand watch here, ushering visitors through during the day and guarding the gate at night. The guards use the bell tower to capture the attention of market-goers during the day to make public announcements to make. If attacked, the guards ring the bells to warn the palace of an assault.

TYPHOON GUARDS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H5. SATOMI PARK

Peach trees line this thoroughfare leading beyond the outer gate. To the north, a gentle hill climbs its way to a park filled with stone monuments.

The first of three parks within the grounds of the Imperial Palace, this garden was named for Empress Amatatsu Satomi, who favored the shade and refreshing fruit of the meticulously groomed peach trees here when she wished to escape the heat of the summer sun.

H6. MONUMENT PARK (CR 14)

Brightly lacquered statues watch over this wide, tiled plaza from atop stone pedestals. Carved in the likeness of samurai warriors, each stands at attention with a katana and wakizashi.

Emperor Teikoku Kenshiro commissioned this park as a tribute to the many samurai who have served the Jade Throne since the founding of Minkai. Small placards at the base of each statue identify the name of the Minkai hero or legend it represents.

Creatures: The 12 statues are ceramic constructs crafted to defend the Imperial Palace. These advanced terra-cotta soldiers are armed with katanas and wakizashi, and gain Exotic Weapon Proficiency (katana) as a bonus feat. During the day, the soldiers remain still so residents of the palace may enjoy the park. At night, however, or if the alarm bell in area H4 has been rung, the soldiers animate and attack any intruders in this area, unless they are accompanied by Typhoon guards. A character in possession of the *Amatatsu Seal* (or other *Imperial Seal*) can make a DC 15 Charisma check to command the soldiers and order them to halt their attack, but they will not leave their posts in the park.

ADVANCED TERRA-COTTA SOLDIERS (12)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 80 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 262, 290)

Melee katana* +10/+5 (1d8+3/18–20) and wakizashi* +10 (1d6+1/18–20)

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

H7. TAIRAKA PARK

A wooden bridge crosses a shallow creek in the center of this well-maintained park. To the east, the creek widens into a small pond surrounded by cattails and long-stemmed flowering plants.

Empress Sugimatu Yoshie instituted this natural park hundreds of years ago. A devoted gardener, she often looked after this park, and legends claim that the plants she grew here granted a variety of healing effects.

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H8. CAUSEWAY

The road to the palace takes on a noticeably steeper grade here, rising as it doubles back toward the outer gate. This steep hill has seen the deaths of thousands of soldiers, both defenders falling back to Imperial Palace and those attackers cut down by the archers defending its walls.

H9. ENPERASHII BRIDGE (CR 15)

An arched bridge crosses an elevated moat here. Surrounded by three towers, it opens onto a wide road that winds up to the Imperial Palace following the plateau's ledge.

This well-defended bridge lies within the field of fire of archers in three guard towers (areas **H4** and **H10**). It provides the only access to the Imperial Palace from the castle's surrounding grounds.

Creatures: Two earth yai, oni who have taken stone giant form, stand on the far side of the bridge. The oni are invisible, and they defend the bridge against any invaders approaching the palace.

EARTH YAI (2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

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

Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 23 (+6 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size)

hp 184 each (16d10+96); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +16, Ref +11, Will +14

SR 24

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)

Melee greatclub +23/+18/+13/+8 (2d8+12) or
2 slams +23 (1d10+8)

Ranged stony missile +21 (3d6 plus Awesome Blow)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks spiky skin

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +18)

Constant—fly

At will—darkness, invisibility (self only), passwall (stone only)

3/day—spike stones (DC 16), stone shape, stone tell

1/day—earthquake, repel metal or stone, transmute mud to rock (DC 17), transmute rock to mud (DC 17)

TACTICS

During Combat The earth yai cast *earthquake* to collapse the bridge, dropping attackers into the moat and burying them beneath the rubble. If enemies attempt to fly over the moat, the yai cast *repel metal or stone* to drive them back, and fire stony missiles at any remaining foes.

Morale If one of the earth yai is slain, the other takes to the air and flees the city.

STATISTICS

Str 27, Dex 22, Con 23, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 15

Base Atk +16; CMB +25; CMD 41

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Precise Shot, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Pinpoint Targeting, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot

Skills Bluff +21, Fly +27, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Perception +21, Sense Motive +21, Stealth +21 (+29 in rocky terrain); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in rocky terrain

Languages Common, Giant

SQ change shape (Medium or Large humanoid; *alter self* or *giant form I*)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Spiky Skin (Ex) An earth yai may grow spikes from its stony skin at will as a free action. These spikes are treated as armor spikes that deal 1d10 points of damage.

Stony Missile (Su) As a swift action, an earth yai can fire an incredibly dense stone from its third eye. This attack has a range of 200 feet, with no range increment, and deals 3d6 points of bludgeoning damage. Upon striking the target, the stone immediately makes an Awesome Blow attempt against the target using the earth yai's CMB.

Treasure: Each of the earth yai is carrying 2,000 gp worth of coins, gems, and jewelry stolen from the Imperial Palace. In addition, one of the earth yai carries a *fire elemental gem*.

IMPERIAL PALACE GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor of the Imperial Palace normally receives guests and petitioners on a daily basis, either seeking an audience with the Jade Regent or reporting for duty. Since the arrival of Ameiko and the PCs in Minkai, however, Anamurumon has forbidden anyone from visiting, turning away foreign dignitaries and supplicants alike. Within the palace halls, the servants are no longer allowed to leave for fear someone may assume their identities to gain access to the palace. The oni have already subjugated most of the servants with charms or intimidation, confining them to their quarters when they aren't otherwise occupied with their daily routines.

Most of the chambers on the ground floor are 20 feet high, unless indicated differently in their description. Doors are made of strong wood (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 23). *Continual flames* in shaded lamps provide light in most rooms and corridors.

H10. PALACE TOWERS (CR 14)

Four guard towers are incorporated into the castle's walls. These towers are 50 feet tall and rise a full three stories, all connected by wooden stairs. The lookout posts on the third floor of the towers are only accessible by ladders on the second floor. The tower doors are made of strong

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wood, and those leading into the palace proper are barred from the inside (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25).

Creatures: Four Typhoon guards are usually posted in each of these towers. Usually, at least half their number take up archery positions in the lookout posts (**H10c**), while the others guard the towers' lower levels (50% chance of being in either area **H10a** or **H10b**).

TYPHOON GUARDS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H11. ENTRY HALL (CR 16)

Jade tiles decorate the dark stone walls of this long hallway, hung with banners, tapestries, and small shelves filled with porcelain urns and vases. Three large doorways open to the south, while a smaller adjoining passage leads west.

The main doors to the palace are made of strong wood and are barred with iron (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 30).

Creatures: Four clockwork golems were brought to the palace centuries ago by an adventurous member of the Amatatsu family, who found the constructs in the clockwork necropolis of Pan Majang and exorcised the evil spirits possessing them. The golems are stationed here to hold the main doors against intruders. One of the golems stands near the entrance to the guard tower (area **H10a**), while the others maintain positions to the east near the entrances to the inner sanctum (area **H12**).

CLOCKWORK GOLEMS (4)

CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 118 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 137)

TACTICS

During Combat Two of the golems seal off the ends of the corridor with their wall of gears ability while the others charge forward to grapple and grind opponents. When the two attacking golems are destroyed in a death burst of shrapnel, the remaining golems re-form and attack.

Morale The golems fight until destroyed.

H12. INNER SANCTUM

Massive wooden pillars support the ceiling above this immense chamber. Four statues stand in the corners of the room, reaching nearly as high as the ceiling, each depicting a different creature—a brightly scaled carp, a sly fox, a leaping hare, and a coiled imperial dragon. Small flights of steps provide access to corridors to the south and east, while three alcoves extend into the west wall.

The alcoves to the west contain small shrines dedicated to three of the most popular gods in Minkai: Daikitsu,

goddess of agriculture and rice; Shizuru, goddess of ancestors and the sun; and Tsukiyo, god of jade and the moon, represented by the statues of their sacred animals—the fox, the carp, and the hare.

The fourth statue, the dragon, stands in the southwest corner before a secret door. Emperor Shigure hinted at the existence of this door when he gave the PCs his blessing. The door opens upon a spiraling stairway leading to the vaults below the palace (area **H16**), and can be located with a DC 30 Perception check (or automatically, if the PCs follow Shigure's clue and specifically look behind the statue).

H13. THE WINDING GALLERY

Priceless art adorns the walls and alcoves of this series of small parlors. Exits lead both north and south.

The emperors of Minkai display a small portion of the imperial art collection within this hall, often changing out the exhibits with each change in the season.

H14. IWAKU GALLERY (CR 12)

Velvet ropes close off this long gallery. It appears to be undergoing renovation, as several tapestries, urns, and decorative statues lie piled upon the floor.

The wall hangings and sculptures filling this long hall normally tell the history of Minkai and the various imperial families who have held the Jade Throne. With the Jade Regent's ascendancy, however, Anamurumon has roped off the gallery and started removing these priceless relics to make room for the trappings of a new age.

Traps: Anamurumon forbade the servants from entering this gallery, and placed two magical tapestries from the House of Withered Blossoms here to ensure they would obey his command. The tapestries hang at either end of the gallery beside the stairways leading to the upper levels (area **H22**). All of the oni in the palace know to avoid gazing at the tapestries, as anyone looking upon them triggers the traps, which summon the shades of multiple dire tigers into the hall. They immediately attack anyone before them.

SHADOW TIGER TRAPS (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Type magic; Perception DC 34; Disable Device DC 34

EFFECTS

Trigger visual (looking at the tapestry); **Reset** automatic (10 minutes)

Effect spell effect (*shades [summon monster VIII]*), summons 1d4+1 quasi-real fiendish dire tigers for 17 rounds, deals only 80% damage to nonbelievers, DC 28 Will save to disbelieve [if interacted with])

H15. TRAINING HALL (CR 16)

An elevated wooden stage fills the center of this large ballroom, approximately two feet off the floor. Several exotic weapon displays line the partitioned walls around the stage, and the musty smell of sweat hangs heavy in the air.

The weapon racks around the perimeter of the room contain a bewildering variety of weapons, mostly monk weapons and more exotic arms, all of masterwork quality. You can use this area to introduce your players to many new exotic Eastern weapons (such as those found in *Ultimate Combat*), but the weapons are all part of the Imperial Palace's collection.

Creatures: The chamber belongs to one of Anamurumon's most loyal supporters among the Five Storms, a kuwa oni named Sudoshi Sento. A master of the martial arts, Sento devoted his time away from the Forest of Spirits into developing a fighting style called the Iron Tempest, based on his own personal philosophy of measured hate and superiority. Obsessed with the sensations of physical exertion and pain, Sento created a fighting school within the Imperial Palace, where he seeks to twist and pervert the minds of his students, turning them into nothing but devoted killing machines for their sensei.

Sento and his followers abhor the raging conflict outside the city, viewing war on the battlefield as a crude and inefficient means of personal combat unworthy of their participation. When the PCs arrive, Sento and four Iron Tempest monks are all engaged in spars with one another, but Sento pauses their workout when presented with visitors to the school. He greets the PCs by complimenting them on the honorable choice they've made to test themselves individually against the Iron Tempest. He then suggests they start by dueling with his students in hand-to-hand combat one at a time to take their measure. If the PCs refuse the honor of such a challenge, he directs his students to surround them and attack as one.

Initially, Sento holds himself aloof from the fighting, declining to participate unless someone attacks him directly. He prefers to stand aside and assess the performance of his students before committing himself to the fray. But once the PCs slay or incapacitate at least two of his students, Sento leaps into the middle of combat to show them what a true master can do. If anyone offers to personally duel Sento alone, he calls off his students and has them stand aside while he meets the challenge. If the challenger defeats Sento, the remaining monks scatter in fear.

SUDOSHI SENTO

CR 14

XP 38,400

Male kuwa oni monk (martial artist) 12 (*Pathfinder RPG*)

Bestiary 3 208, *Ultimate Combat* 59

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

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 25, flat-footed 22 (+3 armor, +7 Dex, +4 monk, +4 Wis, +1 natural)

hp 195 (17 HD; 5d10+12d8+114); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +17, **Ref** +16, **Will** +16

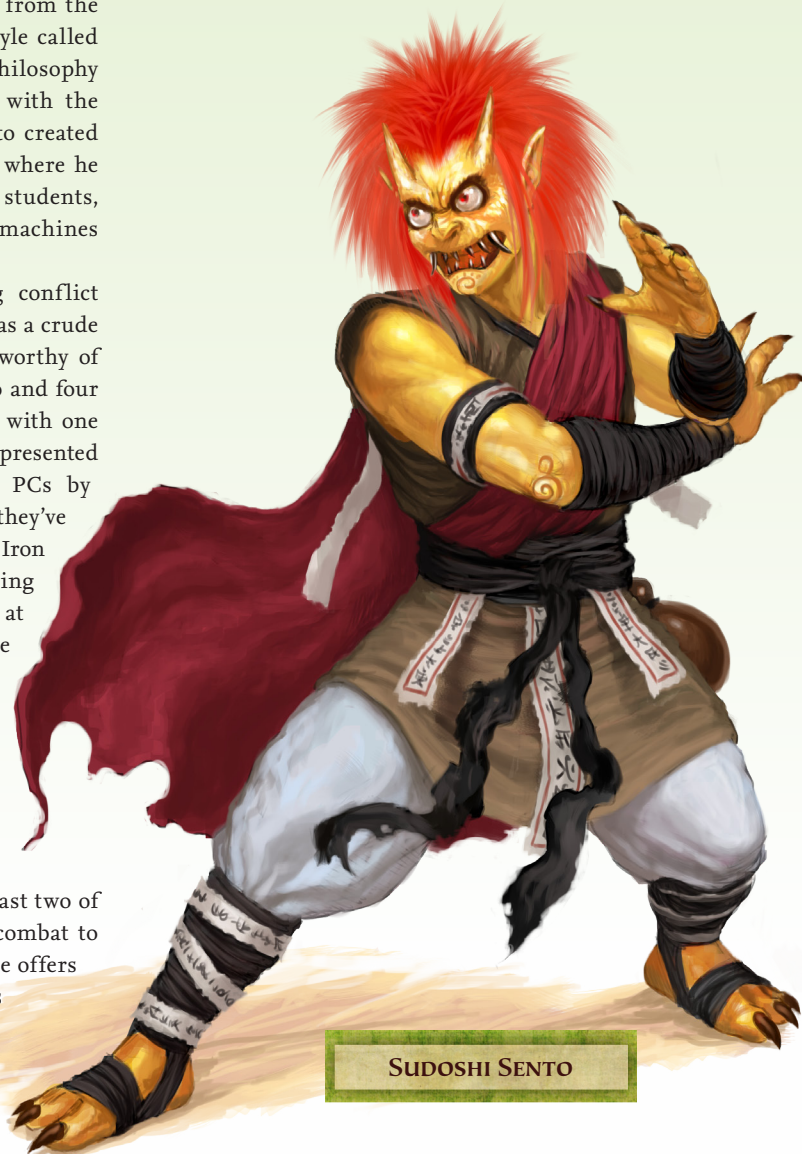
Defensive Abilities improved evasion, physical resistance* (2 points); **Immune** exhaustion, fatigue; **SR** 15

OFFENSE

Speed 80 ft.; fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee +2 *unarmed strike* +24/+19/+14 (2d8+11/19–20) or

+2 *flurry of blows* +25/+25/+20/+20/+15/+10 (2d8+11/19–20)



SUDOSHI SENTO

JADE REGENT

Special Attacks exploit weakness*, flurry of blows, pain points*, stunning fist (14/day, DC 21)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +8)

3/day—*darkness*, *fly*

1/day—*charm person* (DC 14), *deep slumber* (DC 16), *invisibility* (self only)

TACTICS

Before Combat Sento casts *fly* before fighting to maximize his movement options.

During Combat On the first round of combat, Sento attempts to demoralize his opponents with his Intimidate skill. Once he enters combat, Sento uses his flurry of blows to attack any enemies within reach, spending a swift action each round to exploit an enemy's weakness. Against a single foe, Sento uses Spring Attack to make a stunning fist attack and attempt to stagger his opponent, before closing in to attack with flurry of blows.

Morale If seriously injured, Sento uses a withdraw action to fly upward, quickly casting *darkness* to hide until his regeneration restores his lost hit points. Defeat is inconceivable to Sento, so he fights until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 24, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +24 (+26 bull rush); **CMD** 46 (48 vs. bull rush)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Deflect Arrows, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (unarmed strike), Improved Unarmed Strike, Intimidating Prowess, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Staggering Critical, Stunning Fist, Toughness, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Weapon Specialization (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +24 (+56 when jumping), Bluff +16, Disguise +16, Fly +15, Intimidate +23, Perception +20, Sense Motive +16, Stealth +17, Use Magic Device +10

Languages Minkaian, Tien

SQ change shape (any human; *alter self*), extreme endurance*, fast movement, high jump, maneuver training, martial arts master*

Other Gear *amulet of mighty fists* +2, *belt of physical perfection* +2, *bracers of armor* +3, *monk's robe*

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

IRON TEMPEST MONKS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Human fighter 3/monk (hungry ghost monk) 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 110)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 20, flat-footed 21 (+2 armor, +3 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 monk, +1 Wis, +3 natural)

hp 98 each (11 HD; 3d10+8d8+41)

Fort +13, **Ref** +12, **Will** +10; +1 vs. fear, +2 vs. enchantment

Defensive Abilities bravery +1, evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee +1 *unarmed strike* +15/+10 (1d10+5/19–20) or

+1 *flurry of blows* +15/+15/+10/+10/+5 (1d10+5/19–20)

Special Attacks flurry of blows, life funnel*, punishing kick* (8/day, DC 16), steal *ki**

TACTICS

Before Combat The monks drink *potions of barkskin* and *shield of faith* prior to combat.

During Combat Sento orders his students to attack the strongest-looking opponents first, urging them to gang up while he deals with enemy spellcasters. Whenever possible, the monks flank with each other and make punishing kick attacks to knock enemies prone. The monks use their steal *ki* and life funnel abilities to replenish their *ki* pools and hit points as needed.

Morale The monks battle to the death, pausing only to drink their *potions of cure moderate wounds* before fighting on.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +15 (+17 grapple); **CMD** 33 (35 vs. grapple)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (unarmed strike), Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Punishing Kick*, Step Up, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +17 (+33 when jumping), Climb +12, Intimidate +10, Perception +15, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +16

Languages Minkaian, Tien

SQ armor training 1, fast movement, high jump, *ki* pool (5 points, magic), maneuver training, slow fall 40 ft., still mind

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* (CL 6th; 2), *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potions of shield of faith* (CL 6th; 2);

Other Gear *amulet of mighty fists* +1, *belt of giant strength* +2, *bracers of armor* +2

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

THE LOWER HALLS

This portion of the castle lies deep within the raised plateau supporting the Imperial Palace, and contains the vaults of the imperial treasury. While the vaults still hold much of value, they have been depleted far below their normal levels since the Jade Regent took the throne. Except where otherwise noted, the ceilings reach a height of 40 feet. The doors are always locked and made of iron (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28, Disable Device DC 28). Permanent *continual flames* fully illuminate each room and hallway.

Hi6. STONE LANDING

The spiral steps give way to a short stone landing before a set of iron double doors to the south. To the north, steps descend to a ten-foot-deep alcove, its rough alabaster walls decorated with frescoes of imperial dragons and menacing samurai.

THE EMPTY THRONE

The palace's more obvious treasure vaults lie behind the double doors to the south, but a secret door (DC 30 Perception check to notice) in the mouth of the largest dragon fresco along the northwestern wall leads to the palace's hidden treasuries. Only the Jade Regent and Anamurumon carry the keys, which fit between the dragon's claws. Both keys must be turned simultaneously to open the door, though two DC 30 Disable Device checks or a single *knock* spell can gain entry as well.

H17. WARDROBE VAULT

Dozens of elaborate costumes and armored suits hang from wooden racks and mannequins throughout this chamber. Many appear far more decorative or ceremonial than functional.

The emperors of Minkai have created and collected a number of priceless robes, kimonos, headdresses, and armors over the years. Many of these outfits date back centuries, and are preserved here for their historical value.

H18. JADE VAULT

Hundreds of gemstones lie separated into individual piles throughout this vault. Rubies, emeralds, diamonds, and other more exotic stones create a scintillating array of colors.

This vault contains all of the gemstones in the imperial treasury. Most of the gems are of lesser value, but a few larger jewels can be found here as well.

H19. CATWALK (CR 14)

A narrow catwalk winds along the wall of this odd-shaped chamber. Below, a deep pit falls away into darkness.

Trap: Midway along this narrow walkway, a trap awaits the unwary. When it activates, multiple ghostly hands emerge from the walls, attacking and shoving intruders off the catwalk and onto the poisoned spikes in the pit below.

HANDS OF THE MANY CR 14

XP 38,400

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger visual (*true seeing*); **Duration** 17 rounds; **Reset** automatic (1 round); **Bypass** hidden lock (DC 25 Perception to locate, DC 30 Disable Device to open)

Effect spell effect (multiple *forceful hands*, CL 17th, bull rush into poisoned pit trap, CMB +26; 50-ft.-deep pit (5d6 falling damage); pit spikes (Atk +20 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d6+5 damage each plus poison [shadow essence]); multiple targets (one *forceful hand* for each creature on the catwalk)

H20. GOLD VAULT (CR 16)

Thousands of golden coins fill this chamber, some scattered and others neatly stacked upon the floor. Among them, golden scepters, crowns, and other jewelry also glitter in the light.

This vault contains all of the gold in the palace treasury. Besides the vast array of coins, the vault contains several items of gold jewelry, as well as other more mundane items such as place settings, all of gold.

Trap: A nefarious trap also runs throughout this chamber. When anyone passes the initial alcove to enter the vault without using the hidden bypass, the iron doors shut and lock themselves as the floor begins to thrum with electricity, frying anyone still in contact with it.

LIGHTNING BOLT GALLERY TRAP CR 16

XP 76,800

Type magic; Perception DC 33; Disable Device DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*alarm*); **Duration** 1d4 rounds; **Reset** none;

Bypass hidden lock (DC 25 Perception to locate, DC 30 Disable Device to open)

Effect spell effect (heightened *lightning bolt*, 8d6 electricity damage, DC 22 Reflex save for half); multiple targets (all creatures in area H20)

H21. IMPERIAL VAULT (CR 15)

Several columns support the ceiling of this half-sunken chamber. Pairs of stone sentinels stand in alcoves lining the north and south walls, watching over the treasure heaped across the floor.

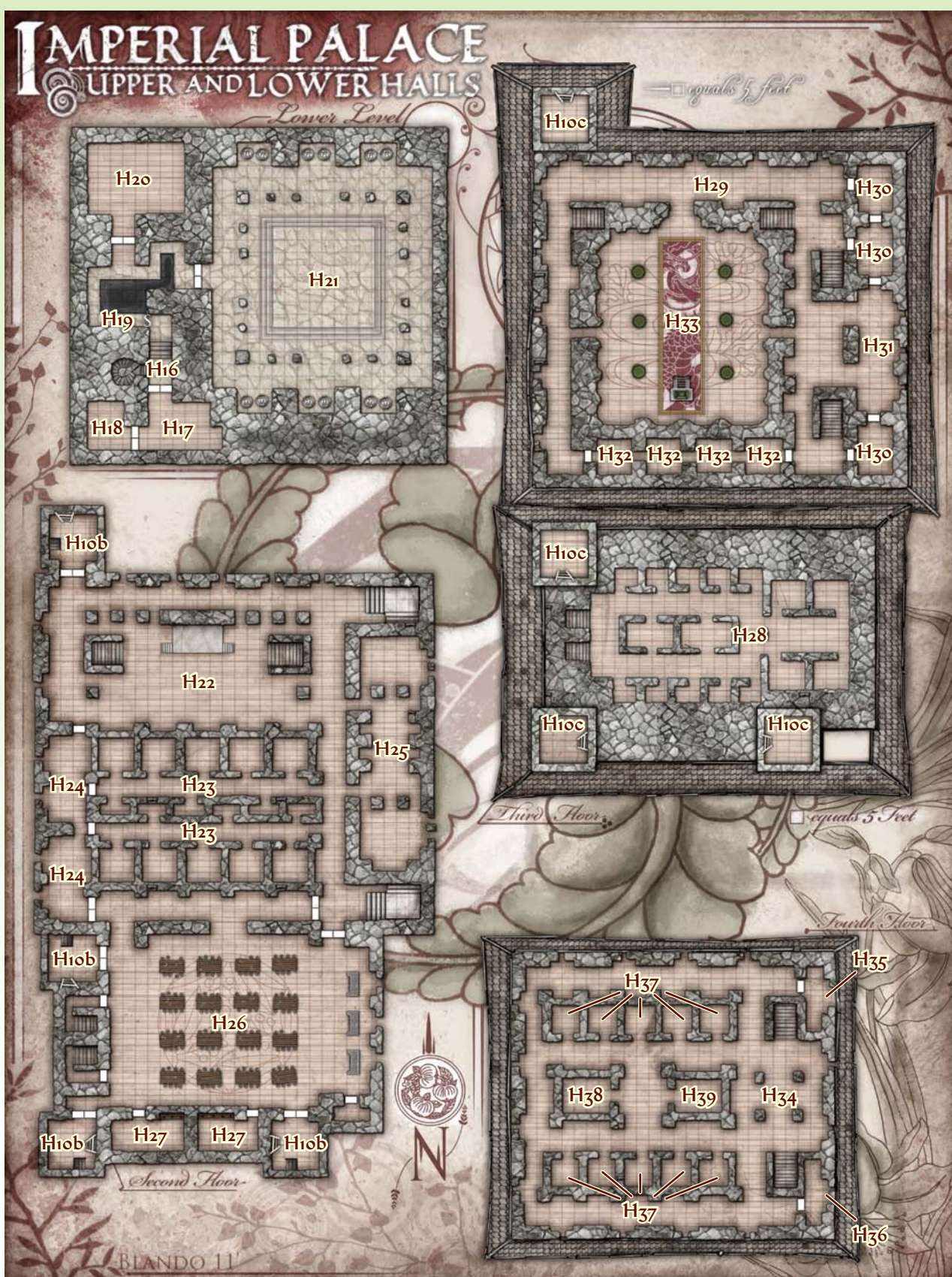
The impressive art in this vault, with several pieces dating back to the founding of Minkai and beyond, would command a hefty price from any collector.

Creature: A sovereign imperial dragon named Teikono lairs within this immense treasure vault, honor-bound to serve the holder of the Jade Throne as a guardian for the next 100 years. Upon the PCs' arrival, Teikono is in his human form, appearing as an unassuming monk meditating amid a collection of priceless urns and other art. Like any samurai serving an emperor, Teikono views his duty as part of his personal honor and cannot step aside, even if he disagrees with the current ruler, the Jade Regent (which he does).

When the PCs first enter the chamber, Teikono greets them courteously and asks them their business. He introduces himself and explains his duty here. If asked about the *Imperial Seals*, Teikono confirms that they are here and that they are under his protection. Teikono willingly admits that he does not agree with the Jade Regent, but his oath is to the Jade Throne, and the Jade Regent now sits upon that throne. If the PCs want the

IMPERIAL PALACE

UPPER AND LOWER HALLS



THE EMPTY THRONE

seals, they must either take the seals from him, or come back with a new emperor. If the PCs tell Teikono that they intend to overthrow the Jade Regent, the dragon wishes them luck, but says that he can take no part. However, if the PCs were to have the seals in their possession when they faced the Jade Regent, these symbols of the true rulers of Minkai might give them a small advantage in their efforts to remove the usurper.

If the PCs attempt to take the *Imperial Seals* or steal any of the room's other treasures, Teikono attacks them, as he is sworn to guard everything in the chamber. However, savvy PCs should be able to subdue the dragon rather than kill him outright, if they wish. Once combat begins, Teikono assumes his natural form, that of a horned, serpentine dragon with shining golden scales.

TEIKONO CR 15

XP 51,200

Male adult sovereign dragon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 100)

hp 225

TACTICS

During Combat On the first round of combat, Teikono unleashes his sonic breath weapon. Between uses of this ability, he attacks with spells or his natural attacks, whichever will be most effective. He targets any raging barbarians or bards using inspire courage with *calm emotions*. If an opponent falls in combat, Teikono ignores that character—the dragon bears the PCs no ill will, and he fights only those who are fighting him.

Morale Bound by his honor, Teikono fights until slain or knocked unconscious. If the PCs heal or return him to life afterward, he is forced to renew his attack. If the PCs wish to save the dragon's life, they must leave him unconscious or subdue him in some other way. Only after Ameiko has successfully claimed the throne can Teikono be released from his oath.

Treasure: The four remaining *Imperial Seals*—the *Higashiyama Seal*, *Shojinawa Seal*, *Sugimatu Seal*, and *Teikoku Seal*—lie scattered among the other treasures in this vault. Anyone casting *detect magic* or using *arcane sight* can readily pick out the intensity of the seals' auras. Otherwise, a DC 25 Perception check made while searching the room reveals them as well. See the sidebar on this page for more information on the *Imperial Seals* and how the PCs can use them against the Jade Regent.

Development: If the PCs subdue Teikono rather than kill him, award them +3 Rebellion Points, as this preserves the dragon's oath to serve the empress of Minkai once Ameiko claims the throne. If the PCs manage to recover all four of the lost *Imperial Seals*, award them +2 additional Rebellion Points.

Story Award: If the PCs subdue Teikono rather than kill him, award them 76,800 XP.

THE IMPERIAL SEALS OF MINKAI

Each of the five *Imperial Seals* not only invests a family with the divine right to rule Minkai, but can also attune itself to a new bloodline, thereby establishing new heirs to the Jade Throne. As such, when the Five Storms assassinated and corrupted the existing imperial families—the Amatsus, Higashiyamas, Shojinawas, Sugimatus, and Teikokus—the oni also secured their family seals and locked them away in the imperial vault, counting on the dragon Teikono to safeguard them so they wouldn't fall out of the oni's hands and create new heirs to challenge the Jade Regent's rule.

The PCs have likely already been chosen as scions of the Amatsus family by the *Amatsu Seal*, so they cannot invest themselves as new heirs using the other seals. Nevertheless, the four other seals can still be of use to them in the battle against the Jade Regent. The very presence of the seals in the hands of the PCs is enough to send shivers of doubt straight through the Jade Regent and Anamurumon. If the PCs openly display the *Imperial Seals* when they confront the Jade Regent and his allies, reduce all of the foes' Teamwork Scores by 5 for each seal in the PCs' possession. In addition, if the PCs received the blessings of an imperial family, that family's *Imperial Seal* can be used to cast one of the following spells once during the battle with the Jade Regent and his allies: *cure serious wounds*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*, or *restoration*. The seals have other powers, but these are only accessible to scions of a seal's family line.

THE UPPER HALLS

The second level of the Imperial Palace holds most of the facilities necessary for day-to-day living in the castle. Unless stated otherwise, all of the ceilings on this level are 15 feet high. Doors are made of strong wood (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 23), except for the barracks (area H23), where the doors are sliding rice paper *shoji* panels (hardness 0, hp 2, Break DC 10). Small lamps provide dim light for interior rooms and hallways, while rooms with an outside window have normal light.

H22. KABUKI THEATER (CR 15)

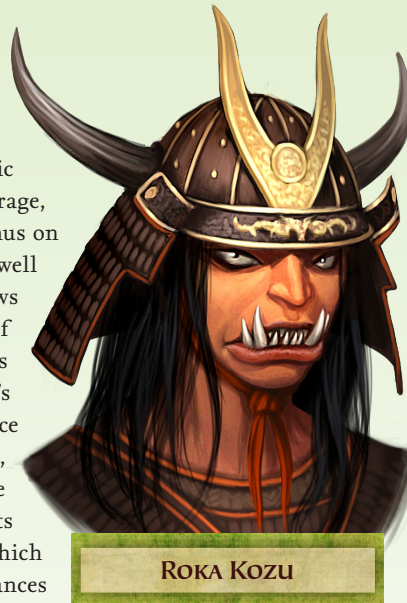
An elevated stage with an ornate backdrop stands along the north side of this chamber. The hall before it is strewn with sitting cushions. Wide stairways lead up to the east and west.

Creatures: The Jade Regent made sure to keep some of his more powerful oni in the palace while the rest of his forces meet the rebels outside Kasai. As a result, five ogre mages have been stationed here to guard the stairs to the palace's throne room and living quarters. Bored and in

JADE REGENT

need of entertainment, the oni have pressed three geisha, **Harumi**, **Tomiku**, and **Wakani** (N female human bards 6; use minstrel statistics, *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 273) into performing for them on the stage. The oni commander, a thuggish brute named Roka Kozu, has a particularly strong obsession with the sense of hearing, and finds the geisha's melodies far more soothing than silence as the oni wait for some danger to present itself. Any incorrect note or off-key tune is like a dagger in Kozu's ears, however, and she is quick to chastise—and beat—the geisha if their performance is not perfect.

When the PCs arrive, Kozu demands the geisha play for the ogre mages and inspire them as they fight. The geisha use their bardic performance ability to inspire courage, granting the oni a +2 competence bonus on attack and weapon damage rolls as well as a +2 morale bonus on saving throws against charm and fear effects. One of the geisha, Harumi, is Asachi Isao's daughter. Eager to escape the oni's cruelty, she uses her bardic performance to inspire courage in the PCs instead, granting them the bonuses above. The geisha are unarmed noncombatants and cower if anyone attacks them, which disrupts their individual performances whether supporting the oni or the PCs.



ROKA KOZU

ADVANCED OGRE MAGES (4)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 180 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 221, 294)

TACTICS

During Combat The ogre mages cast *charm monster*, then draw their weapons and turn invisible so they can attack from surprise. When Kozu joins the fray, each of the ogre mages takes turns launching a *cone of cold* at their opponents, caring little if they catch any of the geisha in the spell's area of effect.

Morale The ogre mages fight to the death. Each time the PCs kill one of the ogre mages, another geisha stops playing for the oni, and Harumi encourages them change their tune to support the PCs instead.

ROKA KOZU

CR 13

XP 25,600

Female Typhoon commander (see page 10)

hp 188

TACTICS

During Combat Kozu turns invisible and flies upward so she can cast *shield of faith* and *divine favor*. She then imbues her

naginata with the *bane* weapon special ability and flies back down to attack. If the geisha turn against her by changing their performance (see below), Kozu wastes at least every other round attempting to demoralize the geisha with Intimidate checks, as the new tune hurts her ears.

Morale Kozu fights to the death.

Development: If the geisha survive, they offer to heal the PCs' wounds with their spells. In addition, award the PCs +1 Rebellion Point for rescuing Harumi.

H23. BARRACKS (CR 15)

Rice paper shoji screens line both sides of this long hall, opening onto small cells. Sleeping pallets line the floor of each chamber, with various personal effects scattered about.

These barracks were designed to house the samurai of the palace's guard contingent, but the Jade Regent dismissed these loyal samurai when he took the throne. The smaller alcoves across the hall are storerooms for the guards' arms and armor, but they are now empty.

Creatures: Five Typhoon guards currently occupy the barracks along the southern hall, one to each of the larger rooms. With the paper-thin shoji doors, the

oni can hear and respond to all but the most silent battles that might break out here. If attacked, they swiftly raise the alarm, sending one of their number to alert the guards in the dining hall (area H26), who send reinforcements 4 rounds later.

TYPHOON GUARDS (5)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H24. BATHHOUSES

Several wooden tubs filled with water sit in this chamber, half-hidden by long, white sheets hanging from the ceiling. Next to each window is a fire pit that holds several hot stones among its smoldering coals.

The soldiers stationed at the castle use these rooms as bathhouses, placing heated stones in the wooden tubs to heat the water. Several oni have found this place an absolute delight, and spend a good deal of time here reveling in the sensation of hot water against the flesh that clothes their evil forms.

THE EMPTY THRONE

H25. HALL OF MEDITATION (CR 15)

An aura of restfulness permeates this carefully partitioned hall. Paintings of tranquil nature scenes and a variety of flowering plants and greenery add to its ambience.

Residents of the palace normally use this peaceful hall for meditation and relaxation, but it currently serves as a prison for hostages of the Jade Regent.

Creatures: Nine daughters of various merchants and nobles of Kasai (N female human aristocrats 3) are held in this chamber, hostages to ensure the loyalty of their families to the Jade Regent (see *Captive Hearts* on page 13). The women sleep in the smaller chambers to the north and south, but are otherwise confined to the central room, where their days alternate between fear of their oni captors and mind-numbing boredom. Three jorogumos watch over the captives, serving as both chaperones and jailers. The jorogumos seem to be beautiful human women, but they are actually monstrous spider-creatures. Natives of the Forest of Spirits, the jorogumos agreed to serve the Jade Regent in exchange for a supply of male human “mates” in whom the jorogumos can lay their eggs. The prisoners are all noncombatants, but the jorogumos attack any intruders.

JOROGUMOS (3) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 161 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 156)

TACTICS

During Combat The jorogumos immediately extend their spider legs once combat is initiated, and summon ogre spiders or giant black widow spiders to aid them in combat. The jorogumos use their webs or spell-like abilities to attempt to capture male humanoids for use as mates, and attack female opponents, flanking with their summoned spiders or one another to make sneak attacks.

Morale The jorogumos are not loyal servants of the Jade Regent, and attempt to flee if reduced to fewer than 80 hit points.

Treasure: One of the jorogumos wears a *minor cloak of displacement*, and another wears a *necklace of adaptation*. The third jorogumo wears a jeweled spider pendant on a mithral necklace, worth 1,000 gp.

Development: Award the PCs +3 Rebellion Points if they successfully rescue all of the noble daughters held captive here.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully free all of the captives, award them 38,400 XP.

H26. DINING HALL (CR 15)

More than a dozen low tables surrounded by small cushions take up the floor of this spacious dining hall. Several doors line

the south and west walls, while more exits lead north. To the east, three stone charcoal ovens stand near open windows.

Creatures: An off-duty Typhoon commander named Bogo-Na and the four Typhoon guards under his charge have stationed themselves here to harass the servants still working in the dining hall. Corpulent and gluttonous to the extreme, Bogo-Na has a fondness for overeating, and demands the servants cook him meals five times the size of those a normal man might eat. Although he professes loyalty to the Five Storms, Bogo-Na actually loathes fighting, as it takes him away from his favorite pastime. He takes any interruption of his meals quite angrily, preferring to send two of his guards to reinforce anyone seeking his aid rather than go himself. In addition, 12 cooks (N human commoners 2) scurry about the hall serving the oni. When combat breaks out, they flee the room or cower beneath the tables.

BOGO-NA CR 13

XP 25,600

Male Typhoon commander (see page 10)

hp 188

TACTICS

During Combat Bogo-Na turns invisible and flies upward with the rest of his food, leaving the Typhoon guards to deal with any attackers first. Only after they've been slain does he commit to the battle as well. Even then, he does so in the least strenuous manner possible, always staying aloft. From the air he casts *charm monster* to get someone else to do his fighting for him or hits as many attackers as possible with his *cone of cold* before striking from a distance with his bane-empowered naginata.

Morale Bogo-Na has no desire to die, preferring to live so he can continue to indulge his prodigious appetites. If reduced to 60 hit points or fewer, Bogo-Na assumes *gaseous form* and flees through the open windows, following the smoke from the room's ovens.

TYPHOON GUARDS (4) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H27. PRIVY

An unpleasant stench emanates from this closed chamber. Along the north wall, a row of open holes fall away in what can only be a cesspit or open latrine.

Normally kept much cleaner than their current sad state, these privies have fallen into poor condition since the oni killed off most of the staff responsible for their maintenance. No one else has volunteered to take over the task.

JADE REGENT

H28. SERVANTS' QUARTERS

Twin stairwells ascend into this humid upper attic space. Between the musty rafters, wooden partitions block off sleeping cells and workrooms.

The palace servants live in these rooms, which also contain various tools for household maintenance and laundry. Altogether, 15 servants (N human commoners 2) currently reside here, hiding away from the oni until called upon.

THE PALACE LEVELS

The third and fourth floors of the palace's main keep include both the throne room and the imperial family's living quarters. The ceilings are 15 feet high throughout both levels. All doors are locked and made of strong wood (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25, Disable Device 25) unless specified otherwise. The living quarters on the fourth floor use sliding rice paper shoji panels instead (hardness 0, hp 2, Break DC 10). Portable lamps with *continual flames* sit in small wall sconces to provide normal light in every room and corridor.

H29. ARCHERS' GALLERY (CR 16)

This long corridor turns at a right angle, following the north and west walls of the palace. Small windows are regularly spaced along the walls.

This is one of the major defensible areas of the castle, as the narrow windows located every 25 feet or so in the outer wall overlook the main approaches to the castle below, from which archers can fire on any attackers attempting to breach the castle.

Creatures: A contingent of eight Typhoon guards keeps watch from the windows. They fire on anyone who approaches, whether from below the castle walls, through the air, or up the stairs from area H22 below.

TYPHOON GUARDS (8) CR 10
XP 9,600 each
hp 121 each (see page 11)

H30. GUEST ROOMS

The emperors of Minkai maintained these rooms for important guests visiting the Imperial Palace. Each

one contains a small bed, table, and sitting area, and is decorated according to a unique theme. Currently, they all lie in tatters from the abuse of the Typhoon commanders entrusted with them. Nothing of value remains in any of these rooms.

H31. TEA ROOM

This sitting room is well lit with natural light, and normally provides a space for private meetings, strategy sessions, and tea ceremonies between the emperors and their guests. The Jade Regent and his allies use it for much the same purpose, only they're more likely to argue among themselves than build alliances with diplomats of neighboring countries over tea. The oracle Renshii Meida spends more time here than anyone, taking tea with her handmaidens or using the room to commune with her ancestors, seeking their help in guiding her steps to become the next empress of Minkai.

H32. STOREROOMS

All the collected furnishings of generations of ruling families are stored throughout these chambers, stacked on top of one another in layers until the oldest have become almost irretrievably buried. Occasionally, someone tasks the servants with rooting out some collection to redecorate a guest room or gallery. The easternmost chamber shows heavy signs of such an effort—Anamurumon had the palace servants search for something from Minkai's ancient past that would be more appealing for his personal quarters.

H33. THE JADE THRONE (CR 19)

Six stone columns of solid jade flank the approach to an ornate jade throne atop a short dais in this massive chamber. Banners hang along the walls above detailed frescoes of mountains; forests; and samurai engaged in the arts of archery, swordplay, calligraphy, and flower arranging.

For over a thousand years, the emperors of Minkai have ruled their empire from this room, seated upon the Jade Throne. Said to have been created by the goddess Shizuru's lover, the moon god Tsukiyo, the Jade Throne is in



THE EMPTY THRONE

fact a powerful artifact, both a symbol of the emperor's divine right to rule and the guardian of that right. Only a member of one of Minkai's imperial families, bearing one of the *Imperial Seals* and the blessings of the previous emperors, can claim the title of emperor and utilize the full powers of the Jade Throne. Although he currently sits upon the Jade Throne, the Jade Regent cannot access its powers or claim the title of emperor for himself. His power derives from the regency invested in him by Emperor Shigure, and only once there are no longer any rightful claimants to the throne and all five *Imperial Seals* are in his possession can the Jade Regent seize the true power he craves.

Creatures: The Jade Regent and his closest allies, those most instrumental in his rise to power, await Ameiko and the PCs in this room, the sovereign center of the empire of Minkai. Only two actually belong to the Five Storms—the Jade Regent Soto Takahiro and his grandfather Anamurumon. The others are Renshii Meida, the haunted advisor to former emperor Higashiyama Shigure, and Giras Notori, a famed tengu assassin locally known as the Raven Prince. They've all convened in the palace throne room to ensure Ameiko can't present herself as the rightful heir to the Jade Throne. The Jade Regent currently sits upon the throne, patiently waiting for the Amatatsu heir to arrive and try her hand at facing him. The others have positioned themselves elsewhere in the room. Anamurumon stands alone in the center of the main approach, as eager as his grandson to finally put the last of the imperial families to death and collect the remaining *Imperial Seal*. Notori hides behind the jade column just west of the throne, while Meida lingers at the foot of the throne's dais, seated upon its bottommost step and prepared to shield the Jade Regent from those who would do him harm.

The PCs must face all four of these characters together. They are used to working together, and support each other in battle, as outlined in their descriptions, but depending on how fractured their alliance has become based on the actions of the PCs (see the Sowing Discord sidebar on this page), their level of cooperation with may vary, giving way to selfish goals that might make it easier for the PCs to triumph.

ANAMURUMON CR 16

XP 76,800

hp 230 (see page 50)

GIRAS NOTORI, THE RAVEN PRINCE CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 101 (see page 56)

RENSHII MEIDA CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 131 (see page 58)

SOWING DISCORD

Throughout "The Empty Throne," the PCs have the opportunity to undermine the trust of the Jade Regent's inner circle. They can do so not only by amassing Rebellion Points, which causes the Jade Regent and his allies to argue among themselves, but also through subtler methods, perhaps by planting evidence or spreading information designed to tear down their alliance. Each of the NPCs in the NPC Gallery on pages 50–61 contains details on the information that can sow such discord and reduce their Teamwork Scores, thus affecting these characters' individual tactics and morale.

SOTO TAKAHIRO, THE JADE REGENT

CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 207 (see page 54)

Development: If the PCs defeat the Jade Regent and his allies here, award them +5 Rebellion Points for deposing the usurper.

Story Award: Once the PCs defeat the Jade Regent, the ascension of Ameiko (or of another Amatatsu scion) to the Jade Throne of Minkai is all but assured. Award the PCs 51,200 XP for accomplishing this feat, and see Concluding the Adventure on page 48 for the results of their efforts.

H34. GATHERING HALL

Four solid columns hold up the ceiling of this square hall, and the smell of new lacquer rises from the freshly polished wooden floor. Stairways descend to the north and south, while multiple corridors lead to other areas of the palace.

This chamber serves as a mustering area for imperial processions down to the throne room. Since claiming the Jade Throne, the Jade Regent has renovated this hall and the attached living quarters to better accommodate himself, his allies, and his favored minions. The fresh lacquer upon the floor and paint on the walls are evidence of this work, and extend into all the hallways and chambers on this level.

H35. ROYAL SEER'S BEDCHAMBER

This small chamber is richly decorated with thick carpeting, elaborate silk hangings, and small items of beautifully wrought furniture. A sleeping pallet scented with lavender oil lies in one corner, next to a small table holding a variety of perfumes and cosmetics.

JADE REGENT

REBELLION POINT TOTAL

RP Earned Result

1–9	Disastrous: The empire of Minkai remains in shambles. A new oni arises as leader of the Five Storms, who continue their depredations. Emperor Ito's ghost re-forms and finds a way to escape the Imperial Shrine, striking a new reign of terror across Minkai and presenting a new challenge to the empire.
10–15	Mild Success: The spirit of Minkai remains broken by the atrocities its people endured under the Jade Regent. The people acknowledge Ameiko as their empress, but struggle to accept her as one of their own. It takes many years for Minkai to once more establish itself as a power in Tian Xia.
16–24	Success: The people rejoice at the fall of the Jade Regent and embrace Ameiko as their new Empress, ready to usher in an age of hope, renewal, and prosperity. Minkai takes only a few years to recover from the tyranny it endured, and any remaining oni of the Five Storms are soon driven from the empire.
25+	Great Success: The turnaround is dramatic as Ameiko enacts sweeping changes not only to put Minkai back together, but to position it as a leading force in the region for years to come. Minkai enters a golden age of peace and prosperity. The people hail the PCs as national heroes and Empress Ameiko is beloved by all.

When Anamurumon claimed the sleeping quarters closest to the Jade Regent, Renshii Meida had to make do with this small room. She rarely stays here, however, sharing the Jade Regent's bed more often than not. A cabinet in one wall holds a selection of amazingly elaborate and expensive silk robes, headdresses, and shoes, all new outfits for her position as the Jade Regent's consort.

H36. ROYAL ASSASSIN'S BEDCHAMBER

This spartan chamber contains nothing beyond a simple sleeping pallet on the floor. The wooden paneling on the walls is marred with numerous tiny holes and scratches.

These quarters have been given over to the Jade Regent's royal assassin, Giras Notori, the self-styled Raven Prince. The tengu ninja rarely spends any time here, however, preferring to sleep in various secret bolt-holes throughout Kasai. When he is present here, he spends most of his time

engaging in target practice with his shuriken or bow, the source of the damage to the room's walls. There is nothing of value here.

H37. BODYGUARDS' QUARTERS

A simple sleeping pallet and small storage locker sits within each of these small chambers. In times past, these rooms served as sleeping quarters for the emperor's bodyguards, all trained and loyal samurai. The Jade Regent's abandonment of his samurai order to become a ronin left him far less concerned about maintaining the samurai's service, viewing them as potential troublemakers more than trusted allies. As such, he sent most of them on various missions throughout Minkai to keep them away from the palace. A few favored Typhoon guards have claimed some of these rooms for their personal quarters, but none are currently here—all are currently off putting down the uprising outside the city or defending other parts of the palace.

H38. CHIEF MAGISTRATE'S BEDCHAMBER

An oversized sleeping pallet, seemingly designed more for a giant than a man, takes up almost all of the floor space in this chamber, leaving little room for anything else.

This room typically housed the wife and children of a sitting emperor. Anamurumon has claimed it for himself, even though Renshii Meida lobbied strongly for it. Because of his great size when not in his human form, Anamurumon had the servants remove all of the furniture from the room and replace it with additional sleeping pallets so that he can rest in his oni form.

H39. EMPEROR'S BEDCHAMBER

A sumptuous rug decorated with imperial dragons and dire tigers stretches across the floor of this chamber. Rumpled silk sheets cover the stuffed mattress of its sleeping pallet.

Normally reserved for the emperor of Minkai, the Jade Regent Soto Takahiro has taken this room as his personal bedchamber, which he usually shares with Renshii Meida. He keeps nothing of importance here except a small memento that Anamurumon claims belonged to his mother—actually just a cheap necklace the oni took from a merchant caravan the Five Storms raided nearly a century ago before Takahiro was even born.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With the defeat of the Jade Regent, Ameiko (or one of the PCs, if Ameiko was replaced in the campaign) can finally present herself as the legitimate heir to the Jade Throne. Provided Ameiko has the *Amatatsu Seal* and received the

THE EMPTY THRONE



blessings of the past emperors, the Jade Throne accepts her as the rightful empress of Minkai. She gains full access to the throne's powers, and can begin to heal Minkai of the damages inflicted upon it by the Jade Regent and the oni of the Five Storms.

In addition, the number of Rebellion Points the PCs have amassed during the course of the adventure determines the state of the empire that Ameiko inherits. Total the PCs' final Rebellion Point score and consult the sidebar on page 48 to tailor the ending of the adventure accordingly. Ameiko rewards the PCs generously for their part in defeating the usurper and restoring her throne; besides a monetary award, Ameiko might also give each PC a powerful or expensive magic item from the imperial treasury, or she might grant the PCs land and noble titles in Minkai. The exact nature of the reward is up to you, but they should be tailored to fit your players' desires and the end of an epic campaign.

If the PCs fail to defeat the Jade Regent, then Minkai enters a new dark age. If Ameiko and the PCs were all slain, then there are no longer any rightful heirs to the imperial families of Minkai. The Jade Regent places the *Amatatsu*

Seal in the imperial vault with the other *Imperial Seals*, thus preventing the spirits of the seals from investing new scions with the right to rule. With no legitimate heirs left to claim it, the Jade Throne accepts Takahiro as the ruler of Minkai, and the Jade Regent becomes the Jade Emperor—with the helpful advice of Anamurumon, of course. This perversion of Shizuru's divine mandate to rule corrupts the Jade Throne, and Takahiro uses the throne's power to spread evil throughout the land. Minkai becomes the garden of excess and depravity that Anamurumon and the Five Storms sought to create, a blight on the lands of Tian Xia. Oni and other monstrous creatures run freely throughout the empire, and the common people of Minkai cower in fear and terror, and pray for an end to their suffering.

But even in this case, all is not lost. The Jade Emperor rules only because there are no other legitimate heirs to the Jade Throne. The *Imperial Seals* still lie beneath the palace in Kasai, waiting for worthy heroes to find them and become scions of new imperial lines. If all of the PCs were killed, perhaps new characters can arise to take their place, recover the *Imperial Seals*, and save Minkai from the depredations of the Jade Emperor.

JADE REGENT



ANAMURUMON



ONCE A HUMAN WARLORD, THE WIND YAI ANAMURUMON IS THE TRUE POWER BEHIND THE JADE THRONE, SACRIFICING HIS HONOR, HIS HUMANITY, AND EVEN HIS OWN GRANDSON, THE JADE REGENT, IN HIS COVETOUS PURSUIT OF DOMINION OVER ALL MINKAI.

ANAMURUMON

CR 16

XP 76,800

Male wind yai (see page 88)

LE Huge outsider (air, giant, native, oni, shapechanger)

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 11, flat-footed 29 (+5 armor, +3 Dex, +16 natural, –2 size)

hp 230 (20d10+120); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +18, Ref +9, Will +19

Resist electricity 10, sonic 5; SR 27

Weaknesses vulnerability to royal weapons

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee Ikarikurusai +33/+28/+23/+18 (3d8+21/19–20 plus 1d6 electricity) or
2 slams +30 (2d6+12)

Ranged shocking missile +21 touch (4d6 electricity plus deafen)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

Special Attacks roaring gale

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +21)

Constant—*cloak of winds**, fly

At will—*darkness*, *gaseous form*, *invisibility* (self only), *levitate*

3/day—*control weather*, quickened *shout* (DC 19), *wind wall*

1/day—*chain lightning* (DC 21), *whirlwind* (DC 23)

TACTICS

Before Combat Anamurumon always shields himself with *cloak of winds* before a fight.

During Combat Anamurumon reveals his true form to intimidate and demoralize opponents. He then unleashes a powerful spell like *chain lightning* or *whirlwind*, or his roaring gale ability, together with quickened *shout*. Thereafter, he wields his three-section staff, *Ikarikurusai*, in melee combat while firing shocking missiles from his third eye. He attempts to disarm anyone wielding a royal weapon. If surrounded, Anamurumon flies into the air and casts *invisibility*, then makes Flyby Attacks coupled with Awesome Blows, knocking foes into a *whirlwind*, if possible.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 100 hit points, Anamurumon casts *invisibility* or *gaseous form* until his regeneration restores his hit points. Anamurumon refuses to give up his plans for the Jade Throne and fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 35, Dex 16, Con 22, Int 15, Wis 20, Cha 21

Base Atk +20; CMB +34 (+36 bull rush or disarm); CMD 47 (49 vs. bull rush or disarm)

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Disarm, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Power Attack, Quickened Spell-Like Ability (*shout*)

Skills Bluff +28, Diplomacy +15, Disguise +18, Fly +12, Intimidate +32, Knowledge (arcana) +25, Knowledge (history) +17, Perception +20, Perform (wind) +15, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +22, Stealth +9

Languages Common, Giant, Minkaian, Tien

SQ change shape (Medium, Large, or Huge humanoid, *alter self* or *giant form II*)

Other Gear +1 leather lamellar**, *Ikarikurusai* (+3 shock *sansetsukon***; see page 60), key to secret door in area H16, gold-and-jade necklace worth 500 gp, 35 pp, 46 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Roaring Gale (Su) See page 88.

Shocking Missile (Su) See page 88.

Vulnerability to Royal Weapons (Ex) Anamurumon is vulnerable to weapons imbued with royal honor, such as the ancestral weapons of the five imperial families of Minkai—including the *daikyu* of *commanding presence* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #53 60), the sword *Suishen* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #50 61), and the *thundering blade of the House of Sugimatu* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #52 61). Against Anamurumon, these weapons function as *outsider (oni) bane weapons*. In addition, *Suishen* automatically confirms all critical hits made against Anamurumon.

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

** See *Ultimate Combat*.

Nearly 500 years old, the wind yai Anamurumon was born as a human in 4219 AR (6719 IC) and raised among the savage brigands of northern Minkai. A powerful warlord, Anamurumon eventually sought to defy the divine laws of Minkai and place himself on the Jade Throne, and even slew Emperor Shojinawa Kenshiro, but not before the emperor used the power of the *Shojinawa Seal* to call down a terrible curse upon the warlord. Anamurumon's soul was ripped from his body, only to be reborn as a hideous wind yai.

NPC GALLERY

Anamurumon's transformation ensured that he would never claim the Jade Throne, but ever savvy, he spent the next 3 centuries contemplating how to skirt the *Laws of Golden Perfection* so he could strike back at the empire in a way the gods would be powerless to deny. Anamurumon carefully orchestrated the eradication of Minkai's imperial families and enacted a plot to sire oni-blooded offspring capable of bypassing the divine laws. Eventually, Anamurumon was rewarded with a tiefling grandson named Soto Takahiro, who could pass as human and seize the throne in his stead. Positioning Takahiro as one of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure's bodyguards, grandfather and grandson succeeded in betraying the emperor and Takahiro became the Jade Regent of Minkai.

Anamurumon wields his power like a blade, having commanded the trust and loyalty of the Five Storms oni for over 3 centuries. In his human guise, Anamurumon publicly acts as a middle-aged, imperial magistrate and close advisor to the Jade Regent. Anamurumon is the true villain of "The Empty Throne," serving as the mastermind behind the rise of the Jade Regent and perhaps the single biggest threat of the campaign. The rest of the Five Storms look to him for leadership, and if he is slain, the coalition of oni crumbles.

TEAMWORK

Anamurumon's Teamwork Score represents the strength of his alliances with the Jade Regent and his allies. As long as these alliances are intact, Anamurumon cooperates with and aids his companions, but should his Teamwork Score drop to a level that breaks his alliance, his individual tactics and morale are affected. The following section details how Anamurumon's cooperation affects his allies, as well as how the PCs can further reduce his Teamwork Score by sowing discord.

Teamwork Score: 50

Alliance Intact: As long as Anamurumon's Teamwork Score is greater than 0, he and his allies are treated as if they had the Paired Opportunists teamwork feat (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 166). This remains in effect for the duration of the final battle with the PCs.

Alliance Broken: If Anamurumon's Teamwork Score is reduced to 0 or lower, he no longer goes out of his way to avoid catching his erstwhile allies in his area effect spells and abilities. In addition, if one of his allies falls below 20 hit points, Anamurumon takes the opportunity to unleash a shocking missile and finish that ally off, thereby eliminating any perceived treachery that might to deny him control of the Jade Throne.

Sowing Discord: If the PCs somehow inform the Jade Regent of his origin as Anamurumon's descendant and the oni's complicity in his mother's death (see page 55), the Jade Regent confronts Anamurumon with this revelation, leading to a bitter argument between the two. If the PCs are successful in this ploy, reduce Anamurumon's Teamwork Score by 10.

In addition, if news of Renshii Meida's pregnancy (see page 59) reaches Anamurumon's ears, the oni does not look kindly upon this development, having assumed that Takahiro had merely seduced Meida for the purposes of betraying Emperor Shigure. Anamurumon had been planning to edge her out of the picture, but a new heir adds too many unwanted complications. If this information comes out, reduce Anamurumon's Teamwork Score by 10.



JADE REGENT

EMPEROR HIGASHIYAMA SHIGURE

THE LAST LEGITIMATE EMPEROR OF MINKAI, HIGASHIYAMA SHIGURE TRAGICALLY LINGERS ON AS A VENGEFUL GHOST, SEETHING IN ANGER OVER HIS BETRAYAL AND MURDER AT THE HANDS OF THE JADE REGENT AND RENSHII MEIDA.

EMPEROR HIGASHIYAMA SHIGURE

CR 14

XP 38,400

Male human ghost aristocrat 14 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 144)

LN Medium undead (augmented humanoid, incorporeal)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

DEFENSE

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

hp 161 (14d8+98)

Fort +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits

Weaknesses vulnerability to ancestral weapons

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee corrupting touch +11 (14d6 plus vorpal touch, Fort DC 22 half)

Special Attacks frightful moan (DC 22), telekinesis

TACTICS

During Combat After making his presence known, Shigure initiates combat with a frightful moan. He attacks those who don't flee with his corrupting touch, using his Combat Expertise feat to increase his Armor Class if opponents are able to successfully hit him too easily. Against more powerful opponents—particularly those channeling positive energy against him—he uses his telekinesis ability to hurl them out of the Shrine of the Emperors and into the surrounding moat, where he holds them under until they drown, if necessary.

Morale If confronted with positive energy damage or reduced to 50 hit points or fewer, Shigure flees into the relative safety of the walls or floor of the Tomb of the Past Emperors. If slain, he simply re-forms again 2d4 days later. Only the proper ceremony and cremation of his physical remains can grant him peace.

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 26

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Persuasive, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Craft (calligraphy) +11, Diplomacy +22, Fly +15, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (geography) +11, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility) +14, Perception +15, Perform (oratory) +11, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +18

Languages Celestial, Minkaian, Tien

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Vorpal Touch (Su) Shigure was beheaded by the Jade Regent, and his severed head now floats above his incorporeal body. If Shigure makes a successful critical hit with his corrupting touch, the target is decapitated and immediately slain (creatures without a head are immune to this effect).

Vulnerability to Ancestral Weapons (Ex) Shigure is vulnerable to ancestral weapons of the Higashiyama family, such as the *daikyu of commanding presence* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #53 60). Against Shigure, the *daikyu of commanding presence* functions as an *undead bane ghost touch weapon*.

The ghost of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure now haunts the Imperial Shrine of his forebears, lost and forlorn in a web of deceit perpetrated by his most trusted advisors. Slain by his bodyguard Soto Takahiro and the oracle Renshii Meida, he rages at his own blindness to their duplicity, lashing out at any who come near him. His short reign as emperor of Minkai shames him nearly as much as how easily he fell for his advisors' lies, and he further torments himself with the knowledge that his ineptitude now threatens to undo the centuries-long mandate of divinely appointed rule in Minkai—forsaking the sanctity of the *Imperial Seals* to hand the Jade Throne over to the oni of the Five Storms, thereby ushering in a new age of tyranny and evil for his people.

Since his untimely death, Shigure has grown increasingly filled with rage, dismayed and angered by the defilement of his corporeal remains, which rest at the bottom of the Well of Demons. It's a place even his restless spirit fears to tread, for having ventured there at least three times already, he feels an unnatural pull from the collected evil of his predecessors. Their sins call out and mock his naive stewardship of Minkai's throne. Some even encourage him to join their miserable company—a fate he almost believes he deserves. Despite, or perhaps because of this constant lure, Shigure clings desperately to the site of his murder in the Shrine of Heavenly Sovereigns.

HISTORY

Higashiyama Shigure lived his entire childhood in the shadow of his older siblings. As he had seven brothers

NPC GALLERY

and four sisters ahead of him in the line of succession, he never expected to one day sit upon the Jade Throne. Instead, he happily consigned himself to more studious and scholarly pursuits than the art of governing and politics. So, too, did he eschew physical activity, never taking his mandatory training as a warrior seriously enough to learn to avoid scrapes and bruises during practice, unlike his more martial-minded siblings.

In his youth, Shigure also developed an admiring friendship with his bodyguard, Soto Takahiro. Growing up together, Shigure thought of Takahiro as more of a brother than his actual siblings, always closer in age to him than the rest of his family. They often trained together, helping one another dupe their instructors into believing they had mastered their lessons. In truth, Takahiro would intentionally lose some of their sparring matches while Shigure completed Takahiro's assignments on Minkai history and culture. The pair were inseparable until they became young men, when Renshii Meida made her first appearance into their lives. Shigure spent many months trying to make himself appealing to the beautiful oracle, hoping that he might convince his father to let them marry, despite her role as a tutor and advisor to the throne. Unfortunately, the haunted young woman spared little time for him, lavishing her infrequent attentions upon Takahiro instead.

Meanwhile, a series of tragedies were befalling Shigure's siblings. A bandit attack claimed the lives of three of his brothers on a hunting trip in the wilderness. One of his sisters committed suicide over the loss of her child. Another died when she took ill during the winter. Two more brothers perished at sea in a terrible storm, and another froze to death on an ill-fated attempt to cross the Crown of the World. One by one, the Higashiyama clan died out, until Shigure's father finally passed away of old age, leaving Shigure the heir to the throne. Unwilling and unready for the responsibility, Shigure began questioning the will of the gods as he fell into a deep depression. Only Takahiro and Meida sought to lift his spirits, a ruse that sealed the young emperor's doom when he ascended to the throne.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Shigure plays a vital role in the culmination of the Jade Regent Adventure Path. Perhaps the most significant casualty in the Five Storms' plot to take over Minkai, Shigure can be both a source of information to the PCs and a potential mentor for Ameiko. Even more importantly, Ameiko or another heir in possession of an *Imperial Seal* cannot make a legitimate claim to the Jade Throne without Shigure's spiritual blessing. His

assistance is crucial to the PCs' efforts to end the Jade Regent's reign.

Even after their final confrontation with the Jade Regent and his allies, the PCs could continue to find Shigure a valuable source of knowledge and support in establishing a new dynasty. Through his scholarly pursuits, Shigure knows much about Minkai's ancient history, the function of the *Imperial Seals*, and the various alliances established between Minkai and the other nations of Tian Xia. Even after laying his body to rest, the PCs can come back to the Imperial Shrine to commune with Shigure's spirit and seek his counsel. Unlike many of his predecessors, Shigure feels honor bound to assist Ameiko and the PCs in any endeavor, seeing such assistance as a form of atonement for his brief, ill-fated reign.



JADE REGENT



THE JADE REGENT



SECRETLY TRAINED FROM BIRTH TO USURP THE JADE THRONE OF MINKAI, THE JADE REGENT SOTO TAKAHIRO SEES HIMSELF AS A SAMURAI WITHOUT PEER, THOUGH HIS ONI HERITAGE FORCES HIM TO HIDE BEHIND A MASK OF DUPLICITY.

SOTO TAKAHIRO, THE JADE REGENT

CR 15

XP 51,200

Male oni-spawn tiefling samurai 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 264, *Ultimate Combat* 18)

LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 15, flat-footed 28 (+12 armor, +3 deflection, +2 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 207 (15d10+120)

Fort +19, **Ref** +12, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities evasion, greater resolve, honorable stand 1/day, resolve 8/day; **DR** 3/—; **Resist** cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee *Karusetzu* +24/+19/+14 (1d10+10/15–20)

Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +19/+14/+9 (1d8+6/x3)

Special Attacks banner +4/+3, challenge (+15, +4, 5/day), demanding challenge, greater banner +2

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +15) 1/day—*alter self*

TACTICS

Before Combat Takahiro readies an action to absorb the first spell thrown his way with his *ioun stone*.

During Combat At the beginning of combat, Takahiro executes a flourishing slash with *Karusetzu* before issuing a demanding challenge and charging forward to attack. Takahiro holds his chosen destiny ability in reserve until he needs to make a saving throw against a particularly powerful effect. Once his *o-yoroi of imperial rule* has absorbed 15 points of damage, he releases the stored energy against his foes. Takahiro uses his greater banner ability to help free his allies from harmful effects.

Morale Takahiro always uses his resolve to negate critical hits against him and to roll twice on saving throws. He keeps at least one use in reserve to stabilize himself and remain conscious so he can buy himself enough time to drink a *potion of cure serious wounds*. If reduced to fewer than 60 hit points, Takahiro makes an honorable stand against the target of his challenge and fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 17, **Con** 22, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 36

Feats Blind-Fight, Blinding Critical, Combat Reflexes,

Critical Focus, Fiendish Facade (human), Improved Critical (nodachi*), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (nodachi*)

Skills Bluff +13, Disguise +20 (+23 to appear human),

Intimidate +15, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nobility) +5, Perception +10, Ride +6

Languages Giant, Minkaian, Tien

SQ mount (horse), mounted archer, ronin (chosen destiny, self reliant, without master), weapon expertise (longbow)

Combat Gear *potions of cure serious wounds* (3); **Other Gear**

o-yoroi of imperial rule (+4 *adamantine glimmered o-yoroi**; see page 60), *Karusetzu* (+3 *nodachi**; see page 60), +1 *composite longbow* (+5 Str) with 20 arrows, *amulet of natural armor* +3, *belt of physical perfection* +4, *cloak of resistance* +4, *lavender and green ioun stone* (27 spell levels remaining), *ring of evasion*, *ring of protection* +3, key to secret door in area H16, gold bracelet (focus for Renshii Meida's *sacred bond*, worth 100 gp)

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Exceptional Resources (Ex) As the Jade Regent of the Minkai Empire, Takahiro has access to the vast wealth of a PC. This increases his CR by 1.

Fiendish Facade Unlike most tieflings, Takahiro appears mostly human. As a result, he gains a +5 racial bonus on Disguise checks to appear as a normal human. This feat appears in *Pathfinder Player Companion: Blood of Fiends*.

Oni-Spawn Tiefling An oni-spawn tiefling has the following racial traits, which replace those for a normal tiefling: +2 Strength, +2 Wisdom, –2 Charisma; +2 racial bonus on Disguise and Intimidate checks; and *alter self* as a spell-like ability once per day. All other racial traits are the same as for a normal tiefling. Complete rules for oni-spawn tieflings can be found in *Pathfinder Player Companion: Blood of Fiends*.

At the young age of 26, Soto Takahiro rules over one of the most powerful empires of Tian Xia. His short reign as Jade Regent has already ushered in an age of excess and debauchery almost unrivaled by the emperors preceding him, and whispers of rebellion and civil uprising spread throughout the streets.

Once just a member of the Imperial Guard, Takahiro now has everything his heart desires—but the power and

NPC GALLERY

prestige of his success has fully corrupted him, and he chafes under his grandfather's control. No longer satisfied as Anamurumon's puppet, Takahiro plans to rule Minkai at his own direction.

Considered heavy-handed at best and rapacious at worst, the Jade Regent cuts a tall, imposing figure, standing almost 7 feet tall. His *glamered o-yoroi of imperial rule*, seemingly crafted of heavy sheets of jade, only enhances his imperious image.

TEAMWORK

The Jade Regent's Teamwork Score represents the strength of his bonds with his allies. As long as these alliances are intact, Takahiro cooperates with and aids his companions, but should his Teamwork Score drop to a level that breaks his alliance, his individual tactics and morale are affected. The following section details how the Jade Regent's cooperation affects his allies, as well as how the PCs can further reduce his Teamwork Score by sowing discord.

Teamwork Score: 50

Alliance Intact: As long as the Jade Regent's Teamwork Score is greater than 0, he and his allies are treated as if they had the Outflank teamwork feat (*Advanced Player's Guide* 165). This remains in effect for the duration of the final battle with the PCs.

Alliance Broken: If the Jade Regent's Teamwork Score is reduced to 0 or lower, he becomes verbally abusive and dismissive of his allies, and refuses to assist them in combat. In addition, if Anamurumon falls below 20 hit points, Takahiro seeks to finish him off. If Takahiro's alliance is broken, he flees combat once reduced to 60 hit points or fewer, or if all of his allies are killed.

Sowing Discord: If the PCs learn of the Jade Regent's origin in "Forest of Spirits" (and especially the manner of his mother's death, perhaps through divination magic), and make this information available to Takahiro, it will seriously damage his relationship with his grandfather. How the PCs deliver this insight is up to them. A friendly geisha could volunteer to share such evidence during a trip to the palace (though doing so would likely ensure that she will remain there as a prisoner), or an allied ninja or rogue could infiltrate the palace and leave such information behind where Takahiro would be sure to find it. Regardless, a DC 30 Diplomacy check is required to secure the cooperation of any of these individuals.

If successful, Takahiro confronts Anamurumon with this revelation, driving a wedge between them, and Takahiro's Teamwork Score is reduced by 10.

In addition, it's no secret among the geisha that the Jade Regent has a lustful appetite for female companionship. Though everyone knows of his involvement with Renshii Meida, few realize how often he steps outside their relationship—something made all the easier now with the power he commands from the throne. Publicly revealing Takahiro's secret affairs by spreading gossip among the citizens of Kasai with a DC 30 Bluff check would tarnish

the Jade Regent's image and cause a lover's quarrel. If successful, reduce Takahiro's Teamwork Score by 10.

Finally, if Anamurumon learns of Renshii Meida's pregnancy (see page 59), the oni and Meida get into a heated argument, requiring Takahiro's intercession. In this case, reduce Takahiro's Teamwork Score by 5.



JADE REGENT

THE RAVEN PRINCE

AS THE JADE REGENT'S ROYAL ASSASSIN, THE RENOWNED TENGU NINJA GIRAS NOTORI COMES AND GOES AS HE PLEASES ACROSS MINKAI, A LEGENDARY KILLER SEEN ONLY WHEN IT'S FAR TOO LATE BY THOSE HE COMES TO SLAY.

GIRAS NOTORI, THE RAVEN PRINCE

CR 14

XP 38,400

Male tengu ninja 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 263, *Ultimate Combat* 13)

NE Medium humanoid (tengu)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *see invisibility*; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 21, flat-footed 18 (+5 armor, +3 deflection, +7 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 101 (15d8+30)

Fort +8, **Ref** +18, **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *Tsuruhashi* +23/+18/+13 (1d4+4 plus poison) and bite +15 (1d3+1)

Ranged mwk shuriken +21/+16/+11 (1d2+2) or poisoned sand tube* (nightmare vapor, 15-ft. cone)

Special Attacks sneak attack +8d6 (+8 bleed)

TACTICS

Before Combat Notori prepares his sai, *Tsuruhashi*, with dragon bile and drinks his *potion of heroism* before any anticipated fight.

During Combat On the first round of combat, Notori drinks his *potion of haste* and uses his invisible blade ninja trick to disappear from sight. He then studies a single opponent in preparation for an assassinate attack. Once in position to execute a sneak attack, Notori deals a deadly blow while activating *Tsuruhashi's* *silence* effect on his victim. He feints to make repeated sneak attacks coupled with bleeding attack. Against grouped attackers, Notori uses his poisoned sand tube to disperse nightmare vapor in their midst. If seriously injured, he uses his *cape of the mountebank* to escape, preferably to seek healing from one of his allies. Thereafter, he relies on Combat Expertise and Spring Attacks to limit his opponents' opportunities to strike back at him.

Morale A paid assassin, Giras Notori feels little loyalty to Anamurumon and the Jade Regent. Because of this, he always holds 1 *ki* point in reserve to turn invisible or hurl a smoke bomb and slip away undetected if things go bad. He implements this strategy as soon as the PCs succeed in slaying both the Jade Regent and Anamurumon.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 24, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 34

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Greater Feint, Improved Feint, Martial Weapon Proficiency (poisoned sand tube), Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (sai)

Skills Acrobatics +27, Bluff +19, Climb +17, Disable Device +22, Escape Artist +22, Knowledge (local) +14, Knowledge (nobility) +12, Linguistics +12, Perception +23, Sense Motive +12, Sleight of Hand +20, Stealth +29, Use Magic Device +19

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant, Minkaian, Tengu, Tien, Wayang

SQ gifted linguist, *ki* pool (6), light steps, ninja tricks (assassinate [DC 17], bleeding attack +8, combat trick, evasion, invisible blade, smoke bomb, vanishing trick), no trace +5, permanent spells, poison use, swordtrained

Combat Gear *potion of haste*, *potion of heroism*, dragon bile (3 doses), nightmare vapor (3 doses); **Other Gear** +4 padded armor, *Tsuruhashi* (+2 adamantine sai; *see* page 61), poisoned sand tube*, masterwork shuriken (6), *belt of incredible dexterity* +6, *cape of the mountebank*, *ring of protection* +3, pouch of brass crowned raven coins

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Permanent Spells (Sp) Notori has made *darkvision* and *see invisibility* permanent on himself by casting the spells from scrolls with his Use Magic Device spell.

* *See Ultimate Combat.*

Few know the true identity of the tengu Giras Notori, but everyone in Minkai recognizes his handiwork. Those with secrets to hide or debts to repay simply refer to him as the Raven Prince, a renowned ninja employed by commoners and emperors alike to retrieve lost goods or assassinate their greatest enemies. He works for anyone capable of meeting his price—whether they pay in coin or by piquing his interest with a task deemed worthy of his skill. People rarely see Notori on such missions, but they always know his visits by the shiny brass coins stamped with the image of a crowned raven that he leaves behind to mark his victims.

HISTORY

Giras Notori studied with several prestigious ninja clans, excelling in the arts of deception and assassination, but

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never joining their ranks as a full member. Nevertheless, he soon began accepting assignments from both the ninja who trained him and members of Minkai's noble and imperial families. These contracts were often against enemies of the Jade Throne, both within Minkai's borders and without. As Notori's legend grew, so too did his skills, and eventually he found fewer and fewer challenges worthy of his talents.

Not long after, Anamurumon contacted Notori with an especially intriguing idea—nothing less than the assassination of each imperial bloodline down to the last remaining heir to the Jade Throne. Seeing this as a crowning achievement for any ninja, Notori took the oni's coin and accepted the contract, and as a result, nearly a hundred members of Minkai's imperial families have met their ends at his hands.

Now the Jade Regent sits upon the Jade Throne and the Raven Prince enjoys a steady supply of challenges, thanks to his position as the Jade Regent's royal assassin. As the inquisitors of the Typhoon Guard identify possible enemies to the throne, the Jade Regent sends Notori to either eliminate them or deliver a message to ensure their continued intimidation. While the tengu excels in this role, he is beginning to find such tasks routine, but he has found a new distraction in the tales and rumors of the approaching Amatsatsu heir. Notori looks forward to the day when he can either test his skills against her or offer up his services to Minkai's new emperor, following her ascension.

TEAMWORK

Giras Notori's Teamwork Score represents the strength of his alliances with the Jade Regent and his allies. As long as these alliances are intact, the Raven Prince cooperates with and aids his companions, but should his Teamwork Score drop to a level that breaks his alliance, his individual tactics and morale are affected. The following section details how Notori's cooperation affects his allies, as well as how the PCs can further reduce his Teamwork Score by sowing discord.

Teamwork Score: 32

Alliance Intact: As long as Notori's Teamwork Score is greater than 0, he and his allies are treated as if they had the Feint Partner and Improved Feint Partner teamwork feats (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 100, 105). This remains in effect for the duration of the final battle with the PCs.

Alliance Broken: If Notori's Teamwork Score is reduced to 0 or lower, he refrains from trying

to assassinate the PCs, switching instead to nonlethal sneak attacks designed to merely debilitate them—all so he can survive and break off combat once the PCs defeat Anamurumon and the Jade Regent. If one of his allies gains the upper hand against a PC, Notori throws a smoke bomb to aid the PC and forestall his ally's victory.

Sowing Discord: Although a loyal ally of the Jade Regent, Notori seeks a challenge worthy of his skills, and he retains a sense of honor even as he faces Ameiko and the PCs. Savvy PCs can exploit this sense of honor by exerting their influence with Minkai's ninja clans, as Notori still feels a responsibility to abide by many of their codes and strictures. If the PCs successfully gained at least one ninja clan as an ally in "Tide of Honor," they can use their contacts to deliver a message and influence Notori, either by shaking his confidence through the knowledge that the ninja have united behind Ameiko, or by persuading him to withhold his full participation in any conflict against the Jade Regent. Demoralizing him requires a DC 30 Intimidate check. Making him indifferent to the PCs' opposition to the Jade Regent requires a DC 29 Diplomacy check. If the PCs succeed at either check, reduce Notori's Teamwork Score by 10.



JADE REGENT



RENSHII MEIDA



THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF A DISGRACED CLAN, RENSHII MEIDA IS THE JADE REGENT'S ADVISOR, SEER, AND LOVER. AN OPPORTUNIST TO THE CORE, SHE NOW OBSESSIVELY PLOTS TO SEIZE THE EMPIRE FOR HERSELF AND HER UNBORN CHILD.

RENSHII MEIDA

CR 14

XP 38,400

Female human oracle 15 (*Advanced Player's Guide* 42)

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** *true seeing*; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 28 (+10 armor, +4 deflection, +1 Dex, +4 shield)

hp 131 (15d8+60)

Fort +11, **Ref** +10, **Will** +15

Resist fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *ancestral ghost touch katana** +12/+7/+2 (1d8+1/18–20) or +1 *fighting fan** +11/+6/+1 (1d4/x3)

Ranged mwk dart +13/+8/+3 (1d4–1)

Oracle Spells Known (CL 15th; concentration +26)

7th (5/day)—*destruction* (DC 24), *ethereal jaunt*, *mass cure serious wounds*, *reverse gravity*, *summon monster VII*

6th (7/day)—*blade barrier* (DC 23), *greater dispel magic*, *greater heroism*, *heal*, *mass cure moderate wounds*

5th (7/day)—*cleanse***, *flame strike* (DC 22), *mass cure light wounds*, *slay living* (DC 22), *telekinesis* (DC 22), *true seeing*

4th (7/day)—*air walk*, *cure critical wounds*, *divination*, *freedom of movement*, *spiritual ally***, *unholy blight* (DC 21)

3rd (8/day)—*bestow curse* (DC 20), *borrow fortune***, *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *heroism*, *sacred bond***

2nd (8/day)—*aid*, *augury*, *cure moderate wounds*, *levitate*, *minor image* (DC 19), *resist energy*, *silence* (DC 19), *spiritual weapon*, *status*

1st (8/day)—*bleed* (DC 17), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound* (DC 17), *guidance*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*, *read magic*, *stabilize*

o (at will)—*bleed* (DC 17), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound* (DC 17), *guidance*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*, *read magic*, *stabilize*

Mystery ancestor***

TACTICS

Before Combat Meida activates her spirit shield revelation and casts *status* to monitor her allies every day. Prior to battle, she casts *shield of faith* and *shield* from her wand (using Use Magic Device). She further prepares for battle by casting *true seeing* and *resist energy* (fire) on herself, and *sacred bond* on the Jade Regent.

During Combat Meida casts *air walk* on the first round of combat. She summons a *spiritual ally* to attack anyone targeting her while she casts battlefield control spells such as *blade barrier* or *reverse gravity*. She monitors her allies closely with *status*, casting mass cure spells or *dispel magic* as needed. If the Jade Regent is attacked, she casts *summon monster VII* to add 1d3 shadow demons to the fight. Meida targets enemy healers with her *otherworldly kimono's* *maze* effect to keep them from aiding their companions. If necessary, she opposes spellcasters with her Improved Counterspell feat and either *greater dispel magic* or quickened *dispel magic*.

Morale If severely hindered by magic or reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, Meida casts *sanctuary* and retreats to restore herself with *cleanse*, *greater dispel magic*, or a cure spell. If the Jade Regent is slain, Meida reacts by invoking her ancestral weapon and spirit of the warrior abilities to avenge him, launching herself into the melee with wild, furious abandon and fighting to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 29

Feats Combat Casting, Defensive Combat Training, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (fighting fan*), Extra Revelation**, Improved Counterspell, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Quickened Spell, Toughness

Skills Bluff +17, Diplomacy +20, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nobility) +10, Knowledge (planes) +8, Knowledge (religion) +10, Perception +6, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +14, Use Magic Device +17

Languages Draconic, Minkaian, Tien

SQ oracle's curse (haunted), revelations (ancestral weapon*** [+2 *ghost touch*, 15 minutes/day], *sacred council**** 7/day, *spirit of the warrior**** 7 rounds/day, *spirit shield**** [+10 AC, 50% ranged miss chance, 15 hours/day], *storm of souls**** [7d8, Fort DC 24 half, 3/day], *wisdom of the ancestors**** [*commune* 1/day])

Combat Gear *wand of hold person* (17 charges), *wand of shield* (33 charges); **Other Gear** +1 *fighting fan**, masterwork darts (6), *otherworldly kimono* (see page 60), *ring of counterspells* (harm), *rod of splendor*, gold bracelet (focus for *sacred bond*, worth 100 gp)

NPC GALLERY

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

** See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

*** See *Ultimate Magic*.

Loyal allies of the human warlord Anamurumon, the Renshii clan goes back several centuries. But when Anamurumon's barbarian army was defeated, the victors put most of the Renshiis to the sword. Only a handful of women managed to flee the emperor's samurai, escaping vengeance by marrying into other families, until the hidden clan all but disappeared. Renshii Meida was 20 years old when the spirits of her ancestors contacted her and whispered of her origins, and their desire to take vengeance on the imperial families who had erased all memory of them from Minkai. To this end, Meida offered her services to the Higashiyama family as a seer and advisor to interpret the will of the gods and ancestral spirits alike.

Behind Renshii Meida's outward demeanor of a tradition-bound geisha hides the soul of a deceitful snake, ready to lash out at the merest slight. In truth, there's a measured intelligence behind her submissive eyes—something others only discover long after falling victim to her schemes and machinations, if at all.

She and Soto Takahiro, the Jade Regent, developed a lasting love affair with each other, but regardless of her feelings for him, Meida is aggressively opportunistic, constantly plotting and scheming to gain further influence over Takahiro while secretly undermining Anamurumon's control over him. Now that she's pregnant with Takahiro's child (a secret she has only shared with her handmaiden), Meida is determined to establish a new dynasty, and will stop at nothing to place her own child on the Jade Throne.

TEAMWORK

Renshii Meida's Teamwork Score represents the strength of her alliances with the Jade Regent and his allies. As long as these alliances are intact, Meida cooperates with and aids her companions, but should her Teamwork Score drop to a level that breaks her alliance, her individual tactics and morale are affected. The following section details

how Meida's cooperation affects her allies, as well as how the PCs can further reduce her Teamwork Score by sowing discord.

Teamwork Score: 40

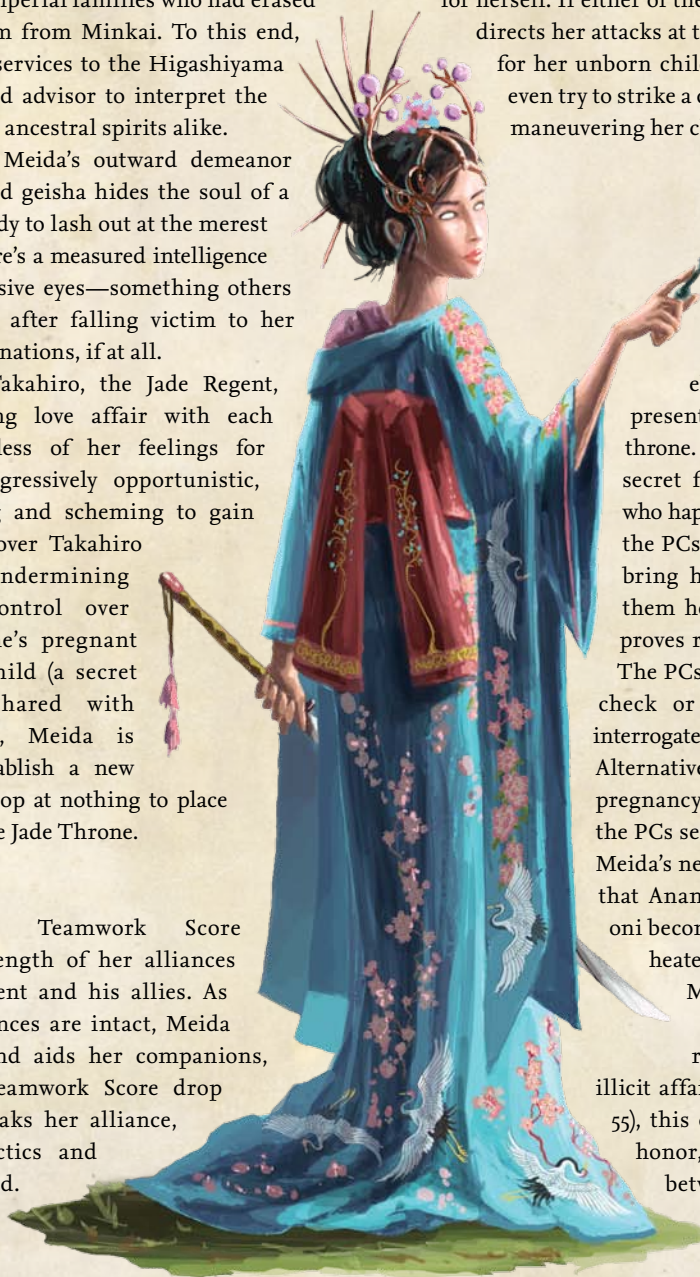
Alliance Intact: As long as Meida's Teamwork Score is greater than 0, she and her allies are treated as if they had the Shake It Off teamwork feat (*Ultimate Combat* 118). This remains in effect for the duration of the final battle with the PCs.

Alliance Broken: If Meida's Teamwork Score is reduced to 0 or lower, she refuses to cast healing spells on her allies. In addition, she sees weakness in Anamurumon or the Jade Regent as an opportunity to seize the throne for herself. If either of them falls below 20 hit points, she directs her attacks at them to remove any competition for her unborn child. If she survives, Meida might even try to strike a deal with the PCs, all in hopes of maneuvering her child closer to the Jade Throne.

Sowing Discord:

Always ambitious, Renshii Meida has her own designs on the Jade Throne. Secretly pregnant with the Jade Regent's child, she intends to marry Takahiro, elevating herself to empress and presenting their child as heir to the throne. The PCs can learn about Meida's secret from one of her handmaidens, who happens to be the daughter of one of the PCs' samurai allies. This ally could bring his daughter to the PCs to tell them her story, but the young woman proves reluctant to betray her mistress. The PCs must make a DC 30 Diplomacy check or DC 20 Intimidate check to interrogate the girl and learn the full story. Alternatively, they might learn of Meida's pregnancy through divination magic. If the PCs send inquiries to the palace about Meida's need for a midwife (thus ensuring that Anamurumon learns the news), the oni becomes angry, and the two get into a heated argument. In this case, reduce Meida's Teamwork Score by 10.

In addition, if the PCs spread rumors about the Jade Regent's illicit affairs with other women (see page 55), this does untold damage to Meida's honor, causing a lover's quarrel between her and Takahiro, which reduces Meida's Teamwork Score by 15.



JADE REGENT



JADE REGENT TREASURES



THE FOLLOWING UNIQUE TREASURES CAN BE FOUND IN “THE EMPTY THRONE.” PLAYER-APPROPRIATE HANDOUTS APPEAR IN THE GAMEMASTERY JADE REGENT ITEM CARD SET.

IKARIKURUSAI, THE RAGING CYCLONE

Aura moderate evocation; **CL** 9th

Slot none; **Price** 90,308 gp; **Weight** 3 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

Ikarikurusai is an ornate +3 *shock sansetsukon* (Ultimate Combat 134) that automatically resizes itself to match the size of its wielder. The chains joining the segments of this three-section staff crackle with arcs of electricity, and while held in at least one hand, the weapon acts as a lightning rod, drawing away incoming electrical attacks and granting its wielder electricity resistance 10. Upon striking a successful critical hit, *Ikarikurusai* explodes with electricity. In addition to the electricity damage from the *shock* ability, the target of the attack is struck by a stroke of lightning, which then arcs to other targets, as *chain lightning*. The bolt deals 5d6 points of electricity damage to the primary target (Reflex DC 19 for half damage). After it strikes, the lightning can arc to up to five secondary targets within 30 feet of the primary target. The secondary bolts each strike one target and deal as much damage as the primary bolt (Reflex DC 17 for half damage). The *chain lightning* effect only triggers on the first critical hit confirmed in a round, regardless of how many critical hits are made by the weapon that round.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *call lightning* or *lightning bolt*, *chain lightning*, *resist energy*; **Cost** 45,308 gp

KARUSETSU, THE CUTTING LIGHT

Aura strong evocation; **CL** 13th

Slot none; **Price** 67,500 gp; **Weight** 8 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This exquisitely detailed +3 *nodachi* (Ultimate Combat 133) comes sheathed in a black-lacquered scabbard with gold filigree. Its hilt is wrapped in red dragonhide, and a single golden feather hangs from the pommel. *Karusetzu* enables its wielder to execute a flourishing slash three times per day in the direction of a single distant opponent (i.e., one not already engaged in melee combat with the wielder) up to 60 feet away. This flourishing slash projects a plane of scintillating force across the intervening distance, functioning as a ranged attack with a thrown weapon using the wielder's highest base attack bonus. On a successful hit, the blade's cutting light deals 4d6+3 points of force damage to the target, with a threat range of 18–20 and a critical multiplier of x2. In addition, a creature struck by the cutting light must succeed at a DC 14 Reflex save or be blinded for 1d4 rounds.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *mage's sword*, *searing light*; **Cost** 33,930 gp

OTHERWORLDLY KIMONO

Aura strong conjuration; **CL** 15th

Slot body; **Price** 67,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

Embroidered images of cherry blossoms and cranes in flight adorn this blue silk kimono. The wearer can move and reposition these images on the kimono at will. The kimono grants its wearer a +4 resistance bonus on all saving throws and a +4 bonus on all caster level checks. Once per day, the wearer can draw a single creature within 60 feet into the kimono (no save), effectively shunting the victim into an extradimensional space, similar to a *maze* spell. Inside this otherworldly prison, the maze appears as an apparently endless cherry orchard filled with “walls” of windblown cherry blossoms and cranes flying overhead. Each round on its turn, the victim inside the kimono may attempt a DC 20 Intelligence check to escape the kimono as a full-round action. If the victim doesn't escape, it is released after 10 minutes, returning to where it had been before the kimono drew it in. If this location is filled with a solid object, the subject appears in the nearest open space.

Whenever a creature is drawn inside the kimono, the victim's image temporarily manifests as another embroidered design among the kimono's other images. While a victim is trapped inside, the kimono's bonuses on saving throws and caster level checks are increased by 2 (to +6). The kimono's increased bonuses return to normal when the victim is freed or released.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *Heighten Spell*, *maze*, *resistance*; **Cost** 33,500 gp

O-YOROI OF IMPERIAL RULE

Aura strong evocation; **CL** 13th

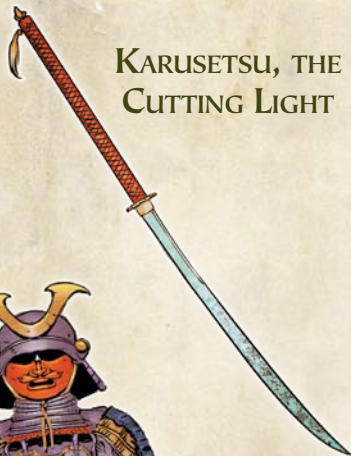
Slot armor; **Price** 68,400 gp; **Weight** 45 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This distinctive +4 *adamantine glamer*ed o-yoroi (Ultimate Combat 128) was designed for scions of Minkai's imperial families and their highest-ranking and most loyal samurai, providing its wearer with DR 3/—. In addition, the armor stores the kinetic energy from blows made against it. Once the armor has negated 15 total points of damage, the wearer can release

JADE REGENT TREASURES

KARUSETSU, THE CUTTING LIGHT



OTHERWORLDLY KIMONO



TSURUHASHI, THE SILENT CRANE



O-YOROI OF IMPERIAL RULE



SEISHINRU, SPIRIT ELIXIR

IKARIKURUSAI, THE RAGING CYCLONE



the stored energy as a swift action against a single creature within 10 feet. This energy takes the form of a force effect, and the wearer must make an attack roll at his base attack bonus +10. The energy deals 15 points of force damage to the target, and the target must make a DC 22 Fortitude save or be stunned for 1 round. If the wearer chooses not to release this energy, the armor still provides damage reduction but absorbs no more energy until the stored energy is released.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *clenched fist*, *disguise self*; **Cost** 42,550 gp

SEISHINRU, SPIRIT ELIXIR

Aura moderate evocation; **CL** 10th

Slot none; **Price** 5,500 gp; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

This potent elixir has the consistency and color of pomegranate juice, and a tart taste with a faint aroma of fresh fruit. Usually found in bamboo containers decorated with images of carp, the sacred animal of the goddess Shizuru, the elixir within contains the distilled spiritual essence of the most honorable guardians who died in service to Minkai's emperors. Each time the character drinking the elixir makes an attack roll, ability check, or skill check, it rolls two d20s and takes the better result, as these spiritual guardians offer their advice and encouragement. This effect lasts for 10 rounds, but it immediately ends if any roll is a natural 20. If the character drinking the elixir is a scion

of one of Minkai's five imperial families (including anyone invested as such by an *Imperial Seal*) and is reduced to fewer than 0 hit points during the duration of the elixir's effects, the elixir also immediately cures the drinker of 5d8+10 points of damage, which can bring a recently slain character back to life. This healing immediately ends any of the elixir's other effects.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *breath of life*, *brilliant inspiration* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 207); **Cost** 2,750 gp

TSURUHASHI, THE SILENT CRANE

Aura moderate necromancy; **CL** 9th

Slot none; **Price** 16,101 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

The cross-guard and tines of this +2 *adamantine sai* are crafted of a mysterious red metal, adorned with grinning skulls. The haft is wrapped with delicate white crane feathers. Only a handful of *tsuruhashi* are known to exist, each one crafted as a silent killer. The weapon grants a +1 bonus to the DC of Fortitude saves made against an assassin's death attack or ninja's assassinate ability. In addition, while executing such an attack, the wielder of a *tsuruhashi* may cast *silence* upon his victim as a swift action. This ability can be used once per day and affects only the victim of the attack.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *silence*, *slay living*; **Cost** 9,551 gp

JADE REGENT



CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

MOST WHO CROSS THE CROWN OF THE WORLD TAKE BUT A GLIMPSE AT THE LANDS BEYOND, DEEM THEMSELVES EXPLORERS, AND PROMPTLY RETURN HOME. BUT THE WONDERS OF TIAN XIA DON'T ARRAY THEMSELVES ALONG THE NORTHLANDS LIKE SOME SORT OF ARCTIC MENAGERIE. BEYOND LIE NATIONS AND MYSTERIES IT WOULD TAKE MORE YEARS THAN THE GODS GRANT US UPON THIS WORLD TO EVEN HEAR OF, MUCH LESS TO EXPLORE. PEOPLES AND RACES WONDROUS BEYOND YOUR IMAGINING LIVE AS PLAINLY AS THE COMMON FOLK OF THE SMALLEST INNER SEA VILLAGE, IGNORANT OF THEIR REMARKABLENESS. THOSE WHO WOULD DISCOVER THE TRUE WONDERS OF THE DRAGON EMPIRES FIND THAT THEIR JOURNEYS, THEIR DANGERS, AND THEIR REWARDS DO NOT END IN THE SHADOW OF THE POLE BUT, RATHER, HAVE JUST BEGUN.

—MILRISSA “MISUZU” RETOBBARRI, VARISIAN CARAVANEER

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

The defeat of the Jade Regent need not end your adventures in Tian Xia. Beyond Minkai, innumerable wonders and dangers await in the vast and varied countries collectively known as the Dragon Empires. The following presents numerous new plots and perils GMs might delve into with the completion of the Jade Regent Adventure Path. While not complete plots or adventures, these new villains, stat blocks, maps, and suggestions should serve as tools and idea generators for new adventures of your devising, keeping your Dragon Empires campaign running for numerous sessions to come.

CONSEQUENCES OF GLORY

Presented here are just some of the possible plot hooks you could use to integrate further adventures into your campaign after the finale of the Jade Regent Adventure Path. Depending on how the PCs fared in garnering Achievement Points while placing Ameiko (or one of themselves) at the throne of Minkai, they can continue their journeys in a number of directions. Several of these plots focus on rooting out the new leader of the Five Storms and gathering more support from the people of Minkai to rebuild, while others make use of the PCs' newly acquired positions of imperial power and push them out of Minkai to further establish prosperity throughout Tian Xia.

Rebuilding an Empire: If the PCs earned fewer than 10 Achievement Points, then there is still much to be done if Minkai is to recover from its recent tragedies. Along with the regular governmental duties that befall Ameiko and the PCs, they will need to travel to various power centers within Minkai such as Akafuto, Shogokabe, and Sakakabe to quash dissent and make sure all is well among the people, possibly gaining support from the powerful elite or doing favors for the regions' lords to impress upon these important vassals their worth as leaders.

Dismantling the Five Storms: If the PCs were unable to fully destroy the presence of the Five Storms in Minkai, then tracking them down and putting an end to their corrupt organization should be a good motivator for PCs to continue their quest, especially if the Five Storms have appointed a new leader among their ranks. If the PCs killed the most powerful members of the Five Storms, then the oni will seek a new leader from outside their ranks—perhaps the powerful cave giant Hikutsuo, who has risen to become a warlord in nearby Chu Ye but has become bored with his station, yearning for the destruction of another nation. Yet another viable candidate can be found in the depths of neighboring Xidao, however, where an infamous water yai by the name of Lerrasuwa dwells in the enormous Aya-Maru trench; though she does not yearn for power, she takes great pleasure in acquiring treasures and wealth, and would love to sink her teeth into the sacred artifacts rumored to be guarded in Kasai's great vaults.

A CONTINENT TO EXPLORE

While most Pathfinder Adventure Paths are relatively small in scope—remaining fixed in a single region, country, or even city—by the end of the Jade Regent Adventure Path players will have passed through several countries and crossed an entire icy continent to reach a new land of adventure. While this article presents an overview of the Dragon Empires, a number of comprehensive supplements detail these lands and suggest a host of adventures that might unfold within. Any GM seeking to explore this realm beyond the Jade Regent Adventure Path should check out *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Dragon Empires Gazetteer* for an in-depth look at Tian Xia's myriad countries, races, and religions. Players hoping to get their feet wet in the vast continent and make a character suitable for play in a Dragon Empires campaign need look no further than the *Pathfinder Player Companion: Dragon Empires Primer*, which features a variety of traits, feats, archetypes, and more to bring your character to life. To round all this out, the *Jade Regent Poster Map Folio* brings your game to the next level with large-scale maps of Tian Xia, the Crown of the World, and the huge city of Kasai!

Obliterating the Oni Presence: Even if the oni of the Five Storms are banished from Minkai, the threat of invading oni still looms over the Empire of Dawn, as the oni-ruled kingdom of Chu Ye lies just beyond the Xidao Gulf, and its leaders are continually seeking to expand their territory. Should the stalwart PCs attempt to save the enslaved peoples of Chu Ye from their demonic despots by taking on the role of war generals or vigilante assassins, their efforts would no doubt lead to freedom for countless innocents as well as unknowable treasures hidden within the oni ranks.

The Imperial Seals: The Jade Regent kept the *Imperial Seals* heavily guarded during his rein, but with his defeat, the sacred items can once again perform their duties and locate the most worthy individuals to rule Minkai. Since the oni of the Five Storms supposedly killed off all of the royal heirs, the seals must now be used to locate worthy citizens who have proven themselves to the gods and would make suitable rulers. Can the PCs locate such noble individuals? They'll have to travel to regions in Minkai both heavily populated and remote. The next heirs to the throne could be anywhere—they could be tribesmen dwelling in the primitive lands of the ninth province in the northern reaches of the nation, or perhaps a hermit dwelling in the crags of the treacherous trio of volcanoes that run along the Kamifushi and Kyojin Mountains is destined to eventually rise to the ranks of royalty. The PCs must travel far and wide to discover the whereabouts of these potential rulers, and their journeys will no doubt be filled with danger and peril.

JADE REGENT

THE ONI THREAT

Even after the defeat of the Five Storms and the Jade Regent, the threat of oni invasion remains very real within Minkai, as an entire nation plagued with such monsters lies just over the Xidao Gulf. When Chu Ye was besieged by the oni lurking within its own borders and the voidlord void yai Tsuneni claimed the title of shogun, an entire nation was forced to succumb to the oni's depredations and whims, and the monstrous new rulers enslaved the peaceful healers that made up most of the country's population.

The oni of Chu Ye have doubtless taken notice of the political upheavals that have befallen Minkai, and are also privy to the resolution of the PCs' attempts to restore the rightful ruler to the throne. Shogun Tsuneni in particular kept track of these events; always interested in expanding

the boundaries of his newly risen empire, Tsuneni knows that if he is to strike at Minkai, he should do so soon, for each day he waits is a day that the nation's unsteady government and military can rebuild. At the same time, the oni ruler knows that his own dominion is still in its early stages, and that a failed assault on Minkai may spell the end of his rule.

The shogun has determined a course of action comprising two parts. First, he has decided to infiltrate Minkai with small groups of spies that can integrate themselves into the nation's major cities little by little, much like they did within Chu Ye itself. In this way, these oni can attack from the inside when the main force of oni in Chu Ye launch an all-out attack, overwhelming Minkai's people from both within and without. The second part of Tsuneni's plan is to send squads of oni into the smaller farmlands and villages of Minkai to eradicate any potential militia members who could rise from the rural folk should the oni decide to attack.

These smaller raids are meant to be as discreet as possible, and the oni ideally hope to destroy the outlying farmlands and villages with little to no resistance, using their most powerful yai to ensure that they leave virtually no traces of their attacks. Should the newly instated ruler of Minkai ever hear of these attacks, the PCs would no doubt be an apt choice for military resistance against these monstrous invaders, having dealt with similar monsters numerous times in the past. Adventures in which the PCs defend Minkai can be as complex or simplistic as you deem necessary, as the oni's attacks within the country's borders can undoubtedly spark the flames of political intrigue or go completely unnoticed by the nation's populace.



SHOGUN TSUNENI

CR 24

XP 1,228,800

Male voidlord void yai

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

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *true seeing*;
Perception +37

DEFENSE

AC 41, touch 9, flat-footed 40 (+14 armor, +1 Dex, +18 natural, -2 size)

hp 462 (28d10+308); regeneration 15 (fire or good spells)

Fort +27, **Ref** +11, **Will** +22

Immune cold; **SR** 35

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (good) with armor

Melee +5 *speed katana* +50/+45/+40/+35

(3d6+22/15-20) or

2 slams +43 (2d6+17)

Ranged void missile +28 (6d6 plus energy drain) or

+4 *composite longbow* +32/+27/+22/+17 (3d6+21/x3)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks commanding voice, energy drain (2 levels, DC 31), void trap

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 22th; concentration +29)

Constant—*fire shield* (chill shield), *fly*, *true seeing*

At will—*deeper darkness*, *gaseous form* (self only), *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *invisibility* (self only), *minor creation*, *vision*

3/day—*blade barrier* (DC 23), *cone of cold* (DC 22), *demand* (DC 25), *dominate person* (DC 22), *keen edge*, *mage's sword*, *major creation*, *mass charm monster* (DC 25), *polar ray*, *teleport object* (DC 24)

1/day—*implosion* (DC 26), *plane shift* (DC 24)

STATISTICS

Str 44, **Dex** 15, **Con** 32, **Int** 18, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 25

Base Atk +28; **CMB** +47; **CMD** 59

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Greater Weapon Focus (katana), Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (katana), Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Staggering Critical, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (katana)

Skills Acrobatics +25 (+29 when jumping), Bluff +38, Diplomacy +35, Fly +28, Intimidate +38, Knowledge (nobility) +35, Perception +37, Sense Motive +37, Spellcraft +35, Use Magic Device +38

Languages Aklo, Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin

SQ change shape (Large, Huge, or Gargantuan humanoid, *giant form II*), void form, voidlord focus (swordplay)

Gear +5 full plate, +4 composite longbow (+17) with 10 brilliant energy arrows and 40 adamantite arrows, +1 speed katana

FRONTAL ASSAULT

Rather than encountering the oni within Minkai, the PCs might choose to confront the oni forces head-on, nipping the impending problem in the bud. Such a venture could undoubtedly constitute an entire campaign of its own, though the most straightforward approach to dismantling the oni empire would be by infiltrating the capital and slaying the despot in charge of the entire operation. Giants from the Nightford Mountains and the wilds of northern Zi Ha act as Shogun Tsuneni's private military force, and would prove formidable foes should the PCs attempt any sort of attack against the monsters Chu Ye. Among his most valiant supporters are the chaotic taiga giants who occupy many of the northern highlands of Zi Ha—superstitious barbarians who find the destructive nature of Tsuneni's rule to their liking—as well as legions of different oni, including ja noi, yamabushi tengus, and yai of all sorts.

Should the PCs decide to lead the newly invigorated Minkai in a war against the evil beings of Chu Ye, the quick-play rules for fast-paced mass combat from *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #35 can easily be adapted to

accommodate a militaristic campaign of this sort. While you as the GM can certainly calculate the exact number of armies Chu Ye and Minkai could accommodate by determining their Build Points and other statistics, such details are beyond the scope of this article, and it can be just as fun to run through the military campaign in a much simpler fashion that allows you to quickly get back to small-scale battles, roleplaying encounters, and personal interactions for the PCs. For instance, the PCs may accumulate a modest army of Minkai samurai, battle a number of Chu Ye's own monstrous armies, and finally encounter the ruler of the oni nation and his favored lieutenants in a traditional, individual-level battle (after the PCs gain a few levels, of course!).

In addition to the example armies found in *Pathfinder Adventure Paths* #35, #36, and #42, the following armies may prove suitably fearsome opponents in the PCs' campaign against the wicked oni.

ICE YAI MERCENARIES

CR 12

XP 19,200

LE Small army of ice yai (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 207)

COMBAT

hp 66; **DV** 31; **OM** +20, ranged

Tactics False Retreat, Taunt

Special Abilities mobility advantage, regeneration 5 (acid or fire), spellcasting

LOGISTICS

Speed 4; **Moral** +4; **Consumption** 6

Leader Tsuliwa, ice yai monk 12 (+4 Cha)

JA NOI HORDE

CR 11

XP 12,800

LE Gargantuan army of ja noi (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #52 90)

COMBAT

hp 55; **DV** 19; **OM** +11

Tactics Cautious Combat, Expert Flankers

Special Abilities regeneration 3 (acid or fire)

LOGISTICS

Speed 2; **Moral** +4; **Consumption** 5

Leader Akarahei, ja noi fighter 11 (+3 Cha)

TAIGA GIANT WARBAND

CR 14

XP 38,400

CE Large army of taiga giants (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 131)

COMBAT

hp 63; **DV** 20; **OM** +18, ranged

Tactics Relentless Brutality, Spellbreaker

Special Abilities rock throwing

LOGISTICS

Speed 2; **Moral** +4; **Consumption** 7

Leader Telkorruske, advanced taiga giant (+4 Cha)

JADE REGENT

AGENTS OF THE EMPRESS

Although freeing Minkai from the tyranny of the Jade Regent is a step in the right direction for the troubled nation of Minkai, the country is still far from being a safe haven for its citizens, and the PCs have much work ahead of them if they are to serve as agents of Ameiko's fledgling rule. The new empress still has a lot to learn if she is to govern Minkai effectively, and she makes good use of her adventurous allies while she gets her feet wet in the political realm.

The PCs function better as an elite strike team for Ameiko rather than as political leaders (though they may fill this role as well if one of the PCs ends up as emperor or empress of Minkai in place of Ameiko). The empress may have any number of missions for the PCs in her efforts to restore the empire to its former glory. The Jade Regent's increasingly expensive whims nearly

ran Minkai into the ground, tapping into the coffers of every city in the nation with reckless abandon, and so the capital's treasure is in dire need of revival, something the PCs may be able to accomplish should they locate valuable treasures either within Minkai or in other lands, such as the pirate coves of Minata or the rich and perilous depths of the Valashmai Jungle.

In addition to its lost wealth, Minkai is also in need of a resource even more valuable than a treasury: food. With the decline of the empire under the rule of the Jade Regent, many of its people felt the sting of famine. Some farmers' croplands were ignored by the corrupt rulers of Minkai and thus exposed to the depredations of nearby beasts; other farmers' harvests were forcibly confiscated by the voracious oni of the Five Storms. In addition, monstrous carnivores such as trolls and giants were able to emerge from seclusion during the reign of the Jade Regent, and ravaged the wildlife in the forests and hillocks of Minkai—wildlife that used to feed the citizens of the nation. While the farmlands and forests around Minkai's cities and villages will no doubt recover in time alongside the empire, PCs seeking to expedite the process must find ways to help feed the starving parts of the country. Of course, the PCs might be able to locate any number of food sources within or around Minkai, and a well-timed attack on a kraken or another marauding sea creature could feed an entire seaside village for weeks.

FLAMES FROM WITHIN

Of course, not all of Minkai's various denizens appreciate the efforts of the new empress and her adventurous helpers to restore prosperity to the realm. Among such discontented creatures are undoubtedly twisted oni, as well as the other dangerous beasts that lurk in places both dark and damp.

The infamous underworld dragon Jirukarakaza is one such rival to the empire, making his lair deep in the hot underbelly of the cavernous Three Fires, the trio of active volcanoes spanning the Kamifushi and Kyojin Mountains. Jirukarakaza has dwelled in his molten den for eons, and has borne witness to the numerous emperors and empresses who have reigned over Minkai. While he is far from the only underworld dragon to make its home in the vast and winding caves below the Three Fires, he is certainly one of the most powerful to lair there, and has established a formidable reputation among the other creatures that dwell within the underground passages twisting beneath the tempestuous volcanoes.

While he has so far remained removed from the politics of Minkai, the imperial dragon was relying on the extended dominion of the Jade Regent in order to establish his own domain within the empire,



CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

seeking to rule over the lands surrounding the extensive realm of fire he and his other igneous brethren dwell in. In particular, Jirukarakaza had his eye on the trade city of Hiyosai, a successful mining town whose vast treasures have long tempted the underworld dragon to prey upon its people. Now, with his plans in utter ruin, the enraged dragon is enlisting any allies he can find beneath and near Mount Yogan, knowing that the longer he waits, the stronger Hiyosai's military defenses will be when he and his fellow raiders arrive.

While it is true that Hiyosai is rich (it is often called the eastern treasury of Minkai), the city's wealth is far from what it used to be, having been practically drained by the Jade Regent's insatiable gluttony. Jirukarakaza scarcely realizes that there is far less to steal from Hiyosai now, but there is no dissuading the enraged imperial dragon at this point. Despite his own fortune, a treasure horde he amassed over the centuries by raiding countless caravans on their way through the mountains, he still desires more. Should a band of heroes beat Jirukarakaza to the chase and attack him in his home beneath Mount Yogan, they would certainly locate the dragon's massive treasure horde as well, a haul which might just be enough to reignite Minkai's badly damaged economy. Nevertheless, as Jirukarakaza's impending siege draws ever closer to the oblivious town of Hiyosai, less and less is certain, though it is almost guaranteed that the unprepared town will be in dire need of heroes if and when peril strikes from above.

JIRUKARAKAZA

CR 19

XP 204,800

Great wyrm underworld dragon

LE Gargantuan dragon (fire)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, smoke vision; **Perception** +35

Aura frightful presence (360 ft., DC 29)

DEFENSE

AC 41, touch 4, flat-footed 41 (−2 Dex, +37 natural, −4 size)

hp 377 (26d12+208)

Fort +23, **Ref** +13, **Will** +21

DR 20/magic; **Immune** dragon traits, fire, magical paralysis and sleep; **SR** 30

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., burrow 60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)

Melee bite +37 (4d6+14/19–20), 2 claws +38 (2d8+14/19–20), gore +36 (2d8+14), tail slap +31 (2d8+7)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks adamantine claws, breath weapon (140-ft. line, 2d6 fire, Reflex DC 31 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), crush (DC 31, 4d8+14), lava eruption, tail sweep (DC 31, 2d6+21)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 26th; concentration +32)

UNEXPECTED HEIRS

Although the campaign assumes that at its conclusion, Ameiko ascends to the throne of Minkai, both fate and PCs are fickle forces. As such, there's a possibility that one of the PCs' number now sits on the Jade Throne. For some parties, claiming an empire of their own is as close to "winning" as possible, and might make a satisfying end to the campaign. GMs who wish to carry on the adventure, though, might summon up any number of opponents to challenge such undestined rulers. Any of the high CR threats in this article make fine rivals for would-be kings and queens, as would the nation's kami, shinigami concerned with the cosmic balance, and emissaries of Shizuru, patron goddess of Minkai.

At will—*clashing rocks**, *repel metal or stone*, *soften earth and stone*, *spike stones* (DC 20), *stone shape*, *wall of stone*

Spells Known (CL 17th; concentration +23)

8th (4/day)—*greater shout* (DC 25), *wall of lava**

7th (6/day)—*delayed blast fireball* (DC 24), *rampart**, *reverse gravity*

6th (7/day)—*disintegrate*, *flesh to stone*, *move earth*

5th (7/day)—*fire snake** (DC 22), *passwall*, *transmute rock to mud*, *waves of fatigue*

4th (7/day)—*enervation*, *shout* (DC 21), *solid fog*, *stone shape*

3rd (7/day)—*displacement*, *fireball* (DC 20), *protection from good*, *rage*, *slow*

2nd (8/day)—*acid arrow*, *daze monster* (DC 18), *flaming sphere* (DC 19), *scorching ray*, *stone call**

1st (8/day)—*burning hands* (DC 18), *cause fear* (DC 17), *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 17), *true strike*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 16), *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 16), *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 16)

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

STATISTICS

Str 39, **Dex** 6, **Con** 27, **Int** 22, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +26; **CMB** +44; **CMD** 52 (56 vs. trip)

Feats Greater Weapon Focus (claws), Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Critical (claws), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Lunge, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Spell Focus (evocation), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite, claws)

Skills Acrobatics +24 (+28 when jumping), Appraise +35, Bluff +35, Climb +43, Fly +13, Intimidate +35, Knowledge (dungeoneering, geography, planes) +35, Perception +35, Spellcraft +35, Stealth +21

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Giant, Ignan, Terran, Undercommon

SQ change shape, underworld burrower

JADE REGENT

NATIONS OF THE DRAGON EMPIRES

The Jade Regent Adventure Path spans but a small fraction of the vast continent of Tian Xia, and while there is certainly enough going on in both Minkai and the Forest of Spirits to provide countless material for further adventures, there's no reason to limit you or your players to one region within an entire continent full of excitement and wonder. Below are brief descriptions of the other nations of Tian Xia, all of which are described in full detail in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Dragon Empires Gazetteer*.

Amanandar: The city of Kamikobu was once a major trade city, but the fall of Imperial Lung Wa led to the victimization of this settlement until Taldor's Eighth Army of Exploration saved the city and restored peace to it and the outlying regions, renaming the area Amanandar.

Bachuan: This nation was once governed by the altruistic Grandfather Pei, but the death of Bachuan's leader has given rise to the harsh and zealous rule of his young wife.

Chu Ye: After the collapse of Imperial Lung Wa, the oni of this nation of renowned healers shed their masks, overthrew the government, and enslaved the populace they had hid among for so long.

Darklands: There are three main entrances to the Darklands of Tian Xia, which are plagued not by drow and duergar, but rather by clockwork warriors, cave-dwelling hobgoblins, and countless other horrors.

Dtang Ma: The kingdom of Dtang Ma is best known for the sorcerous powers of its citizens, who are governed by a council of the nation's most powerful mages.

Goka: The largest city in all of the Dragon Empires, Goka is situated in the only significant break in the Wall of Heaven, and boasts a thriving economy based heavily on gambling.

Hongal: Upon frigid plains, the nomadic Hongali live in harmony with their horses and brave the region's harsh elements on a daily basis.

Hwanggot: Known as the Kingdom of Flowers, the nation of Hwanggot handles every political conflict peacefully and with grace, as its people adhere to strictly philanthropic ideals.

Jinin: After Earthfall devastated the Inner Sea region, some of the elves of that land went underground instead of through the gates to Sovyrian, emerging centuries later in what became the elven nation of Jinin.

Kaoling: When the empire of Lung Wa fell, the hobgoblins to the north of Kaoling quickly overwhelmed the land's human residents, and established a brutal government of their own in place of that which they had destroyed.

Kwanlai: Populated mostly by tengus, the newly independent nation of Kwanlai still faces political challenges in the form of constant infighting between numerous rival tengu clans.

Lingshen: Lingshen is one of the most powerful Successor States left in the wake of Lung Wa's collapse. Its armies are

the mightiest in part because the soldiers fight at first in bodily form, and then, upon dying, their souls are encased in terra-cotta statues and enter battle once again.

Minata: The Wandering Isles of Minata are inhabited by numerous peoples, including the diverse Tian-Sings and shadowy wayangs, and comprise several island regions.

Nagajor: Populated entirely by nagas and their servitor race of nagaji, the unforgiving jungle realm of Nagajor has yet to see successful human colonization.

Po Li: Po Li is home to what was once the capital of all of Lung Wa. It forbids the worship of any deity other than the Eternal Emperor, who it is believed will reincarnate in time and once again ascend to the sacred *Five Dragon Throne*.

Quain: The nation of Quain boasts thousands of martial artists and hundreds of different schools of training. Once every 12-year cycle, the ruler of Quain sacrifices his royal daughter's heart to the legendary Celestial Dragon to ensure the future prosperity of the nation.

Shaguang: The vast wasteland of Shaguang is inhabited by numerous nomadic tribes who live in fear and awe of the mysterious sky spirits that dwell above. Near the Wall of Heaven, the ancient city of Yjæ floats ominously overhead.

Shenmen: Spirits and terrible beasts from the dark forests curse the land of Shenmen, whose rulers now consist of evil jorogumos (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 156) who demand periodic sacrifices from the region's various townships.

Shokuro: Once inhabited solely by helpless farmers and artisans who sought to rebel against the ruling nation of Lingshen, Shokuro is now a potent military nation of samurai led by a benevolent ronin.

Tianjing: Celestials tasked the aasimars who dwell in Tianjing to protect the land from an evil extraplanar menace, and the half-celestials bravely continue this mission.

Valashmai Jungle: Deep in the untameable Valashmai Jungle lurk monsters few can fathom; fewer still dare challenge the vast and unforgiving wilderness.

Wall of Heaven: With numerous peaks that tower well over 30,000 feet high, the mountain range known as the Wall of Heaven spans nearly the entire continent of Tian Xia. Some regions, however, are plagued by monstrosities from the nightmare realm of Leng.

Wanshou: Ruled by an immensely evil elder kraken known as Zhanagorr, Wanshou's human citizens are now slaves to the region's monstrous denizens.

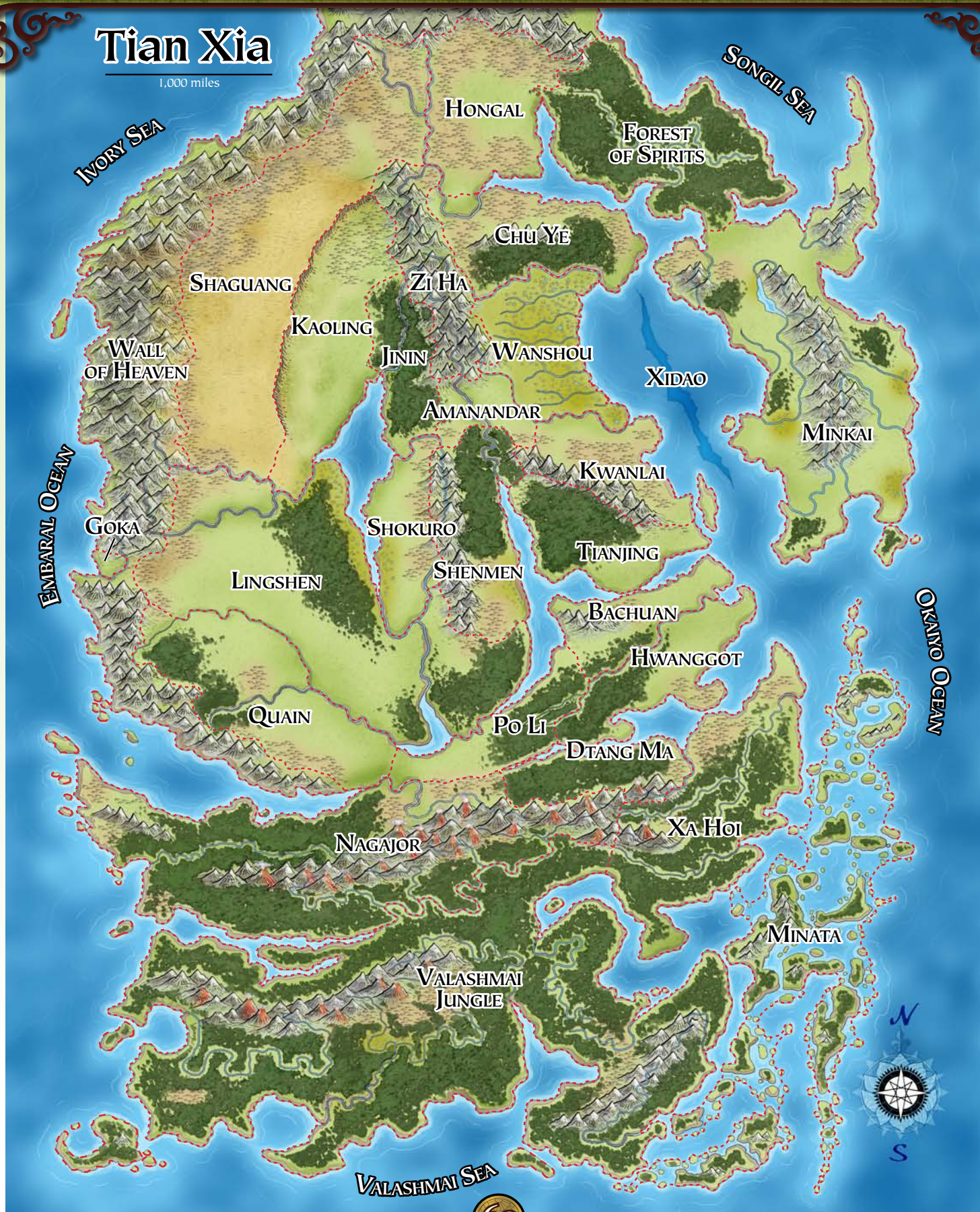
Xa Hoi: Justice in Xa Hoi is nothing if not fair, and the sovereign imperial dragons that rule the nation ensure this remains the case.

Xidao: Locathahs make up the majority in Xidao, an aquatic nation with a treacherous, monster-filled trench splitting it down the middle.

Zi Ha: Spiritual enlightenment is valued above all other things in the peaceful mountains of Zi Ha, whose inhabitants include the benevolent samsarans.

Tian Xia

1,000 miles



JADE REGENT



KASAI

“I’VE NEVER SEEN ANOTHER PLACE QUITE LIKE KASAI. THEY MAKE MUCH OF HONOR THERE, OF TRADITION AND MINDING YOURSELF, BUT REALLY, IT’S ALL ABOUT MAKING SURE THE CITY GETS ITS CUT OF YOU BEFORE YOU HEAD ON. IT’S ALL CONTRADICTIONS. ON THE SURFACE EVERYTHING’S BEAUTY AND DELICATE IDEALS, BUT YOU DON’T EVEN HAVE TO DIG TO FIND THE DARKNESS AND UGLY TRUTHS. YOU CAN BE AS POLITE AS YOUR MOTHER TAUGHT YOU AND STILL FIND OUT YOU’VE OFFENDED SOMEONE FOR LIFE. BUT IT CAN GO THE OTHER WAY TOO. SOMETIMES YOU GO LOOKING FOR SOMETHING UGLY BUT TURN UP A TREASURE OF THE SWEETEST SORT. I SUPPOSE THAT’S THE REAL REASON WHY I KEEP COMING BACK.”

—IOZIF THE DOUR, ULFEN TRADER

KASAI

Powerful warlords, fickle crime bosses, ingenious generals, and goddess-graced emperors have all had their glorious ambitions and insidious plots tested in the golden city of Kasai. The city's ageless, shining walls have seen the rise and fall of empires as its own influence withstands the test of time. Kasai has existed since before the foundation of Minkai, becoming the capital of the new empire after the old capital of Uddo was razed at the end of the Teikoku Shogunate. Since then, the city has flourished as the favored seat of the nation's imperial families, growing in influence and power, its prosperity mirroring that of the empire. But despite recent troubles, Kasai remains the treasure of Minkai, a gate for traders from across the world, the throne-city of an ancient empire, and the site of treasures and adventures untold.

KASAI

LN metropolis

Corruption +6; **Crime** +1; **Economy** +7; **Law** +6; **Lore** +6;
Society +1

Qualities holy site, prosperous, notorious, rumormongering
citizens, strategic location, tourist attraction

Danger +20

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government overlord

Population 164,200 (163,394 humans, 380 tengus, 112 kitsune,
97 wayangs, 217 other)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 30,400; **Purchase Limit** 200,000; **Spellcasting** 10th
Minor Items all available; **Medium Items** 4d4 items; **Major**

Items 3d4 items

KASAI CULTURE

A strict social hierarchy divides Kasai's populace, one determined by tradition and family heritage rather than material wealth. At the top of this order is the nobility, consisting of the imperial family, the clan lords and their families, and trusted retainers. Next come the samurai and lesser nobility of the empire. Commoners and free people such as farmers, artisans, and merchants follow—merchants actually being considered socially inferior in status to farmers and artisans as they do not create any goods. The final, lowest members of this social hierarchy are the *hinin*, meaning “non-persons.” This group comprises hereditary outcasts, itinerant entertainers, beggars, professional gamblers, and members of those professions that involve butchering animals and handling dead flesh.

Outside of this social hierarchy are the ronin and many religious figures such as monks and clerics. Because they exist outside of the hierarchy, their positions are less clear. Usually, it is safe to say that ronin rank somewhere between samurai and farmers. Clergy and monks should

always be shown respect, though they hold little sway over the secular lives of commoners.

Life is a struggle, and the people Minkai know this all too well. Sometimes all one can count on having is pride, and it can become as important to a person as his own life. In order to best maintain this pride, Minkai's culture insists that it be acknowledged in others, constantly giving them the opportunity to maintain their own dignity. Causing embarrassment for others can become cause for shame for oneself or one's family. Displaying negative emotions toward others is regarded as both a sign of weakness and an undignified act. Separation of personal life and public life is very important to the people of Minkai and serves as a means of preserving pride and propriety while maintaining hierarchical demands. As a result, strangers to Kasai often view residents' behavior as remorseless or aloof, but the passions of the locals are neither fewer nor cooler than those of any other race or culture; the people of Kasai are merely adept at the elaborate social interplay that weaves through every element of their daily lives.

KASAI GAZETTEER

The city of Kasai is a huge metropolis, and any gazetteer can only briefly touch upon the wonders of this beautiful and inscrutable city. Beyond the city proper, three outlying areas that are not considered to officially be part of the city support it from across the Hebigawa River: the Hitsugi District, controlled by the local yakuza; the Red Lantern District, which serves as the entertainment district; and the Reeds, a shantytown sprawl of *hinin* families.

Badger's Folly Bathhouse: The bathhouse of **Yu** and **Otaru** (NG female and male human expert 3) has long been known for its clean facilities, its attentive hosts, and the three stuffed badgers overlooking its main tub. A natural hot spring fuels the bathhouse, inviting guests to ascribe all manner of restorative properties to its salty waters. The Badger's Folly had enjoyed good business until Yu woke one morning to find a young guest disemboweled and floating in the bubbling water. Since then, it's rumored that the ghost of the victim boldly rises from the tub each night, hunting for the killer among the patrons and staff.

Baku Theater: Named for a mythical creature that eats nightmares, this theater hosts performances in a variety of styles from across Tian Xia, from recitals of traditional music and kabuki plays to wayang shadow puppetry and Po Lian throat singing. However, what sets the performances of this theater apart from others is its use of illusions and subtle magic to enhance shows. **Daichi** (CN male wayang summoner 8) owns and manages the theater, and he and his son **Dijo** (CN male wayang sorcerer 3) create the majority of the magical effects the place is known for. The wayangs tend to keep backstage, letting their human staff deal with the audience and most business partners. Twice

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LOCATIONS IN KASAI

- 1 Inu Island
- 2 Golden Ghost Pagoda
- 3 The Reeds
- 4 Red Lantern Row
- 5 Jade Mantis Dojo
- 6 Baku Theater
- 7 Sorrowful Tiger Sake House
- 8 Offices of the Hitsugi Gumi
- 9 Badger's Folly Bathhouse
- 10 Setting Sun Cemetery
- 11 Temple of the Sun's Blade
- 12 Monastery of the Thunderous Cricket
- 13 Rising Dragon Dojo
- 14 Tortoise Feather Stable
- 15 Temple of Woe
- 16 Imperial Jade Eye Academy
- 17 Tree of Souls
- 18 Flying Leopard Dojo
- 19 Imperial Garden
- 20 Teardrop Teahouse
- 21 Fox's Grove
- 22 Imperial Palace

a year, the pair invite the city's small wayang community to the theater for major cultural holidays involving elaborate shadow plays, festivities, and, some say, a strange blurring of the boundaries between the Material Plane and the Plane of Shadow.

Flying Leopard Dojo: This immaculately maintained dojo has few students. The harsh, lone instructor, **Chen Lau Wan** (LE male human monk 8), teaches a variety of martial arts and archery, but also serves as an agent of the Kusari-Gama. He goes out of the way to create friction between his two chief rival dojos, the Jade Mantis Dojo and the Rising Dragon Dojo, using such conflicts as a crucible in which to test potential students—and taking note of those who show promise with the intention of recruiting them into the Kusari-Gama. Lately, he has been attempting to recruit Saeko, mistress of the Jade Mantis Dojo, and orchestrated a recent attack by the Rising Dragon that left her school disgraced. He hopes shame and desperation will help bring her into the arms of the Kusari-Gama. (The Kusari-Gama are described in detail in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Faction Guide*.)

Fox's Grove: The walled structures in this neighborhood serve as homes to some of the most desirable courtesans in the city. The courtesans living here serve as mistresses and escorts to the senior members of the military and the lesser nobility. They will not serve anyone of lesser status and are treated as near nobility. One such courtesan of note

is **Shimada Mari** (N female human witch 6), who secretly holds the reigns of the Hitsugi Gumi yakuza group. The leader of the Hitsugi Gumi, Eguchi Zoisaito, is so besotted with Mari that he willingly does anything for her. Mari is often secretly visited by Zoisaito, whom she believes she controls through a combination of spells, hexes, and drugs. The yakuza boss is among the youngest and most effective leaders the Hitsugi Gumi has ever had, largely thanks to the sound strategies and covert mystical support that Mari provides.

Golden Ghost Pagoda: Once the pride of the city, the gold-plated Kourin Pagoda now looms as a tower of terrors in the heart of Kasai. Locally known as the Golden Ghost Pagoda, it only appears on nights when no natural light shines upon its surface. Formerly, this pagoda was a monument to Setsuna Kuga of the Perfected Blade, who established Kasai in ages past. Four centuries ago, the remains of many interred in the pagoda were stolen by a mysterious band of thieves, driving the spirits of the desecrated bodies mad. Not long after, the priests of the Temple of the Sun's Blade moved to seal the unquiet spirits in the pagoda, but their exorcism failed spectacularly. After this attempt, the pagoda withdrew from the heavens' light, only to appear on moonless and cloud-covered nights. Since then, none have been able to successfully abate the anger of the spirits resting here, and its grounds remain closed and guarded—against both those who would enter, and anything that might attempt to leave.

Imperial Garden: The imperial garden is the largest maintained garden in the city, with a wide variety of ornate ponds, meditation gardens, and rarified plant life not found anywhere else in Tian Xia. Rumors hold that strange fey and spiritual beings traverse this sacred garden and have had pleasant discourse with numerous past emperors. These stories have largely faded in local memory, though, as no new tales of such encounters have occurred in years.

Imperial Jade Eye Academy: The imperial academy of mysticism teaches the arcane arts to those with the talent and wealth to attend. While the school teaches a variety of classes on divination and elemental control, it also holds classes on herbalism, alchemy, and various ancient medical traditions. **Soseki** (CG male human wizard 10) is the court-appointed head of the academy. He is said to have been raised in the wilderness by a kitsune woman and is regarded as both a trickster and something of a problem-solver. A frequent attendant of the imperial court, Soseki cultivates the appearance of a corrupt bureaucrat for the benefit of the Jade Regent and his minions, but is popular with his school's students for his wisdom and subtle sense of humor. Those who encounter him quickly notice his jade eye, a potent magical object passed down among the school's masters that supposedly grants the ability to see anything within the academy grounds.

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Jade Mantis Dojo: The instructor of this dojo, **Saeko** (CG female human monk 4), teaches kenjutsu, the art of the sword. She has only been running the dojo for a few months after her father died and left it to his only child. Until recently, the dojo had been faring well under her supervision, and though the students are few in number, they showed promise and were doing well in competitions. Lately, however, members have been afflicted with an illness that has kept them incapacitated and incapable of protecting their dojo's honor. During a challenge from the Rising Dragon dojo, they were incapable of effectively defending their dojo. As a result, their dojo's sign was taken, leaving them humiliated.

Monastery of the Thunderous Cricket: This monastery is dedicated to seeking the perfection of mind and body under the guidance of the god Irori, yet many of the monks here are deaf or hard of hearing. The giant, golden bell in this monastery is a well-known magical landmark capable of amplifying the voice of any who speak into it by a hundredfold. An old story about the bell tells how it was once used by a lowly initiate of the order to awaken everyone in the city when the inhabitants were overcome by magical slumber. Supposedly, the young monk had discovered the bell's properties when she was nearly deafened by the chirping of a cricket within. The monks guard the bell jealously, ensuring that no one uses it for selfish or mischievous reasons.

Offices of the Hitsugi Gumi: The Hitsugi Gumi control both the law and the crime in the three districts that fall outside the walls of Kasai. Members of the yakuza group all have some degree of tattooing that serves as an indication not only of service, but also of rank, and a few higher-ranking members even have spell tattoos granted to them by yakuza sorcerers (see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Magic* for details). **Eguchi Zoisaito** (LE male human rogue 4/samurai 3) currently serves as the head of the family, his rise over his sisters after their father's death proving as meteoric as it was unexpected. He is a man of few vices, but the one he indulges in too frequently is visiting the Fox's Grove, which he does almost nightly. From the Hitsugi Gumi's public office, which operates as a legitimate importer of clay and building supplies, Zoisaito and his followers uphold the traditions of the Eguchi family and maintain law and order in the Hitsugi District, the Red Lantern District, and the Reeds.

Red Lantern Row: Much of Kasai's entertainment and adult recreation can be found along this main thoroughfare through the Red Lantern District, where patrons come to relieve stress and let themselves forget their worries for a little while. Large brothel facilities are located just off of Red Lantern Row, as are numerous theaters, inns, sake taverns, teahouses, and gambling dens, as well as a rather vigorous black market. This part of town is surrounded by the Hebigawa River and the canal system on all sides. The

only way into or out of the Red Lantern District is over one of the seven bridges crossing the river and canals. Members of the Hitsugi Gumi stand guard upon these bridges, and all who enter the district must leave any weapons they might have in their care, so as to prevent the district's varied conflicts from becoming deadly. However, those willing to pay an "exception tax" can purchase a wooden token to tie to their weapons, which permits such weapons to be carried in the district so long as they are kept sheathed.

The Reeds: The only part of Kasai that might be considered a slum, the Reeds are where the vast majority of the city's hinin population lives. Numerous families live in cramped, interconnected houses, where crime and poor sanitation prove to be constant dangers. Despite the residents' low status, most accept their lot in life, but this isn't always the case. The irascible **Mother Mariku** (LG female human bard 3), a 72-year-old widow who has only left Kasai once in her life, vocally disapproves of the Hitsugi Gumi, the increasing influence of the Temple of Woe, and—in quieter tones—the Jade Regent. While she would never do anything more provocative than giving a yakuza tough a public tongue-lashing or grumble about the Jade Regent, most know that she'd open her home and cook at least one fine meal for any who did.

Rising Dragon Dojo: Instructor **Isamu** (LN male human monk 7) is flush with pride after his dojo's recent victory over the Jade Mantis Dojo, with which the Rising Dragon has harbored a decades-long feud. The surprising thing is that the Jade Mantis traditionally offered significant competition, but the Rising Dragon's recent victory was so complete that Isamu's students brazenly stole the opposing school's sign. Currently, the Rising Dragon students proudly display the Jade Mantis Dojo's sign upside down beneath their own outside their dojo.

Setting Sun Cemetery: For centuries most locals have believed this ancient cemetery is haunted, and residents of the surrounding neighborhood built a small shrine to appease the restless dead here. The Setting Sun Cemetery was once a part of a larger temple's grounds before the canal system was installed. Since the waterways were constructed—over 200 years ago—the cemetery has been cut off from the sacred temple grounds, insulting the souls laid to rest here to the point that some make their displeasure known in and around the graveyard's grounds. Bodies are still occasionally buried here, typically by the Hitsugi Gumi, who do so to purposefully dishonor fallen enemies and traitors.

Sorrowful Tiger Sake House: This sake house is a favorite hangout of ronin and disenfranchised samurai, as well as the local constabulary, who frequently visit to stop drunken brawls. The owner and operator, **Arundo** (LN male human samurai order of the ronin 10), is a tough old warrior whom his guests know well enough to understand that if they ruin his sake house, he will ruin them. Arundo

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also runs an employment service of sorts for warriors in need of work. He has contacts in the city's import office, the yakuza, and several lesser noble families as well, doing his best to match warriors in need with tasks suited to their skills.

Teardrop Teahouse: This teahouse is considered to have the most talented geisha in the city and is frequented by some of Kasai's most notable clientele. The Teardrop Teahouse is actually a base of operations for a quiet congregation that worships Lady Nanbyo, goddess of suffering. **Shura** (CN female human cleric 5), the teahouse's night manager and leader of Lady Nanbyo's local flock, downplays the wantonly destructive elements of her goddess's faith in favor of propagating or soothing sorrows. For some, she and her geisha offer a soothing balm to the trials of a hard life; for others, the geisha's subtle advice and seductions encourage strife. Shura seeks to balance the pains of those who come through her teahouse's doors, doing her best to alleviate the pains of the undeserving while increasing the suffering of the wicked—all as she and the house's icy geisha judge.

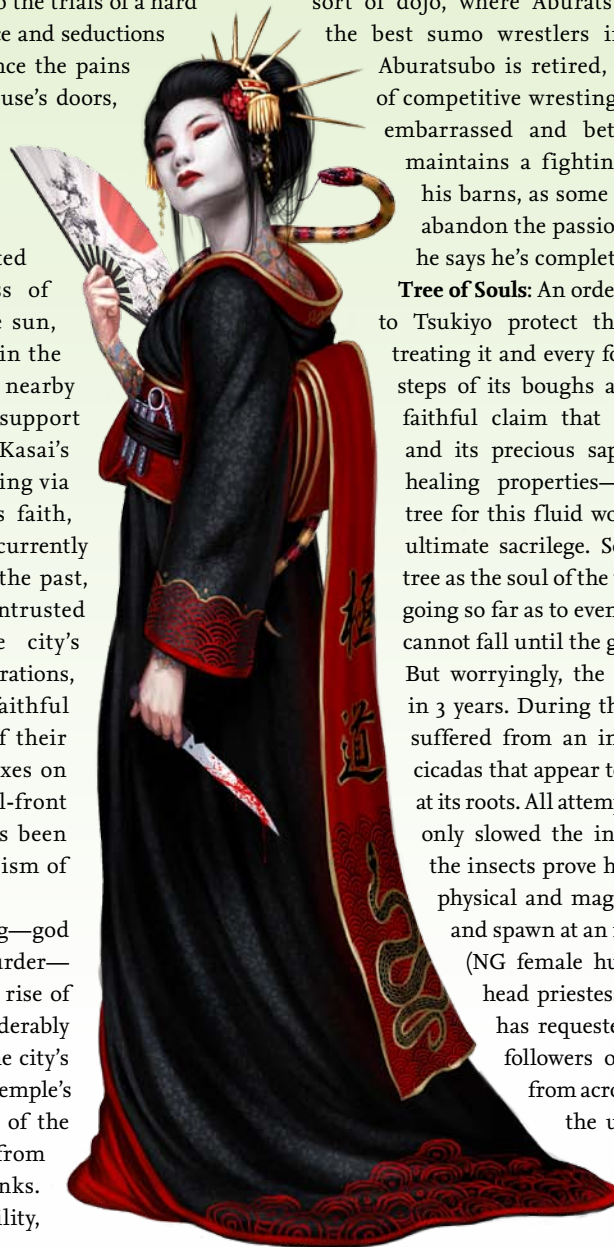
Temple of the Sun's Blade: Devoted to Kasai's patron Shizuru, goddess of ancestors, honor, swordplay, and the sun, this temple is the largest and oldest in the city. The temple grounds and the nearby homes of its priests and significant support staff are surrounded on all sides by Kasai's canal system, with the only access being via ornate bridges. This temple and its faith, though popular with the masses, are currently in disfavor with the Jade Regent. In the past, many of the temple's clergy were entrusted with important positions in the city's constabulary and judiciary administrations, but now rumors grow that Shizuru's faithful will be lucky to retain possession of their temple, as new laws impose heavy taxes on both religious structures and canal-front properties, and the public's faith has been shaken since the priests' failed exorcism of the Golden Ghost Pagoda.

Temple of Woe: Worship of Yaezhing—god of harsh justice, punishment, and murder—was never popular in Kasai before the rise of the Jade Regent, but it has grown considerably in recent years. Since then, many of the city's judges have been appointed from the temple's growing priesthood, while the ranks of the city's constabulary are recruited from the temple's flock and attendant monks. With the backing of some of the nobility,

the head priest of the Temple of Woe, **Tsunan** (LE male human cleric 11), has petitioned for an audience with the Jade Regent, intending to request that he be allowed to seize the Temple of the Sun Blade's grounds and repurpose the site for the worship of Yaezhing. The petition claims that Shizuru has abandoned the city and her clergy are no longer capable protectors. It goes on to assert that the faithful of the Temple of Woe can maintain order in Kasai with the protective authority of Yaezhing guiding them.

Tortoise Feather Stable: The stable and livery of **Aburatsubo** (NG male human monk 4) houses and protects the personal steeds of some of the city's wealthiest and most esteemed residents. Aside from providing unparalleled care, the stable also once served as a strange sort of dojo, where Aburatsubo trained some of the best sumo wrestlers in the nation. Today, Aburatsubo is retired, having left the world of competitive wrestling after his last protege embarrassed and betrayed him. He still maintains a fighting ring within one of his barns, as some part of him refuses to abandon the passions of his youth even if he says he's completely retired.

Tree of Souls: An order of priestesses devoted to Tsukiyo protect this giant cherry tree, treating it and every foot of earth within 121 steps of its boughs as sacred ground. The faithful claim that the tree is immortal and its precious sap possesses incredible healing properties—though tapping the tree for this fluid would be considered the ultimate sacrilege. Some tales refer to the tree as the soul of the very empire of Minkai, going so far as to even claim that the empire cannot fall until the great tree of souls does. But worryingly, the tree has not bloomed in 3 years. During this period the tree has suffered from an infestation of oversized cicadas that appear to be slowly eating away at its roots. All attempts to heal the tree have only slowed the infestation's damage, as the insects prove highly resistant to both physical and magical means of removal and spawn at an impossible rate. **Osuzu** (NG female human druid 11) is the head priestess tending the tree and has requested the assistance from followers of Tsukiyo and druids from across the country. Despite the urgency of her call for aid, few—and none of especial talent—have answered.





MANTLE OF STOLEN FLESH

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I'm going in."

"Wait." The boss put a hand on my arm, pulling me away from the warehouse window.

Takeda made a sound deep in his chest, barely audible over the drumming from inside the building. He didn't like what we saw in there any better than I did. Still, he crouched beside the slit I'd cut through the paper window—someone had boarded the place up, but there'd still been enough space between the planks for my knife to do its work. He glanced back at the lane curving down to the three gray wooden buildings that formed Tatami House. There was still no sign of Shiro, Osamu, or the reinforcements they'd been sent to fetch.

I hoped we could trust the men. If even one of them was a Kappa agent, we were in a deep pile.

We'd ignored the other two buildings when we heard the rhythmic chanting from the one farthest from the street. It was a nice place for a murder, I thought. Or for some infernal ritual, which is what it looked like they were having tonight.

"Look at what they're doing to her," I said. "I was wrong, all right. Kazuko isn't a Kappa."

Beside me, Arnisant shifted but kept quiet. His eyes were locked on the boss, waiting for instructions. He's a better dog than I am.

"You were not wrong," the boss said. "Watch."

I gritted my teeth and peered back inside.

The building was tall but only one floor, with high ceilings. Heavy wooden beams supported a system of rolling chains and pulleys near the rafters. From some

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of the chains hung stacks of thick reed mats, too heavy to move by hand. When I looked at the mats, the spell that let me understand the local language brought the word "tatami" to my mind. For once during this crazy night, the name of the joint we were visiting wasn't some kind of poem.

Tall stacks of finished mats formed mazes at the far ends of the building. Against the walls stood low tables piled one atop the other, some with thin, half-woven tatami still pinned in place. Crammed between them were bundled reeds, bolts of cords, and toolboxes.

The big frames sat up on their sides at an angle. Dozens of thin wooden legs stuck up from their faces. On one lay the beginnings of an extra-thick mat. Six of these frames stood end-to-end on the far wall. Together, they looked like a giant centipede curling up to die.

In the middle of it all, thirty or forty men knelt and beat hand drums in time to their chanting. From their dark clothes, I knew they were the Kappas, a gang of killers known in these parts as ninja. They surrounded a cleared space lit by red and yellow lanterns hanging from the rafters. Around their waists they wore hooked chains and short swords. On their faces were dark masks. We'd been watching long enough that I recognized the material: stained human flesh.

I didn't like that, and not because I hadn't seen it before.

The cultists had peeled down their robes to the waist, revealing their tattoos. Some were covered everywhere but their hands. Others had only two or three tattoos, but all wore the same figure on the right sleeve: a sort of goblin with a turtle's shell and, atop its skull, a bowl-shaped dent sloshing with water. Kazuko had told me the creature was called a kappa.

In the center of the kneeling men capered a brown skeleton of a man with a strip of dirty cloth slung between his legs. He also wore a mask, only his wasn't dyed black. It was stitched together from the faces of five or six different guys, each with a different color skin. Weedy patches of hair stuck out here and there. I made out a blob of a nose on one cheek, a withered ear on the other. The gaunt man jabbered as he danced around a wicker basket set on a low table. He shook a bloody knife above his head, yawping as he speckled the faces of the nearest Kappas. He turned to the first of his captives and grinned.

Bound by his wrists and ankles to one of the large tatami frames, the naked young man could barely stand up straight. He jutted his chin, but fear gnawed at his eyes. He kept glancing down at a heavy wooden mallet on the floor beside him. Like the kneelers, he had a kappa tattooed on his right sleeve.

On the legs of the next frame hung dripping hunks of human flesh, draped open to show off their tattoos.

I recognized the dragon from the chest of Hiroshi the moneylender. Beside it hung the skin of an arm tattooed with an octopus with wicked hooks at the end of its tentacles. Beneath the dragon hung a phoenix tattoo cut from someone's back. Beneath them were two long strips of flesh, one with a yeti, the other a tengu.

They were all but one of the tattoos from Ichisada's secret book. They'd have been beautiful on living skin. But it was what hung from the third rack that turned my guts to ice.

The gaunt man had already done his work on Kazuko. He'd flayed the skin of her torso, legs, and left arm. She should have been dead, but she arched her back and craned her neck. The twine binding her to the tatami frame creaked. The only mercy was that her long black hair covered her features, sparing us the sight of her agonized face.

"We can still save her," I insisted. "Get her to a healer. I've got a healing potion right here."

"It's no use," said the boss. "There are too many Kappas to fight."

"You could drop a great big fireball on them."

"No," hissed Takeda. "You will burn down half the city."

"Understood," said the boss. "Notice the woman's right arm."

I'd seen it. Kazuko had a kappa on her right arm, a fancier version of the monster tattooed on all the ninja and the man bound across from her. I'd seen it before in Ichisada's book. I'd also had a good enough look at the bound man's face to notice the family resemblance. He had to be Kazuko's brother.

"It need not be this way!" he cried. "We can rule the Kappas together."

The gaunt man cackled.

"No, you alone will be Master Kappa," whined the bound man. "I will be your servant. Just let me live!"

The gaunt man covered the man's mouth with his palm and uttered a few words. He removed his hand to reveal a festering wound where the brother's lips had been. His jaws worked, but I could barely hear his muted grunts.

"Monsters," muttered Takeda. "All of them."

"I don't care if Kazuko's one of them," I said. I couldn't look away from her ruined body. "The kid doesn't deserve to die like that."

Takeda looked up the street again, but there was nothing to see. From the look on his face, I wondered whether he was questioning the loyalty or competence of his men. Even if I wasn't wrong about Kazuko, that didn't mean she was the only Kappa who'd fooled us. Takeda returned his gaze to the ritual. "We must wait for reinforcements. The three of us cannot—"

The gaunt man removed the lid of the basket to reveal a pearl the size of his head. It wasn't actually a pearl, I

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realized, but an eggshell-thin globe of the iridescent colors you see inside an oyster shell. The gaunt man reached for the mallet.

"No," said the boss. "Not the husk!"

He yanked a board away from the window with a squeal of old nails. The sound turned the heads of the Kappas toward us.

Without hesitating, Takeda pulled away another board. I cut away the last of the paper window with three quick strokes of the big knife. Before I could stop him, the boss clambered through.

Takeda bumped into me as we both tried to get through the window at once. I growled him off and shoved my way through.

The Kappas shrugged their arms back into their sleeves and scattered toward the dark corners of the room. A few flung chains toward the rafters and floated up like spiders, snuffing out half the lights as they went.

That was all right by me. The boss had keen eyes on account of having an elf for a father, and I could practically see in the dark thanks to whatever the hell it was my ancestors took to bed. I avoided looking directly at the ninja creeping along the stacks of tatami mats, hoping they'd think I couldn't spot them.

What they didn't know could definitely hurt them.

Two Kappas rolled a couple of eggs across the floor. They wobbled like skittles, only we were the pins.

I pulled the boss out of their path. As the grenades burst against the wall, I squeezed my eyes shut, expecting a blinding flash or pepper. Instead, the eggshells exploded into sickly sweet clouds. I caught a snootful before I could hold my breath. The stuff made me woozy, even after I staggered out of the cloud.

A couple of smart slaps helped shake off the sleep powder. I returned the favor until the boss said, "Enough! We must prevent—"

The sound of the mallet crushing the husk cut him off. The sleep powder cleared, and we saw the gaunt man raise a double handful of iridescent dust from the basket. He held it before Kazuko and blew. The cloud glittered around her, and shining motes clung to her raw flesh. Her shriek pierced my ears like broken glass.

I filled my hands with knives.

The boss drew his sword in one hand, a riffle scroll in the other. He pointed the little sheaf of paper at the gaunt man and thumbed the edge. The face of each page glimmered with a fraction of an arcane rune, and four bolts of energy shot from his hand.

The gaunt man stared down at the oozing wounds on his chest and drew a few symbols of his own in the air.

A ninja rushed the boss. I stepped in to take that dance. The Kappa didn't waver when I threw him the big smile, so I drew one just like it under his chin.

The boss threw another volley of magic at the gaunt man, but the bolts splashed and vanished against an invisible barrier.

"Hit him," said the boss.

I threw the little knife. It struck just as the masked man finished casting another spell. The blade glanced off his body, like the ninja's stars had bounced off the boss. The gaunt man turned away to reach for the stolen tattoos.

Nearby, Takeda moved in. Before he'd gone two steps, a blur shot down from the rafters. He flicked his wrist, barely moving his sword. Throwing stars glanced off his blade and stuck in the wall.

The floor creaked behind me. I whirled to the side. My spur caught a ninja's sleeve and pulled his sword a few inches out of line, sparing me a real bad haircut. I followed with the big knife, cutting deep into his kidney. A warm spray wet my hand as I jerked the blade free. The body sagged to the floor.

The boss parried a slash from a Kappa I'd missed. I moved to help, but one I hadn't spotted swept my legs. I twisted my fall into a roll. The heavy blade of one of those scythe-weapons stabbed the floor where my neck would have been if I were a little slower. In the time it took the Kappa to tug it free, I put the big knife in his neck. My hands were getting slippery.

The boss retreated from three Kappas. The newcomers bound up his blade with their chains while the third raised his sword. I lunged toward him, but there wasn't time. "Boss!"

A dark blur passed over his head, knocking the swordsman to the ground. The man uttered a strangled cry as Arnisan's jaws closed on his throat.

Good boy.

I went for one of the ninja with the chains. They both saw me coming and skipped away like kids at a ribbon dance, their chains winding around the boss.

The boss caught my eye and signaled, *Stand clear.*

I faded back as he riffled another scroll. He grabbed a chain.

Sparks danced across the metal links. His hair lifted as if he were underwater, and his jaws clenched in an agonized rictus. The Kappas dropped their chains and fell back, bodies jerking in shock. I finished one and moved in to kill the other, but Arni had already taken him out.

Very good boy.

Takeda gutted two of his attackers with a sweep of his blade. When the third raised a grenade to hurl in his face, the inspector cut off his hand before he could release it. The Kappa wailed and clutched his stump.

I stopped worrying about Takeda and stuck close to the boss. He staggered from the shock of his own spell, but kept on his feet as he shrugged off the slack chains. He paused to fetch another scroll.

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"Keep moving, boss." I took my own advice and tumbled forward as several throwing stars sank into the floor behind me.

The boss thumbed his riffle scroll. Before he finished, a throwing star caught him in the back. He set his jaw and kept the small sheaf of paper in hand. As the last page snapped free, two more throwing stars hit him. They bounced off his shoulder and neck, repelled by magic.

"You got one of those for me?" I asked.

He grimaced an apology.

We kept moving toward the gaunt man. The Kappas showered us with steel. They leaped from every shadow, but I saw them, Arnisant smelled them, and Takeda had lightning in his veins. Between us, we stopped the ninja from reaching the boss, giving him time to snap off a few more scrolls. I felt the prickly energy of his magic settle into my body, making me stronger, faster. Maybe even prettier, I don't know.

Kazuko screamed louder than ever. The pearl dust sparkled on her exposed muscle. I couldn't help thinking the stuff must have felt like salt on an open wound. The gaunt man tossed a piece of the tattooed skin toward her. It floated through the shimmering cloud to settle on her raw chest, its edges settling neat against the border of skin at her throat. In an instant, the magic of the pearl dust sealed the flesh in place. The dragon I'd seen on Hiroshi now coiled between Kazuko's breasts.

Her cries grew louder, but they weren't screams of agony. She threw back her head in ecstasy.

"More!" she wailed. "Give me the entire mantle!"

The gaunt man raised his arms above his head. The remaining tattoos rose off the tatami rack, floating like jellyfish on the tide. They moved onto Kazuko's body and fixed there, edges sealing with a sucking sound.

Takeda cut his way free and went straight for Kazuko. The gaunt man stepped into his path, raising his hand as if to command the samurai to halt. Whatever magic protected him earlier did nothing against Takeda's wakizashi. Half the man's hand hit the floor moments before his masked head joined it.

Takeda raised his sword to strike Kazuko. She kicked him in the belly, the rope bonds around her ankle snapping like thread. The samurai flew back, crashing against the man bound to the opposite table. The slender legs of the rack impaled Kazuko's brother, but his body spared Takeda the same fate.

Kazuko held up her foot for a second, like an acrobat showing off after a smart move. I saw the yeti tattooed on that leg and figured that one gave her strength. With a shrug, she snapped her remaining bonds. Smiling, she turned toward us.

She brought her foot down, smashing the wooden floor. The force of her step shook the building. I let myself fall

and rolled with it, heading for the shadows. I wouldn't be the only one in the darkness, but I was betting I'd be the only one who could see in there.

The boss fenced with another ninja while Arnisant protected his back. Takeda stood, raising his sword once more.

As if they'd been waiting for the dramatic moment, the city constables broke in through the doors and windows. Osamu was one of the first in. He shouted, "In the name of Lord Koga, I order you to surrender!"

Naked but for her stolen tattoos, Kazuko stood without a trace of fear or shame. "No. Throw down your weapons, or suffer the same fate as your commander."

She thrust her left arm toward Takeda. The tentacles of the octopus tattoo shot out of her flesh, swelling to the size of mooring ropes. One encircled the inspector's blade. The others arched around him, their hooked ends tearing through his clothes.

"No!" Shiro screamed as he rushed forward. He hadn't made it halfway across the floor before a pair of Kappas intercepted him. In an instant, Osamu was by his side. Their katanas flashed against the ninja's blades.

Constables rushed in to fight the rest of the Kappas. Now it was the ninja who were outnumbered, but the first wave of police fell back before a flurry of throwing stars and flash grenades. Two or three screamed as hooked chains caught them around the neck and pulled them toward the ceiling.

The boss fumbled with his scrolls again, hesitating before he triggered one. I saw his lips form an apology as a stream of fire roared from the riffing pages toward Kazuko.

"Fire!" yelled the constables. They showed less fear of the ninja than of the flame.

They didn't need to worry. As the ray of flame reached Kazuko's body, the dragon on her chest opened its jaws and sucked down the fire, leaving only a trail of smoke.

"No fire!" cried Takeda. Two of Kazuko's tentacles held him high off the floor. He twisted his wakizashi, slicing through the tentacle that tried to steal his blade. He reversed his grip and threw the blade like a spear. It shot down toward Kazuko's breast, impaling her through the heart.

I felt a pang of regret as I saw his blade emerge from her back. Then the phoenix tattoo glowed like the sun at dawn, dazzling my eyes. I heard another sucking sound. My vision returned just as Kazuko hurled Takeda's sword to the floor. In the waning glow of the phoenix, I saw her flesh heal around the wound.

"I cannot die," she said, bringing Takeda closer. "The same is not true of you."

Five of the tentacles arched up like serpents. Their razor hooks sliced through his skin. At the first cuts,

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Takeda set his jaw in silence, but as the hooks tore away his flesh, he could not help but scream.

"Of all the samurai in Oda," said Kazuko, "only you are worthy of admiration. You are the sacrifice I must make before assuming the mantle of leadership."

She flayed him before our eyes. A mist of blood obscured his body, but as it cleared I saw that all the skin on his torso was gone. Kazuko cast him away, her tentacles reaching for the nearest constables.

"Inspector!" cried Shiro. He overran his opponent, trampling the ninja even as his foe stabbed him in the thigh. Osamu dispatched Shiro's attacker with a thrust to the heart. As he opened his guard, Osamu's own foe slashed him across the belly. The samurai fell to his knees.

Shiro hesitated, torn between helping his master and his friend. Osamu waved him forward.

"Go," he wheezed.

It didn't matter. Shiro could never have gotten back in time. The ninja raised his blade to decapitate Osamu. Before letting the mortal strike fall, the masked man looked to Kazuko.

Kazuko smiled, pleased that the man awaited her permission before executing an officer of the law. She flung away the constables in her tentacles. Their bodies crashed into the walls and slumped to the floor. As if we'd all received the same unspoken command, everyone stopped fighting and looked at the woman clothed in monsters.

There was no magic in it. I could have moved, but I froze, waiting for the right moment. It would be a simple thing to move forward and put the big knife in her spine. But after seeing the phoenix tattoo save her life from Takeda's mortal blow, I didn't think I could put her down for good.

Not by myself, anyway.

I had an inkling of what might do the trick, but I didn't want to give away my position. When the boss stood up and sheathed his sword, I hoped he was thinking the same thing. He likes to say I'm smarter than I look. The question was whether I was just smart enough that he could guess what I was thinking.

He walked toward Kazuko, Arnisant at his heel. I reckoned he could see me, but he didn't so much as glance in my direction.

"Mistress Kappa," he said. "I see that your clan's symbol lends you great cunning. Rarely have I witnessed such daring manipulation of unwitting allies. And yet you are bold. Not only did you use the inspector for your own ends, but you also dared to put a count of Cheliox to your service."

"You think much of yourself, foreigner," she said. "But it is true, Takeda's investigation foundered after I allowed him to find the bodies of the first few victims. He worked day and night, returning home only to care

for his motherless children. In his fatigue, he began to fail me."

"How dare you speak of the inspector!" Shiro shouted as he cradled Takeda's head on his knees. The inspector moaned as his man tried to cover his flayed body with his own outer robe.

Kazuko's tentacles twitched, eager to strike. She eyed Shiro.

"What caused you to act in such haste?" said the boss. He laid a hand on Arnisant's head. "Was it simply the impatience of youth? Did you yearn to take your father's place?"

Kazuko scowled, but she took the bait. "My brother learned of my designs, so I visited Yamana this evening. Like the inspector, he is a man who deserves respect. As I apologized for the need to take his life, he tried to bargain with me. He told me of your reputation as an investigator, and I agreed that your arrival might serve to reinvigorate the search for the other tattoos. Before you appeared, I barely had time to disguise myself as a servant."

"And to instruct your men to flay the skin from Yamana's arm. Yet this petty cruelty puzzles me. If you wished me to find the other tattoos, why attempt to mislead me with a false clue?"

"To inspire you!" she said. "Yamana told me of your vanity. He said you had a weakness for spectacle. Do not deny it. I saw your eyes fill with excitement at the sight of the corpse."

She wasn't wrong, I thought. And she reminded me how happy I'd been to see a pretty girl to comfort at the scene of the crime. She'd played the boss, and she'd played me.

"Is it too much to hope that your respect for the honorable Inspector Takeda is sufficient to allow us to remove him to safety?"

Kazuko laughed. "It is far too much."

"Very well," said the boss. He waved his hand in what you might mistake for a helpless gesture. I read it for the signal that it was: *Cut her*.

I'm more of a stabbing fellow, ordinarily. But I can cut a straight line.

Or the rough outline of a phoenix.

It took me three strokes. The first made a clean arc over the bird's raised wings. The wound sagged open, making me think that the magic sealing the stolen skin together hadn't yet bound it to the flesh below. Two more strokes joined the ends of the first cut to a point beneath the phoenix's blazing claws.

The tattoo lit up like molten gold, but only for a second. I grabbed it by the edge and tore it away.

The point of the boss's sword emerged from her back. He'd struck so quickly, she hadn't had time to scream.

Above us, the tentacles swelled and rose toward the ceiling before sinking down again. They withered and fell slack as a snake's shed skin.

MANTLE OF STOLEN FLESH

The rest of Kazuko's tattoos stretched like living things away from her body. The yeti was the first to break free, its straining muscles bursting like inflamed boils. Once ruptured, the stolen flesh collapsed on the floor, flaccid and unmoving.

All around us, the Kappas resumed their attack, but the sight of their defeated leader drained their courage even as it emboldened the samurai. The rest of the fight was noisy, bloody, and already decided.

The morning light shone bright on the waves, and I could barely make out the sandbar of the Seahorse from across the bay. At least for a while, the Kappas weren't the most feared gang in Oda. The old rivals went back to war less than an hour after the news of Kazuko's death and that of her brother. From the Seahorse all the way up to the eleventh precinct, the constables would be picking up more bodies this morning. But they'd be doing it without Inspector Takeda.

"So he sold his sword to marry a prostitute."

The boss frowned. And I thought I'd used the polite word. "She was a prostitute only on the night he paid for her water-raising ceremony. Purchasing her contract from the Flower and Willow Pavilion cost far more than a public official could afford. Thus, for love, he sold his family sword. When his wife died bearing their second daughter, he was father by day, mother by night. He could no longer afford all of his servants. His appearance suffered. Soon his peers shunned him."

"But all the girls at the whore—I mean, at the flower place," I said. "They all bowed to him. Even Kazuko said she respected him."

"Where a noble finds disgrace, the common man sees honor." The way he said it, I guessed he was quoting something from a book. Either that or he was getting poetical on me again.

I patted Arnisant on the shoulder. You and me, I thought. We're the common men.

We boarded the ship that would take us to mainland Tian Xia. Somewhere in the middle of it all we'd find a country called Quain. If the boss's information was right, the king there had a line on another one of these magic husks. I'd tried talking him out of it, but it was no use. In his mind, it'd be some kind of disgrace to return without the thing the Decemvirate had sent him to find.

Inspector Second Class Uchida Osamu, newly appointed to lead investigations in the eleventh precinct, had wangled not only our passage but also a pretty good reward for our help in the investigation. His report painted our help in such a good light that the city leaders considered



"Who says tattoos are forever?"

us honored visitors rather than foreign devils, a phrase I heard every time I walked the streets alone. That was good luck for us, since the body count was sure to grow in the weeks ahead. Osamu and Shiro were going to have their hands full as the gang war heated up.

So it was a surprise when I saw both men ride toward the docks. A third man sat between them, a little stiff in the saddle. I thought it was a good thing they hadn't arrived earlier. Horses don't much fancy me, and I'd hate to see them throw the newly anointed Lord Takeda, Chief Inspector of all of Oda.

At first the phoenix tattoo wouldn't stick to him, even after the boss had blown the pearly dust all over Takeda's weeping wounds. But he wouldn't give up. At last Shiro charged over to behead the dying Kazuko, and the magic took on Takeda's ravaged body. One customer at a time, I guessed.

Takeda and his men raised their hands in salute as our ship left dock. The boss returned the gesture with a Chelish flourish I'd seen him use in fancy company.

Arni just sat at attention, but I lifted his paw to help him wave back. The boss shot me a look like I was embarrassing him, but I didn't care. I wasn't making fun of the samurai, even if they were all above me. I was just helping Arnisant tell them how we both felt, common fellows that we were.

It'd been an honor.

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BESTIARY

A TERRIBLE, PIERCING WAIL RANG OUT, LIKE THAT OF AN INFANT STUNG BY A WASP, BUT SHRIEKED AT SUCH AN EAR-SPLITTING PITCH IT SEEMED TO SHAKE THE LEAVES OF THE WILD ORCHARD. DISGUST AND WINE-COLORED JUICE COVERED SUOU'S FACE AS HE SPAT WILDLY, CHOKING TO AN EXTENT THAT VOMITING WOULD HAVE BEEN A MERCY. HIS WIDE, PLEADING EYES JOLTED UP TO MEET MINE. UNABLE TO SPEAK, HE LOOKED DOWN INTENSELY, BRINGING UP TREMBLING HANDS. IN THEM ROCKED THE SAME PINK, PEACH-LIKE FRUIT I HELD IN MINE, BUT HIS BORE DOUBLE HORRORS—BOTH A TINY, WRINKLED FACE FROM WHICH ISSUED THE TERRIBLE WAIL, AND THE MARK OF A SINGLE DEEP BITE.

—IZUMI KAYOYA, TEA FROM THE GARDEN OF TEARS

BESTIARY

Creatures from the fears and legends of Minkai fill this entry of the Pathfinder Adventure Path. Whether monstrous titans, like the gashadokuro or the wind yai, or more subtle terrors, like the jinmenju tree or rokurokubi, these ancient of monsters eagerly seek the blood of strangers from distant lands.

Special Thanks: Veteran game designer Owen K.C. Stephens deserves a special mention here alongside the final caravan encounters, the vast majority of which he's been designing since the first volume of this Adventure Path. Thanks again to Owen for populating the path from Sandpoint to Kasai and for all his fantastic work!

CARAVAN ENCOUNTERS

As the caravan makes its final travels across Minkai, there's a 10% chance of an encounter each day. Encounters indicated with an asterisk (*) have a 50% chance of occurring at night while the caravan is camped—all other encounters occur while the caravan is on the move. Encounters don't occur if the caravan camps at a settlement. If an encounter occurs, roll on the following table to see what the PCs have encountered. Note that all of the following encounters are caravan encounters and use the caravan combat rules found in the *Jade Regent Player's Guide*.

Forest of Statues (CR 1): The caravan comes upon a small clearing just off the road, which contains dozens of fine stone statues of humanoids in simple dress. Each statue includes a small plate next to an inscription asking strangers to leave offerings to help the poor. If offerings totaling at least 1 gp per person in the caravan are left (regardless of who leaves them), the caravan finds an abandoned masterwork wagon (detailed below) just as it reaches its camp for the night. The statues are not encountered again, even if the caravan backtracks to the clearing where they were found. If this result is rolled a second time, it counts as no encounter.

MASTERWORK WAGON

Cost 1,200 gp; **hp** 40

Traveler Capacity 6, **Cargo Capacity** 6

Limit none; **Consumption** 1

Special Benefit +1 bonus to caravan AC

Origami Crafter (CR 1)*: The caravan encounters an old woman traveling alone (N female human commoner 6). She offers to fold paper cranes for the caravan, at 1 cp each, as tokens of good luck. If the members of the caravan buy at least 1 origami crane from her, they gain a +3 luck bonus on Security checks on the next caravan encounter. The origami crafter is not encountered again; if this result is rolled a second time, it counts as no encounter.

Earthquake (CR 10): A considerable amount of geological activity roils beneath Minkai, causing irregular but

MINKAI CARAVAN ENCOUNTERS

d% Roll	Encounter
01–15	Forest of statues
16–55	Origami crafter*
56–75	Earthquake
76–90	Company of hobgoblins
91–00	Imperial dragon

dangerously destructive tremors throughout the area. The caravan finds itself near the epicenter of one such unpredictable tremor—possibly a natural occurrence, possibly an attack by deadly oni spellcasters. The caravan must make a DC 25 Resolve check each round for 1d6+1 rounds as tremors, unpredictable fissures, and jets of volcanic gas tear through the earth. For every failed check, each wagon takes 4d6 points of damage. The caravan can gain bonuses on these checks by casting individual spells, such as *transmute rock to mud* to cushion the caravan from the shaking land or *teleport object* to remove wagons from danger, though casting the latter only protects wagons affected by the spell; unaffected wagons are damaged as normal.

Company of Hobgoblins (CR 15)*: A company of 60 hobgoblins led by a dozen ja noi oni (AC 26; **hp** 240, **Attack** +20/+20/+20/+20/+20/+20; **Damage** 2d6+6) attacks the caravan. The company comprises six patrols of 10 hobgoblins and two ja noi each; for every 40 points of damage the company of hobgoblins takes, it loses one attack (five attacks from 161–200 hit points, four attacks from 121–160 hit points, and so on). If the company loses 120 or more hit points, the survivors try to flee, and the caravan must succeed at a DC 25 Resolve check to prevent the foe from escaping. If the caravan manages to defeat all of the hobgoblins, its members find 1d4+1 units of cargo among the hobgoblins' equipment and past plunder.

If the company does escape, there is a 10% chance each day for the next 2 weeks that a random caravan encounter is another company of hobgoblins, called by the survivors of the first attack to attempt a second assault.

Imperial Dragon (DR 15): An imperial dragon (AC 30; **hp** 220; **Attack** +24; **Damage** 5d8+50) lands in the center of the caravan, and demands to be told why the presence of foreigners is good for the lands it protects. If any character in the caravan makes a DC 30 Knowledge (arcane, history, local, or religion) check, she can explain the benefit of the caravan to the dragon's satisfaction. Otherwise, the dragon demands reparations for potential damage the caravan may cause (2,000 gp, or 1 wagon, or 2 horses, or 10 cargo units), or insists the caravan takes a new route (costing 3d6 days of travel). Failure results in the dragon attacking for 2d4 rounds, after which time it flies away.

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GASHADOKURO

This massive skeleton appears to be the animated bones of some giant humanoid. As it lumbers forward, the bones and skulls of countless smaller creatures rattle inside its massive rib cage and fall from the intersections of its joints.

GASHADOKURO

CR 13



XP 25,600

NE Huge undead

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +20

Aura starvation aura (60 ft., DC 24)

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 8, flat-footed 28 (+20 natural, -2 size)

hp 180 (19d8+95)

Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +14

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; DR 10/bludgeoning; Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +22 (2d8+10 plus grab), 2 claws +23 (2d6+10/19-20)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (30-ft. cone, 12d6 bludgeoning damage, Reflex DC 24 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), corpse consumption, swallow whole (6d6 bludgeoning damage, AC 20, 18 hp)

STATISTICS

Str 30, Dex 11, Con —, Int 6, Wis 17, Cha 21

Base Atk +14; CMB +26 (+30 grapple); CMD 36

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (claws), Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (claws)

Skills Climb +23, Intimidate +32, Perception +20

Languages Common (cannot speak)

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Su) A gashadokuro can expel a blast of jagged bone shards from its maw as a standard action. In addition to tearing through any creatures within range, the shards from this attack cover the ground in a thick layer of bone and detritus, causing the affected area to become difficult terrain.

Corpse Consumption (Su) If a gashadokuro kills a creature by using its swallow whole special ability, the gashadokuro automatically consumes its victim's body, gaining a number of hit points equal to the victim's Constitution score. This ability cannot heal a gashadokuro beyond its maximum number of hit points. Consumed creatures cannot be resurrected by any effect short of a *miracle* or *wish* spell until the gashadokuro that devoured them is destroyed.

Starvation Aura (Su) A gashadokuro emits a powerful aura that causes all creatures within range to feel the intense pains of starvation. Every creature within 60 feet must succeed at a DC 24 Fortitude save or become fatigued and succumb to the supernatural starvation of the gashadokuro, taking 2d6 points of nonlethal damage at the end of its turn each round if it remains in the area at this time. Even after leaving the area or slaying the gashadokuro, an affected creature continues to starve and cannot heal from the nonlethal damage dealt by this ability until it gets food (see page 444 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* for rules on starvation).

Gashadokuros are enormous skeletons that come into being as a result of mass starvation, the countless victims of such a tragedy fusing together into an undead colossus that continues to hunger even in death. Although a gashadokuro may



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at first appear to be the skeleton of some giant humanoid, the detritus sifting through its joints and its deadly ability to absorb creatures quickly reveal that the animated horror is something far more terrible.

A gashadokuro's size depends on the scale of the famine that caused its emergence, with more devastating food shortages resulting in larger gashadokuros. A typical gashadokuro is 30 feet tall and weighs up to 5,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Gashadokuros usually form in the wake of horrible natural disasters such as floods, droughts, or destructive storms that destroy crops and leave thousands without food. As hunger turns into famine and famine turns into death, the spirits of the dying sometimes leave a fragment of their pain and hunger embedded in their physical bodies. When the haunted corpses begin to decompose and sink into the ground, the bones do not fertilize the nearby grubs and plants as would normal bone meal, but instead become the devourers, absorbing countless vermin and showing the first sparks of undead energy as the bone shards and bits of marrow begin to move through the dirt of their own accord. The cursed bones of the starved victims congregate beneath the soil, and when they finally stitch themselves together and take the form of a gashadokuro, the undead monstrosity bursts forth and begins an endless search to satisfy its unearthly hunger.

Although its body is composed mostly of bones and other organic material that never fully decomposed, a gashadokuro is far from mindless, and still possesses a flicker of intelligence. The combined intellects of so many once-living creatures weave together into a rudimentary but dark cunning, and the undead colossus uses its feral instincts to hunt living creatures, forever seeking to sate its ineradicable, collective memory of starvation. A gashadokuro's tombstone-sized teeth and jagged claws are more than capable of destroying most foes, but it wields simple tools—such as an unearthed tree trunk used as a club—when it needs some sort of weapon to crush its opponents.

In a grisly mockery of human digestion, a gashadokuro may capture a dead victim in its jaws and incorporate the corpse into the innumerable bodies that churn within its massive chest cavity. In a matter of seconds, the corpse begins to turn into bleached, brittle bones, its indigestible possessions falling through the gaps in its skeletal frame as the giant lumbers on. Only when the gashadokuro's rib cage is completely filled with the bones of victims does its terrible hunger subside. But as the creature wanders and small vestiges of its meals tumble slowly from within, a gashadokuro starts to know hunger once again, and it resumes its hunt for new prey. A gashadokuro will hunt and kill anything, its appetite knowing no bounds. Nonetheless, it prefers larger creatures in the hope that such food will end its perpetual craving. Tales tell of ranchers who

unknowingly raise their livestock in a gashadokuro-plagued area, awaking to find all of their cattle gone, a trail of prematurely bleached bones leading into the distance their only clue as to their animals' whereabouts.

Although the bones cradled within a gashadokuro's torso serve to abate the creature's hunger, the behemoth also uses them as deadly weapons against more formidable prey. In combat, a gashadokuro sprays a wicked blast of fragmented bone shards at its foes, the deadly shrapnel flaying skin from enemies, stripping bark from trees, and punching through plate mail. After it has slaughtered its opponents, the gashadokuro picks up the bloody bodies and consumes them in its gruesome fashion, converting its victims' bones into additional fuel for its deadly attacks.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Gashadokuros can arise from almost any terrain, although they are most common in harsh, resource-strapped lands like scorching deserts or icy tundra. However, even urban areas can give rise to one of these predatory horrors if its people succumb to the right mix of hunger and despair. Once formed, a gashadokuro's ability to range knows no bounds, and such terrors often travel hundreds of miles beyond their place of emergence to feed.




Despite its ability to understand the common tongue of the starved individuals who make up its bulk, a gashadokuro cannot be bargained with and does not make allies, even among its own kind. Its voracity drives it ever onward, and it knows no distinction between good and evil victims, wreaking havoc wherever it goes with no regard for the target of its endless craving. A gashadokuro's single-minded destructiveness can often unite even the bitterest and most ancient of rivals in tenuous pacts to rid the land of its monstrous presence. Occasionally, evil clerics and powerful necromancers can bend a gashadokuro to their will and, if successful, unleash the monster as a scourge against their enemies. Few risk such an attempt, however, as most evil spellcasters know that should they lose control over such a powerful minion, the consequences would be dire.

The intentional creation of a gashadokuro is almost unheard of, as the drawn-out suffering and deprivation required to create such mass starvation require time and a concerted effort few can muster. However, there have been instances of particularly heinous rulers who have sought the power of such an undead goliath, starving their people to death in order to use the ensuing monster as a weapon in war or for some other detestable purpose. More often, though, cruel warlords and merciless generals who wish to create such a horrific beast take the opposite route and attempt to cut off their enemies' access to food, effectively striking the targeted nations twice when the famished citizens starve, then rise from the earth as gashadokuros eager to destroy those whom they may have once called allies and kin.

JADE REGENT

JINMENJU

A low hum surrounds this huge, gnarled tree. The rotten fruits that hang from its sickly branches look vaguely like human heads, and each fleshy melon drips with a thick rope of ooze.

JINMENJU	CR 11	  
XP 12,800		
N Huge plant		
Init +3; Senses all-around vision, blindsight 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +17		
Aura unsettling drone (30 ft., DC 18)		
DEFENSE		
AC 25, touch 7, flat-footed 25 (–1 Dex, +18 natural, –2 size)		
hp 136 (13d8+78)		
Fort +14, Ref +5, Will +5		
Immune poison, plant traits		
OFFENSE		
Speed 10 ft.		
Melee bite +15 (2d6+8/19–20), 2 slams +16 (1d8+8)		
Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.		
Special Attacks enticing head-fruits, intoxicating stench		
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +15)		
At will—reach <i>share memory</i> * (DC 14)		
3/day— <i>sculpt sound</i> (DC 15), <i>shout</i> (DC 16)		
* See <i>Ultimate Magic</i> .		
STATISTICS		
Str 27, Dex 8, Con 22, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 15		
Base Atk +9; CMB +19; CMD 28		
Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Lunge, Reach Spell** (<i>share memory</i>), Weapon Focus (slam)		
Skills Perception +17		
Languages Common		
** See the <i>Advanced Player's Guide</i> .		
ECOLOGY		
Environment temperate hills or mountains		
Organization solitary		
Treasure incidental		
SPECIAL ABILITIES		
Enticing Head-Fruits (Su) A jinmenju's head-fruits produce powerful toxins that cause hallucinations and compel nearby creatures to eat the rotten melons. As a swift action, a jinmenju can alter the appearance of any of its head-fruits to take on the particular face of any creature the tree has seen or has memory of. If it cannot determine what kind of face or form would be most appealing to a particular target by using its <i>share memory</i> spell-like ability, a jinmenju makes its head-fruit take the appearance of a delicious-looking melon. A jinmenju can alter its head-fruits into any combination of up to a maximum of six faces or shapes at one time. Any creature that begins its turn within 5 feet of a head-fruit must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or be magically compelled to immediately grab the head-fruit and eat it as soon as		

possible. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect. A creature that successfully saves is immune to that jinmenju's enticing head-fruits for 24 hours. A head-fruit removed from a jinmenju's branch retains some of the tree's magic and maintains its shape for 1d3 hours before reverting to its natural form. The save DC is Constitution-based. In addition to tasting terrible, a jinmenju's head-fruits are incredibly poisonous, and anyone who takes a bite out of one suffers from the following effect.

Head-Fruit Poison: Head-fruit—ingested; save Fort DC 22; frequency 1/round for 6 round; effect 1d3 Wisdom damage and confused for 1 round; cure 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Intoxicating Stench (Su) Once per day as a swift action, a jinmenju can cause its fruit to immediately begin to ferment, emitting an unnaturally sweet aroma in a 60-foot spread that draws creatures toward the tree. Once activated, the aroma persists for 6 rounds unless dispersed by moderate or stronger wind. All creatures within the area must succeed at a DC 22 Will save each round or become captivated. Once a creature becomes captivated, it takes no actions save to approach the jinmenju via the most direct route possible. If this path leads it into a dangerous area, such as through fire or off a cliff, that creature receives a second saving throw to end the effect before moving into peril. A victim that is attacked by the jinmenju gets a new saving throw as a free action during each of the jinmenju's attacks to overcome the effect. This is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Unsettling Drone (Su) A jinmenju's numerous head-fruits emit a low, persistent hum that unnerves any living creature who hears it. Any creature within 30 feet of a jinmenju must succeed at a DC 18 Will save or become shaken until it leaves the affected area and for 1d4 rounds thereafter. A creature that successfully saves is immune to that jinmenju's unsettling drone for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

One of the more disquieting plants native to Tian Xia, the jinmenju is an eerie tree that grows in hilly regions far from civilization. While a jinmenju otherwise appears to be nothing more than a twisted, gnarled cherry tree, the fruit that hangs from its branches makes it impossible to mistake for any other flora, for each fleshy melon possesses the semblance of a human head.

In their natural form, a jinmenju's head-fruits—which sag from the branches and look entirely too heavy for the short, stringy vines they hang from—resemble dark brown melons with vaguely humanoid facial features. A jinmenju can alter these head-fruits to resemble virtually any form, making the rotting melons attractive or at least intriguing to potential prey. Using its ability to delve into nearby creatures' memories, a jinmenju simulates the appearance of whichever creature (or fruit) will draw prey within

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range of its branches, which it uses to pummel enraptured creatures to unconsciousness before devouring them. A jinmenju's head-fruit retains a magical connection to the tree that bore it, so even after it is lopped from its branch, a transformed melon still bears the likeness chosen by the jinmenju, though the tree's compulsion effects remain distinctly tied to the tree itself.

ECOLOGY

A jinmenju's head-fruits are covered in a thick skin that is easy to bite into, with an outmost layer similar in texture to that of a lumpy peach. Whenever potential prey nears a jinmenju, it wills its fruit to prematurely begin the rotting process. In addition to enticing its prey with hallucinations, a jinmenju can instantly ferment its head-fruits, emitting a sweet, intoxicating odor that lures creatures to the tree and captivates them. Those who have tasted a head-fruit and lived to tell of the experience claim that the fruit's flesh has a mushy consistency that makes it hard to hold in one's hands, and as it slips from one's grip, the world seems to melt away as well.

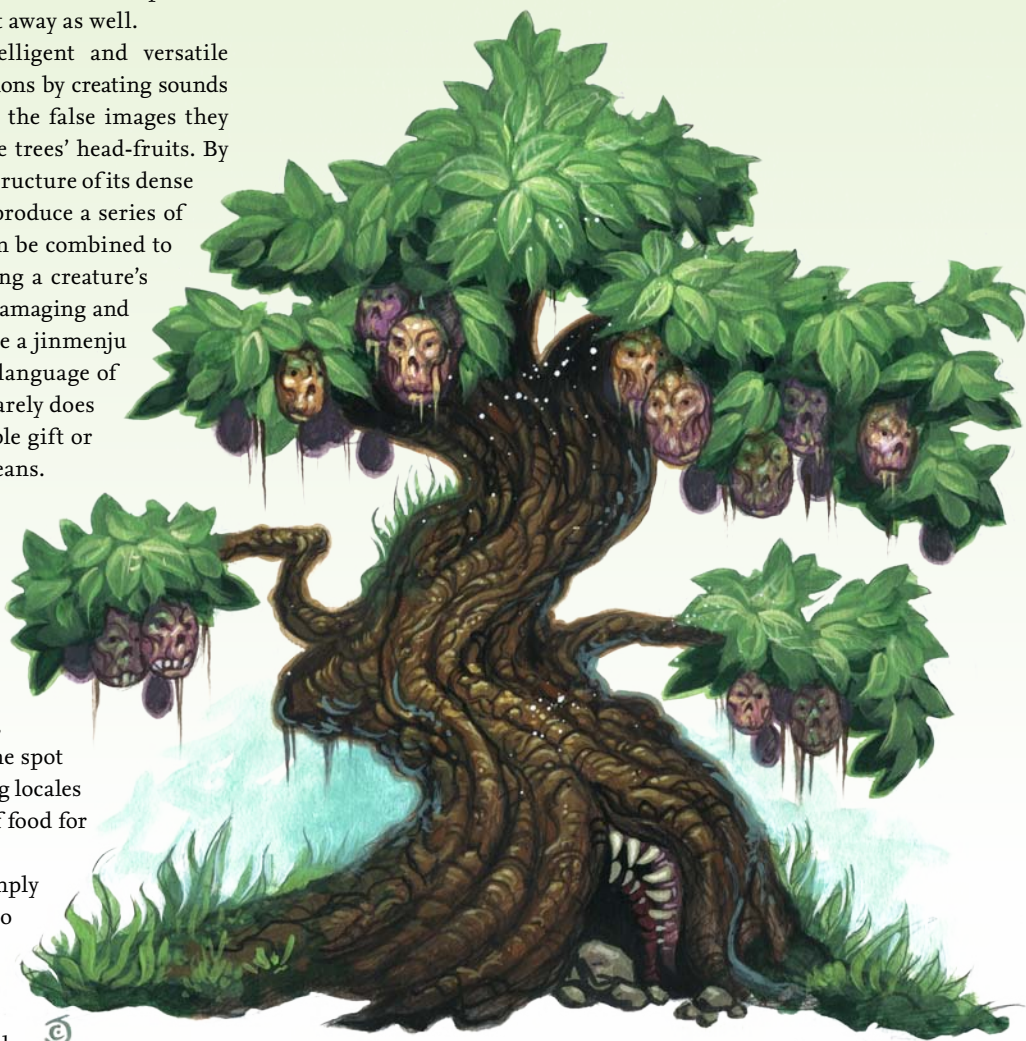
Jinmenjus are remarkably intelligent and versatile plants, and can augment their illusions by creating sounds to further convince creatures that the false images they are seeing are real as they near the trees' head-fruits. By making minute alterations to the structure of its dense but flexible bark, a jinmenju can produce a series of cracks, shudders, and pops that can be combined to imitate almost any sound, including a creature's voice or bursts of noise capable of damaging and deafening the tree's enemies. While a jinmenju can communicate in the common language of those it most often encounters, it rarely does so unless it has been given a suitable gift or is forced to speak by some other means.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Jinmenjus are found primarily in hilly and mountainous regions, far from any civilization whose residents might seek to put an end to such a deceptive and ravenous creature. Eternally patient, jinmenjus usually reside in the same spot for hundreds of years, only changing locales if their current location runs out of food for an extended period of time.

While most jinmenjus are simply hungry predators that have no interest in interacting with other intelligent creatures, some will communicate with others if given payment in the form of food,



though many jinmenjus also desire particular magical or mundane objects they have learned of while scanning their targets' memories throughout the years. Once it has been befriended, a jinmenju may provide creatures with some of its vast wealth of acquired memories, though such a relationship is tenuous in the extreme, and only the most hardy creatures can withstand a jinmenju's magic long enough to provide the tree with an offering and ask for its knowledge. Brave or foolhardy adventurers seeking knowledge of their ancestors or perhaps lost loved ones may seek a jinmenju, hoping its expansive collection of memories might contain clues or information about the person they seek. Even if such folk do manage to convince the fickle tree to share some enlightening memory, they are often heartbroken when the jinmenju callously informs the memory-seekers afterward that it killed and devoured their sought-after friend, and so those who dare seek a jinmenju's knowledge should be careful of what questions they ask.



JADE REGENT

ONI, WIND YAI

A third eye rests on the forehead of this ornately robed giantess, her figure half-shrouded in the darkness of a starry night that swirls continuously about her.

WIND YAI **CR 16**   

XP 76,800

LE Huge outsider (air, giant, native, oni, shapechanger)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +28

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 11, flat-footed 28 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +16 natural, –2 size)

hp 230 (20d10+120); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +20, **Ref** +9, **Will** +17

Resist sonic 5; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee mwk morningstar +32/+27/+22/+17 (3d6+12) or
2 slams +30 (2d6+12)

Ranged shocking missile +21 touch (4d6 electricity plus deafen)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks roaring gale

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +21)

Constant—*cloak of winds**, *fly*

At will—*darkness*, *gaseous form*, *invisibility* (self only), *levitate*
3/day—*control weather*, quickened shout (DC 19), *wind wall*

1/day—*chain lightning* (DC 21), *whirlwind* (DC 23)

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

STATISTICS

Str 35, **Dex** 16, **Con** 22, **Int** 15, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +34; **CMD** 47

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Combat Casting, Combat
Reflexes, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull
Rush, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*shout*),
Weapon Focus (morningstar)

Skills Bluff +28, Disguise +28, Fly +25, Intimidate +28,
Perception +28, Perform (string) +28, Sense Motive +28,
Stealth +17

Languages Common, Giant

SQ change shape (Medium, Large, or Huge humanoid; *alter
self or giant form II*)

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate mountains

Organization solitary, gang (2–4), or storm (5–8)

Treasure standard (masterwork chain shirt, masterwork
morningstar, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Roaring Gale (Su) As a standard action three times per day, a
wind yai can select a point within sight on which to conjure
a violent updraft, violently flinging its opponents into the
air. When it uses this ability, the wind yai must make a
single bull rush combat maneuver check (CMB equal to
the wind yai's caster level + its Cha bonus; +21 for most

wind yai) against all creatures in a 10-foot-radius burst.

Any creature with a CMD score lower than the result of this
check is hurled 1d6 × 10 feet straight up, and lands prone in
a spot 1d4 × 5 feet from its original position. The wind yai
selects the direction it wishes to throw its victims, and may
select a different direction for each victim, though each
must be thrown in a straight line. Creatures take falling
damage for any impacts while traveling up or down in this
way; if a creature collides with an object during its sideways
movement, both the creature and the object take 1d6 points
of damage and the creature is knocked prone in the space
adjacent to the obstacle.

Shocking Missile (Su) As a swift action, a wind yai can fire a bolt
of electricity from its third eye as a ranged touch attack. This
attack has a range of 180 feet with no range increment, and
deals 4d6 points of damage. If the creature struck is wearing
metal armor or is made of metal, it instead takes 4d8 points
of damage. Upon being struck by this attack, the victim must
make a DC 25 Fortitude save or be deafened for 1d4 rounds.
The save DC is Charisma-based.

Wind yai may take after the graceful cloud giants in
general appearance, but given their hard, icy stares and
the brooding manner in which they carry themselves,
observers may not immediately relate the two races.
Whereas cloud giants wear their finely made robes
and ornate jewelry with an air of regality and serenity,
their oni imitators manage to make even the humblest
garments and adornments seem ostentatious, and are
always shrouded in an air of darkness that many liken to
an ill omen. Though wind yai look as though they have
one foot in the light of day and the other in the darkness
of night, the shadow that perpetually swirls about the
otherworldly beings is not the result of any natural source;
in actuality, the supernatural night that constantly
follows wind yai is a raw magical manifestation of their
foul intentions and evil nature.

Wind yai do not shape the winds—they force their will
upon them, commanding the powers of the sky to commit
acts of domineering brutality with none of the natural
grace normally associated with the element. Whereas a
cloud giant is always accompanied by a gentle breeze, the
malicious wind yai brings with it only furious storms, the
chaotic winds tossing its hair about and blowing dust into
its unblinking triad of eyes.

A wind yai is 20 feet tall and weighs over 5,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

A wind yai does not appear to walk upon the ground so
much as glide across it—but even then, its exaggerated
movements and overbearing demeanor make every footstep
a thunderous stomp. An unexpected wayward breeze is
enough to throw a stony-faced wind yai into a fit of rage,

BESTIARY

the delicate motions of nature an ever-present reminder of the wind yai's own blustering presence and lack of grace. Thus are wind yai desperate to gain some semblance of control over the capricious winds, and they use their sheer might and monstrous resolve to bend that untamable force to their will, taking pleasure in not only controlling nature, but also using it for unnatural acts of destruction.

Wind yai tend to wear thick, showy robes and heavy jewelry, though their great strength still allows them to move swiftly and with ease. Like all yai, wind yai each possess a third eye through which they can emit rays of destructive energy. In the case of wind yai, this powerful beam takes the form of a lightning bolt, as the oni channel the very essence of the storm into their attacks, simultaneously electrocuting their opponents while rendering them deaf with the cacophonous boom of thunder that follows the attack. They also possess the unique ability to send their foes flying into the air, commanding bursts of wind to carry their enemies aloft and bring them crashing back to the earth.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Cloud giants possess one other thing wind yai yearn to claim mastery over—their instruments. But rather than use such delicate tools to create melodious works of art, wind yai are interested in their more destructive properties, and have a particular respect for bards, especially those who bend others to their will with their music. Thus do they tend to seek out such rhythmically inclined individuals, and when faced with a foe who possesses musical skill, wind yai will invariably seek to keep that individual alive, so they can force it to serve as the wind yai's enslaved jester and musician. An ensnared performer is usually forced to entertain its master until its fingers are cracked and raw and it inevitably falters while playing. Wind yai are hardly patient creatures, but nothing sets them off in quite the same way as a weak or inept musician, and even the most innocent mistake can mean the fatal end for an indentured bard. When wind yai are not presented with a suitable performer to capture and dominate, they seek out magical instruments, having a particular affection for rare, magical instruments, especially those with strings. A wind yai takes great pride in its musical possessions, and also finds a unique pleasure in assembling masses of enslaved musicians to perform thunderous symphonies.

Wind yai also take great pleasure in dominating cloud giants, perhaps even more so than bards, as they revere cloud giants' heavenly melodies above all others. Rather than apprehend these giants one by one, however, wind yai seek to dominate entire tribes of such beings, using their powers over the skies to trick particularly superstitious groups into thinking the oni are earthbound demigods or celestial messengers sent from on high. Groups of wind yai can be an even fiercer force, gathering entire legions of cloud giants under their command and leading them in aerial campaigns against helpless creatures on land. Evil cloud giants tend to make the best soldiers for wind yai leaders, though if the oni can manage to sway good-aligned cloud giants under their banner, the subsequent wars they wage are all the more satisfying.



JADE REGENT

ROKUROKUBI

This human-sized woman is dressed in simple peasant clothing. From her shoulders sprouts a grotesquely long neck that coils about like a snake, and razor-sharp teeth fill her gaping maw.

ROKUROKUBI	CR 14
XP 38,400 LE Medium monstrous humanoid Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +21 Aura nightfall aura (15 ft.)	
DEFENSE	
AC 28, touch 16, flat-footed 22 (+6 Dex, +12 natural) hp 195 (17d10+102) Fort +11, Ref +16, Will +13 DR 5/cold iron; Immune sleep effects; SR 25	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft. Melee bite +24 (2d6+4/19–20 plus rokurokubi's curse), 2 claws +23 (1d6+4) Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (20 ft. with bite) Special Attacks elongate neck Spells Known (CL 12th; concentration +17) 6th (3/day)— <i>permanent image</i> (DC 21) 5th (6/day)— <i>feeblemind</i> (DC 20), <i>nightmare</i> (DC 20) 4th (7/day)— <i>charm monster</i> (DC 19), <i>confusion</i> (DC 19), <i>locate creature</i> 3rd (7/day)— <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>fly</i> , <i>keen edge</i> , <i>wind wall</i> 2nd (7/day)— <i>ghoul touch</i> (DC 17), <i>invisibility</i> , <i>knock</i> , <i>touch of idiocy</i> 1st (8/day)— <i>charm person</i> (DC 16), <i>disguise self</i> , <i>obscuring mist</i> , <i>shocking grasp</i> , <i>sleep</i> (DC 16) o (at will)— <i>arcane mark</i> , <i>detect magic</i> , <i>detect poison</i> , <i>ghost sound</i> (DC 15), <i>mage hand</i> , <i>message</i> , <i>open/close</i> , <i>prestidigitation</i> , <i>read magic</i>	
STATISTICS	
Str 18, Dex 23, Con 22, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 21 Base Atk +17; CMB +21; CMD 37 Feats Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Deceitful, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (bite) Skills Bluff +26, Climb +24, Disguise +26, Intimidate +25, Perception +21, Stealth +26 Languages Aklo, Common, Tien	
ECOLOGY	
Environment any ruins Organization solitary, pair, or harem (3–6) Treasure standard	
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Elongate Neck (Ex) A rokurokubi can stretch her otherwise normal-looking neck up to 20 feet in length, giving her reach with her bite attack and allowing her to threaten all foes within this range. In addition, she can deliver touch spells with her head.	

Nightfall Aura (Su) A rokurokubi can choose to surround itself with an aura that simulates the most terrifying aspects of night, creating a sphere of *darkness* and *silence* (as the spells) with a radius of 15 feet. A rokurokubi is immune to the effects of her own nightfall aura, and can activate or suppress this ability as a free action. The *darkness* and *silence* effects can each be dispelled; if either of these effects is dispelled, a rokurokubi can reactivate her nightfall aura as a free action on her next turn.

Rokurokubi's Curse (Su) *Curse of Silence*: save Will DC 23; effect the target takes 1 point of Charisma damage per day, and its throat gradually closes in on itself, until the creature becomes permanently silenced after 1d4 days.

Spells A rokurokubi casts spells as a 12th-level sorcerer.

Rokurokubis are evil, sorcerous humanoids with malevolent origins and even viler intentions. Always taking the form of women, rokurokubis seek to spread as much mayhem and despair as possible, using their wicked magic to ruin lives, tear families apart, and at worst, maim and murder innocents. Such monsters make their homes within civilized societies and disguise themselves as simple commoners, but they take the form of monstrous hags with serpentine throats during the night (and even in the shadow of daylight should the mood strike them), and delight in the taste and feeling of warm blood running down their gullets.

At first glance, a rokurokubi looks much like any ordinary human woman. Upon closer inspection, however, her frail appearance and sickly hued skin begin to hint at the being's true nature. When a rokurokubi reveals her monstrous ability to stretch her neck to inhuman lengths or begins to weave her arcane sorcery, there can be no doubt as to her sheer otherworldliness. When she wills it, a rokurokubi may snake her long, rubbery neck up to 20 feet from her body. Down the length of this otherwise smooth, fleshy appendage, evenly spaced vertebrae show as sickening knobbles, lending further grotesqueness to the creature's already disturbing appearance.

While most prefer to utilize their dark magic to devastate enemies from the shadows, rokurokubis are far from helpless when forced to face foes head-on, and can be exceptionally canny combatants if cornered, using their long necks to deliver devastating bites to short-limbed foes at a distance. The aura of darkness and silence that surrounds a rokurokubi makes combating the fiend difficult for creatures that rely on melee attacks to damage or disable their foes but lack the ability to see in the dark.

When her neck is not distended from her body, a rokurokubi is 5-1/2 feet tall and weighs 150 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Rokurokubis' wan skin ranges in hue from pale blue to muted green, and thus most cover up their flesh with

BESTIARY

makeup or wear concealing robes and gowns to disguise their identities. Their gnarly hands and fingers are perhaps the most difficult traits to hide, and thus many rokurokubis take to wearing loose-fitting gloves or clothes with oversized sleeves to mask their hands while in public. They use their bites in combat to gruesome effect, and their jagged teeth are like the creatures' necks in that they can be shortened and lengthened at will.

Rokurokubis are born and raised by their mothers. In order to reproduce, a rokurokubi must seek an unsuspecting humanoid male as her partner, though she may also occasionally copulate with more monstrous creatures—race matters not to a rokurokubi, whose savage and rapacious nature knows no bounds. Regardless of her partner's race, the offspring of a rokurokubi is always a rokurokubi, and rarely do such monstrous children bear any resemblance to the father, instead acquiring almost all their features from the mother who bore them, though they undoubtedly carry a spark of the father's nature within them as well, usually manifesting as odd quirks or obsessions with particular hobbies or activities. A rokurokubi's sire rarely has the chance to see his child come into being anyway, however, as the man is usually slain immediately after he has fulfilled his purpose and his vile partner has tired of his presence.

A rokurokubi's bizarre anatomy allows her to carry a child without her belly broadening noticeably, and she can even host multiple children of different fathers simultaneously, though with a third or fourth simultaneous pregnancy she does begin to show signs of fatigue as well as a widening girth, her already fragile body pushed to its absolute limits.

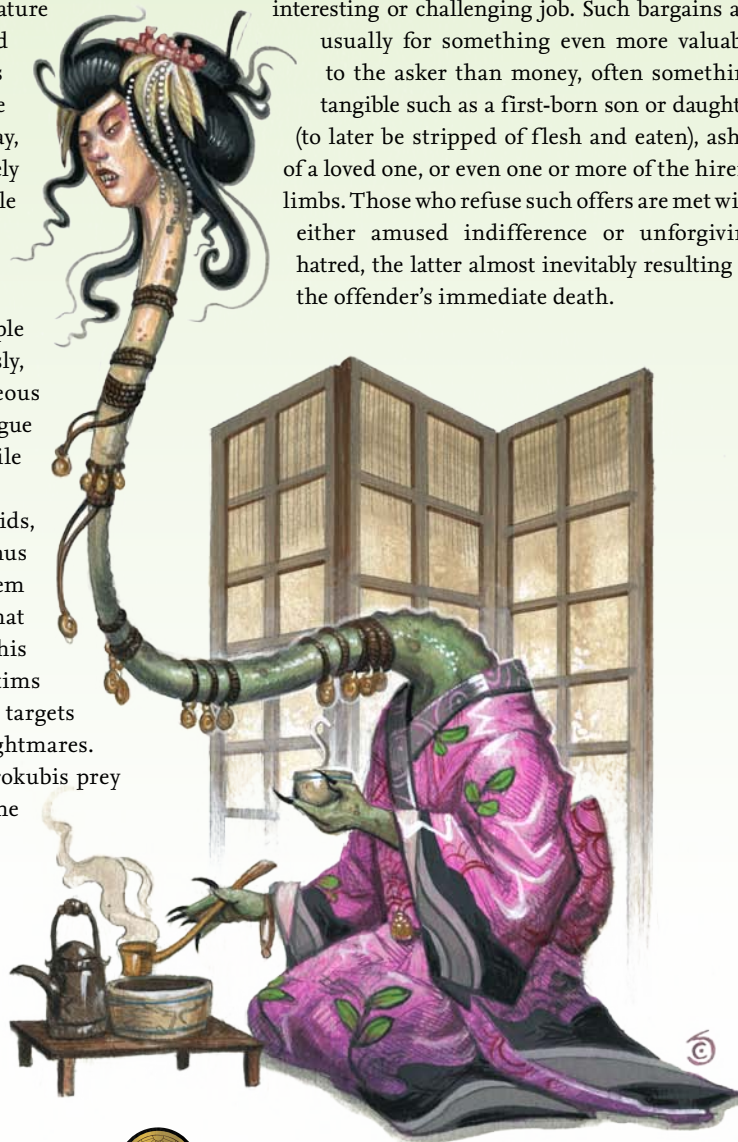
Unlike most other monstrous humanoids, rokurokubis have no need for sleep, and are thus immune to magical effects that would cause them to do such. Nonetheless, they understand that other creatures require such rest and utilize this weakness, shaping their magic to render victims unconscious, at which point they cause their targets further harm in the form of relentless nightmares. As most other creatures sleep at night, rokurokubis prey upon unsuspecting victims during this time more than any other.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Rokurokubis tend to make their homes in dark, dank, secret places, far from settlements and the activities of what they deem to be lesser races. Caves, long-forgotten burial mounds, and deserted or crumbling homesteads are all likely hideouts

for these dangerous creatures. Solitary creatures by nature, rokurokubis leave their mothers shortly after they are old enough to survive on their own. When they do congregate, they usually do so only to execute complex, sinister plans that would be impossible to enact by themselves.

Rokurokubis' affinity with the night and their unusual physiology make them natural rogues and hunters, apt as they are at peering around corners and through windows as well as trapping victims in clouds of inky blackness and silence. While some rokurokubis seek no allegiances and only wish to kill for the sheer sport of it, others see the advantages in forming tentative alliances and making themselves available as assassins and spies, and thus sell their services to those foolish or desperate enough to seek them out. The cost of such a monstrous mercenary is usually exorbitant; rokurokubis have been known to strike deals with those customers who can't afford to pay them but who still entice them with a particularly interesting or challenging job. Such bargains are usually for something even more valuable to the asker than money, often something tangible such as a first-born son or daughter (to later be stripped of flesh and eaten), ashes of a loved one, or even one or more of the hirer's limbs. Those who refuse such offers are met with either amused indifference or unforgiving hatred, the latter almost inevitably resulting in the offender's immediate death.



NEXT MONTH

THE WORMWOOD MUTINY

The adventurers wake up in the hold of a ship at sea, only to discover they've been press-ganged into a crew of scoundrels, thieves, and buccaneers from the pirate isles of the Shackles. When they're assigned to a captured ship as part of a skeleton crew, the adventurers finally have a chance to stage a mutiny, but a sudden storm strands them on an isolated island inhabited by strange monsters. Can the adventurers survive the dangers of the island to overthrow their cruel captors and take control of their own destinies? Will they become feared pirates with their own ship, or will they meet their ends in a watery grave?

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A warrior haunted by his past, Salim is a problem-solver for a church he hates, bound by the death goddess to hunt down those who would rob her of her due. Such is the case in the desert nation of Thuvia, where a merchant on the verge of achieving eternal youth via a magical elixir is mysteriously murdered, his soul stolen from the afterlife. The only clue is a magical ransom note offering to trade the merchant's spirit for his dose of the fabled potion. But who could steal a soul from the boneyard of Death herself? Enter Salim, whose unique skills should make solving this mystery a cinch. There's only one problem: The investigation is being financed by the dead merchant's stubborn and aristocratic daughter—and she wants to go with him. Together, the two must embark on a tour of the Outer Planes, where devils and angels rub shoulders with fey lords and mechanical men, and nothing is as it seems.

From noted author and game designer James L. Sutter comes an epic mystery of murder and immortality, set in the award-winning world of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game.



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To an experienced thief like Krunzle the Quick, the merchant nation of Druma is full of treasures just waiting to be liberated. Yet when the fast-talking scoundrel gets caught stealing from one of the most powerful prophets of Kalistrade, the only option is to undertake a dangerous mission to recover the merchantlord's runaway daughter—and the magical artifact she took with her. Armed with an arsenal of decidedly unhelpful magical items and chaperoned by an intelligent snake necklace happy to choke him into submission, Krunzle must venture far from the cities of the merchant utopia and into a series of adventures that will make him a rich man—or a corpse.

From veteran author Hugh Matthews comes a rollicking tale of captive trolls, dwarven revolutionaries, and serpentine magic, set in the award-winning world of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game.

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ON THE DRAGON SEAS

The sails of Minkaian traders are among those most welcome in ports across the Dragon Empires. Junks laden with the treasures of that country command attention wherever they might land, their finely crafted goods and curiosities highly coveted among the rich and prestigious of dozens of nations. But such attention isn't always welcome. Pirates of the surrounding seas mark Minkai's ships as priority targets, with seafaring bandits hailing from Minkai itself, as well as from lands across the waves—and even more sinister thieves that rise from the depths below, and care little for the lives of air-breathers.



TARNISHED STEEL

The recent decades have not been kind to Minkai's warrior class. The rise of the Jade Regent meant the fall of several of the nation's most influential families, and with them, the duties and prestige of serving such nobles. Many of the samurai who once enjoyed respected positions found themselves dismissed, hunted, or forgotten. While many hung up their blades to find more common work, others forsook their honor to become petty bandits. Still others, however, seek only a spark to rekindle their fighting spirit and take up their blades against the enemies of their nation, restoring their tarnished honor at last.

DEATH TO THE TYRANT

Revolution brews in the empire of Minkai as the people take up arms to throw off the yoke of their unnatural oni masters. With the populace rising, the heroes lay siege to the capital of the empire, the ancient city of Kasai. There, they must discover the secrets of emperors past and seek the aid of ageless beings, gathering all the allies they can for a final assault on the bastion of the murderous Jade Regent. Will the heroes and their companions be able to bring an end to the warlord's tyranny? Or will Minkai remain locked in the grip of true evil? Confront the powers of destiny and shape the fate of a nation in this, the exciting final chapter of the Jade Regent Adventure Path.

This volume of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* includes:

- “The Empty Throne,” a Pathfinder RPG adventure for 13th-level characters, by Neil Spicer.
- A gazetteer of the city of Kasai, capital of the mysterious nation of Minkai, by Frank Carr and Michael Tumey.
- Plots and high-level threats to continue your Jade Regent campaign, by Patrick Renie.
- Deceit and revelation in the Pathfinder's Journal, by Dave Gross.
- Four new monsters, by Jesse Benner, Tork Shaw, and Owen K.C. Stephens.



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