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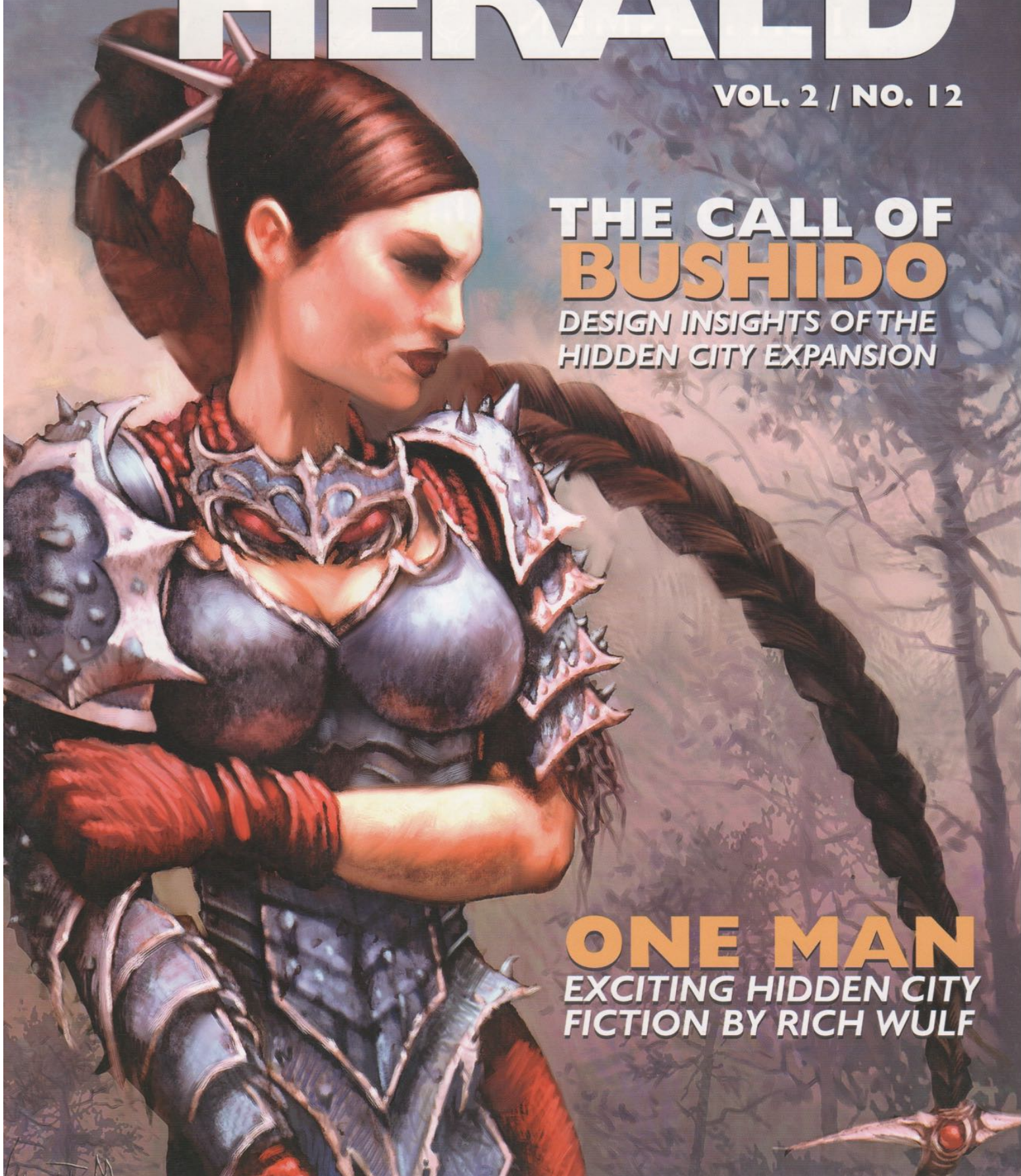
HERALD

VOL. 2 / NO. 12

THE CALL OF BUSHIDO

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ONE MAN
EXCITING HIDDEN CITY
FICTION BY RICH WULF



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THE OFFICIAL LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS™ QUARTERLY **VOL. 2 / NO. 12**

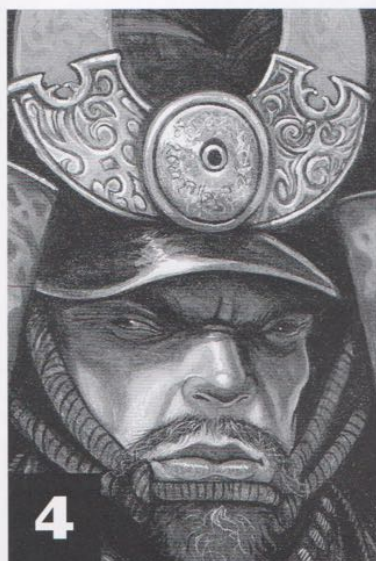
Editorial

Each year, as the L5R World Championships roll around, we're often asked to make predictions of who will make top 16, what clan will take first, or which sleeper will surprise us. But if I had any real intuitive skill, I'd have predicted that telling . That being said, I'm not afraid to forecast a few things you'll see this GenCon.

10 things you're certain to experience at GenCon Indy

1. Great prizes for all AEG of the events.
2. Our writer, Rich Wulf listening intently to someone describing his tricked out character.
3. The Question Guy, raising his index finger starting every other sentence with, "Question..."
4. Dozens of players wearing kimonos ordering cheeseburgers from local food stands and greeting each other with, "Yo, wassup?"
5. Jeff Alexander, Lead Designer, leading a hellacious Ultz-Bonzai.
6. Mark Jelfo, our Marketing Director, screaming in frustration after every obviously bad move he makes playing L5R.
7. A Crab Clan player standing on top of some piece of convention furniture making drunken challenges that no sober man would dare take.
8. Players of every level, furiously making last minute changes to their decks only minutes before Round 1 begins.
9. A Klingon patrol hunting down marked players in the name of charity.
10. At least one kilt. Our international reach, knows no bounds.

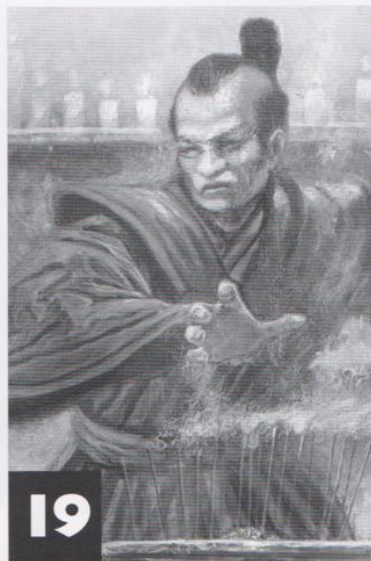
— Raymond Lau
L5R Brand Manager



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THE CALL OF BUSHIDO

WOC
04

by Jeff Alexander

As with *Reign of Blood*, we chose Factions to receive Strongholds in this set based on which best fit the theme. Crab, Ratling, Shadowlands, and Mantis are all primarily military clans, and Lion and Unicorn have strong military tendencies along with honor-gaining potential. Well, Unicorn just got a Stronghold in *Reign of Blood*, so they were out. Shadowlands fights a great deal, but they're furthest from the codes of bushido. Since the set also focuses on Samurai, we passed over them for being out-of-theme. Ratling would have been excluded as well, but this is a big set for Ratling and it made too much sense for them to get a Stronghold. With theme the deciding factor, Crab's dedication to the Wall edged out Mantis.

One area Crab are traditionally weak in is actually accomplishing things during battle. For years, their paradigm has been to attack with superior Force and shut down attempts at defense with things like *Winter Warfare*, *Deadly Ground*, and *Crushing Attack*. That option isn't there in the Diamond environment, but many of the Crabs in that environment are still fairly vanilla high-Force bruisers with little in the way of offensive battle-swinging actions. Giving them a way to use that Force should help Crab players overcome weak token defensive armies.

One of Ratling's major mechanics is mob synergy: making the whole greater than the sum of the parts once enough parts are assembled. After all, no one puts Ratling Bushi in her deck so she can pay 6 Gold and get 3 Force.

But only half the problem of using a mob is making it. The other half is keeping it, especially in a game where battles destroy the entire losing army. Thus we add a very Ratling-esque capability to their Stronghold: the ability to retreat from losing battles. (Or even winning battles, if you want.) And rats are good at burrowing into foundations. If your Personalities get bowed during an attack, the new Ratling Stronghold gives your Ratling Followers something they can still do to help you out.

Lion's Stronghold is simple. Terrains are a big part of Lion's offensive strategy. They deserve a Stronghold that focuses on them at some point. What better time than in an expansion concentrated on battles?

Alms for the Poor

As the *Diamond* environment progresses, it becomes more and more evident just how powerful the free Holdings of the *Gold* era truly were. *Hidden City* re-examines the economies of the Factions that relied on free first-turn boosts and tries very hard to fill in the gaps left by the absence of the corrupt mines. Expect to see a lot of Shadowlands-specific *Gold* at or above the efficiency of *Obsidian Mine*, with restrictions to keep it out of the hands of other Factions unless they choose to run the riskiest of corrupt strategies. Scorpion and Crab receive some Holding help as well that parallels the usefulness of *Daidoji Merchants* and of *Shinmaki Monastery* in their appropriate decks.

Gifts and Favors was created to address the disastrous issue of drawing no Holdings on the opening turn. Another, and surprisingly similar, issue has been dogging the heels of L5R's fundamental design for a long time: the advantage of going first.

Keep in mind that we've never believed there was no advantage to starting before your opponent. There is, and proving it is trivial.

The important question is, how big is it? Is it so large that it can't be compensated for in some other feature of the game?

We did not consider reverting the rule on who goes first to the one in the *Gold* rulebook. We de-emphasized the importance of Focus values on purpose in *Diamond*, and the reasons for doing that are still relevant. We also did not spend much time considering reversing the order and allowing lowest Honor to start, nor making the start entirely random in all games. Lowest Honor first doesn't give good results because the connection between high starting Honor and tournament performance is too unreliable. *Kyuden Doji* at 5 is doing much better than *Shiro Mirumoto*, also at 5. If starting Honor were the key, they should be the same. Both typically do worse than the *House of Tao* at 4, and that doesn't have as good a record as *Kyuden Gotei* at a lowly 3.

And neither a low-Honor-first nor a totally random system addresses the case of two identical Strongholds facing off against one

another. That's crucial. The goal is not that Clan A score as many tournament victories at Clan B. The goal is that a Clan A deck, played against an equally good Clan B deck run by an equally skilled player, have a 50% chance of winning. If there is too much of an advantage to going first, adding more randomness to the starting order can give the two Clans similar tournament records, but it can't do a thing about making individual games fair.

One of the options we *did* consider was giving the starting player less Fate draws. Much (though not all) of the advantage the first player has is in the development of his economy, though, plus, altering Fate draws affects Honor and Military decks differently. So we looked instead at tweaks to the Dynasty side of early game development, since all decks rely on economic buildup. Changes to how many cards get revealed on the first turn quickly hit a boondoggle: *Gifts and Favors*. Even if we cut the number of Provinces the very first player gets to reveal to zero, he can still bow

his Stronghold to put a G&F into play — just like he does in many games right now.

So it's hard to hurt the Dynasty development of the player who goes first.

What if we instead help the one who goes second? We did something once with *Gifts and Favors*. Why not try something similar...say, a better version that you can only buy on your opponent's first turn if you go second?

A blanket 4-Gold producer was the first thing we tried. We stopped quickly after seeing what it did with Ratling. With a few



Gifts and Favors and just one copy of *A Favor Returned* (deliberately dubbed “*Favors and Gifts*” in play-test), Ratling could run a deck with 36 Personalities, yet never get gold-screwed and bring out two or three Personalities a turn from turn 2 to the end of the game. So could Lion, though against fewer opponents. In fact, giving the Holding even a 3 production caused these problems.

The other issue was overbalance. It was critical that this card not be so good that it made going second better than going first. That wouldn't solve any problems. It would just be making new ones. That's why it doesn't help buy anything until turn three. *A Favor Returned* was also not being created to balance low starting Honor Factions versus high. Its job was counterweighing the first-turn advantage, nothing more. Making it strong plus giving large boosts to Factions like Scorpion could easily overshoot the goal of overall parity.

Dress that Line!

Overall, the hardest task in *Hidden City* was getting the Formations into shape. It was understandable. There are a lot of them — over a dozen, to be exact.

From the beginning, we toyed with the idea of splitting Formations into a set of standard types, perhaps tight versus loose, or wide versus deep, to try to represent the strengths and weaknesses of different unit arrangements in historic rank-and-file warfare.

We settled on three general types: Center, Flank, and Reserve, corresponding roughly to the kinds of tactics best used for front-line fighting, by more rear-ward units, and by highly mobile cavalry or skirmishers. We settled on these because we wanted them to work in a rock-paper-scissors kind of way, with each type having another type built-in that it would automatically be strong against. In the end, we abandoned the build-in advantage idea because it would ultimately discourage

people from using Formations at all. Players aren't going to want to use cards when there's a chance their opponent will completely neutralize their Formation and gain an advantage of his own all by playing one card. We kept the types on the cards, though, as something we could use as a hook for later interaction, like we've done with *Elemental* and *Siege*.

— Something else we let go was Clan-specific Formations. Sure, there are some that are easier to play if you're Scorpion or Lion or Unicorn, but *Hidden City* don't have any Formations that are exclusive to anyone. Being a brand new card type, we want to see exactly which ones get used and get some experience creating them before we try to give one to every Clan. It is too likely otherwise that we'd end up with a wide power disparity, like with the *Doom* events in *Shadowlands* and the Ancestral Armors in *Emerald Edition*. Once we know for sure how to make a good Formation, we'll re-address the issue.

COMBOS

Killing Fields + Summon Earth Kami

Killing Fields grants a sizable bonus to your Followers, but only when there is an actual army opposing them. How does one get this bonus when there aren't actually any defending forces? Why, one creates them!



Ignominious End + Slaughter the Scout (DE)

Slaughter the Scout lets you destroy a unit for moving into a battle opposing one of your units. It combos very well with any method of forcing other players' cards to move into a battle where you have somebody... especially if that method doesn't require bowing any of your people. So *Ignominious End* works perfectly. All you're missing is a way of dishonoring people...



Armed Brigade + Mirumoto Daisho

While this Formation is in play, you can use your Weapons to bow opposing cards. What better tool for this than a card that can provide two Weapons at once?

Hitting the Brakes

Any set — especially one that's focused on army battles, and doubly true for one that introduces cards that only work if you have a large army — will have a hard time being useful if battles happen too fast and too soon. That potential grows narrower still in a game environment already slanted in that direction. So don't be surprised if you browse a *Hidden City* spoiler list and see card after card designed to bite back against early attacks, rapid-fire death, and fast Honor gains. *Hasty Barricades* is similar to an always-on *In Search of the Future* in your defense, plus it has an alternate use so it's not worthless if your opponent doesn't attack you. *Battlefield Messenger* stops one killer movement unit from knocking out two of your Provinces, and *Fire in the Hidden City* can make your opponent sorry he destroyed even one. *Hidden City* itself (the card, not the set) cuts in half the number of Personalities you can lose in

any given phase, and if you do manage to lose more than one, *The Legions Charge* gives you two more for free. *Go In Disgrace* permanently renders a card unable to produce Honor.



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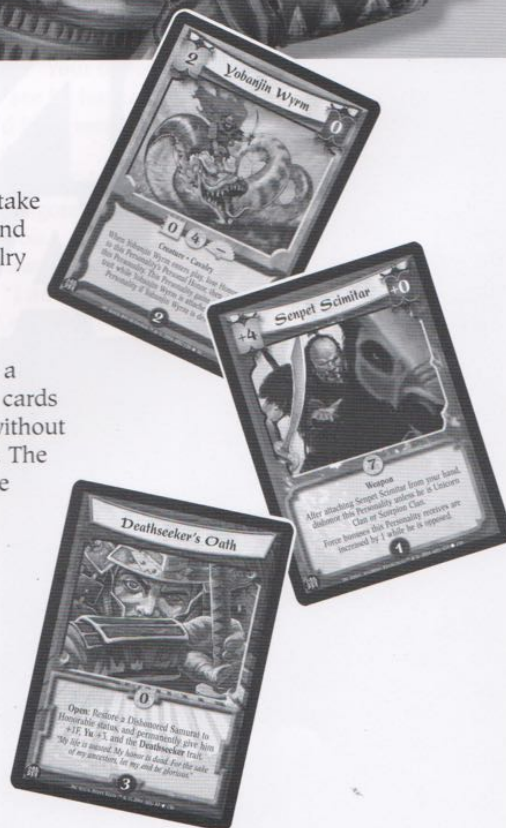
Deranged Mujina + Hida Katai (RoB)

Each time *Deranged Mujina* enters play, everyone has to discard a random card from his hand. *Hida Katai* combos with this card in two ways. First, he can attach a dead *Deranged Mujina* from your discard pile, and they still generate their entering-play effect. Second, if your random discard happens to be a Follower, it's not lost for good. *Katai* lets you use it anyway.



Yobanjin Wurm + Senpet Scimitar + Deathseeker's Oath

Together, these three cards take any one plain Personality and turn him into a whole Cavalry unit with +7F and all the protections and benefits of having both an Item and a Follower. But this isn't just a three-card combo. Any two cards from it work well together without the third, making it flexible. The Wurm and the Scimitar have overlapping drawbacks, so attaching both to the same Personality has less of a downside than putting them on two different people. The *Oath* mixed with either attachment overcomes the dishonor involved in playing it.





ONE MAN

The Year 1127 by the Isawa Calendar (The Clan Wars)

Toturi looked out at the jagged expanse of Beiden Pass, his sharp eyes picking out every turn in the terrain that might grant his enemy advantage, every shadow in the pass where he might conceal a squad of archers or reserve shugenja. For days, he had known this conflict was approaching. He kept constructing endless strategies in his mind, countless contingencies for whatever plans Kisada might unleash against him. Now that he was here, now that battle was about to be joined, all of that was wiped away. "No plan ever survives contact with the enemy," was an old Akodo axiom, and as he maneuvered his troops into position he found it true today.

"Toturi-sama?" said a quiet voice behind him.

Toturi turned. A small boy in ill-fitting armor stood awaiting his attention. Toturi remembered the boy, the young ronin who had dared to compete at the Topaz Championship a few years ago. "It was a pass like this one, Toku," Toturi said. "One thousand years ago my ancestor, Akodo, faced an army like the one we face now... With a mighty roar, the mountains held their breath and he brought the pass down upon himself and his enemy rather than face defeat."

Illus. Thomas Denmark © 2004 AEG

"Then, with all respect to your glorious ancestor, let us hope we fare better than Akodo did," Toku said with a smile.

Toturi laughed despite himself. "Yes, Toku, let's hope so. What news do you bring?"

"We have completed the sashimono for the officers, as you requested," Toku said nervously. He held out a long wooden shaft, wrapped in silk. Toku let the banner unfurl with a snap on the mountain wind, revealing the symbol of a fierce wolf. "I hope the symbol meets with your approval, Toturi-sama."

"It does, Toku," Toturi said, bowing his head in gratitude. "Arigato. But you need not call me Lord Toturi. I am the same as any of you."

"No, Toturi-sama," Toku replied, shaking his head quickly. "You are a leader. You are the only one who will stand against Kisada. You are a hero. With you in command of our troops, how can we fail?"

Toturi laughed. "You seem very confident, Toku-san," Toturi said in a sad voice. "Eager to be a hero. I was like you, once."

Toku smiled. "You still can be, Toturi-sama."

The Year 1165 by the Isawa Calendar (Present Day)

For days now he had followed this army of samurai as they made their way north through the Mountains of the Phoenix. He had been able to remain just out of their sight while keeping even pace with them. They moved quite swiftly for so large a force, never pausing for more than a few hours to rest and replenish their supplies. Their soldiers were accustomed to such harsh terrain. Most were of the Dragon Clan, at home in such this environment. The rest were the most elite members of the Imperial Legions, quite adept at handling even the harshest situations. He shivered in his armor as he picked his way through the snow-covered pass. He had been trained for such hardship as well, but that didn't mean he enjoyed it. He wished he had listened to his mother, and brought another blanket along.

Given the talent of the soldiers he followed, he should have realized that he could not follow them forever without being noticed. The young bushi considered this as he felt the cold edge of steel across the back of his neck. He slowly lifted his hands in surrender.

"I mean no harm," he said, trying his best not to sound afraid. "I am Toturi Kyoji, Taisa in the First Legion."

"Fool boy," spat a gruff voice. The blade moved away, followed by the harsh snap of a katana sliding back into its saya. "Does your father know you are here?"

"No," Kyoji answered, lowering his hands and turning around with a weak smile. A tall samurai with gaunt, weathered features stood before him, looking down with a severe frown. He wore a deep brown kimono, a symbol of a wolf on his right arm, to guide his sword. "Konnichiwa, General Saigorei," Kyoji said, sheepishly greeting his superior.

"You were supposed to be on your way to Toshi Ranbo," the old samurai growled. "Didn't your father give you a message for the Emperor?"

Kyoji nodded. "I gave the message to a shisha in Nanashi Mura. It will be delivered."

"You shirked your duty on another?" Saigorei asked.

"Not at all," Kyoji replied, straightening a bit. "I am an officer in the Imperial Legions. The shisha are the Emperor's heralds and messengers. Had there been a shisha available to deliver my father's message I am certain he would have relied upon their greater capability to do so. I merely gave the message to the one whose duty it was to deliver it, then returned here where my own duty lies."

"A very good answer," Saigorei replied. "Though it sounds like you have been reciting it. If that is true, then why did you not report to your father? Why do you follow our troops like a shadow?"

Kyoji did not answer.

"Because you are afraid your father will find another safe 'mission' for you?" Saigorei asked.

"Will you tell him I have returned?" Kyoji asked, shoulders slumping slightly.

"Follow me, Kyoji," Saigorei said. "Your father is coordinating information with the Dragon commanders. We should wait a bit before we disturb him." Saigorei turned and walked back toward the camp. Kyoji silently followed.

The two samurai sat around a small campfire, the tiny light walled all around with the deep blackness of nighttime in the mountains. Saigorei lifted two bowls from the earth and filled one with rice from the steaming pot over the fire, handing it to Kyoji. Kyoji took it gratefully and held it with both hands, warming his freezing fingers. Saigorei filled his own bowl and began eating, producing a pair of chopsticks tucked beside his sword. Kyoji drew out his own eating utensils in the same manner.

"Always keep what's important close at hand," Saigorei said with a laugh. "Your father and I learned that trick from Dairyu. I see he has taught you well."

"I just wish he would have more faith in his teachings," Kyoji mumbled.

"I have heard the pride in Toku's voice when he speaks of his children," Saigorei replied. "Your father has the greatest faith in you."

"Then why send me away?" Kyoji asked, irritation creeping into his voice. "I am an adult, a samurai. I am a Taisa in the First Legion. Yet when we discover an army of Bloodspeakers marching on the Phoenix, he sends me away on a minor errand. I am a child to him."

Saigorei was silent a long time, pondering the young man's words over the crackle of the fire. The howl of a lonely wolf echoed across the mountains. "You know your father and I fought beside one another in our youth," Saigorei said. "What has Toku told you of those times?"

Kyoji smiled suddenly. "Father has told me many stories about the days when he served Toturi," he said. "I wish I had been there to see them myself."

Saigorei frowned, letting a load of rice fall back into his bowl. "I think history has granted Toku's stories shades of glory that were not always there," he said. "Those were difficult times, Kyoji-san."

"Those were glorious times," Kyoji said, smiling in excitement. "To fight at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, to stand against Yogo Junzo's armies, to watch the Legion

of the Dead charge through Oblivion's Gate. You were beside my father for all those things. You were the Empire's greatest heroes. You cannot tell me you regret being a part of history."

"Perhaps I do," Saigorei said in a tired void. "Your father has told you of all the good that we did, but has he told you the rest? So many old friends gone... Dairyu, Hiroru, Akiyoshi, Hasame, Mikio, Sukune... Well, Sukune was already dead when he joined us but that's beside the point..."

"To die in battle is a samurai's duty," Kyoji replied.

"Spoken with the immortality of youth," Saigorei said, though his smile removed the sting from his words. "Wait until you have watched a few friends die. I think you will be less certain."

"What are you saying Saigorei-sama?" Kyoji asked. "That I should fear death? That I should shy away from battle?"

"Not at all," Saigorei replied. "If the cause is just, I can think of no more noble end. All I mean to say is that there is great tragedy in war... and not quite so much glory as the tales suggest."

"What cause can be more just than this?" Kyoji replied. "These beasts caused the Rain of Blood. They left a stain on the heart of the Empire. What warrior could back away from this challenge, and yet call himself samurai?"

"You truly are your father's son," Saigorei said in an annoyed voice. "You are as stubborn as he is."

"Will you tell him I am here?" Kyoji asked.

"Why bother?" Saigorei asked. "He already knows."

Kyoji blinked. The clank of armor sounded from the edge of darkness. A short, stocky old man stepped into the ring of firelight. His head was shaven in the manner of a monk, though he still wore the same thin moustache and short beard he had worn since his youth. He wore the full armor of a samurai, an elaborate helmet clutched under one arm. The symbol of the Monkey Clan was emblazoned on his left arm, closest to his heart.

"Father," Kyoji said, rising and bowing deeply.

"Sit, Taisa," Toku said curtly, referring to his son's formal rank. Toku strode forward with slow, deliberate steps, seating himself beside Saigorei, across from Kyoji. The young boy sat, as commanded. The three sat for a long time without speaking.

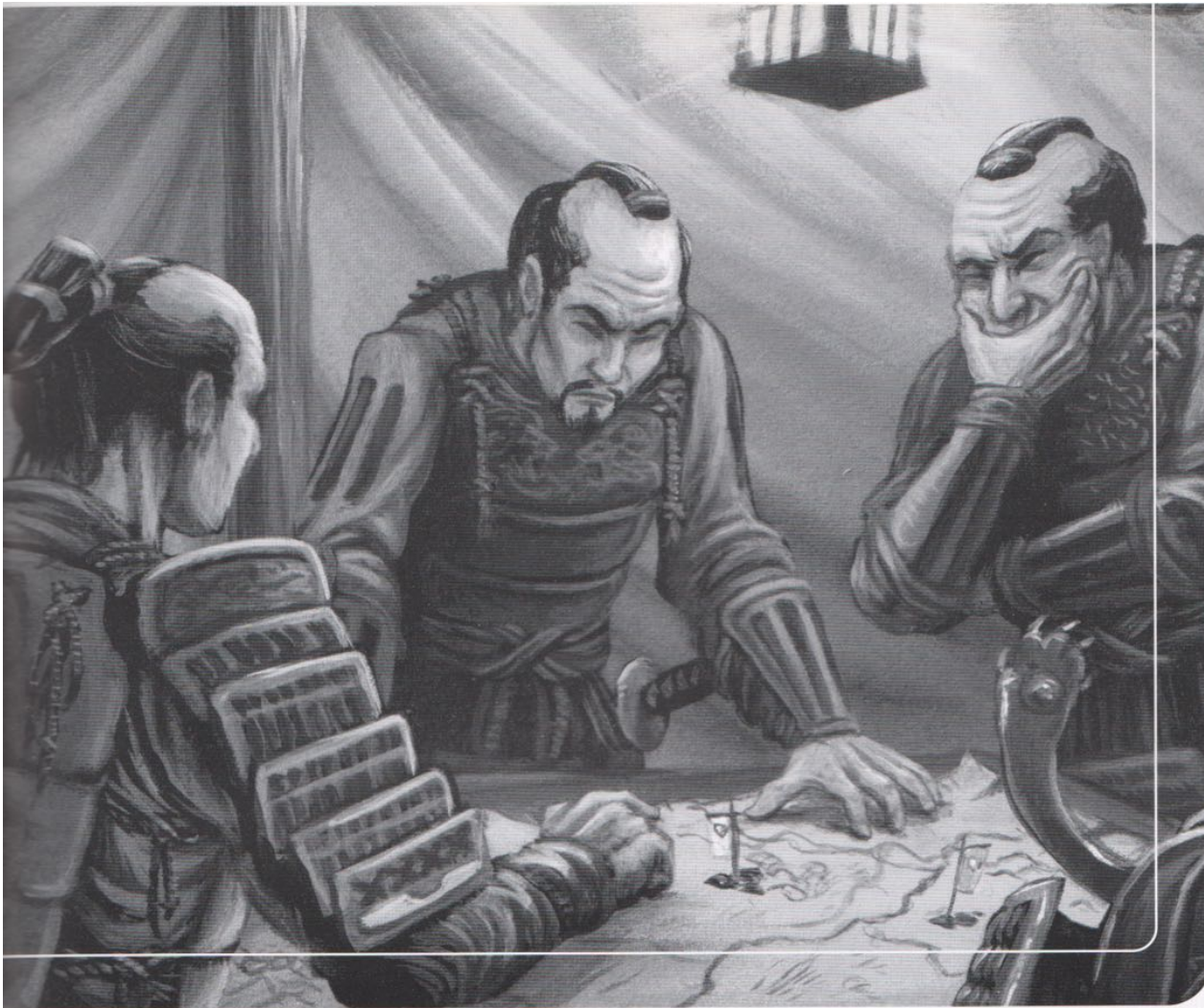
"Please do not send me away, father," Kyoji finally said. "I can help. I can fight."

"Tell me, Kyoji," Toku said. "If we should both die in this battle, what will happen to your mother? What will become of her when she hears that her husband and eldest son both perished on the same day?"

"How much worse will she feel if the Bloodspeakers destroy the Empire, and I did not do all that was in my power to stop them?" Kyoji retorted.



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Illus. Paul (Prof.) Herbert© 2004 AEG

"Do you think your presence here will make that great of a difference?" Toku asked in a pained voice.

"My father always taught me that one man always makes the difference," Kyoji answered.

Saigorei chuckled again. Toku shot the old general an annoyed glance, then looked back at his son. "You are right, of course," the old man said in a tired voice.

"Are you all right, father?" Kyoji asked.

The old samurai offered a wan smile. "It's nothing," he said. "I just can't help but think I should have retired years ago."

"You did retire, ten years ago," Saigorei said, "and again five years ago. It's your own fault you're too stubborn to stay in a monastery, Toku."

Toku shrugged at his old friend. "Each time I imagine that my days of fighting are done, some new evil calls me back into battle."

Saigorei laughed. "You just can't sit still, more like," Saigorei replied.

Toku shrugged. "Better to die as I lived, I think," he said, looking down at his thick, scarred hands. "Besides, these hands were never suited for origami."

"Still the same old Toku," Saigorei said. "No excuses. No complaints. Something needs to be done, you get up and do it."

"If it's worth doing, it needs to be done," Toku replied. "The Dragon think there's something powerful hidden in these mountains, and the Bloodspeakers are seeking it."

"Such as?" Saigorei asked.

"They don't know," Toku replied.

Saigorei laughed. "Trust a Dragon to find a deeper meaning in everything, then refuse to explain it. If there was something so powerful in these mountains, wouldn't the Phoenix know about it already?"

"Maybe they already know," Kyoji said. "The Phoenix guard their secrets closely. Perhaps they have some hidden temple or shrine in these mountains."

Saigorei laughed again.

"Something amusing you general?" Toku asked, looking at him sharply.

"I was just thinking," Saigorei mused. "Here we have a famous general, returned from solitude, leading a mixed band of soldiers on behalf of the Dragon Clan. We fight an army of black-hearted fiends in the heart of the mountains. You cannot tell me this does not feel familiar to you, Toku."

"Beiden Pass?" Kyoji asked, eager to display his knowledge of the old legends.

Toku sighed. "Gather enough memories, and everything will look familiar to you, Saigorei."

"True enough," Saigorei replied, "but if I must be reminded of a battle... it may as well be a battle we won."

"True enough," Toku answered with a laugh.

A city.

They had expected to find that the Phoenix had hidden a shrine or temple, perhaps some old ruin here in the mountains, but when the sun rose the swirling snows parted and revealed an entire city nestled in the valley before them. The walls shone with magic. The architecture, all shooting spires and towering archways looked truly ancient. Kyoji was awed that somehow this place had survived for centuries without anyone's knowledge. But that was a mystery for another time — the Bloodspeakers were already at the walls.

"How could there be so many of them?" Mirumoto Kenzo whispered, looking down at the forces they faced. "Their army is three times the size of ours. How could so many Bloodspeakers hide among us?"

"Many were corrupted in the Rain of Blood," Doji Midoru replied grimly. "Many more were simply killed by the rest, and now serve the Bloodspeakers as the undead."

"I can sense powerful maho," Tamori Tsukiro said with a frown. "Obviously it would take great power to raise an army such as we face, but I sense something darker underlies all this. Something ancient and evil leads this army. If we face their leader, we will perish."

"So how do we win?" Midoru asked.

"We don't need to win," Kyoji said hopefully. "We need only make for a weakness in their assault, fight our way through, and help the Phoenix defend their city."

"I can see such a weakness," Saigorei said with a nod. Their forces seem concentrated on the southern gates. If we circle the city and make a quick strike against the north, we may reach the walls before their command staff realizes what has happened."

"You assume the Phoenix will open the gates for us, Kyoji-san," Kenzo said darkly.

"Well, they would, wouldn't they?" Kyoji looked at Kenzo hopefully. "I mean, we are fellow samurai. We were sent by the Emperor!"

"And these Phoenix did not ask for our help," Kenzo replied. "No doubt they would die to the last man before giving up their secrets."

"Not all Phoenix are as foolhardy as you claim, Kenzo," Toku replied.

"We shall see," the Dragon said.

Kyoji looked at the rest of the offers. He looked at the organized ranks of Wolf Legion ronin, Dragon Clan samurai, and Imperial Legionnaires who followed them. He saw the doubt and uncertainty that they tried their best to hide. They were like him. They were afraid.

"What is your command, Lord Toki?" Saigorei asked.

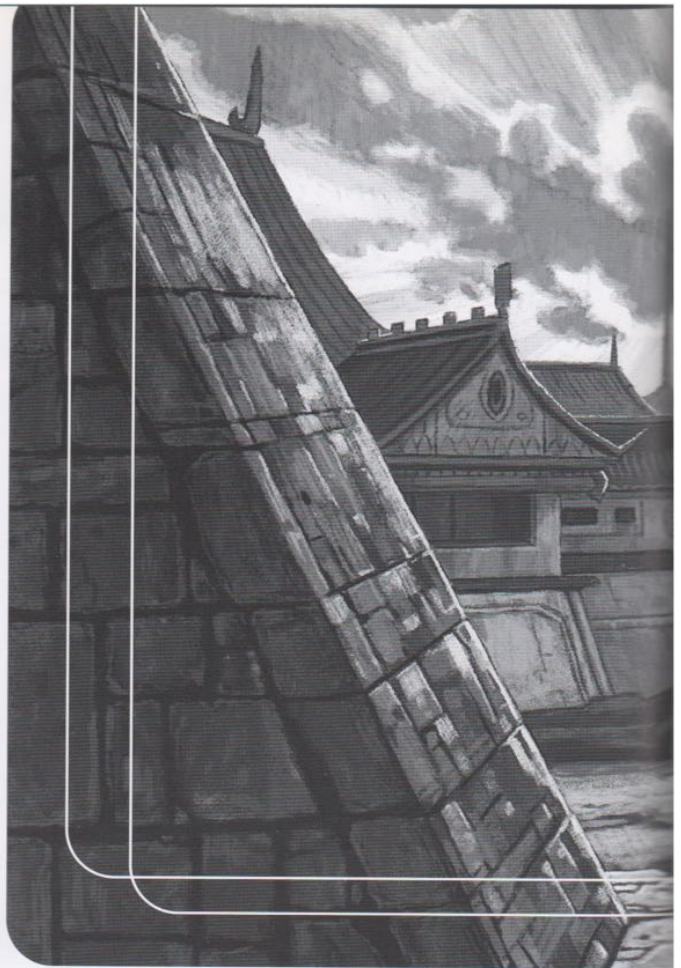
Kyoji looked to his father. The old general was still looking intently at the valley below. When he turned to face his troops, his gaze was stern and focused. He stood confident, no longer seeming quite so old as he had a moment before.

"It does not matter," he said in a clear voice.

A ripple of confusion passed through his troops.

"Father?" Kyoji asked quietly.

"I said it does not matter," Toki repeated. "None of it matters. It does not matter if the Bloodspeakers outnumber us three to one or ten thousand to one. It does not matter if you must face your own father in the



valley below. It does not matter if the Phoenix bar their gates, or if they rain fire upon us for discovering their secret city. There is no glory to be had here, fighting a battle in some secret valley days from civilization — and that does not matter!" Toki pointed to the valley. "I see the enemies of the Empire! I see samurai with ready swords prepared to face them! I see that justice must be done. And that is all that matters." Toki's stern eyes scanned his officers, fixing upon each one.

When he looked at Kyoji, the young man drew his sword in salute. "For Rokugan!" he shouted

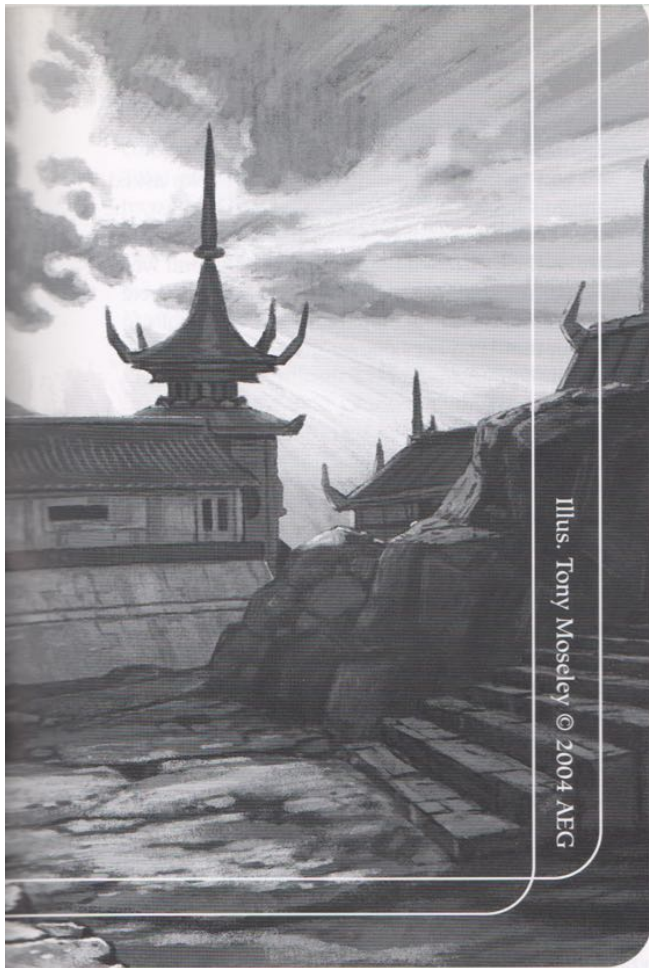
His fellow officers drew their swords and echoed his cry.

Kyoji had seen battle before, mostly daytime raids against bandit gangs, fighting beside his sister in the First Legion. His forces had always outclassed the enemy, and surrender came quickly. While there had often been violence, there had seldom been any danger.

It was nothing like this.

Kyoji swung his katana with both hands, hewing about him like a woodsman as the undead troops closed in. They were peasants, or had been once, their decaying forms clad in simple garments. Some held short spears or staves. Some merely clawed at him with jagged fingernails.

He buried his sword in the chest of one — it seized the blade in both hands, tangling the weapon in its body as it fell. Kyoji stumbled forward, thrown off-balance, and felt the heavy body of another attacker leap onto his shoulder. He drew his wakizashi with one hand



and stabbed over his shoulder, burying the weapon in the second zombie's throat. It gave an unearthly cry that ended abruptly as Kyoji twisted the blade, severing the creature's head. A second stroke sliced his katana free from his first attacker and he rose with a blade in each hand.

"That's the way," Mirumoto Kenzo chuckled, nodding at Kyoji as he cut down another of the undead creatures. "Now make for the wall!"

Kyoji nodded, following in the Dragon's wake. A raucous explosion sounded to his left as one of Tsukiro's potions exploded in brilliant green fire. He searched the chaos all around for any sign of his father. He saw the general's unmistakable back banner — marked with the symbols of the Monkey Clan and the Toturi Dynasty. Several soldiers stood in a ring around him, spears held out in a ring. Most were wounded, some could barely stand. A squad of Bloodspeaker cavalry on monstrous black steeds suddenly launched itself from the confusion, galloping toward the general. Toku stood at the north gates, waving his battle fan wildly in hopes that someone on the wall would see. A trio of red-robed shugenja appeared on the wall above the gates. Suddenly, brilliant green fire rained from the walls, enveloping the black riders.

The hidden city's gates opened.

"To the city!" Kyoji shouted, rallying whatever troops he could find. He continued slashing about with his katana, cutting down any Bloodspeaker minion who drew too close.

A handful of the undead creatures followed his troops as they passed through the gates, but were

quickly cut down by jade fire from Phoenix shugenja and swift arrows from hidden Shiba archers. Kyoji charged through the gates and collapsed against a wall, gasping for breath. Outside, he saw that the gates were slowly grinding closed. The Bloodspeakers had begun to charge at the walls en masse, trying to breach the gates before they closed. Just outside the gates he saw a group of twenty Legionnaires, pinned down by a ring of shambling dead.

"Hold the gates!" he shouted. Without thinking, Kyoji surged to his feet and ran back through the gates. He realized, in the back of his mind, that he alone would make little difference when twenty samurai could not fight their way free. The Phoenix could not hold the gates for the sake of twenty men at the risk of hundreds more. He was probably only dooming himself to be trapped beyond the walls. He pushed those thoughts aside, and fought.

"For Rokugan!" came a defiant cry, and Kyoji was almost surprised when he realized he had been the one to shout it. The cry was echoed by those around him. A dozen samurai had followed him from the city, charging back to save their brethren.

Pressed between the twenty fighting their way free and Kyoji's reinforcements, the undead crumbled. Falling quickly into formation, Kyoji led his band back toward the walls. Arrows and jade fire rained over their heads as the Phoenix did their best to support them. More of Tsukiro's volatile potions erupted behind him, reducing undead soldiers to flaming cinders. The world erupted into bright explosions and chaos; Kyoji ceased paying attention to anything beyond putting one foot in front of the other. Only when he heard the city's heavy gates clang shut did he dare look up, finding with relief that he and his soldiers were safe inside.

Relief flooding through his body, Kyoji fell to his knees. Strong hands gripped his arms and held him upright. Looking up in surprise he saw the faces of the soldiers he had saved. Over the din of the battle they cheered his name.

Kyoji merely glanced around him, still stunned by what had happened. He caught a glimpse of his father, face exhausted yet still standing tall. Pride shone in the old man's eyes.

* * *

During his time in the Imperial City, Kyoji had seen the Phoenix Elemental Council before. He had never thought much of the Master of Air. He always felt a little distant in a distracted sort of a way. Here, today, standing in the Temple of Bishamon at the heart of the hidden city, he seemed a different man entirely. His orange kimono was stained with soot and blood. His face was hard and determined as he explained the truth to Toku and his officers.

"This city's name is Gisei Toshi," Isawa Nakamuro explained. "The City of Sacrifice. It has remained hidden for centuries, the secret repository of the Phoenix Clan's darkest forbidden knowledge.

"What sort of forbidden knowledge?" Mirumoto Kenzo asked.

"Magical artifacts that could neither be safely wielded nor safely destroyed," Nakamuro said, looking at the Dragon meaningfully. "Journals containing dark

magic, written by such madmen as Yori, Akuma, and Yajinden. This place is the Isawa family's deepest secret, known only to our highest ranking shugenja."

"Yet I saw many guards outside," Saigorei replied. "Some of them wore Shiba standards."

Nakamuro nodded. "The samurai and peasants who dwell here have all sworn a vow — they will live and die within these walls, never venturing forth, all to protect the secrets that sleep here."

"You are surprisingly forthcoming with secrets your clan has guarded for centuries," Kenzo said.

"We do not hide the truth for our own sake but for yours," Nakamuro replied. "If the Bloodspeakers had known of this place before... If they should gain access to that which lies hidden here..."

"A great deal of good your secrecy has done you, Phoenix," Tamori Tsukiro replied. "Now we are all trapped here, outnumbered, with little hope of reinforcements, in a city that does not exist."

"Fighting with each other gains nothing," Toku said in a quiet voice. The old general knelt in the corner of the temple, his eyes half closed in meditation. Kyoji knew that look; his father was planning something.

"And what I have told you is not the worst of it," Nakamuro continued. "The Bloodspeaker armies are led by a man named Yajinden. He is extraordinarily powerful, and as immortal as Iuchiban himself. He created many of the more dangerous items we house here."

"Then perhaps he has come seeking what was once his," Kyoji offered.

"That was my conclusion as well," Nakamuro said uncomfortably. "But those are not my true fear. Once he arrived here, he no doubt sensed the power of the Black Scrolls that we hide here — artifacts that once imprisoned the essence of the Dark Kami, Fu Leng. If the Bloodspeakers should obtain those, the Rain

of Blood will be a fond memory compared to what comes after."

"So why not remove the Black Scrolls?" Toku asked. Nakamuro sighed. "It is not as easy as you suggest," he replied. "I cannot use magic to remove the Scrolls from the city — they radiate an aura of corruption and would simply tear my soul from my body were I to try. There are a few escape tunnels that could bear the scrolls to safety, but that is equally dangerous. Yajinden might sense that their power had left the city, and track it. It would be a suicide mission."

"Kyoji, you sent word to Toshi Ranbo that the Bloodspeakers marched on the Phoenix lands," Kenzo said. "How long before we might expect more troops to be dispatched?"

"We asked for no reinforcements," Kyoji said. "It may take weeks... assuming they even find Gisei Toshi."

"How long will the city walls hold?" Midoru asked. Nakamuro was silent for several moments. "By my estimates, three more days."

Toku looked at the Master of Air. "Nakamuro-sama," he said. "I would like a map of this area, if you please."

Two Shiba guards flanked the heavy steel door at the end of the cavern. They looked back at Kyoji and the others, waiting for the signal. The door would only remain open for a moment, long enough for them to ride through and flee through the mountain pass.

"Are you sure you are prepared for this General?" Midoru asked as they led their horses to the end of the cavern. The Crane looked back at Toku, his dark eyes impassive.

"Am I sure I am not too old for this, you mean?" Toku replied with a small smile. "I have defended this empire since I was old enough to hold a sword. I did not shy away from Yogo Junzo, Daigotsu, or the Steel Chrysanthemum. I will not stand aside today."

"But perhaps it would be wiser for you to remain in Gisei Toshi, helping command the troops," Kyoji said. "Nakamuro could use a soldier of your experience."

Toku looked at his son evenly. "Kyoji," he said, "I was wrong not to treat you like a samurai when I sent you away before. Show me the same respect now."

"Hai, father," Kyoji said, bowing his head respectfully. Nakamuro appeared from deeper in the tunnel, followed by three Phoenix shugenja. Each held a small iron box cautiously with both hands. With great care, they lashed one box to each of their saddles.

"Only one of these boxes contains the Black Scrolls," Nakamuro said. "For your own safety I will not tell you which. Do not touch or open the boxes until you arrive in Kyuden Isawa — though you are not shugenja their Taint is yet powerful enough to claim your soul. Bring them to Master Taeruko, she will keep them safe."

"Carry the Fortunes, Master Nakamuro," Toku said, bowing from the saddle. "I hope we may meet again, in this world or the next."

"Arigato, General," Nakamuro replied, a strange sadness in his voice. "The Phoenix cannot thank you enough."



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With that, the doors opened. A blast of snow and cold wind rushed inside, dousing the Shiba Torches. Toku gave a quiet signal and galloped out into the mountains. Midoru and Kyoji followed. The trio galloped along at a breakneck pace for several hours. The narrow pass loomed about them on either side, the walls easily a hundred feet high on either side. Kyoji had the distinct impression he was riding through a small chip on the face of the earth. As they drew further from Gisei Toshi, Toku signaled for them to slow their pace.

"It will do us no good to kill the horses before we see Kyuden Isawa," the general said, slowing to a trot. "But should we not hurry as long as we can, father?" Kyoji asked. "If Yajinden should find us before the scrolls are delivered."

Midoru chuckled. "Kyoji do you really believe it was ever our mission to escape Yajinden?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" Kyoji asked, looking at the Crane curiously.

Midoru opened his mouth to answer, but Toku gestured curtly for silence, tilting his head to hear. Kyoji listened as well and could hear it, faintly. A rising scream, a horrible sound, building in the distance and slowly growing closer. Kyoji looked back in time to see a murky shadow build around the corner of the pass behind them. A bestial black horse galloped around the pass, bearing a tall, broad shouldered man with flowing white hair. His face was set in an expression of fierce and implacable hatred as he bore down toward them.

"Yajinden," Midoru said, kicking his horse to a gallop. "Ride, Kyoji!"

Kyoji did not hesitate, but galloped along beside the Crane. It was several moments before he realized that his father was not beside them. He saw his father step from the saddle and reach into his kimono.

"What is he doing?" Kyoji shouted. "He's no match for Yajinden!"

"He doesn't have to be, fool!" Midoru cried. "Ride or all is lost!"

The old samurai looked back over his shoulder and smiled at his son. There was no sadness there. No fear. Only pride, and, as always, the burning light of hope.

Kyoji realized then what his father hoped to do. Gisei Toshi could not survive, not with Yajinden leading their forces. Yajinden could not be killed... but here, with the right plan, he could be stopped.

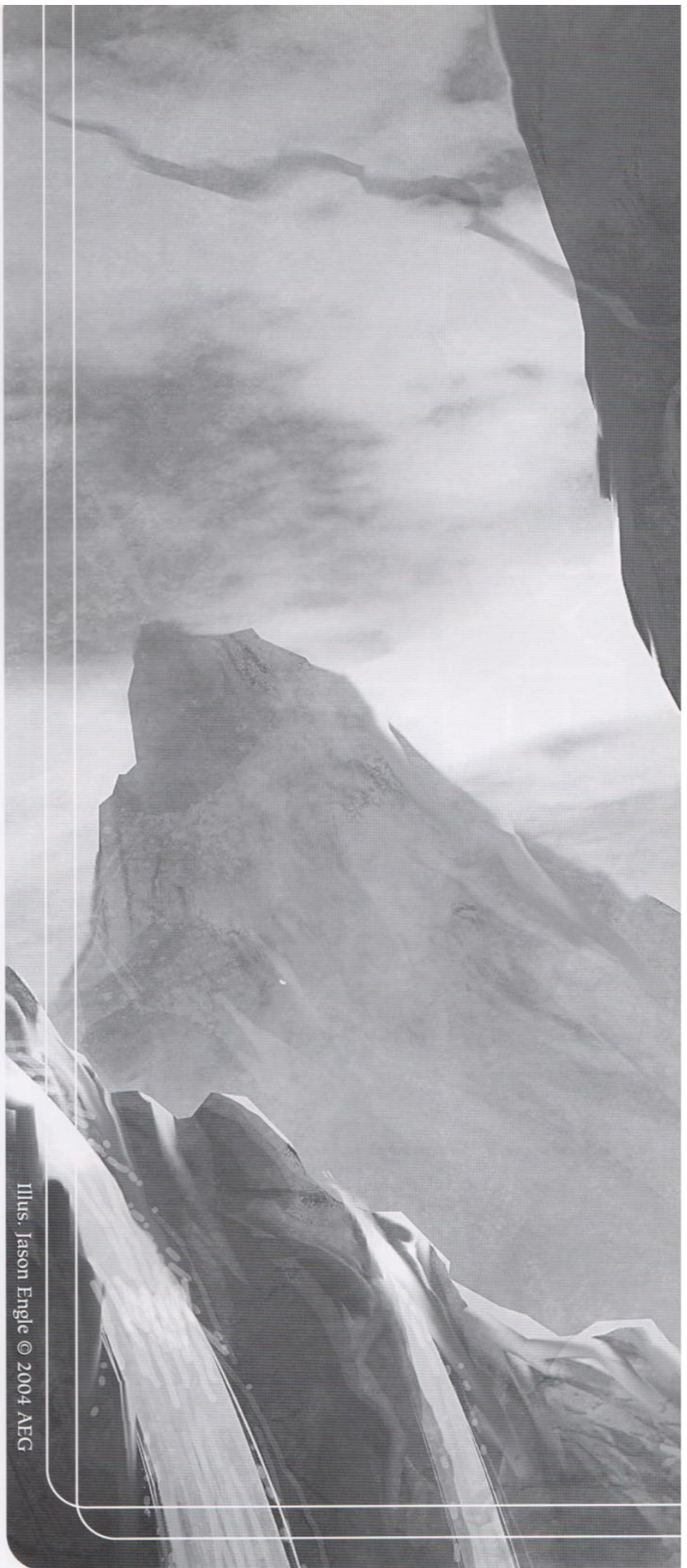
Toku drew his hand out from his kimono. Tamori Tsukiro's potion bottle glowed warmly, casting a faint radiance on the icy walls around them. Yajinden bore down on Toku, lifting his blacksmith's hammer high to end the old general's life. Toku lunged with a sudden surge of strength, hurling the bottle toward the Bloodspeaker.

Yajinden's eyes widened in sudden recognition of what was about to happen.

"One man always makes the difference," Kyoji whispered. "Good bye, father." The young samurai kicked his horse to a gallop and rode away as swiftly as he could.

Behind him, there was a sharp crack followed by intense silence. The mountains held their breath.

Then the mountain pass crumbled upon Toku and Yajinden.



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BRILLIANT SOUL

Formations make their long-delayed debut in *The Hidden City*. Even in such a highly anticipated expansion, the introduction of formations might make the biggest splash.

The rules for formations and a few examples were released in February, so you're already likely to know how nifty they'll be. But in case you were on vacation, here are formation rules in a nutshell: there's an army requirement for playing it, and the formation "breaks"

when it's not met; once in play, it stays there; each army can have one; and you get another action after playing it.

Brilliant Soul is a formation to give some special attention to your one-of-a-kind personalities: the Uniques. Like all formations, there's a personality requirement for playing this. You need a Unique samurai, and another samurai or bushi. The Unique personality is really the key, though, because Brilliant Soul grants you the ability to bow a samurai or bushi to give a Unique Samurai a +2F/+2C bonus, as a Battle action. By virtue of Brilliant

Soul having a built-in Battle action, you'll always be able to pump up one of your Unique Personalities right away.

But if you're only getting one +2F/+2C bonus, you're better off with *Destiny Has No Secrets*. The trick to exploiting Brilliant Soul, of course, is to use it to give multiple bonuses. This card belongs in decks with lots of Personalities ("Box Party" decks, for example), and low force Personalities may be best. If your samurai or bushi are less than 2F, you're gaining force outright without needing tricks like straightening the Personalities you bowed for the bonus with *Armed and Ready*, *Dying Effort*, or similar cards.

Because force bonuses tend to be so important in battle, it's easy to overlook that there's a Chi bonus, too. Of course, that affects duels. Brilliant Soul can protect a personality from a challenge, or allow your samurai to issue a challenge that wasn't expected a moment earlier.

You could easily miss an important point about the playing of this card, because of how it's worded. It's easy to think that because you need a Unique samurai to make the formation,

that he or she is the one that will receive the bonus. Not necessarily. If you've got multiple Unique samurai, you can spread the bonuses around to all of them.

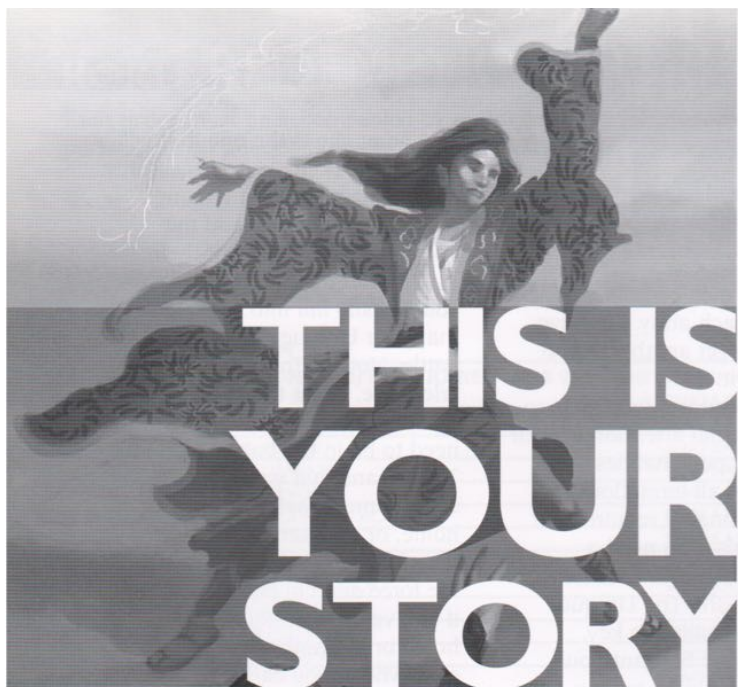
Another mental trap a player could easily fall into is to think that your Unique has to be in the battle. Not so. To meet the rule of relevance, *either* the bowing Personality or the Unique samurai need to be in the battle. Not both. This means that you can bow some samurai safely from your home, or another battle, to give your Unique in the current battle the force and chi bonus. Likewise, if you've got a Unique Samurai at home or in another battle somewhere, you can start bowing like mad with your samurai in the current battle to pump that samurai. In an environment where mobility has been a highly successful strategy, "reassigning" force from almost anywhere could be mighty handy.

It's a center formation, although that doesn't mean anything important — yet. There will be plenty of chances for keyword fun with formations later.

Finally, even if you think the card is nifty, "Aren't the deckbuilding options a bit limited? How many Unique samurai are out there to use, anyway?" More than you might think. With the release of *The Hidden City*, there will be over 50 Unique samurai in the Diamond environment! Most factions have four or five personalities that could benefit from Brilliant Soul. The outliers? With zero and one Unique samurai, respectively, *Ratling* and *Shadowlands* won't have much use for this card (unless someone really likes Koto!). At the other extreme, *Crane* currently weigh in with a massive eleven Unique samurai, and *Lion* bring up a close second, with nine.

It's also worth pointing out that there are other cards in *The Hidden City* that key off the Unique trait, like *Shining Example* and *Heart of a Hero*. Although building a deck around Uniques may be risky, there are certainly some fun possibilities. If you manage to pull it off, people might say you're... brilliant.





THIS IS YOUR STORY



Illus. Thomas Denmark © 2004 AEG

by Rich Wulf

One of my fondest early memories of L5R is the finals of the Day of Thunder tournament. Watching the players as they huddled around to catch every detail of the final confrontation of the Clan War, the energy of the crowd as they wondered what would happen next, listening eagerly to the conclusion of the story we had all followed so closely for so long — it was that moment, in my mind, that really set Legend of the Five Rings apart from any game I'd ever been a part of. The great people I've met since then have only reaffirmed that belief. Rokugan may be a fictitious world, but Legend of the Five Rings is a community, a *family*, and we all care deeply about this fantasy world we have worked together to create.

Now, years later, it is a distinct privilege for me to be a part of that game, writing the stories as the players determine the Empire's course through storyline event after storyline event. As you can probably guess, the job can be difficult in a lot of ways; the players often surprise us and it's rare that a storyline ever turns out exactly the way we might have expected. Nonetheless, it's also a great deal of fun. Whatever happens lies in store for L5R, you can be certain that the story will always feature a great many of surprises (even if you happen to be one of the writers).

The most significant way to influence the storyline, to become a part of the constantly evolving world of Rokugan, has always been to win a major storyline tournament. Events such as GenCon, the Kotei season, and the European Championships have a profound effect on the storyline. Heroes live and died, brave souls have are to the Shadowlands, and new Emperors take the throne all due to the actions of players at these events. Since the beginning of Gold Edition we've been working to give the players even greater powers of influence.

Though the winner of a tournament will always have the most profound impact upon a story, we've also begun to offer other ways for participants to affect the story. At GenCon 2003, the votes of every player present determined the fates of the Four Winds. At GenCon UK 2002, the top player of every faction was allowed to make a significant decision on behalf of their clan, and in most cases had an incredible effect on the course of the Four Winds plotline. This year will be no different, so I'd like to take this opportunity to discuss the effects of this year's Origins and GenCon tournaments.

Origins

If you didn't know, Origins is a major gaming convention held in Columbus, Ohio on June 24-27 2004. The following storyline events will occur at Origins 2004.

Origins 2004 Challenge Booth

The Challenge Booths are a proud Legend of the Five Rings tradition. Throughout the course of the weekend, players will be allowed to make a small donation to the Make a Wish Foundation to challenge other players to a game of L5R. In the past, most Challenge Booths have been focused on small events involving only two clans. This year's Challenge Booth is a little different. The winner of this event will get the chance to nominate a final hero to join the Legion of the Dead — a hero who would otherwise not be a legal choice.

These heroes either died outside the clan, were allied with but never officially a member of the clan, never had a card before, or were corrupted by the Shadowlands but never killed — their selection will allow them to take their place among the blessed ancestors (or the Legion of Blood, as the case may be). The hero selected will depend upon the clan that player represents, as follows: Yasuki Nokatsu (Crab), Kakita Toshimoko (Crane), Hoshi Maseru (Dragon), Akodo Kage (Lion), Kaimetsu-uo (Mantis), Asako Sagoten (Phoenix), Hiruma

Kazuma (Ratling), Shosuro (Scorpion), (Shadowlands), or Shinjo Yokatsu (Unicorn).

The Challenge Booths are a somewhat informal event. Thus, there are no advance tickets available. If you wish to participate in the Challenge Booths, simply show up in the CCG room at some point during the convention and inquire at the Legend of the Five Rings booth.

Origins 2004 Tournament

The Legend of the Five Rings tournament held at Origins is also the final tournament of the 2004 Kotei Season, and thus is part of the ongoing Legion of the Dead storyline prize. The winner of this tournament, as in every Kotei, will be given the chance to select a deceased character to join the Legion of the Dead. For rules regarding who can and cannot be selected, as well as full details on the Legion of the Dead, see Imperial Herald Vol. 2, #11.

In addition to this prize, the winner of Origins will also get an additional prize. Though the Legion of the Dead prepares to dispatch the greatest of their number to the land of the living, this is not the first time the ancestors have returned to life. The ronin warrior-poet Rezan, legendary hero of the Empire, entered Rokugan decades ago through Oblivion's Gate and remains in the mortal world. Unknown even to himself, Rezan still bears a connection to the realms of the dead that will factor heavily into the events of this year's GenCon results. The winner of Origins will claim Rezan's fealty. Should the Shadowlands win this great hero will be lost to darkness.

GenCon Indy 2004

GenCon Indy is arguably the greatest gaming convention in the world, held in Indianapolis from August 19–22, 2004. The following storyline events will occur there.

GenCon 2004 Challenge Booth

Much in the same vein as the Origins Challenge Booth described above, the GenCon Challenge Booth allows players to make a small impact on the storyline in the name of charity (the Make

a Wish Foundation). The winner of this event gains a dual prize — the chance to name which Minor Clan will represent the assembled Minor Clans in the Imperial Courts, and a chance to forge a potent alliance between that clan and the faction he is playing. (In the case of a Ratling or Shadowlands win, the Minor Clan that wins will join the court not because of that faction's political influence, but due to more subtle aid from that faction. An alliance between that faction and the Minor Clan will still result.)

The following Minor Clans are legal choices for this event: Badger Clan, Dragonfly Clan, Fox Clan, Hare Clan, Monkey Clan, Ox Clan, Sparrow Clan, or Tortoise Clan.

As at Origins, the Challenge Booths are a somewhat informal event. Thus, there are no advance tickets available. If you wish to participate in the Challenge Booths, simply show up in the CCG room at some point during the convention and inquire at the Legend of the Five Rings booth.

Top of Clan Prizes

As a reward for players who show great loyalty to a particular faction, GenCon also offers a number of story prizes for those who show the best performance in that faction. The top ranking player of each faction will be allowed to make a decision on behalf of his clan, similar to GenCon UK 2002. The full details of the choices each clan can make and their possible implications will be released on the AEG website before GenCon 2004.

Participation Vote

At GenCon 2003, every player present was allowed to vote on the future of the Four Winds, including which Wind ultimately became Emperor. This year's GenCon will continue this trend. Just as the main story prize of the event gave players a chance to decide which character to bring back from the dead, this event will give players a chance to mark a character for death. A list of important characters from every faction will be presented at the

tournament. Players will be allowed to choose one character from this list whom they want to save from Iuchiban's wrath. The character with the least amount of votes will die in the fiction read at the end of the tournament.

Bounties

Player-sponsored bounties have become a large part of major L5R tournaments. These are player sponsored prizes that are offered to other players for meeting specific objectives. In the past, bounties have been offered for the top player of a specific faction, the top pure or corrupt player of a specific faction, or a player who wins the tournament with a specific storyline goal in mind. This GenCon should be no different, with plenty of player bounties. Stay tuned to the AEG website for more information about player-sponsored bounties as we do our best to organize and present these awards in an efficient manner.

GenCon 2004 Tournament — The Main Event

Traditionally, Legend of the Five Rings storyline events at GenCon have held a great deal of significance. This year is no different. The winner of this tournament will select a character from either the Legion of the Dead or the Legion of Blood (the characters nominated at this year's Koteis and the Origins Challenge Booth). This character will return to life by a means yet to be revealed in the story. This hero will return during a critical point in Iuchiban's campaign of conquest. If this character is a member of the Legion of the Dead, his appearance will turn the tide against the Bloodspeaker, forcing Iuchiban to retreat in the face of Rokugan's might. If this character is a member of the Legion of Blood, his appearance will bolster and strengthen his master, spelling even darker times for the Empire.

And this is only the beginning. Keep an eye out for even more of these interactive events as we plan them for you throughout the year.

This is your story, after all, and it's our honor to be the ones to tell it.



DRESSING THE PART

by Kim Hosmer

Illustration: Lynn Hunter © 2004 AEG

In the Emerald Empire, what you wear and how you act has a lasting impact on how people remember you. Is your obi badly tied? Are you gauche enough to show the bottoms of your feet to those of higher rank? Benteen forbid you are actually wearing your kimono crossed the wrong way in front. Sometimes the Fortunes think if you are dressed for your own funeral, they might as well oblige you. In any case you'll be buried at court, so it is better to know how to behave, and how to properly attire your samurai.

For formal occasions, especially Winter Court, most samurai will wear what is traditional. To start, an under-kimono called a nagajuban and tabi socks are put on. The nagajuban is worn crossing the left flap over the right. This is then tied closed with a datejime (a stiff belt that helps prevent the obi from getting wrinkled) for women, and men use a small sash called a koshihimo. The kimono goes on next, still using the principle of left over right. The front bottom edge of the kimono should touch the feet. It is acceptable to fold the kimono over a koshihimo to make sure the length is correct and the kimono doesn't

drag on the floor or trip the wearer. Then the front is smoothed out and flattened against the body. The folds of the kimono should now hide the koshihimo. A datejime is tied around the kimono to secure it, and give a flatter surface for the obi for women. Men use their thinner obi to tie their kimono closed. The extra length of kimono that was smoothed down should now show as a neat horizontal fold below the obi or, if there wasn't that much surplus, not show at all. Women tie an obita (a flat board attached to a sash) on so that their obi will remain unwrinkled and flat in front and tie their obi on top of this. An obiage (scarf) is then tied around the waist and tucked in to top of the obi so that some of it peeks out. The obijime (cord) is then tied around the center of the obi.

There are two types of obi that women use, the fukuro-obi and the nagoya-obi. Fukuro-obis have a design only on one side of the material and the nagoya-obi is narrower in the middle to make them easier to tie around the body. In either case the average obi can be up to twelve inches wide and six feet long. The most popular bow used by Rokugani women is the

taiko-musubi, or "drum bow." It is tied in back and puffs out like a pillow. The complexity of the bow attests to the creativity and artistic nature of the woman wearing it. It was not until the late Edo period, that tying an obi into different shapes and knots became popular. Now it is a necessary skill for any accomplished female courtier.

Both men and women will use a netsuke (small carved bead) and ojime (sliding bead) on their obijime. Netsuke beads are carved into fanciful designs and range from erotic to religious in form. They can be made out of any material, but are usually shaped from bone, wood, or a precious stone. Some netsuke are even passed down as heirlooms, from parent to child. Objects such as koku, inros (small boxes that hold seals and medicine), and kinchaku (bag) can be strung on the obijime and firmly secured using the netsuke and ojime. Inros are elaborately designed, and varieties of jade, ivory, or a simple black lacquered wood with mother of pearl inlays.

Men wear a thin obi, with plain designs and a simple box knot as well as an obijime. When they are wearing hakama (a seven-

pleated skirt sometimes divided in the center as pants), they need not wear an obi. Wearing hakama is also a symbol that they follow the tenets of bushido, as the seven pleats represent the seven virtues. For formal occasions, men wear a hakama and haori. Haoris will normally have the mon of the samurai's clan on one shoulder and the mon of their family on the other. Naga-bakama (split hakama with overlong material in the leg meant to trail behind) and a kataginu (a sleeveless, wing-shouldered vest) can be worn in court. A naga-bakama is a sign of high rank and wealth, and only the upper echelons of Rokugani society wear them. It is said that past Emperors required their subjects to wear this garment in court to make assassination attempts more difficult as the pants make quick movements nearly impossible.

The sleeves of a kimono are a good indication of the age and marital station of a woman. Typically men do not have long cumbersome sleeves, and there

is very little variation in length. A young unmarried girl will often have sleeves that nearly reach the floor. As a woman matures the sleeves get shorter, and more boxlike. Female bushi will normally forego the more frivolous styles and opt for practicality, and they will normally wear hakama as well. To complete their outfit, women wear an uchikake, which is a formal robe that trails behind, and is unbelted. Rokugani only wear pure white kimonos at funerals, and brides wear them when getting married. To wear this at any other time is considered bad luck.

The most important part of a woman's beauty care is maintaining a shining head of hair. This is usually achieved by a twice yearly washing in shiromizu (water in which rice has been soaked). Almond and camellia nut oil is then combed in to keep the hair aromatic and glossy. Kanzashi (hair ornaments) are used to style their hair. Married women will wear their hair in smooth and

neatly coiffed up dos, usually focusing on volume around the crown of the head. Maidens wear their hair down or in a foxtail, with combs ornamenting, and keeping the hair back from the face. Women usually pluck the hair from the nape of their necks and shave off their eyebrows. A white foundation of rice flour is applied to the face and various body parts to give a pale shade that is considered elegant. Black eyebrows made of lampblack are then applied higher up on the brow. Married or engaged women use a solution made up of iron filings steeped in sake on their teeth to blacken them (ohaguro). The black teeth set off the blackness of her hair, and heighten her beauty. The practice of ohaguro used to be a symbol of a woman's coming of age, but now it is an indication of her status. Lips are then reddened using juice from the beni or safflower. Some women also use the beni to redden their cheeks, but a fair complexion is more fashionable.



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To sweeten their scent and increase their attractiveness, both sexes use incense to perfume their clothes. The Ko-do (incense ceremony) is a popular diversion for many nobles. There are even occasions on which some wealthy courtier will hold a contest to see who can come up with the most sublime scent. Jasmine, plum blossoms and chrysanthemum are popularly used in these herbal blends. Some raw woods such as aloe and sandalwood are also used as incense, and commonly given as gifts.

Before the reign of Toturi the First, cosmetics were commonly used by both genders. From his time spent in the monastery, Toturi learned to scorn excessive ornamentation and frivolous attire. As the Emperor himself preferred simple, utilitarian clothing and shunned the use of makeup,

many male courtiers emulated his style to gain favor. Even with the Emperor's passing, it is rare to see men wearing cosmetics, beyond Scorpions using them as masks.

While they do not wear cosmetics, men do wear hats called eboshi. Those possessing rank in court wear tate eboshi to signify this status. It stands tall, with an indentation in the front to help it sit up straight. There are many variations on the style of the hat, but it retains the tall cylindrical shape, rounded at the top. The ori eboshi is a flattened and folded back variation of this hat and ties onto the head under the chin. The most common color for hats is black with a pattern that represents the family and clan. The finishes on eboshi vary from matte for young men, and a high gloss lacquer for older samurai.

Both genders wear zori sandals indoors. It is crucial to not walk around barefoot, as it is considered an insult to let someone of higher rank see the soles of your feet. Geta are only worn outdoors, and left outside when entering an abode. It is customary to also tuck a sensu into the obi as it serves many purposes. Sensu are an important part in the tea ceremony, as well as communication, especially for purposes of courtship. Simply resting the fan upon your lips can indicate that you think the person you are speaking with is a liar. Clicking it open over the face will let the person you are speaking with know that someone is watching you, without ever needing to say a word. Some of the more practiced courtiers can even deliver more detailed messages simply by altering the rhythm and direction of their fanning.

Only bushi should carry a katana, as it is a calling card that you have studied kenjutsu. One can tell how great a person's station is (or how highly they think of themselves) by the fashion in which they tuck their katana into their obi. If it is thrust into the obi in almost horizontal fashion, they are usually of very high rank, as they are indicating that they need more space. When kneeling to speak with someone of higher rank, it is customary to take off the katana and put it edge in on the right side. Placing the katana on the left for ease of draw is a deliberate insult, as it indicates distrust of the person. Touching someone who is not your spouse in public is also a grave insult.

Not all samurai are required to know the intricacies of dress and behavior. This does not mean it is acceptable for them to bring shame on their family and clan's name by committing some huge social gaffe. Court can be a dangerous place for the uninitiated, and the unwary samurai can find himself dishonored, and a wave man simply because he had the effrontery to blow his nose in front of the wrong person.



Illus. Drew Baker © 2004 AEG



THE EMPEROR'S CHOICES

The Emperor has issued his decree — this very year he shall be wed, and the clan that proves itself the most loyal and dedicated to the virtues of bushido shall be the one to select his bride. It gives me great pride to announce that the clan he has chosen is none other than the Lion.

At the behest of the Righteous Emperor, each family of the Lion was allowed to select one noble samurai-ko from their midst, a worthy bride for the son of Toturi. Each family has stepped forward with their selection, from whom will the final choice will be made...

The Ikoma have chosen Kurako — warrior, historian, and tactician. Her keen mind will illuminate the Emperor's court. How could the descendants of an Ikoma and the Righteous Emperor help but shine with unmatched intellect?

The Kitsu have chosen Dejiko — who once served as lieutenant to the Emperor's noble sister. Her loyalty to the Toturi line shines on in her dedication to the Righteous Emperor, and will add the Kitsu family's legendary wisdom to the Emperor's bloodline.

The Matsu has chosen Aoiko, heir to the legacy of Matsu Gohei, mighty hero of the Clan Wars. Surely her bloodline will add even greater honor to the Righteous Emperor's legacy, and inspire their children to great heights of glory.

And the Akodo have chosen... to not choose an Akodo at all. It was the final wish of Akodo Ginawa, before entering into retirement that the Akodo not select the Emperor's bride from among their number. As Toturi himself was once an Akodo, he felt it would be far better to expand the Emperor's bloodline to combine the best aspects of many families, rather than just one.

With this in mind, and as a gesture of respect to their Matsu cousins, the Akodo have chosen Matsu Kenji, taisha of the Lion's Pride, first mate of the legendary Deathless. Such a great hero will surely grant great courage to the Emperor's line.

These are your choices, sons and daughters of the Lion Clan. From among these you will now select your Empress.

Choose wisely.



Illus. William O'Connor, Michael Kalutta, beet
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WAY OF THE OPEN HAND - 15R RPG PREVIEW

Way of the Open Hand is an exciting new dual system sourcebook coming soon for Legend of the Five Rings. This book not only contains a lot of great info about the Brotherhood of Shinsei and its orders, but also explores a subject touched upon but never fully explored — Rokugani martial arts. The design team had a blast with this one, drawing inspiration from myths, films, and of course real life martial arts. I think what we've come up with will be a lot of fun for players and GM's alike. Expect to see a lot of new fighting styles, as well as a fresh new look for a few old familiar faces. Like the following, for example...

KAZE-DO (DRAGON CLAN MARTIAL ART)

HISTORY

Togashi Kaze is well known throughout the Empire as one of the most famous *ise zumi* ever known. He lived during the reign of Hantei III, when the Empire was still securing its borders and settling into the lands Sun and Moon had blessed for their children. It was during this era that the Hantei pronounced that only those of the samurai caste would be lawfully allowed to carry conventional weapons. Though this was done ostensibly to accentuate the strength of the samurai caste, it was also intended to curb the possibility of armed peasant revolts.

Unfortunately for many peasants, this meant only that they became ready prey for bandits and wandering beasts from the Shadowlands. Though some samurai responded to the needs of the farmers, others found the matter of no importance weighed against their other concerns. With few large cities founded and fewer organized patrol routes established, the life of the peasantry slowly became a nightmare.

The followers of Shinsei became concerned with the plight of the common man. As they were not samurai, they understood what it was like to be ignored and mistreated by the nobles. However, because they were not samurai, few felt it was their place to take an active hand in the matter and instead returned to their contemplations. One among their number, Togashi Kaze, refused to take part in such negligence and set about finding a way to teach the peasants how to defend themselves.

The result was that Kaze created the first organized form of *jiujutsu* ("the way of hands and feet") and began to teach others his style. Kaze was a gifted teacher, and the simplicity of the art allowed it to spread further once he had taught his first students. Throughout the lands of the Dragon, then the Phoenix, then the Crane, the peasantry learned the art of *jiujutsu*. Bandits and Tainted monsters alike no longer found peasants such easy prey, and Kaze became an infamous figure by demonstrating his art on brash samurai in the streets of cities across the fledgling Empire.

By the time art reached the lands of the Lion, many Akodo generals and Matsu soldiers saw the useful applications of the art. They invited Togashi Kaze to visit them, and teach whatever elements of his art he would share. Kaze refused. So long as the peasants were forced to remain without the tools to arm themselves, he said, he would leave *jiujutsu* in their hands alone. If the sword was fit only for a samurai, then *jiu-*

jutsu would remain fit only for the common man. Kaze's blunt dismissal of the Lion left the Akodo outraged. The Lion refused to press the matter further, not willing to continue to debase themselves by treating a monk as an equal, but they brought the matter to the Hantei's attention.

Intrigued, Hantei III invited Togashi Kaze to his Winter Court, praising his bravery and famous deeds. Kaze accepted, but in the middle of the court, the Emperor commanded the monk to demonstrate his art for all to see. To the shock of all, Kaze refused his Emperor.

Enraged at such effrontery, Hantei III commanded his Emerald Champion, Doji Kuzume, to strike down the monk for his behavior. If Kaze would not show his style voluntarily, he would do so to save his own life. Kuzume drew his blade and stepped toward the monk, but Kaze spoke that he would not raise his hand to defend himself and he would die peacefully. Kuzume's conscience weighed against his honor, as he was unwilling to fight against such an opponent, and finally he asked permission to commit *seppuku*.

In the same breath, Hantei III granted Kuzume permission, and temporarily granted a Lion general in attendance Emerald Champion status. He then gave his new Champion his first command — to slay Togashi Kaze. Matsu Noshin did so without hesitation, and Kaze died without once sharing his secrets with a samurai. Members of the Imperial Family point to this legend as a warning of the price of foolish pride. After all, if Kaze's teachings had spread so easily through the peasantry, what gain could Kaze have found in defying the Emperor so? After Kaze's death it was not long before the Seppun guard learned the basics of *jiujutsu* even without Kaze's aid.

Among the Dragon, some quietly whisper that the Emperor never truly discovered Kaze's secrets. Though *jiujutsu* is well known across the Empire, it was not Kaze's greatest secret. His most powerful techniques, the art known as *kaze-do*, continues to be handed down among the Three Orders of the Dragon Clan.

STYLE

Kaze-do is a fast style that emphasizes incapacitating a foe instead of killing. Students of the art are taught every single part of the body is a weapon and can be used in some fashion during a fight. Adepts of *kaze-do* seem to fight with wild, unpredictable movements though each strike is carefully calculated. The first principle of Kaze's art was never to strike first. Kaze-do is primarily a style meant for defending against attackers, and is relatively poor at initiating an assault.

In combat, the *kaze-do* student is alternately a blur of motion and as still as the mountains. Kaze taught that predictability is an enemy like any other, and one that your opponent will use to defeat you. Practitioners of the style attempt to never use the same strike twice in a fight, unless that in itself would be falling into a predictable pattern. Kaze-do effectively brings the physical combat to a more intellectual level, as the *kaze-do* student attempts to outwit and confuse his opponents, allowing the physical strike to become the confirmation of a battle that has already been won.

PURPOSE

At its heart, *kaze-do* is a method of defense and nothing more. There are few techniques that are meant to bring down an opponent by sheer force or fury. Most *kaze-do* students are victorious by taking advantage of an opening created by an attacker or using their momentum against them with a throw or flip. Though not an undisciplined style by any means, it is not overly complicated or graceful, instead focusing on the practical use of the hands and feet to achieve victory.

Because of the style's particularities, it is also effective against larger or armed opponents. Disarming techniques are common, as well as moves that take advantage of an opponent's larger size or momentum. Kaze-do teaches a variety of moves in order to give the student a chance to take advantage of any situation. The result is that while kaze-do is not particularly known for a certain "signature" move or technique, students are exceptionally resourceful.

TRAINING

In honor of Togashi Kaze, the Dragon generally teach anyone who expresses a sincere interest in learning the art. While Kaze never wished the art to be learned by samurai so long as the peasants remained without weapons, in the centuries since ashigaru legions and peasant weapons have again become the norm. Thus, the Togashi believe that Kaze would have been satisfied with such a situation, and have no compunction with teaching the art to samurai.

Because of the art's chaotic and unpredictable nature, many samurai fail at the art if only because they have been trained all their lives to follow explicit patterns of commands and strict forms of combat. Those who can master this unconventional art tend to be free-spirited or imaginative individuals. Between this and the shady reputation of Togashi Kaze, the art is not very popular with samurai outside the Dragon Clan despite the clan's open door policy.

KAZE-DO MECHANICS

NOVICE

The initiate begins to learn the basic concepts of kaze-do, such as looking for any opening in a fight and how to react to aggression.

Kaze-do Novice [Dragon Kiho]

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Improved Unarmed Strike

Benefit: As long as you are unarmed and have not made an attack for the current combat, you gain a +1 dodge bonus to your AC. You also gain a +1 bonus to unarmed attack rolls if you are making an unarmed attack against someone who has attacked you within the last round.

Note: All feats in this style chain that rely upon unarmed attacks may also be performed with a bo staff (quarterstaff).

Kaze-do Novice

Required Specialized Skill: Kaze-do (1 rank)

Cost: 9

Cost Reductions: Dragon Clan member (3 points), Monk (including Tattooed Orders) (3 point), Hands of Stone advantage (1 point).

If you are unarmed and have not attacked for the current round, you may add your Awareness to your TN to be hit. In addition, if you make an unarmed attack upon someone who attacked you within the last round, you may add your Reflexes to the attack roll.

Note: Kaze-do may be used with a bo staff as well as unarmed. All maneuvers in this style chain that refer to unarmed attacks may also be performed with a bo.

The kaze-do skill may be used for unarmed attacks as well as grappling.

INTERMEDIATE

With the primary lessons learned, the student begins to learn how gain advantage in a grapple.

Kaze-do Intermediate [Dragon Kiho]

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +2, Dex 13+, Improved Unarmed Strike, Kaze-do Novice

Benefit: Your size category for grappling is considered one higher while you are unarmed.

Kaze-do Intermediate

Required Specialized Skill: Kaze-do (3 ranks)

Cost: 18 points

Cost Reductions: Dragon Clan member (6 point), Monk (including Tattooed Orders) (6 point), Hands of Stone advantage (2 point).

You roll an additional two dice on all contested grapple rolls.

ADVANCED

As the student progresses in the art of kaze-do, he begins to adjust his style to turn an opponent's weapons against them.

Kaze-do Advanced [Dragon Kiho]

Prerequisites: Base Attack Bonus +4, Dex 13+, Improved Unarmed Strike, Kaze-do Novice, Kaze-do Intermediate

Benefit: You gain a +2 dodge bonus to your AC against armed opponents while unarmed. You receive a +4 bonus to disarm attacks.

Kaze-do Advanced

Required Specialized Skill: Kaze-do (5 rank)

Cost: 27

Cost Reductions: Dragon Clan member (9 points), Monk (including Tattooed Orders) (9 points), Hands of Stone advantage (3 points).

You gain a +5 bonus to your TN to be hit against armed opponents. You receive a Free Raise on all disarm attempts.

EXPERT

As mastery of Togashi Kaze's teachings continues, the student begins to develop a supernatural awareness of when an enemy has left themselves vulnerable. Kaze-do students are trained to fully exploit these openings to end the fight as quickly as possible.

Kaze-do Expert [Dragon Kiho]

Prerequisites: Base Attack Bonus +6, Dex 13+, Improved Unarmed Strike, Kaze-do Novice, Kaze-do Intermediate, Kaze-do Advanced

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls on all attacks of opportunity. You deal an extra 1d8 subdual damage on all attacks while in a grapple.

Kaze-do Expert

Required Specialized Skill: Kaze-do (7 ranks)

Cost: 36

Cost Reductions: Dragon Clan member (12 points), Monk (including Tattooed Orders) (12 points), Hands of Stone advantage (4 points).

You roll and keep two extra dice on damage rolls when in a grapple.

More information on Kaze-do and many other unique martial arts forms can be found in *The Way of the Open Hand*.



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SCOTT HASDALL

Kanas City, MO

I was born in Kansas City, Missouri, raised in San Marcos, Texas. After returning to Kansas City with my family I began attending college classes to become a high school English Literature and History teacher. I enjoy movies and music probably too much, and have studied several forms of martial art for almost 15 years. I started playing Legend of the Five Rings at the beginning of 1996, with the set Shadowlands, choosing my clan - The Naga. After a loyal following of the Naga for three straight years, I decided to try my hand at Ninja, where I found my true calling. In 2000, I began to make my case as a good L5R player rated as the #1 player in the World, the Ninja Warlord and winning Origins. In 2001 with my good friend and teacher Brandon Flores, I formed The Dynasty. Since then, I have won two storyline tournaments (both with Crane, since Ninja are not around) and was invited to work with Diamond Edition, and subsequently the L5R Design Team. L5R has had a tremendous influence on my life, and though I missed the Day of Thunder, the story influenced many of my decisions concerning which clan to play throughout my history with the game. I am a Ninja for life, but I guess if I had to pick a clan now, it would be the Crane, because of my favorite character Daidoji Uji or the Scorpion because of my affiliation and love of Ninja.

Scott's Deck

Tani Hitokage

Wind:

Right Hand of the Emperor

Personalities:

- 3 Hida Benjiro
- 3 Hida Soh
- 3 Hida Tenshu
- 2 Yasuki Namika
- 3 Hiruma Ashihei
- 2 Hida Daizu
- 1 Hiruma Todoroki
- 1 Hida Reiha

Holdings:

- 2 Third Whisker Mine
- 3 Iron Mine
- 3 Blacksmith
- 2 Hiruma Dojo
- 2 Quartermaster
- 2 Shrine of Duty
- 1 Favors and Gifts
- 1 Gifts and Favors
- 1 Shrine to Daikoku

Regions:

- 1 Shogun's Armory
- 1 Kaiu Village
- 1 Refuge of the Three Sisters

Events:

- 1 Regions of Rokugan
- 1 A New Order

Items:

- 1 Celestial Sword of the Crab
- 1 Blade of Thorns
- 1 Family War Banner
- 1 Gleaming Wakizashi
- 3 Dai Tsuchi
- 3 Senpet Scimitar

Actions:

- 3 Outmaneuvered by Force
- 3 Armed Brigade
- 3 Flashing Blades
- 2 Berserker Rage
- 3 Tireless Assault
- 3 Rage
- 3 Test of Might
- 2 Superior Swordplay
- 2 Brutal Confrontation
- 3 Wedge
- 2 Frontal Assault
- 1 Desperate Wager

This is an Item based Crab beatdown out of Tani Hitokage. Every personality you put into play will threaten provinces and destroy armies. It doesn't matter who you put into play with this deck, every single card can potentially destroy entire armies. With the large number of Item based cards available now with Hidden City, weapons and items really make a push to power. Using Formations like Frontal Assault and Brutal Confrontation, and great actions like Flashing Blades, you can punish the enemies time and time again. With the number of items in the deck (on the Dynasty and Fate sides) and the sheer size of the personalities, you will plow through most military decks with ease. The stronghold really helps in the military matchup, and honor decks will hate you for your 3 Outmaneuvered by Force, and that Refuge of the Three Sisters to find your Desperate Wager for that all important last turn of the game.



ROGER GINER-SOROLLA

Canterbury, England

I grew up in the New York metropolitan area and I've been playing L5R since Obsidian Edition. Bayushi Kachiko showed up as a rare in my first starter; the Seductress was quite convincing, and I've been partial to the Scorpion since. In my online persona as "Ono-san" I became known for satirical card ideas and, later, for more serious writings on game concepts and strategy. I'm not a super competitive player; the high point of my tournament career was dominating the Ratling challenge booth in GenCon Indy 2003 with a "rat-eat-rat" deck, and engineering a crazy storyline final game with Matt Demand. In real life, I'm a psychology professor in Canterbury, England, and I do experiments on social emotions such as ... shame. Yes, really. Finally, I've got to thank all the people in all the local L5R scenes I've been in over the past six years — Virginia, Maine, Philly, and C-bury — and above all my wife Rea, who first introduced me to L5R and continues to be the strongest source of support and insight in my life.



Roger's Deck

Velvet Glove Cast in Iron

Stronghold:
Shadowed Tower of the Shosuro

Wind:
Under-Hand of the Emperor

Personalities:

- 1 Bayushi Atsuki
- 1 Bayushi Kamnan exp
- 1 Bayushi Tsimaru
- 1 Shosuro Toson exp
- 1 Bayushi Kaukatsu
- 3 Shosuro Maru
- 3 Bayushi Motomu
- 2 Shosuro Mikado
- 2 Otomo Taneji
- 2 Shosuro Higatsuku
- 1 Koto

Holdings:

- 3 Geisha House
- 3 Retired Master
- 2 Geisha Network
- 2 House of the Red Lotus
- 1 Gifts and Favors
- 1 A Favor Returned
- 1 Shrine to Daikoku
- 1 Shrine of Stone
- 1 Court Chambers
- 1 Military Advisor
- 1 Shrine to Bishamon

Regions:

- 2 Refuge of the Three Sisters

Events:

- 1 A New Wall
- 1 Eloquence
- 1 Commanding Favor

Items:

- 1 Ruby of Iuchiban
- 1 Ruby of Iuchiban exp
- 2 Purloined Letters
- 1 Celestial Sword of the Scorpion
- 1 Yoshi's Fan
- 1 Celestial Sword of the Crab
- 1 Blade of Thorns
- 1 Family War Banner
- 1 Glimming Wakizashi
- 3 Dai Tsuchi
- 3 Senpet Scimitar

Actions:

- 3 Outmaneuvered in Court
- 2 Bonds of Fate
- 2 Shame
- 2 Show of Good Faith
- 2 Storm Heart
- 2 Scrutiny's Sweet Stig
- 1 Go in Disgrace
- 2 Kolat Assassin
- 2 Ambush
- 2 Overwhelmed
- 1 Egg of P'an Ku
- 2 Tireless Assault
- 1 Ignominious End
- 3 We Know
- 2 Gold Buys Security

Followers:

- 3 Traveling Ronin
- 2 Diplomatic Apprentice



Hidden City opens up a new field of competitive play for the Scorpion, with better gold, better people, and a hefty dossier of support cards optimized for the Scorpion's low-honor politics and Ninja personalities. Potential decks for the Clan of Secrets range from pure military to almost pure control and every shade in between. "Velvet Glove" is my initial sketch for a courtier control deck that, like the Mantis "dirty scum" concept, packs military muscle to take down an exposed opponent. It exploits Scorpion's newfound political card advantage and plays with an unpredictable toolbox of courtly tricks. Thanks to metagame cards like [arrival of the emerald magistrates], control decks in Hidden City will have to rely on more tricks than just Limited-phase personality kill, and this deck reflects that.



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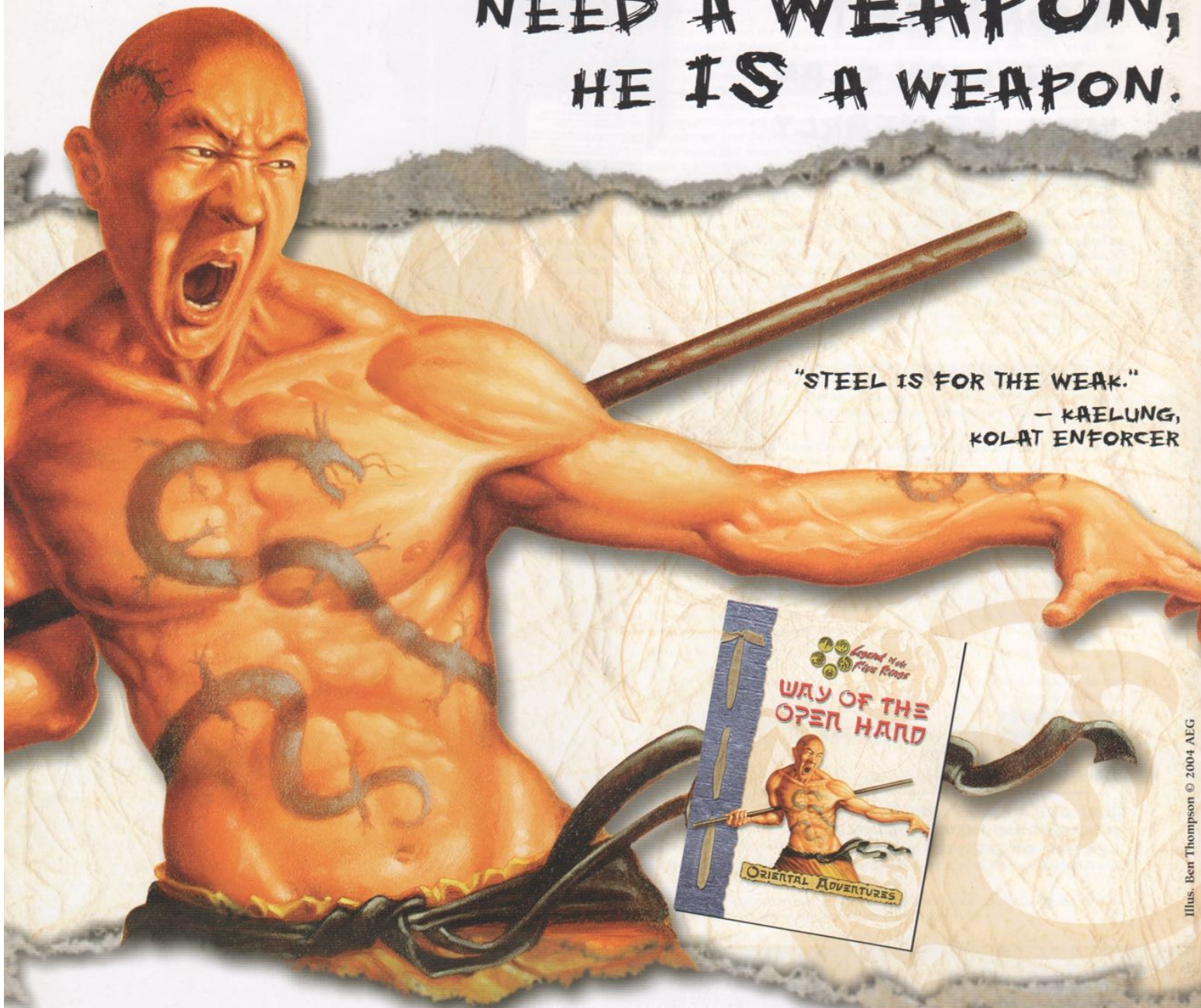


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