

THE
IMPERIAL

HERALD

VOL. 2 / NO. 11

KOTEI 2004
NEWS AND LOCATIONS

ENLIGHTENMENT
NEW STORYLINE REVEALED

SNEAK PREVIEW

THE **HIDDEN CITY**

TIME TO FORGE NEW STORIES...

...YOURS

THE HIDDEN CITY

IN THE LONELY SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAINS OF THE PHOENIX CLAN STANDS A CITY THAT SHOULD NOT BE. The Imperial Histories record that Gisei Toshi was destroyed centuries ago. The City of Sacrifice perished in a mysterious fire, and even its ruins were forgotten.

The Hidden City is the Isawa family's darkest and most closely guarded secret. Many of the immortal Iuchiban's own creations now reside here under lock and key.

But now Iuchiban has returned. The Bloodspeaker armies march upon the Phoenix, poised to crack the walls of the Hidden City and claim its secrets. Can even the greatest heroes of Rokugan stop them? Or will they, like Gisei Toshi, be buried in the mountains and forgotten?

The second expansion in the Diamond story arc, *The Hidden City*™ introduces over 150 new cards, exciting new mechanics, and debuts Formation; a new action. Explore the new Crab, Lion, and Shadowlands strongholds, or power up your existing decks with this landmark expansion set. **On sale in April.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON
Legend of the Five Rings
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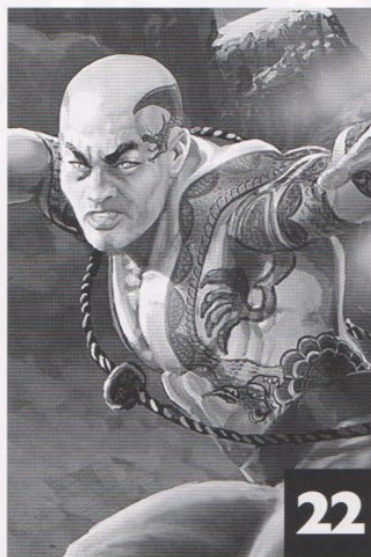
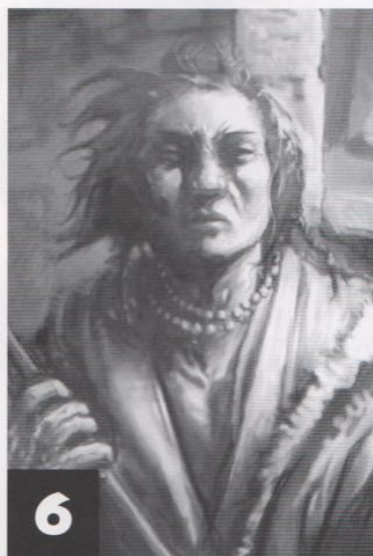


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THE
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HERALD

THE OFFICIAL LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS™ QUARTERLY VOL. 2 / NO. 11



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Editorial

At the beginning of each year, I'm faced with new plans, decisions and goals. Last year, our highlight was designing Diamond Edition and releasing it as the best L5R set ever published. That was 2003 and its now 2004.

We've got an entirely different focus. Our primary goal this year is improving your L5R experience. Plans are in place and in motion to improve storyline and tournament result reporting. This includes an improved interface in which to upload your results to Organized Play.

Up to date online storyline results are in the works. We're working on our website yet again. There's always room for improvement, and we feel that storyline effects should top our lists. Progress reports from store tournament kits and convention results are on their way. Instead of waiting months before finding out how your clan did in an event, you'll be able to just visit our website to find out how your clan is doing now.

Improved Prize Support is on the way. Tournament organizers, if it isn't already in place by the time you read this, you'll soon have more choices of which prize kits you want to offer your players. From 8 player tournaments to satisfying 64 or more!

We're improving Imperial Assembly member privileges. Exclusive votes and storyline implications are available to players of certain clans. Just because your clan didn't win a major tournament, doesn't mean you won't get to affect the storyline. And most importantly, only Imperial Assembly members get this opportunity.

We've implemented the Player Design Team. We want to hear what you guys think should be in the set, so we've chosen four respected players to tell us what that is. Their first task was working on Hidden City which you'll see at the end of April.

That's just to start. Many more improvements that specifically affect you are on the way. It's going to be an exciting year and I can't wait to get into the thick of it.

— Raymond Lau
L5R Brand Manager



LEGION OF THE DEAD

2004 Legend of the Five Rings Story Event

by Shawn Carman
and Rich Wulf

Of all the Spirit Realms, few are so highly honored as Yomi. It is the Realm of the Blessed Ancestors, the place where great heroes pass after a life well lived. It is this place where the great heroes dwell. It is here that they continue their battle against evil and dishonor as members of the Blessed Guard.

Once before, the Blessed Guard rode forth into the mortal realm. At Ryoshun's call they passed through Oblivion's Gate and became mortal. With Toturi himself at their head, they struck down the minions of the Lying Darkness and helped restore the Empire to order. Sadly, the return of so many caused great chaos

and strife in the Empire, as the War of the Spirits shook Rokugan to its core.

Now the return of Iuchiban has thrown the Spirit Realms into disharmony. The soldiers of the Blessed Guard know that they cannot stand idle, but neither do they wish to harm the Empire as they once did. Even if they had the desire to return, Oblivion's Gate is broken — the dead can no longer walk as the living.

But the spirits of heroes are not without power. The Blessed Guard have selected the greatest among their number to form the Legion of the Dead. These mighty heroes will return to Rokugan to guide their descendants, to help them find the courage and strength to fight the Bloodspeakers.

Kotei

Each player who wins a Kotei during the 2004 Kotei season will gain the opportunity to select a hero to join the Legion of the Dead. Each winner can select any personality who died as a member of their faction. This person will become a member of the Legion of the Dead.

Any winning Shadowlands player will be given the right to choose a dead member of their faction to join the Legion of Blood, an army of wicked spirits set to prevent the Legion of the Dead from coming to Rokugan's aid. These two forces will confront one another across the fields of the Spirit Realms, vying for the souls of the Rokugani people.

At the end of the Kotei season a series of fictions will describe the battle between these chosen souls, and detail their fates.

If the number of corrupted and Shadowlands Kotei wins is greater than the number of pure and Tainted Kotei wins, the Legion of the Dead will be forced back into Yomi, and Iuchiban's power will increase dramatically. If the number of pure wins are greater, the Legion of the Dead's guidance will help the Great Clans in rooting out many hidden Bloodspeaker agents and strike a powerful blow against the Heartless.

GenCon

Whatever may occur in the Kotei season, the battle between the Legion of the Dead and the Legion of Blood will reveal one truth — Oblivion's Gate still has some small shred of power within it. One dead soul will be allowed to pass through this gate, and be restored to mortal life. This personality will be chosen from the list of ALL personalities chosen during the Kotei season. Further, this personality will gain the faction trait of the player who wins GenCon (possibly losing former faction traits if keeping both would be inappropriate).

Some Notes on Choosing Characters

This prize is one of the biggest story prizes offered in L5R History — the chance to select your favorite hero and return them from the dead. However, as it is such a huge prize it also carries a few rules on what constitutes as 'dead,' both to preserve continuity and to make things more interesting.

What Cannot Be Picked:

For a personality to be chosen, it must be a personality who was a member of your clan at the time of their death, and who has not returned to life since their death. The following are some examples of personalities who are not valid choices for this for one reason or another:

Some Examples:

Toturi Tsudao — Was never a personality card, thus is not a legal choice.

Dairya — Was not a member of a clan when he died, thus is not a legal choice.

Togashi Yokuni — Has been reincarnated as Togashi Satsu, thus he cannot return twice. Picking him would be a waste of your prize as this story has already been told.

What Can Be Picked:

Rules for who can or cannot be brought back are similarly flexible. Personalities who 'died' but went on to serve as Fortunes are valid choices — they will not lose their Fortune status but will merely return to Rokugan in much the same manner as Hida Osano-Wo frequently does. Personalities with limited story coverage and no confirmed death or appearances during the Gold Story arc may be assumed to be dead. Personalities who did not technically die, but were removed from the game in a manner that resembles death, might also be valid choices.

Some Examples:

Daidoji Uji — No confirmed death. Choosing him would both reveal the manner of his death and bring him back.

Hida Kisada — Is now the Fortune of Persistence, could be brought back to the Empire.

Bayushi Kachiko — Not technically dead, but bound in the lake beneath Kyuden Bayushi. Could be freed from the lake if selected.

Hida Kuroda — Also not technically dead. Could be freed and purified if selected.

All tournament winners should make contact information available to the tournament organizer so if their choice is not valid an alternate choice can be given. Any players who wish to know in advance if a choice is valid can contact Rich Wulf, L5R Head Storyline Writer, at rwulf@alderac.com.



THE HIDDEN CITY

SNEAK PREVIEW

by Jeff Alexander

Winds of Change brought new life into L5R's political scene by focusing on the neglected Courtier element of the game. *Reign of Blood*, besides the expected Bloodspeaker element, emphasized pure Shugenja, the Clans that use them and the cards they use. It is only right that the cycle complete itself and for *Hidden City* to concentrate on the only remaining major Personality type in L5R: the Samurai.

At Last, Samurai

Samurai don't have much going for them. Their only built-in mechanical effect is killing themselves to mitigate an honor loss if they are directly involved in one. Sure, the occasional card like *Daisho Technique* sees print, but for the most part, the only

offensive advantage Samurai have ever held over the other major Personality types is more Force for the same cost. And there were periods when they didn't even have that.

No longer. *Hidden City* gives this core Personality type its long-overdue moment in the sun. Those studying the ways of the kami or practicing courtly manners have little experience leading troops on the battlefield, so the bulk of the Followers in this set will attach only to Samurai or Bushi. Many Items in the set will only attach to them as well, or will attach to anyone but give more benefits to those with an honorable military background. Formations (which I'll get to in a bit) will be hard to play without a field of Samurai or Bushi.

That "or Bushi" is important. While Samurai are the intended focus, we are quite aware there are Clans with a decidedly military focus that don't sport many fully-fledged Samurai. Granting Bushi these benefits brings things closer to equal, and makes sense in the game world. Bushi have much the same training and experience as Samurai, if not comparable social status.

Spearmen, Line Up! Archers, On My Mark!

A well-trained army doesn't march onto the field swinging their swords wildly at the enemy. A well-trained army organizes its units into tactical positions: archers spread in a line on a hill, pikemen stand several ranks deep to receive charges, cavalry ride in a wedge to divide and conquer



opposing lines. Eastern and Western military history are rife with tactics and formations that have been envisioned, refined, and eventually abandoned as technology marches swiftly on.

Formations are an attempt to represent that in the CCG. While many Battle actions, like *Wedge* or *Infantry Square* (from *Ambition's Debt*), reflect a unit briefly assuming a certain formation, they are all one-shot deals. Terrains are lasting, but they don't reflect Formations well conceptually because a Formation is something both armies can to adopt independently.

So, Formations are a new type of Action card. They require a certain mix of units in your army, but they give a lasting benefit for as long as you can maintain that. The goal is to make large battles more appealing, and give military clans, particularly the slower ones, a viable approach to a military victory besides setting up a single big early unit.

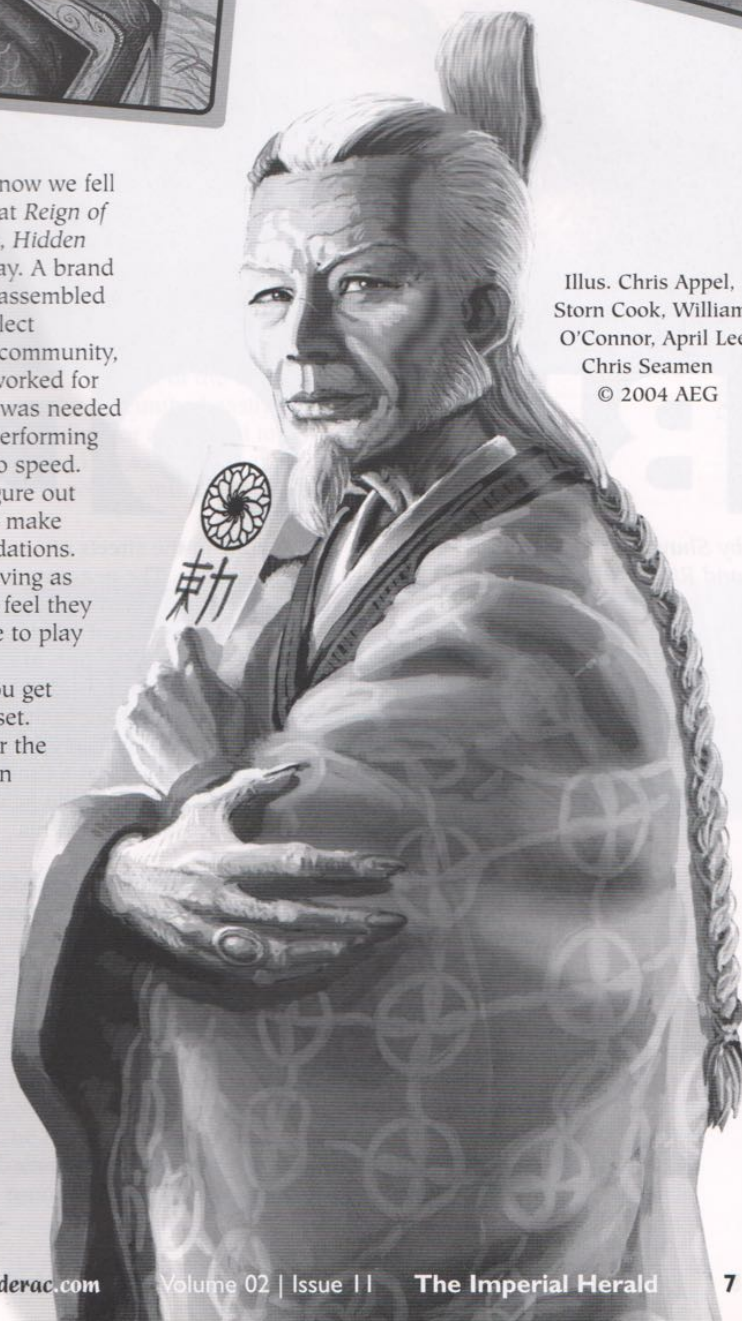
To help make large battles common enough for Formations to be worthwhile (not to mention Battle actions in general), *Hidden City* also tries to cut down on early and easy Province and Personality destruction.

Fortune of Perseverance

The original balancing plan in *Diamond Edition* for the Clans that tended to go second was better gold production and higher quality to their Stronghold-buyable

Personalities. It seems now we fell short of that mark. What *Reign of Blood* began to address, *Hidden City* finishes in a big way. A brand new Design Team was assembled from employees and select members of the player community, then this select group worked for weeks discussing what was needed by Clans that weren't performing well to bring them up to speed. The Team needed to figure out what was going on and make appropriate recommendations. We're serious about having as few players as possible feel they can't win if they choose to play their favorite Clan.

Oh, and Ratling? You get nine Personalities this set. *Nine*. This makes up for the four you didn't get when everyone else in *Reign of Blood* did. Past this point we're committed to giving you the same number per expansion as every other faction. You shouldn't have fewer experimenting options than anyone else.



Illus. Chris Appel, Storn Cook, William O'Connor, April Lee, Chris Seamen
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BLOODLUST

by Shawn Carman
and Rich Wulf

Shouting was audible in the streets of Friendly Traveler Village. The peasants moving through the streets, hardy folk accustomed to life among the Crab, went quickly about their business, heads ducked. It was a matter of pride that these men and women lived side-by-side with those who protected the Empire from harm, but as proud as they were of their lords and masters, they feared them. And when a Crab displayed the temper that struck fear into the hearts of the Shadowlands, a wise peasant minded his own business.

A lone figure strode down the path that divided the village. A daisho rested in a casual stance, and a wide straw jingasa covered his features. Long dark hair spilled out over his shoulders in the style frequently worn by the Kakita. This man was no Crane, however. His kimono was emblazoned with a mon detailing a smiling carp. The Yasuki family mon. The image of a stylized ring of iron surrounded the symbol, signifying the man's position as a magistrate.

The man walked calmly and confidently to the front door of a sake house. Although such a house

would be tiny compared to the massive establishments found in Ryoko Owari or Toshi Ranbo, it was easily the largest and most opulent in the small village. Friendly Traveler Village was, after all, home to the finest sake works in the Empire. Everyone in Rokugan knew it to be so. After all, the Yasuki told them it was. Smiling at the thought, the man threw open the front door and entered the House of the Smiling Fish.

"You dare insult my family?" a very large, considerably inebriated samurai was shouting. The man was truly gigantic, easily as large as any Hida warrior, but his colors marked him as a Crane. Amazingly enough, his mon was that of the Doji family.

"N...no, no of course not," stammered a much smaller man. This one wore the same mon as the newcomer, that of a smiling carp. "You... you only heard a part of our conversation. You were, uh... taking it out of context. That's all! This is just a mistake."

"A mistake!" the Doji roared. "So I'm a fool now, am I?" He swayed ever so slightly, another sign of his drinking. But there was a deadly clarity in his eyes. Drunk he may be, but still very dangerous.

"What is going on here?" the newcomer asked in a pleasant tone of voice.

The Yasuki looked up at the magistrate, obviously relieved. "Takei-sama!" he exclaimed happily. "Thank the Fortunes you're here!"

Takei raised a hand and cut the other man off. He smiled slightly, in a reproving manner. "That will be quite enough from you, Nuroka. When I want to hear some pathetic excuse for shameful behavior, I'll let you know." Ignoring the other man's crestfallen expression, Takei turned to the drunken Crane and rolled his eyes. "Please forgive my cousin, Doji-san. He's a bit of an idiot. He can't help it, though. His mother used to drop him a lot when he was a child."

Nuroka blinked absently. He, too, had been drinking. "She did?"

"Doji-san," Takei continued. "I'm sure that my cousin here said something very stupid and insulted you. On behalf of my family, I apologize for his idiocy."

The Crane frowned. "I must have satisfaction." One hand gently brushed the hilt of his katana.

"Come now, friend," Takei continued fluidly, "do you really want to do that? I mean, I of all people certainly understand the urge to thrash Nuroka here, but what if matters escalate? He has no chance at all against you in a duel. He's a bit of a clod, after all. You would almost certainly kill him, and then what? Your lord and mine will be angry that a duel was conducted without authorization. You would likely be called home to be punished. And then you could not enjoy our fabulous sake, which is, if I may say so, quite exceptional."

The Doji squinted and nodded absently. "It is quite good, yes. But..."

"But your honor, of course," Takei said, holding both hands palmed up. "It would be my great pleasure to discipline my cousin for you, my Crane friend."

"What?" both of the combatants said at the same time.

"Yes," the Crane rumbled with a great grin. "I would enjoy that. You can even buy!"

"Wonderful!" Takei said again. He turned to Yasuki Nuroka, his expression growing sullen. "As for you," he withdrew a folded fan and struck his cousin once sharply across the cheek, leaving a red welt. "You will come with me. Now." With one last smile to the Crane, the magistrate led Nuroka outside, closing the door behind them.

Once outside, Takei's expression changed to one of exasperation. He struck Nuroka again with the fan, this time playfully on top of the head. "What is wrong with you? Are you trying to get killed?"

Nuroka rubbed his head. "It's not my fault he has such good hearing."

Takei weighed the fan in his hand, perhaps debating another strike. "Did you pick the biggest Crane you could find on purpose?"

The other man shrugged. "I thought he was so drunk it wouldn't matter."

The magistrate shook his head in defeat, sliding his fan back in his obi. "You really are an idiot, then. That man is expecting you to be severely beaten. Either you can take a few bruises for show, or you can spend the rest of the week drinking down the street at the Laughing Mujina."

Nuroka frowned. "The sake there is too watery. It might be worth the bruises."

"Get away from me," Takei said with a grin, shoving his cousin from the porch and sending him staggering down the street. "And tell your mother I will be there for dinner tomorrow." He watched his friend and cousin head down the street with an ever so slight sway to his step. Nuroka was a good man and a loyal servant of the Crab. His only true flaw was that he succumbed easily to temptation. It was a terrible failing for a samurai to possess, but thus far Nuroka had avoided any major disasters. Takei hoped he could continue to do so.

"Yes," Takei said firmly. "As magistrate here, it is my duty. I would be greatly pleased to aid you, my friend." He bowed to the Crane respectfully. "Then you could stay and enjoy the rest of your bottle. It would be a shame to waste it."

The Crane glanced back at his table where the bottle sat waiting. He licked his lips slightly. "Yes, my Yasuki friend. I think I will accept your generous offer."

"Outstanding!" Takei said with a broad smile, holding his arms wide. "I hope I can join you later for a drink?"

The sound of sandals kicking up dirt as they ran through the streets reached Takei's ears. He turned and searched the many roads that met in this section of town to try to determine the origin of the sound. The failing light of late afternoon made him squint, but his eyes widened when he saw the boy running toward him.

"Jubei," he called, stepping down from the sake house's raised stone porch. "Jubei, what is it?"

The boy said nothing, only stood there gasping for breath. He was terribly pale, and his eyes were



wide with fear. His hands were trembling, and Takei's smile disappeared in an instant. "Another?" he asked the boy.

Jubei nodded.

Takei felt anger and sorrow flare within him. "Show me."

The house was little more than a shack that sat on the edge of Earthquake Fish Bay. There was a crude but sturdy dock right behind it, obviously built by hand. It was painful for Takei to look on something that was so obviously a labor of love, the house and dock, together, the very picture of a simple fisherman's dream. Knowing what awaited him inside made it all the more agonizing.

Kyuru stood waiting for Takei, his face nearly as pale as the boy's. He inclined his head respectfully. "Hello, Takei-sama. We have touched nothing, as you instructed. We sent for you as soon as we found it. Him. As soon as we found him."

"Thank you, Kyuru," Takei said absently, looking past him toward the house. He looked at the yoriki expectantly. "Is it like the others?"

The younger man swallowed. "It is worse, Takei-sama."

Takei clenched his fists and nodded, saying nothing. Without a word he slipped past his deputy and entered the house, ducking his head to keep from striking it on the overhang. The air inside was

heavy and rank, stinking of rotting meat and copper. The magistrate wrinkled his nose in disgust, but maintained his silence. Inside the tiny house, his second deputy stood waiting with another man clad in filthy robes. Takei nodded to them both, then examined the body that lay twisted and broken in the floor.

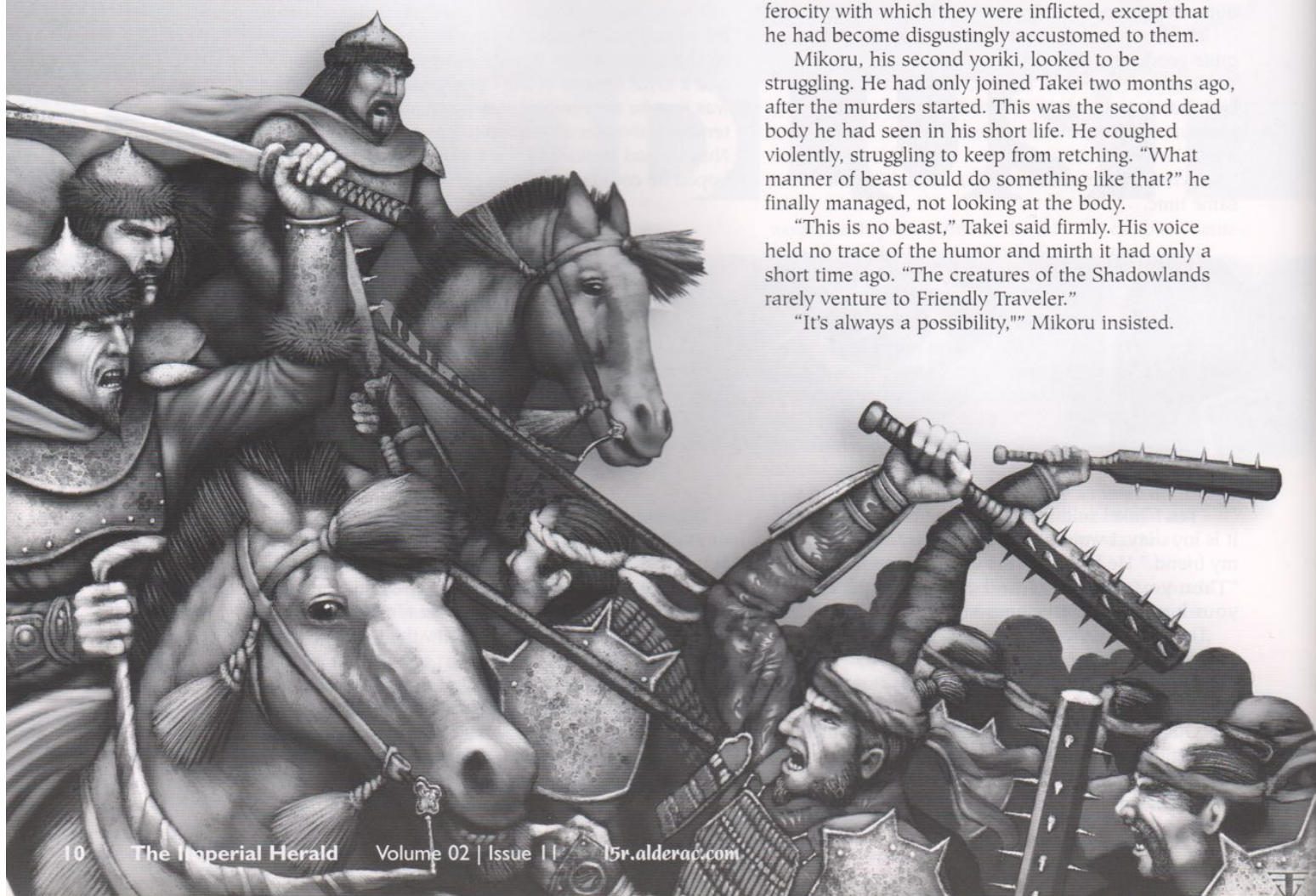
This man, a simple fisherman, had died a terrible death. His body had been twisted and warped in ways that nature had never intended, and the expression on his cold, dead face told Takei that he had suffered enormously before the end finally came. Blood was scattered all about the interior, so much so that Takei had to take care to keep from getting it on his clothing. He could see that his men had done the same. There were places where the blood appeared to form writing, but it was nothing that the magistrate could read, nor had any of those he had contacted about the strange symbols been able to tell him anything further. Takei had had ample opportunity to seek such assistance. This was the eighth such body to be discovered over the past four months.

Takei looked to the eta that accompanied his second yoriki and nodded. The little man bowed very deeply and stepped forward to move the body as Takei directed. At his nod of approval, the eta pulled aside the tattered remnants of clothing that covered the dead man's torso. The wounds there were the same as the others. Takei would have been sickened by them, by their extent and the obvious ferocity with which they were inflicted, except that he had become disgustingly accustomed to them.

Mikoru, his second yoriki, looked to be struggling. He had only joined Takei two months ago, after the murders started. This was the second dead body he had seen in his short life. He coughed violently, struggling to keep from retching. "What manner of beast could do something like that?" he finally managed, not looking at the body.

"This is no beast," Takei said firmly. His voice held no trace of the humor and mirth it had only a short time ago. "The creatures of the Shadowlands rarely venture to Friendly Traveler."

"It's always a possibility," Mikoru insisted.



"I do not think so." The magistrate shook his head. "The corpse is mutilated, yes, but nothing is missing. A ravenous beast would have devoured the flesh. That leaves the possibility that this was a sacrifice by some Shadowlands tsukai, but the murder scene bears no symbols of Fu Leng, no trappings of dark magic. As wicked an act as this is, it does not smell like the Shadowlands to me."

"What is it, Takei-sama?"

The Yasuki glanced around the room, his trained eyes taking in every detail. "A man did this."

The yoriko wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "What sort of man would do such a thing?" The greenish color in his face had not subsided, and he did not glance down as he spoke.

"A sick man," Takei answered. "The Hida call it *ranshin*. It is not unusual for madness to strike so close to the Wall. Sometimes the horrors in these lands light a fire in a man's mind. He tries to ignore it, to bury it deep and extinguish it. But no matter how much he tries, he cannot control it. It builds and builds, until the burning is all he can feel. When that happens..." He gestured to the room around them. "He must find fuel to slake the fires... he must kill."

Mikoru looked perplexed. "Do you mean that he cannot help himself? That whoever did this is not responsible for their actions?"

"Not responsible, perhaps" the magistrate said. "Not accountable? That is a different story. It falls to us to help this killer... and to help others by making certain he does not kill again. We will ease his pain, at the end of a sword if need be." He rested his hand on the hilt of his blade as he continued to study the grisly scene.

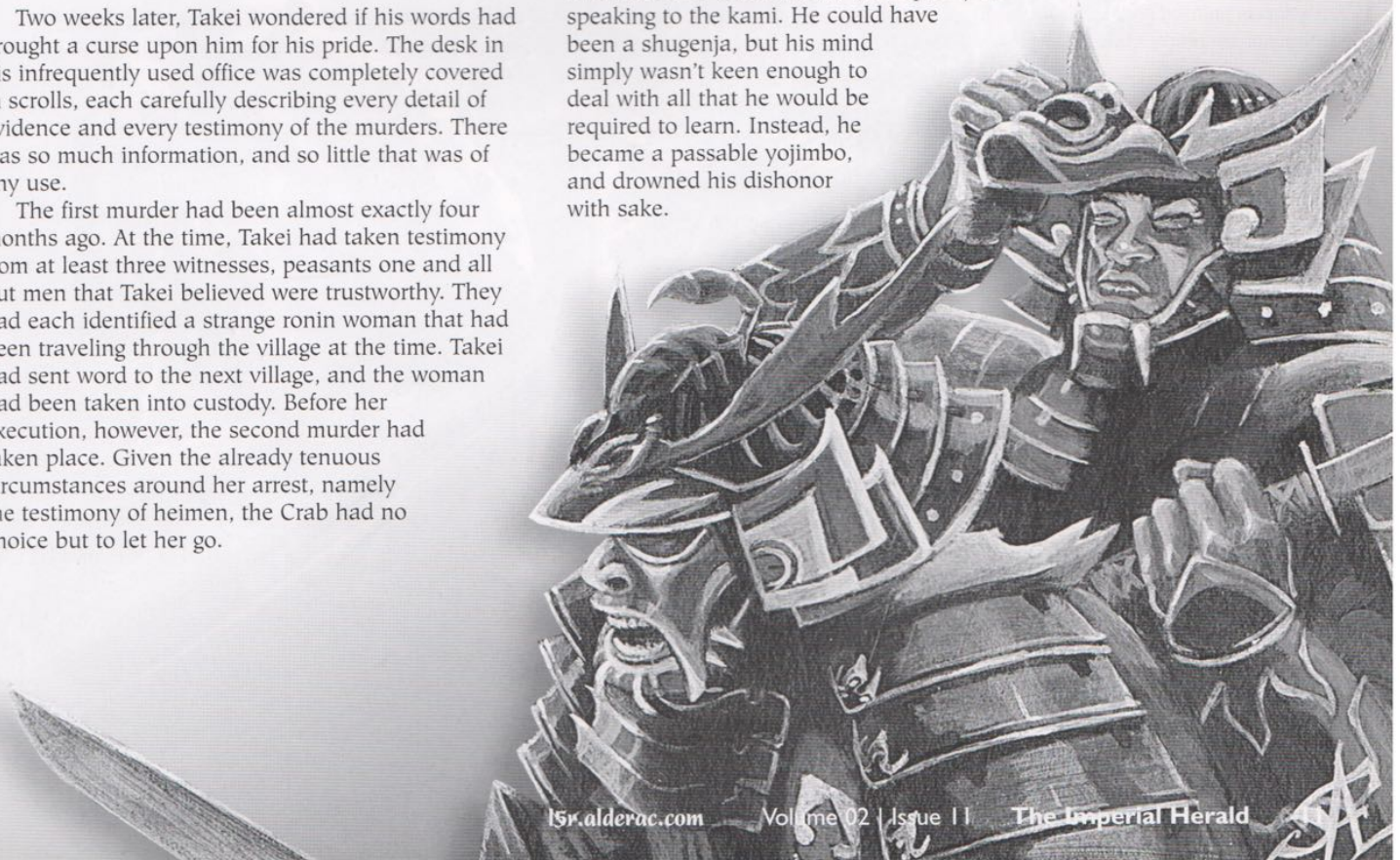
Two weeks later, Takei wondered if his words had brought a curse upon him for his pride. The desk in his infrequently used office was completely covered in scrolls, each carefully describing every detail of evidence and every testimony of the murders. There was so much information, and so little that was of any use.

The first murder had been almost exactly four months ago. At the time, Takei had taken testimony from at least three witnesses, peasants one and all but men that Takei believed were trustworthy. They had each identified a strange ronin woman that had been traveling through the village at the time. Takei had sent word to the next village, and the woman had been taken into custody. Before her execution, however, the second murder had taken place. Given the already tenuous circumstances around her arrest, namely the testimony of heimen, the Crab had no choice but to let her go.

Since that time, there had been three more bodies. Four, Takei corrected grimly, four more murders, all spaced out at seemingly random intervals. With each body, Takei had struggled to find some link between the victims. Each time, his theories had been shattered with the appearance of some new body that seemed completely unconnected to the previous victim's death. The most recent one, a reclusive, unmarried fisherman, had ties to almost no one in the village. His death was utterly outside of the domain of reason. Takei could find nothing that associated him with any other victims, most of whom had been farmers or merchants of some sort. Indeed, the only time the fisherman would have seen other villagers would have been during trips to the shrines around it. He had been a pious man, it seemed.

Takei frowned. Why did that seem important? It seemed familiar. Why? He rummaged through the heavy scrolls for several long moments, occasionally unrolling one and looking over the contents. A former monk turned wheat farmer. A housewife. A miller. And in each case, the victim had at one point been firmly dedicated to religion. One had even studied with the Kuni Witch Hunters for a time before being expelled for incompetence. Not all had maintained their piety, but some had. What did it mean? He couldn't be sure.

A moment of insight struck. Takei stood up so suddenly that his thighs crashed into the edge of his desk, nearly knocking it over in his haste. He barely noticed. The murders made little sense, perhaps, but he believed he knew who the next victim might be. As magistrate, he must prevent any further deaths, and as a Crab, he must protect his brothers. Brothers like Yasuki Nuroka, a barely adequate soldier who had, as a child, shown the capacity for speaking to the kami. He could have been a shugenja, but his mind simply wasn't keen enough to deal with all that he would be required to learn. Instead, he became a passable yojimbo, and drowned his dishonor with sake.



Takei ran through the streets, the glare of lamps illuminating the night only intermittently as he raced toward the sake house. He threw open the door and leapt inside, looking all about for his cousin. Many familiar faces greeted him, and some lifted their cups to call out greetings to him. Most exclamations died when they saw the look on his face. "Nuroka! Where is he?"

"He... he left almost half an hour ago," one rare sober patron replied weakly.

Takei cursed under his breath and bolted back out the door as quickly as he had arrived. Again, his course took him weaving through the village toward Nuroka's meager home. He knew that there was no reason to suspect the murderer would strike again so quickly. No two killings had been so close together save for the first two. And yet, he could not put aside his feeling... no, his certainty... that his cousin was in danger. In moments, he reached Nuroka's home. He did not hesitate for one moment, but smashed through the thin wooden door with the tetsubo he had grabbed from his office on his way out.

The stench of blood was so thick it choked him. The interior was almost completely dark. Only a single candle illuminated the small room, and it was lying on its side near a smashed desk. Across the room, his cousin lay sprawled at a sickening angle on the ground. Hunched over him was the form of a man, sitting down on his haunches like an animal.

The figure glanced over its shoulder he approached.

Takei shouted a battle cry and hurled himself across the room, swinging the tetsubo with all his might. His target dove to the floor, missing the strike by inches. The tetsubo crashed into the wall and opened a hole the size of a man's head.

The murderer lashed out with a vicious kick that caught Takei right beneath the armpit. He hissed in pain and threw an elbow, striking his opponent across the top of the head. He grappled with the stranger for a moment, desperate to get a glimpse of the face in the darkened shadows, to no avail. The other head came forward once, twice, and then a third time, crushing Takei's nose and opening a gash on his forehead that send blood streaming into his eyes. He rolled away, cursing.

The sound of wood splintering forced Takei to his feet. He grabbed the discarded tetsubo and stumbled through the hole that had once been a rear wall of his cousin's home. The choppy waters of Earthquake Fish Bay greeted him, and he saw the faintest glimpse of someone disappearing beneath the waves.

The murderer was gone.



Convene the Imperial Assembly!



You tell the story...

As members of the Imperial Assembly, you have the opportunity to shape the future of Rokugan. The sordid tale of murder and betrayal you've just read is far from over, and the outcome has yet to be written. Your votes will determine how this saga, to be continued through fiction and flavor text, will develop.

Simply mark your selections on this ballot and return it to the address below to make your voice heard.

If you are not yet a member of the Imperial Assembly, the L5R fan club, and would like to take part in creating the largest on-going interactive storyline, see page 29 for a membership form and Join today!

Return this ballot (photocopies accepted) to:

Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.
Attn: Storyline Events
 4045 Guasti Road, Suite #212
 Ontario, California 91761

Bloodlust Storyline Ballot

1. Where will the murderer strike next? (Circle one)
 - A. Toshi Ranbo, the Imperial City
 - B. Ryoko Owari, the City of Lies
 - C. City of the Rich Frog, the City of War
 - D. Friendly Traveler Village
2. Where did this murderer come from? (Circle one)
 - A. A member of the Great Clans.
 - B. A ronin, driven mad by experiences on the wall.
 - C. A peasant, unhappy with his life under the samurai's rule.
 - D. A member of the Imperial Families, indulging in madness and using wealth and power to conceal his activities.
 - E. A gaijin, lost in the Empire and taking out his mad rage on its people.
3. What is the terrible secret behind the murderer's identity? (Circle one)
 - A. **Madness.** Sometimes, mankind needs no assistance to commit great evil. The murderer is an existing personality from one of the Great Clans, driven to commit these hideous crimes by a burning insanity that he struggles to conceal deep within the innermost regions of his soul.
 - B. **Possession.** Something utterly beyond the murderer's control drives him to sate dark, sinister urges. An item or being that the individual cannot control consumes him with its dark power, driving him to kill again and again, no matter the toll it takes on his honor.
 - C. **Corruption.** The murderer is lost to the Taint, though he may not yet realize it. The dark powers deep inside the Shadowlands reach out through their pawn, paralyzing entire villages with fear and weakening the Empire's precious unity.

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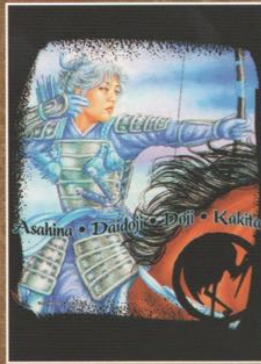
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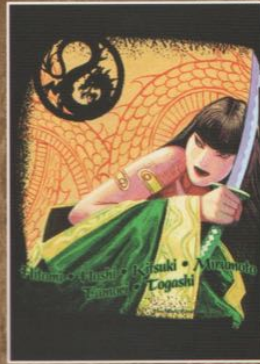
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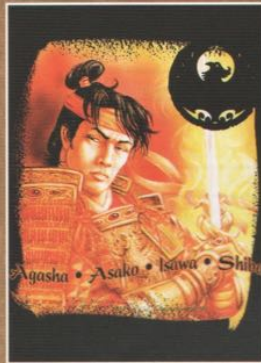
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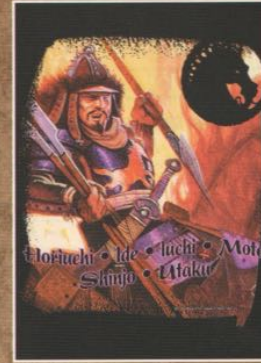
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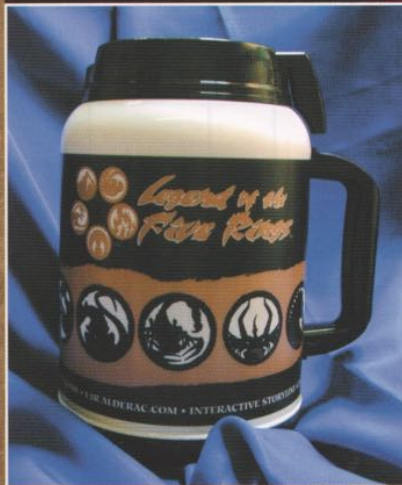


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STATE OF THE SCORPION

Illustration by John Dornan © 2004 AEG

The Wildcard Team of Diamond Edition

The Scorpion Clan is akin to a down-on-their luck football team right now. Having dominated in the previous season, it's as if all their star players have been traded away, their traditional tactics no longer work, and the owner isn't funding the clan enough gold bring the best players to each game. What happened? During the transition from *Gold* to *Diamond*, a lot of adjustments were made to the environment that ended up affecting each clan, but none as much as the Scorpion. Used to being at the top, the clan now finds itself at the bottom of the tournament circuit, with no relief in sight. Here's a short breakdown...

MVPs are MIA

Sunetra... Paneki... Kwanchai... some of the best recognized faces in the Scorpion starting lineup are now absent in *Diamond Edition*. Without Kwanchai's speed and dirty tricks, or Sunetra's movement, or Paneki's power, Team Scorpion lacks the punch to maintain their military dominance. In truth, some of the personalities were removed because they just wouldn't be needed as much in *Diamond* as they would in *Gold*. Without many of the Battle-ending Terrains, such as *Deadly Ground*, *Night Battle*, or *Entrapping Terrain*, *Shosuro Yudoka* was no longer required. Additionally, without the OG corrupt holdings that quickly ate away at a Scorpion's honor,

Bayushi Yojiro was no longer needed either.

Sunetra's and Kwanchai's movement has been replaced by the more subtle effects of *Bayushi Shunko*, *Yogo Soto*, and the recently-released *Soshi Uidori* in *Reign of Blood*.

No More Speed Gold

Zero gold cost and corrupt holdings also proved to be a major problem for the environment, but not for the Scorpion. With so many Personalities containing a "—" for an Honor Requirement, nearly all of the clan's best cards were able to take part of the speed advantage. This early game boost of speed allowed Scorpion to quickly overtake slower, more honorable clans... even with the use of cards such as *Kolat Assassin*, *Kolat Master*, and *Ambush*. Outside of Shadowlands, Scorpion was able to prey upon the weakest aspects of the environment, and turn them all to their advantage.

High Honor Goes First

Another change that affected the clan was the removal of cutting the Fate deck to add to the Starting Honor to see who begins a game first. While almost always starting second to Lion and Phoenix during *Gold*, at least they stood a chance to play first when paired up against Crab, Dragon, and sometimes Unicorn. The total absence of this option means the clan nearly always starts second, save for match-ups against Ratling and Shadowlands. Small consolation. The removal of Take

the Initiative was the nail in the coffin. Without that tempo-changing card, the toothless Scorpion now find themselves on the defensive as soon as the game begins. Not a good prospect for a Military deck.

Hope on the Horizon

Fortunately the state of affairs for this beleaguered does bear a seed or two of hope. First, improving the current gold scheme will allow Scorpion to gain advantage over high-honor competition. While a Lion or Phoenix deck is paying for another 2-for-2 holding, Scorpion would do well with a reliable 1st-turn holding that produces more. Clans, such as Mantis and Unicorn, that can duplicate the gold-production of their stronghold to grant them access to a much wider range of holdings. More gold also means larger Followers, bigger Items, and *Kolat Assassin*, which can have a more profound effect within a game if cast a single turn earlier.

Improving what abilities that the Scorpion Personalities possess will also make them more competitive, as low-honor clans like Mantis prove that the better the ability printed on the card, the more your Fate hand is freed up to do other things. Lastly, the Scorpion just need more hallmark "dirty tricks" at their disposal — the ability to turn the tides of battle when your opponent is least expecting it. If each of these areas can be improved over time, then the Scorpion will have a fighting chance, and reclaim their position in the Empire.

by Mark Jelfo

DIAMOND EDITION STRATEGY

Illus. Paul (Prof.) Hebert © 2004 AEG



by Scott Hadsall

"Good players make good decisions; less good players make less good decisions."
—Anonymous

First off, I don't claim to have the definitive answer regarding what assures a winning deck. When it comes to Legend of the Five Rings, there are any number of permutations regarding which cards in what clans are likely to generate victory conditions. While I can certainly suggest that a Shadowlands Honor runner is probably not going to do well,

I am not going to tell you that certain cards are necessarily better than others. What cards you decide to use correlates directly to your environment and your personal preferences.

I can help however with the generalities. Having a bit of L5R

tournament experience under my belt, I can tell you that building your decks for the generalities will make you a much better deck builder and L5R player.

When I say "build for the generalities" I mean don't build your decks based around your own local environment. Success at high levels of tournament L5R play comes down to your intimate knowledge of the environment on a general level. You can go to your local tournament and win because you play specific cards for your local opponent's specific decks, but what happens when you decide to play outside of your local playgroup? You're going to get beat on by things that you aren't prepared for.

Intimate knowledge of your playgroup's decks is the first step to environmental acuity. What if

you didn't have a Dragon player in your playgroup, then someone came to the tournament with a Dragon deck? Are you in trouble? Are you prepared? Chances are you aren't, mentally or with the cards in your deck. Preparation is the key to victory.

Now that you've gained insight into the tournament environment, you know how to adequately prepare so that you succeed. Most players have their clan loyalties, and will represent their clan regardless of the consequences. Let us assume that we may choose from every clan and every stronghold, because we're building for the generalities here. The next and second most important part of success in competition is deck theory.

Deck theory can be simple for some, complicated for others.

When I talk about deck theory, what I mean is that you have an idea for a deck that you would like to play. How do you determine if the deck is going to stand up to the elements of any environment? What is your path to victory? What and how many cards support it? What are your weaknesses and how do you compensate for them? In other words, when we talk about deck theory, we ask the single most defining question of deck construction. Why will this deck win?

Answering this question is at times impossible. Sometimes, a deck simply will not overcome a certain match-up against a certain victory condition or a certain clan. This is a crucial point — do you want to continue with developing this deck and its strategy? Are you willing to take losses to certain clans/decks? Most often the answer is yes. These acceptable auto-losses usually come regardless of clan or victory condition. No deck is invincible, no matter what a person may believe. Besides, there is always the power of luck to contend with.

Now that you've done the critical thinking necessary, it's time to actually touch the cards. I typically do not waste my time on the actual cards until I understand what the environment looks like, the theory behind my deck is sound, and the deck I build can perform against the popular decks in the given environment. It isn't going to do you any good if you take your deck to a tournament unprepared to face a popular deck and get matched up against it all day. It would make for a long afternoon of L5R.

The architect of any given deck has precise ideas in mind when he/she builds it. What the gold structure looks like, the personality base, the actions, spells, items, etc. all play a crucial role in the deck's flow, or how a deck plays. The flow of a deck is incredibly difficult to describe, but it is how a deck plays. Some decks are very fluid; they have natural progressions over the course of their game play.

Their turns are virtually scripted, and the same decisions are made time and time again with similar results. Some decks are clunkier; they play as though you are on the edge of a sword, winning or losing at any given time, with every decision being a life or death one. The payoff however is huge. These decks are capable of explosive turns where they may start the turn with game totally in their opponent's hands, but change the tempo and play of the game completely.

No deck is required to fit into these fairly narrow definitions, but more often than not, most decks do. This is not to say this is a bad thing, but to make you more aware of what you are comfortable with. Being comfortable with

your deck and knowledgeable of your capacities and your opponent's capabilities is incredibly powerful in tournament L5R, and the best way to reach your comfort zone is to play test until you are on auto-pilot. Keep in mind, master Sun Tzu's teaching "Know thy enemy and know thy self, and a hundred victories lie before you."



Illus. Mathew S. Armstrong © 2004 AEG

WISDOM GAINED

by Rich Wulf

Toturi III studied his court with a cautious eye, stroking his short beard thoughtfully as he analyzed the situation before him. The Lion and Unicorn representatives had been arguing with one another for the better part of an hour — the Emperor had allowed them their tantrums. With the Imperial Guard present they would not truly harm one another, and better that they exhaust their energies against each other. He could sort out the truth and find a solution to their problems later on. The Crane representative had been demanding the release of the gaijin ambassadors for over a week, a virtual impossibility with most of the Empire still crying for their blood. The Phoenix representatives had been secluded in their quarters for three days while they discussed the growing Bloodspeaker crisis, not a good sign. The Scorpion had been completely silent — an even worse sign.

The doors of the chamber opened and Miya Shoin, Imperial Herald, entered. The court fell silent as he approached the Emperor.

"Your Majesty, a visitor from the Temple of the Seven Thunders," Shoin said.

"A monk, demanding audience with the Emperor?" Toritaka Tatsune growled. "Tell him to make an appointment like any other."

The Emperor looked at Shoin curiously.

"This is no monk, Your Majesty," he said. "He claims to be the son of the Hooded Ronin."

The members of the court all turned as one, their eyes suddenly upon the Herald. Shoin's expression did not change, he was too skilled in his duties for that, yet the Emperor sensed a certain nervousness in the young man's words. Something truly legendary was about to occur. Yet any man could claim to be the descendant of Shinsei. The Emperor must be sure.

The Emperor leaned forward in his throne and whispered to Shoin. "What name did he give you?" he asked.

"Rosoku," Shoin replied. "No family name, only Rosoku."

"Show him in," the Emperor said, loud enough for the entire court to hear.

Shoin quickly complied, signaling to the guards. The court chamber doors were opened, and a small man entered. He wore rough garments, his head hooded like a sohei. A black crow perched upon his shoulder.

As he entered, the Emperor rose from his throne, and bowed. The rest of the court quickly dropped to their knees, struggling to show greater obeisance than the Son of Heaven. The Hooded Ronin returned the gesture, though he looked slightly embarrassed.

"Konnichiwa, mighty Toturi," the Hooded Ronin said in a quiet voice. "I apologize for taking the court's time, but what I have to say must be heard by all."

The Emperor studied the man's face cautiously. He truly resembled the description his father had given him of Shinsei's descendant, and he knew the name as well. If this was a deception, it was a skilled one. "Speak," the Emperor said.

"My words are for you alone, Son of Heaven," the Hooded Ronin said.

The Emperor looked at his court. "Leave," he commanded. The court immediately complied. Everyone filed out of the room save Yotsu Irie, the Emperor's personal guard. The cold look in the Emperor's eye told the Hooded Ronin that her departure was not open to negotiation.

"The descendant of Shinsei is always welcome in these courts," the Emperor said, "but is it not dangerous for you to appear here? My mother told me that Shinsei's family always remained hidden in waiting for the next Day of Thunder, once every thousand years. The Shadowlands Horde has a ravenous hatred for your bloodline, and would spare no effort to destroy you."

"This was my fear as well, Son of Heaven, and to be honest the fact that we are of one mind on this soothes my troubled soul greatly," the Hooded Ronin replied.

"What troubles you?" the Emperor asked.

"First, it is my duty to inform you that my father has died," the Ronin said. "It was a peaceful, natural death in one of my family's hidden sanctuaries."

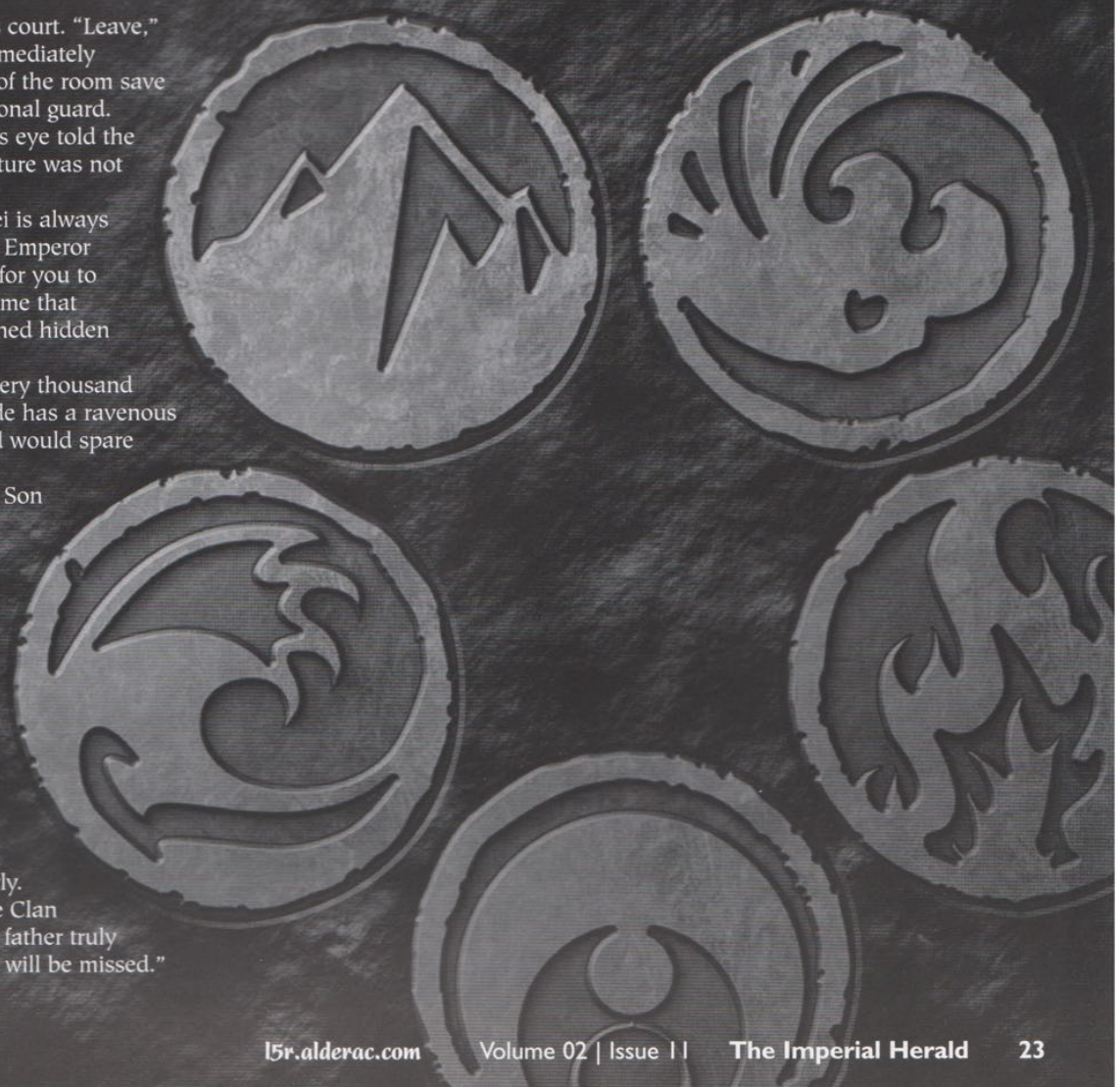
The Emperor nodded slowly. "Your father was a hero of the Clan Wars, one of the few men my father truly admired till his dying day. He will be missed."

"But that sad news is not what truly brings me here," the Ronin continued. "In the past, the Hantei Dynasty was guided by my greatest ancestor, Shinsei. His words became the Tao, in which many souls have found wisdom and guidance. My father also offered his advice to your father, and these words became the New Tao. Yet my father always feared that his words were not enough. From afar, he watched the War Against the Shadow, the Spirit Wars, and the struggle between the Four Winds that happily ended with your own reign. Clearly these are dark times, and so it was my father's dying wish that the Toturi Dynasty have more than a pile of scrolls to guide it. I offer you the aid of an enlightened soul."

"Yourself?" the Emperor asked, raising an eyebrow.

"No," the Hooded Ronin replied with a chuckle. "I cannot say for certain if I am enlightened. Perhaps no man can see that in himself. And, as you said, my presence here is a danger. But there is a way. Before he died, my father offered me six volumes, containing the wisdom collected by my family over the ages." The Hooded Ronin produced five bound scrolls from his weathered satchel. Each was sealed with the symbol of one of the five Elemental Rings. The sixth bore the symbols of all five.

"I thought you said that a pile of scrolls was insufficient guidance," the Emperor said.



Stronghold:

Razor's Edge Dojo

Wind:

Voice of the Emperor

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- 1 In Time of War
- 1 Shinjo Slings

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- 1 Farmlands
- 1 Utaku Meadows

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- 2 Ashigaru Fort
- 2 Barley Farm
- 2 Gifts and Favors
- 3 Iron Mine
- 1 Kisada's Shrine
- 1 Master of Bushido
- 2 Shrine of the Sun
- 1 Shrine to Daikoku
- 1 Shrine to Hotei
- 3 The Hiruma Dojo

Personalities:

- 1 Hida Hitoshi
- 2 Hida Katai
- 3 Hida Kuon Exp
- 1 Hida Reiha Exp
- 3 Hida Shara
- 3 Hiruma Ashihei
- 2 Hiruma Taodori
- 3 Hiruma Tatsuzo
- 1 Omen Exp

Actions:

- 2 Carrier Pigeon
- 3 Fall on Your Knees
- 2 Introspection
- 2 No Hiding Place
- 3 Overconfidence
- 2 Peasant Vengeance
- 2 Relentless Assault
- 3 Spearhead
- 3 Tireless Assault
- 3 Tsuruchi Technique

Ancestors:

- 1 Ichido no Shiryo

Followers:

- 3 Hiruma Archers
- 3 Karo
- 1 The Legion of Two Thousand
- 3 Traveling Ronin

Rings:

- 1 Ring of Water
- 1 Dark Ring of Water

Items:

- 1 Celestial Sword of the Crab
- 1 Gunsen of Water

The Hooded Ronin nodded. "The scrolls are not the true prize, they are only a tool. Just as a hunter's horn drives a fox from hiding, so shall these scrolls find what we seek — a truly enlightened soul. My father also gave me six challenges, and the first to meet each one would gain these volumes. It is in the aid of those six individuals, not these scrolls, that true wisdom will be found."

"An intriguing idea," the Emperor answered, "but a truly enlightened soul would not wish for any reward, would he?"

"Perhaps not," the Ronin replied, "but in a land such as Rokugan, all are subject to another. The Clan Champions will all see value in possessing the ancient wisdom of my family, and perhaps someone among their vassals might prove themselves worthy of possessing them."

"Tell me more," the Emperor said, his interest growing. A challenge from the descendant of Shinsei, a noble quest to inspire the people — it would be a welcome distraction for his troubled court.

"As I said, six challenges," the Ronin continued. "The books shall be given to the first to master each one. The smith who can craft a helmet strong enough to shatter one thousand blades shall keep the Book of Earth. The scholar who can contain one thousand

years of learning on a single parchment shall keep the Book of Air. The warrior who can defeat a thousand enemies in a single stroke shall keep the Book of Fire. The general who can lead his armies from one end of the Empire to the other in a single night shall keep the Book of Water. And the sage who can perform a task greater than these four things combined shall keep the Book of the Void."

"What of the sixth book?" the Emperor asked.

"The Book of Five Rings shall be given to a truly enlightened soul," the Ronin said, "to the one who can master all five of these challenges, true enlightenment. He would become the spiritual guardian and guide to the Toturi Dynasty."

The Emperor frowned. "As you said these are troubled times," he said. "I do not think it would benefit my reign to encourage my citizens to defeat one thousand enemies or march from one end of the empire to another. There is conflict enough in Rokugan."

"The challenges are not meant to be taken literally," the Ronin replied. "My father believed that no danger would come from them so long as this was understood and so long as a worthy judge determined the victors."



"And who shall this judge be?" the Emperor asked. "I was hoping you might desire the honor, Son of Heaven," the Ronin replied.

The Emperor replied with a thin smile. He was beginning to see great potential in this idea.

Keepers of the Five Rings

A series of tournaments will determine what clans are the first to master the mysteries of each volume. An individual from each of these clans shall become the "Keeper" of that particular book. The Keeper of Earth, the Keeper of Fire, etc. If the Shadowlands win, then the prize shall go to the highest ranking non-Shadowlands winner, but the power of Jigoku will exert its dark influence over that Keeper. These Keepers shall appear as powerful personality cards, aligned to their respective clans. (And before you ask, yes the Ratlings are as eligible for this prize as any Great Clan.)

However, just because your clan has the Keeper of Fire, does not mean that you will become the Master of the Five Rings. Other clans can master Shinsei's volumes as well, the Keeper is merely the first person who mastered that particular volume. The true Keeper of the Five Rings will be the individual who masters ALL FIVE of Shinsei's volumes.

The Emperor will make his choice at GenCon Indy 2005, and the Keeper of the Five Rings will be a member of the winning clan. That entire clan will also share the blessings of having a truly enlightened soul in their midst, and many members of that faction will gain the Enlightened trait (the details of which will be revealed later). If the Shadowlands Horde should win, however, then Shinsei's sixth volume will be stolen by the Horde, and there will be no more Enlightenment victories until the lost wisdom can be regained.

Each kit contains the following:

- 1 Large Tournament Poster
- 4 Exclusive Keeper of the Five Rings Tin Card Boxes
- 4 Book of the Ring Promo Cards
- 16 Keeper Promo Cards

Begins June 2004!

Strategy:

This Crab deck goes one step further than your standard high force, stomp on your head deck. It's a Crab deck with tricks. It carries a healthy number of ranged attacks to eliminate key personalities or followers in battle. Also included are a couple of *No Hiding Places* in order to take out those pesky personalities that never enter battle, like *Bayushi Kaukatsu* or *Kakita Mai*.

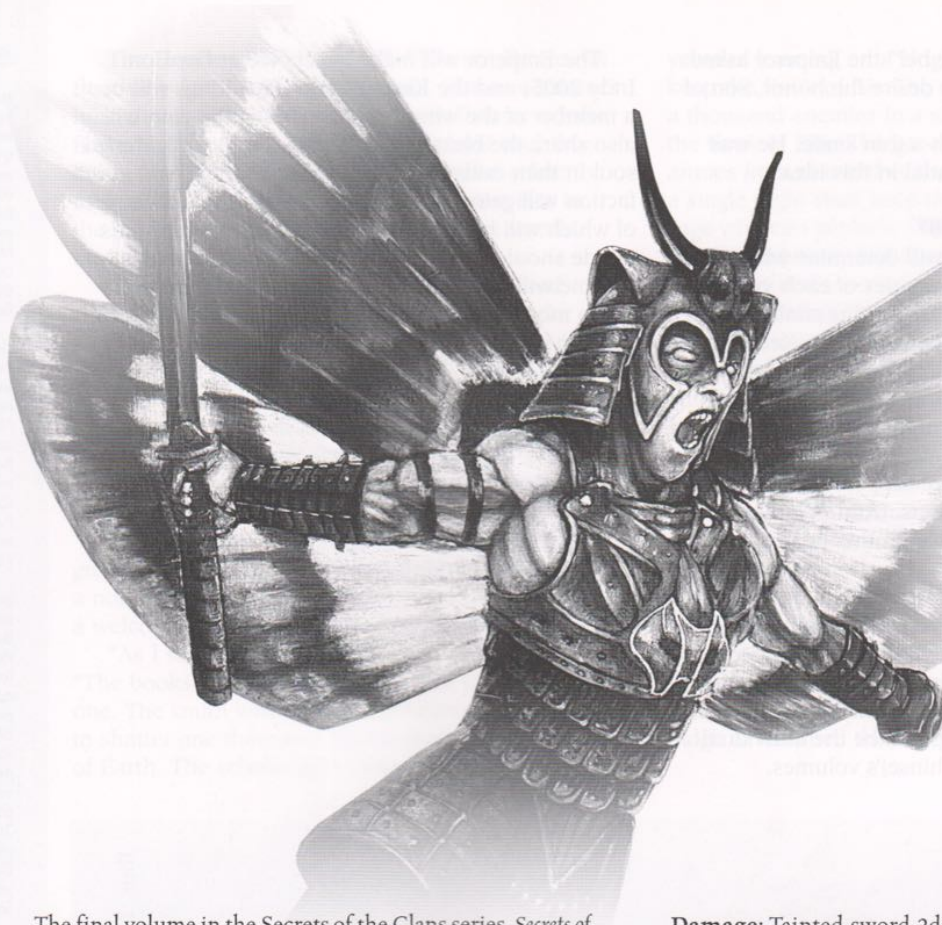
It's follower base is also quite simple. With only 10 Followers, I've included 3 *Karo* in order to search for any other follower I need, whether it's force (*Traveling Ronin*) or ranged attacks (*Hiruma Archers*). Because there are fewer followers than most other Crab decks, who run 12-15, I've included the Crab Ancestor and both *Utaku Meadows* and *Farmlands*.

The goal of this deck is to put pressure on your opponent and keep pressure on him. Because this deck runs off of *Razor's Edge Dojo*, we want to force your opponent to continue targeting your personalities in order to fend off your attacks. Don't feel bad about losing a couple of personalities, in the end, you'll empty the hands of most players before they can refill it. To further that cause, if your opponent resolves *Doom of the Dark Lord*, bust it as soon as you comfortably can with *Shrine of the Sun*.

This is a fun deck that can assault your opponent in the early and late game. Give it a try.

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The final volume in the Secrets of the Clans series, *Secrets of the Shadowlands* explores the deepest hidden regions of Rokugan's deadliest neighbor. Though this book unveils a wide range of new information for d10 and d20 campaigns, in the end the authors simply couldn't fit in everything in. Luckily, we now have the opportunity to present one of the lost bits of *Secrets of the Shadowlands* for your enjoyment.

So without any further ado... the Ashura.

ASHURA

The ashura are creatures of pure nightmare. They are shadows from the dreams of Fu Leng, shadows of a world where the Day of Thunder ended with the Dark Kami's power rolling unopposed across the Empire. Daigotsu has harvested a mere handful of these creatures from the darker realms of Yume-do. Ashura cannot survive in the mortal world for long, but they do everything in their power to make their nightmare world Rokugan's reality.

Ashura resemble tall, beautiful samurai with eyes devoid of emotion. They have elegant moth wings marked with death's-head patterns. The ashura do not use their wings to fly; the earth itself repels them from its presence. Ashura do not speak, but communicate empathically to any creature within 100 feet.

ASHURA

Large Outsider (Evil, Shadowlands)

Hit Dice: 16d8+80 (152hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

AC: 32 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +15 natural, +5 lamellar armor[®])

Attacks: Tainted weapon (sword) +28/+23/+18/+13 melee, 2 wings +19 melee; or tainted weapon (bow) +28/+23/+18/+13 ranged

Damage: Tainted sword 2d6+17 +2d6 if honorable +2d6 if good; wings 1d8+8 plus poison; Tainted bow 1d8+18 plus Taint

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 10 ft.

Special Attacks: Tainted sword, poison, Tainted bow, aura of terror, spell-like abilities, death wrack

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 40/+5 (jade), SR 30, regeneration 5, resistances, summon weapons

Saves: Fort +15, Ref +13, Will +14

Abilities: Str 27, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 18, Taint 11

Skills: Bluff +20, Concentration +21, Iaijutsu Focus +20, Intimidate +22, Jump +24, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +12, Listen +20, Ride +19, Search +20, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +20, Spot +20, Torture +12

Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (Tainted sword), Power Attack

Climate/Terrain: Deep Shadowlands and Yume-do

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 17

Treasure: Double items; standard coins and goods

Honor: Always 0

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: 17-48 HD (Large)

COMBAT

Ashura are fearsome combatants. While confident in their abilities, they do not take foolish chances. They are a perfect combination of ruthless intelligence and sheer power, the ultimate soldiers in an army that was never allowed to exist... and hopefully never will.

Aura of Terror (Su): All enemies within a 20-foot radius of the ashura must make a Will save (DC 20) or become panicked. The Ashura may suppress this ability at will.

Deathwrack (Ex): When an ashura dies, it explodes in a ball of unholy fire. All creatures within a 10-foot radius take 10d6 damage (Reflex save half, DC 17). Half of this damage is fire, the other half is unholy damage. If its Tainted sword, Tainted bow, or armor are not within this radius, they also explode in balls of flame with the same effects.

Immunities (Ex): Ashura are immune to fire, cold, acid, and electrical damage. They can see in darkness (including magical darkness) and can see invisible or ethereal creatures.

Poison (Ex): An ashura's wings have a razor's edge and carry a foul poison. Fortitude save (DC 17); initial and secondary damage 2d6 Charisma.

Regeneration (Ex): Holy and honorable weapons deal normal damage to an ashura. Ashura regenerate lost body parts (including their head) within one round unless their hit points are depleted.

Spell-like abilities: at will — *animate dead*, *arcane eye*, *bad karma*, *circle of death*, *cloud of Taint*, *create undead*, *deeper darkness*, *detect magic*, *detect thoughts*, *dispel magic*, *hallucinatory terrain*, *heart of the damned*, *improved invisibility*, *magic circle against good*, *polymorph other*, *polymorph self*, *teleport without error* (self and objects carried only), *tremor*, *unhallow*; 1/week — *Rise*, *Taint*. These abilities are spells cast as by a 15th level sorcerer (save DC 14 + spell level).

Summon Weapons (Ex): An ashura knows the location of its weapons and armor at all times, and can locate them unerringly. An ashura can teleport its bow or sword to its hand as a free action.

Tainted bow (Ex): Each ashura carries a +5 mighty *daikyu* (+8 Strength modifier). The ashura (and only the ashura) can cause the bow to summon forth a magical arrow as a free action by pulling back the bowstring. This arrow is a +5 arrow, and struck targets must make a Fortitude save (DC 24) or gain 1d6 points of Shadowlands Taint.

Tainted sword (Ex): Each ashura carries a special Large +5 unholy dishonorable *keen katana*. (With the *keen* enhancement and the Improved Critical feat, this weapon inflicts a critical threat on a roll of 15–20.)



ASHURA

Earth: 5

Fire: 4

Agility: 5

Water: 4

Strength: 6

Air: 4

Rolls When Attacking: 8k5

Rolls For Damage: 8k2 plus corrupted sword effects; 9k2 plus corrupted bow

TN to Be Hit: 30 (Heavy Armor)

Carapace: 6

Wounds: 60: +10; 100: +15; 140: +20;

180: Dead

Shadowlands Powers: Unholy Vision, Unearthly Regeneration, Beast of Fu Leng (Wings)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Corrupted Weapons: Ashura may make 2 attacks per round with its katana or bow. Any opponent struck by the weapons must make an Earth roll (TN 15) or gain 1k1 points of Taint.

Deathwrack: When an ashura dies, it explodes in a ball of unholy fire. All creatures within a 10-foot radius take 9k5 Wounds. If the Ashura's katana, bow, or armor are not on it when it dies, they explode with the same effects. Creatures immune to fire still take half damage from this effect.

Fear: 6

Invulnerability: The Ashura's invulnerability may be overcome by weapons dipped in the waters of Yume-Do, the Realm of Dreams.

Passages: Ashura can cast *Detect Passage*, *Passage into Darkness*, and *Passage into Dream* at will.

Poison: An Ashura's wings are razor sharp and secrete a foul poison. The poison deals 6k2 damage on a successful attack. This does not count against the Ashura's normal number of attacks.

Rejuvenation: If slain, Ashura can be harvested from the Realm of Dreams once more via a special ritual known only to Daigotsu. Ashura cannot survive in Ningen-do for more than a week.

PLAYER DESIGN TEAM

Legend of the Five Rings has always been a player's game. From player storyline interaction to koku redemption for rare cards, we constantly wish to treat our players better than any other game does. Now, we're taking it one step further.

Design of *L5R* cards has always been kept in-house and bridled in secrecy. Input from players was taken anonymously from email, forum posts, and phone calls. Today, we've brought together four extraordinary *L5R* players from across the globe. Their job, to represent *L5R* players and to make sure that our designs fit your needs.

Without further ado, let me introduce *L5R*'s first Player Design Team.

Vaughn Derderian

Detroit, OH

This Crane and Shadowlands player has been *L5R*'s Deputy Rules Guru for many years officially answering questions on various listservers, forums, and websites.

An *L5R* player by day, he's a bartender at night working every event only a block from the where his favorite team plays, the Detroit Red Wings. He loves hockey and for some inexplicable reason thinks Gordy Howe is the best

player ever. Vaughn originally played the Iron Crown Enterprises version of the *Middle Earth CCG* and was one of the top players in the world. Now he swaps between *L5R* and *Initial D* depending on his mood and how much he's had to drink.

Justin Walsh

Limerick, Ireland

Justin is a highly respected tournament player with more knobby quirks than the old oak tree in my backyard. He's won numerous events including both GenCons, US and UK, in 2000. His accolades don't stop there, he also won the 2002 Irish Kotei and placed second at GenCon UK 2001. I could go on and on. Also interestingly, Justin is studying for his PhD in Graphic Design and although he talks big, couldn't hold his liquor to save his life. He's a devout Phoenix player, who once sold his fealty to the Dragon clan for charity, but had to return to his true love, the Phoenix clan.

Roger Giner-Sorolla

Canterbury, England

A psychology professor by trade, Roger began playing *L5R* with the introduction of Obsidian Edition and was taught by his lovely wife, Rea. Roger's a loyal Scorpion player who, for some

strange reason, is drawn to Bayushi Kachiko. He's written several outstanding articles on the *L5R*'s concepts and strategies, including one on the spirit and state of *L5R*. Working his way up to the Ratling Challenge Booth finalist at GenCon Indy 2003, he continues to wreck havoc on our *L5R* storyline with his wacky sense of humor.

Scott Hadsall

Kansas City, MO

Scott, savior of Daiya's soul (winner of OrcCon 2003), has made his *L5R* mark with a big huge rubber mallet. Taking a top eight place at GenCon US in 2002 and 2003, he's also been the Ninja Warlord and placed first at Origins 2000. Founder of the Dynasty Player Team, Scott is a loyal Ninja player who celebrates with the enthusiasm of a 3-year-old child whenever he opens a card with a Ninja personality in it. A former Designer/Nexus Coordinator for the *Highlander TCG*, Scott is now a full-time college student studying Secondary Education. In his free time, when he's not playing *L5R*, you can find him online playing *Final Fantasy* into the wee hours of the night.

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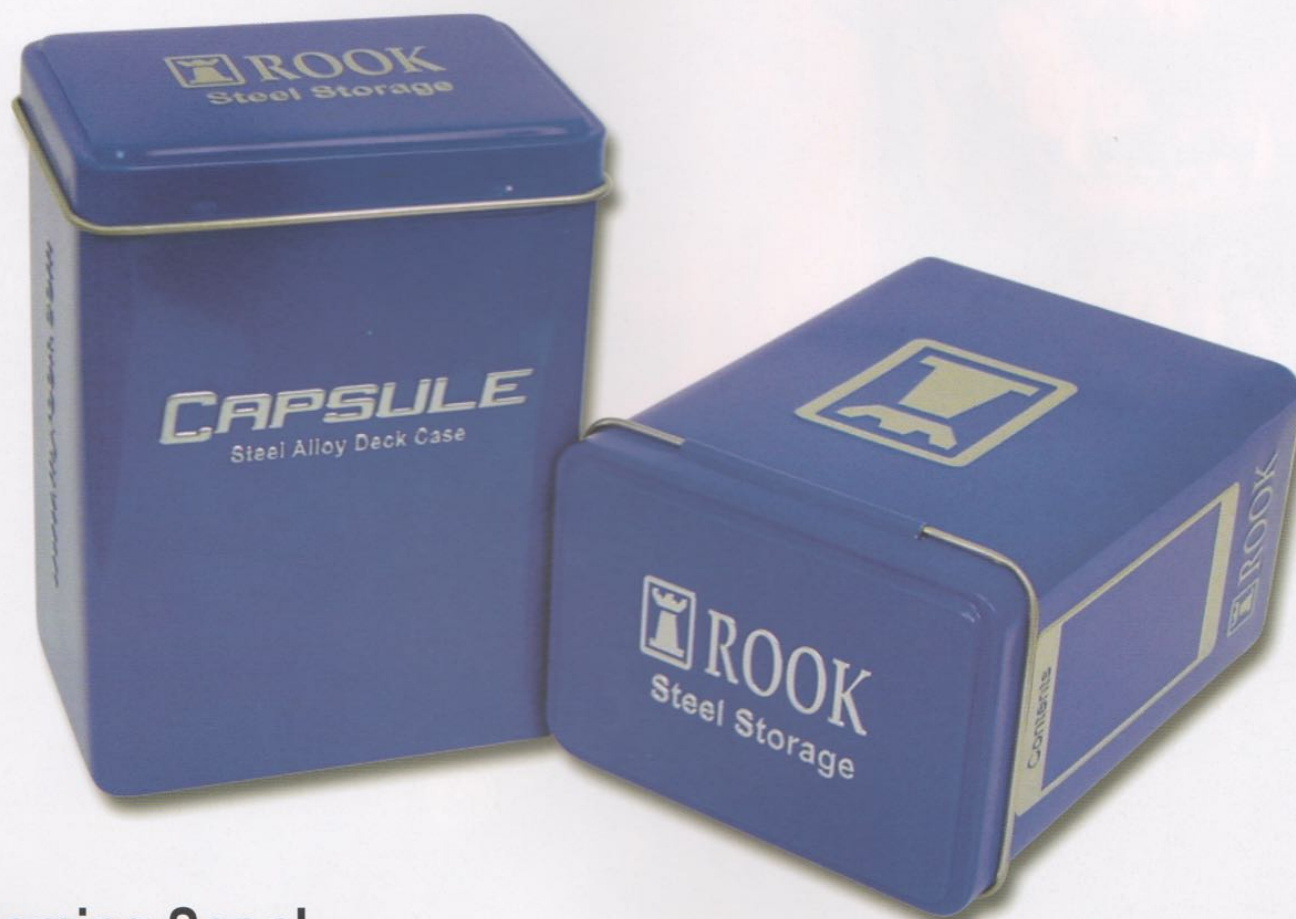
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