

NAME: Kanimoto

CLAN: Mantis

SCHOOL: Mantis Bushi **RANK:** 3

Age: 24 **Sex:** Male **Height:** 5'11"

Physical Description: Large, muscular, with easy grin and constant energy.

FIRE 2

Intelligence 2

Agility 4

AIR 3

Awareness 3

Reflexes 3

EARTH 4

Willpower 4

Stamina 4

WATER 3

Perception 3

Strength 3

VOID 2

GLORY 4.1

HONOR 1.2

INSIGHT 185

TN TO BE HIT: 15 (20 in armor)

Wounds

Dice Penalty

____(0-8)	-0
____(9-16)	-1
____(17-24)	-2
____(25-32)	-3
____(33-40)	-4
____(41-48)	Down
____(49-56)	Out
____(57-64)	Dead

SCHOOL TECHNIQUES

Fight Without Steel: You may use any weapon as if you had at least a skill of 1, and take no penalties for fighting on unstable footing such as boats or during earthquakes.

Voice of the Storm: If you spend a Void point during a Full Attack, your TN To Be Hit remains at its normal level.

Claws of the Mantis: If you are using a weapon in each hand, roll two separate Initiatives and you may attack once with each on the resulting Initiatives.

ADVANTAGES

Crab Hands (You may fight with any weapon as if you had a skill of 1: this combines with Fight Without Steel to make it a 2.)

Sensei (Gahara-sensei)

True Friend: Kitsu Mihime

DISADVANTAGES

Obligation: Kitsuki Fumiko

Nemesis: Tadayasu

Do you seek a just life or a full one?

-Gahara-sensei

SKILLS

Athletics 3

Battle 2

Commerce 2

Courtier 1

Craft: Shipwright 2

Defense 4

Etiquette 1

History 1

Iaijutsu 3

Intimidation 3

Jujutsu 3

Kenjutsu 4

Lore: Mantis 2

Meditation 2

Music 1

Navigation 3

Nofujutsu 5

Sailing 2

Sincerity 1

EQUIPMENT

Two kama (Str + 2k2), katana (Str+3k2), wakizashi (Str + 2k2), Light armor with helm, traveling pack, kimono, tanto (Str +1k2); scissors (Str+0k2) metal-shod geta, yawara stick, razor blade (all Str +1k1), obi, spare obi with a chain sewed into the fabric (Str+0k2, entangling or strangulation rules), 4 bu, 20 zeni, pair of dice, 50 marbles, ink pot and quill pen (str +1k1).

HISTORY

Your Family

You didn't realize you were hurting people.

That's probably the best way to say it. Now that you think about it, you dimly remember some shouting between your father and a woman, but you didn't quite believe in it. He was always louder and more fun than the other men, even if the fishermen and their children asked you a lot of questions.

They asked who your mother was, and you said you didn't know. Your father showed you a shoji painting of Lady Doji, holding her arms out, and told you the story of how the sea took her. You thought you knew the obvious truth: she was a Crane-woman, and she had gone home. The kids laughed at you, and that was when you hit them. You didn't know why they didn't get up again.

But it was all right, because your father brought to a man called "Gahara-sensei," who said you would learn how to be a bushi. He made you carry water for his animals, clean the dojo floor, and practice strokes with two sticks. When you saw the other students practicing with chains and swords and throwing each other, he only said "The stick teaches everything you need to know."

It was true. You swung them at everything you could find, and when one broke, you just swung your hand to mimic the other one. Around the farms, you picked up sickles and forks and found their differences. And when you cut yourself with the sickles, you found the important lesson -- use what is simple, or it will bite you back.

When you told Gahara-sensei what you had learned, he took you with him to Kyuden Mantis for a tournament. It was wonderful. You beat Phoenix and Crane children in no time. The school toasted you. You were invited to travel the mainland for Winter Court, to compete in the Cranes' and Dragons' tournaments for the glory of the whole Clan. At the Akodo court, you met Kitsu Mihime.

Your First Tour of Rokugan

The Hall of Ancestors was the most ornate place you had ever seen. The Lions told you about a thousand years of serving the Emperor and how their ancestors whom they could all recite were with them always. One asked who your mother was, and you said you didn't know. They laughed... until a little girl named Mihime cut them off with a shriek.

"There she is!" She pointed at a blank wall. "She's in the realm of the ancestors, and she will wreak vengeance upon us unless honor is satisfied!"

You took the laughing Lion boy outside with a pair of bokken. When it was over, the Lions were very apologetic and you had killed an Akodo. The tournament that night was even more vicious, and three more of theirs were carried out, but one broke your foot. You returned to the islands.

But you came back many times, and Mihime was always there for you, ready to lie... or get you into the kind of trouble you could only lie your way out of. Once, she even came to the Islands of Silk and you sat together by the seashore and felt for the spirit of your mother. That time she really was there. As it turned out, she was not even heiminn, but a port girl. A pirate romanced her, and she left your father with dreams of glory...only to run afoul of the law, who executed the entire crew.

Dragon Lands

You let your father know what happened, and he got quiet. It was then you realized that behind the laughs and encouragement, you had never been wanted.

Soon he stopped coming with you when you spent the winter in Dragon lands. The Mirumoto's practical school of two-weapon techniques appealed to you, and you fought in duel after duel, challenging the gathered Mirumoto that you could defeat anyone in the room with any weapon they named.

It was then Kitsuki Fumiko said that it was time the ise zumi at the mountaintop taught you a lesson. Gladly, you journeyed with her to the monastery at Shiro Agasha.

Fumiko pointed at an ise zumi as old as the rivers, and you selected your kama. "I am Kanimoto," you announced, along with your list of defeats.

"I am the world," he responded, and did not move.

You waited, frustrated, and then swung your tonfa. He fell. Another took his place, and you knocked him down as well.

"You are trying to teach me compassion?" you guessed.

"We do not teach," Fumiko said. "You learn." With that, you returned to the Mantis isles in shame. You had been lashing out at everyone, with no good reason, and the Kitsuki knew it from the moment she saw you. Your kills had been for no reason.

So you gave up fighting for a time, and tried to study the ways of peace. But it was not so simple.

You were assigned as a yojimbo at the palace for Tadayasu, a foul-tempered Storm Legionnaire, whom you could feel yourself drawn to with a hatred so strong you could not control it. When you caught him taking bribes from pirates, you challenged him to a duel. He accepted on his own account, and you thought, finally, this would be a victory you could be proud of. But he left you barely alive, and you do not know how he managed it. It was hard to say which was more humiliating -- that Tadayasu was considered right or that perhaps he knew more about the ways of the world than you.

In shame, you showed up on Kitsuki Fumiko's doorstep, asking for work. In months, you were back to yourself, and the magistrates' life suited you well: solving crimes, keeping the peace, traveling the length of Rokugan. And when Mihime joined the team as well, you were overjoyed.

You returned to the Mantis islands a year ago, and have managed to steer mostly clear of Tadayasu. But three weeks ago, there was a murder committed in his stomping grounds, an ise zumi, and your friends are coming back to investigate. You are supposed to work with them, to solve the problem with no shame to Yoritomo.

But Tadayasu is a respected member of the Storm Legion. Whatever crimes he commits, all his fellow members back him up. With their support, he is fearless. And it wouldn't be above him to go after your friends. Hopefully, Yoritomo hasn't fallen under his spell yet.

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

Kitsu Mihime: It's hard to imagine anyone you could have more fun with than Mihime. One minute she's sincerely nodding about the duties of a proper Lion girl and the next she's gluing a courtier's fan shut. You never stopped appreciating the joy of a good Crane-humiliation, but you draw the line at hurting people, and it disturbs you a little that she doesn't always. Still, it'll be good to work with her again...before she gets married and is lost to you forever.

Kitsuki Fumiko: A bit of a wet blanket at times, but that's why she runs the squad and nails so many criminals. Without her, you'd probably be floundering around somewhere between ronin and bandit. You don't buy into the idea that she

has some kind of social stigma because her father didn't swing a sword, and you found her practical and philosophic approach to problems refreshing compared to the hit-it-first, make-up-answers-later approach of most Mantids.

Shosuro Yakawa: It's really funny meeting an actual Scorpion. He's exactly what you imagined them like, all smooth and constantly trying to drop innuendo on the ladies and so stuck in his ways that he doesn't even realize when he's hitting on people out of habit. He's so artificial you thought it was ridiculous... until you asked him about it and realized he's got reasons for everything he does. Or he says he does, in blistering torrents of rationalization. You can't quite decide if this means he's really smart and operating on a level you don't understand or is just making up lies as he goes and has never figured himself out.

After a while, you decided his whole Clan operates on this principle.

Asahina Jikoji: Mope, mope, mope. The Crane obviously lock their shugenja up when they're five and beat them until they are pretty porcelain dolls who can quote the Tao. You've seen duelists who just got their arms cut off look happier than this guy gets on his birthday. He's considerate, and loyal, and thinks fast enough on his feet when other people depend on him, but you wonder if he'd be so quick if it were only him at stake. Don't rely on him to cheer anyone up, least of all himself.

Kaiu Watsuko: Another one. Although this time you can understand the misery. Word is she took years of abuse from her husband, then up and killed him with his own sword. Good for her, you figure, but now the problem is making sure she doesn't slide back, because she's got a serious case of the meeks and quiets. You wish you could help somehow, but you're always kind of afraid she'd break if you get too rough.

WHO YOU KNOW ON THE ISLANDS

Yoritomo: You've never actually met him, but you did chat with his poison taster once. That's about as close as anyone your rank gets to the warlord of the Mantis. It took you some time to realize how actively hostile he is to diplomats and courtiers compared to the gentler Crane or even Lion.

From what you understand, he's busy and threatens a lot of people with death. This is not a bad trait in a warlord, but he's inconsistent and half the time, doesn't remember what he's said before. Best to bow, scrape, and leave quickly.

Aisaku: When you're a Mantis bushi, you're expected to fight. If you can't fight, you sail. If you're too lame to sail, you hang around the palaces and gossip. That's where Aisaku comes in, and he's a font of interesting information...if you can ever get him to shut up once he gets started.

Tadayasu: Where to begin?

You've seen some sleaze in your time. You caught a *maho-tsukai* up in Scorpion lands, but at least that guy was straightforward enough just to sell his soul to a demon and be done with it. Tadayasu is the *taisa* of the Storm Legion for the Double-Tree Bay on the Island of Spice. You knew something was up when he didn't turn a prisoner over to the eta to torture, but did it himself. You saw him ask pick up street urchins to sell to pirate crews. One of the urchin girls, he brought to the Bon festival, got her drunk, turned her over to a room full of hohei, and she was never heard from again.

And he's a really good duelist.

YOUR DAISHO

Your katana's name is *Ifuku Suru* ("awe into submission"). You have had it since shortly after your twelfth birthday, when you lied about your age, and snuck into a Lion post-gempukku tournament, besting ninety-nine other contestants over three days and more than a hundred grueling rounds. It was crafted specially for that occasion, with the date woven into the lion's mane on the tsuba. There is a large space on the saya, where the winner's family name was supposed to be worked into the design, but that's never bothered you as long as it stays sharp, and is there when you need it.

NAME: Kitsuki Fumiko
CLAN: Dragon
SCHOOL: Kitsuki Magistrate **RANK:** 2

Age: 20 **Sex:** Female **Height:** 5'4"
Physical Description: Thick-boned and plain, with an air of confidence and authority that's hard to miss. Tattoo of a leaping white stag with dragon scales on right shoulder.

FIRE 3
Intelligence 3
Agility 3

AIR 3
Awareness 4
Reflexes 3

EARTH 2
Willpower 2
Stamina 2

WATER 2
Perception 4
Strength 2

VOID 3

GLORY 5.5
HONOR 3.8
INSIGHT 185
TN TO BE HIT: 15 (20 in armor)

Wounds	Dice Penalty
____(0-4)	-0
____(5-8)	-1
____(9-12)	-2
____(13-16)	-3
____(17-20)	-4
____(21-24)	Down
____(25-28)	Out
____(29-32)	Dead

TECHNIQUES

Kitsuki's Method: You may spend multiple Void on Awareness or Perception rolls.

Wisdom the Wind Brings: When you make any Awareness or Perception roll, you get two Free Raises (your School Rank).

EQUIPMENT

Dragon magistrate badge of office, fine katana (Str+4k2), wakizashi (Str+2k2), light armor, a dozen specimen boxes of various sizes, fine kimono, obi, and sandals, silk gloves, magnifying lens, herb satchel, powdered charcoal, syrup of ipecac, box of rice paper and pen set, 2 koku. Scroll you were told to open only on the Emperor's order.

*The truth is always simple.
Liars make things complicated.*

--Kakita Toshimoko

SKILLS

Athletics 2	Hunting 3
Calligraphy 1	<i>Ichi Miru</i> 3
Craft: Farming 2	Kenjutsu 2
Commerce 2	Law 4
Courtier 3	Lore: Dragon 3
Defense 3	Meditation 2
Etiquette 3	<i>Nazodo</i> 4
Heraldry 3	Painting 1
Herbalism 2	Shintao 2
History 5	Sincerity 3
Horsemanship 2	

ADVANTAGES

Absolute Direction
Great Destiny
Stag Tattoo (add your Honor to your skill dice when working to defend the helpless; cannot regain Void when indoors)
Clear Thinker (+10 TN to deceive you)

DISADVANTAGES

Social Disadvantage (former peasant)
Contrary (Cannot remain neutral on any issue; simple Willpower roll to avoid acting in tense situations)

HISTORY

Humble Beginnings

Your life began with what most samurai in Rokugan consider a fate worse than death. You were born *heimin*, the third daughter of a plum farmer in southern Dragon lands.

It wasn't a difficult life, not compared to some. Sure, you woke with the sun every morning to feed the chickens and collect eggs, and worked until well after dark, but your lord was kind and you rarely went hungry; even in lean years, he paid taxes from his own surplus instead of out of his peasants' mouths.

He was a beautiful man, tall and straight, with pale skin and lustrous hair he did not need to cut back from his face. He dressed in green silk, the color of the earliest leaves, and while you worked in the orchards, you dreamed that one day he would stop by the side of the road and see you and carry you off to his palace where you would eat red beans and fresh fish all day and never lift a basket again.

You learned everything you could about the life of the nobility. Though you couldn't read, you would look at the pictures in the pillow books in town. Since you couldn't afford them and rarely had enough ink to draw, you developed an excellent memory, reliving all the details during the endless hours of weeding, sewing and cleaning.

By the time you were sixteen, you had left such fantasies behind. Your parents had planned your marriage to their neighbor's son, and your mother had already begun your dowry -- a fine kimono for his mother and three jars of plums preserved in honey.

And Then It All Came True

While you were collecting honey, clouded in bees and branches, you overheard a group of ronin. Though their accents were thick, you made out that they were trying to smuggle weapons into your lord's castle on the order of some man they'd met in a tea house. They passed below and continued down the road before you could see more than their backs.

But your memory served you well. Those accents, a storekeeper had once told you, were from Lion lands, there was only one tea house within a day's ride, and there had been rumors of a new daimyo who was seeking to expand his lands north.

You started immediately toward the castle. You have since learned many samurai would have ignored the truth of your words, seeing

only your poor clothes and speech, but fortunately for him, your lord Yasu was a Kitsuki and he took your warning seriously. Three clans had been conspiring at court, and all it required to instigate the war they sought was the assassination of a minor lord: Kitsuki Yasu.

The next time you were called to court, it was at Kyuden Togashi, and the clan daimyo proclaimed that your destiny had only just begun. You were made samurai on the spot and taken to a dark room where you choked on incense fumes and were given something salty to drink. When it was over, you had an *ise zumi* tattoo, and an elaborate scroll you were told only to open under direct order of the Emperor.

Life as a Samurai

Of course, you did have to leave behind your family; it wasn't seemly for a magistrate to spend so much time with peasants. Especially a samurai honored by Togashi Yokuni himself.

You learned quickly, soaking up the culture like a sponge, and it was less than two years before you were considered fit to serve the rest of the Empire as a traveling magistrate, dedicated to uncovering the truth.

This was occasionally a more thankless job than farming, but you did find those who made it worthwhile. Asahina Jikoji was the first assigned to aid you, a shugenja loaned to the Dragon clan as a political favor. While disdainful at first, he came to respect you quickly, much better than Kitsu Mihime, who you think still sees her position as a punishment.

Kaiu Watsuko was just pure joy. Testifying on her behalf when she killed her beast of a husband made you realize what good a magistrate can do.

But the best part was Yakawa, your husband. You can still barely bring yourself to say the word. A Scorpion bushi, self-assured, commanding; he's everything your sixteen-year-old self would have swooned over. And now, in an alliance meant to heal the shaky relations between the Scorpion and Dragon, he's yours.

Your dreams have all come true.

Really.

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS:

Shosuro Yakawa: Other than his unwillingness to discuss having children, Yakawa is an ideal husband. True, when traveling in Scorpion lands his relatives have made no overtures to you, but a pair of roaming magistrates can hardly be the

closest of kin. As a magistrate, you would have to say that Yakawa is a skilled bushi, polite and loyal, who can anticipate your whims, and does his duty without calling attention to himself. After being on guard for years against those who would look down on you for your background, it is a relief to find someone you can completely rely on.

Kitsu Mihime: Spoiled. Spoiled rotten. Two years cleaning up chicken droppings would turn this shugenja into a valuable magistrate. As it is, she's bright, talented, resourceful, well-trained, and simply can't be bothered to *do* anything with it. Apparently she's some kind of elite among the Lion and can do no wrong. You've spent the last year reminding her she's no longer among the Lion.

Kaiu Watsuko: The other rock in your life. When she finally snapped and killed her abusive husband, you were brought in to decide her punishment. When you learned what she had suffered, you were only amazed she hadn't left sooner. To free her from suspicion, you ruled that she leave Crab lands, and took her onto your magistrate team. While she still seems recalcitrant on any kind of personal matters, she is analytical, observant, meticulous and makes a wise magistrate. You could happily spend the rest of your life as her commander, and, you hope, friend.

Asahina Jikoji: Quiet and moody in private, Jikoji can turn silk-smooth courtier on demand, almost as reliably as one of his fetishes. Still, you get the feeling there's something he's keeping from you, that any time he talks about his past, it's just another layer in the court persona, and still far from the real Jikoji.

Kanimoto: A Mantis bushi whom you worked with for a time. You found him personable in a rough, outspoken way, and the outsider in you smiled at how uncomfortable his manners made the courtly folks. He returned to his islands after a few years in your service, but you would gladly work with him again...though perhaps not in Shiro sano no Kakita this time.

YOUR CURRENT ASSIGNMENT

Togashi Nobue has some reputation among the Dragon as an investigator into the unusual: ghosts, *maho-tsukai*, tengu and the like. Last you heard, she was pursuing a lead in Ikoma lands, but Kitsuki Yasu has informed you

otherwise. She was found dead in a garbage heap on the Island of Spice, and no answers are forthcoming.

You have been sent to the Mantis Isles, to work with Kanimoto again and find out who killed Nobue, and why.

The facts are few. The Ikoma, when you visited, said she left them without explanation. "Each wave has a hundred friends," she said, "none of whom help."

You hope that philosophy comforted her in her final moments.

She was skinned.

NAME: Kaiu Watsuko
CLAN: Crab
SCHOOLS: Kaiu Engineer and
Hida Bushi
RANK: 3 (Kaiu 2, Hida 1)

Age: 26 **Sex:** Female **Height:** 5'7"
Description: Sweetly beautiful, with luminous eyes and soft skin, but tries to hide it. Timid, but intelligent manner.

FIRE 3
Intelligence 4
Agility 3

AIR 2
Awareness 2
Reflexes 3

EARTH 3
Stamina 4
Willpower 3

WATER 3
Perception 4
Strength 3

VOID 3

GLORY 2.4
HONOR 2.0
INSIGHT 185
TN TO BE HIT: 15 (25 in armor)

Wounds	Dice Penalty
___ (0-6)	-0
___ (7-12)	-1
___ (13-18)	-2
___ (19-24)	-3
___ (25-30)	-4
___ (31-36)	Down
___ (37-42)	Out
___ (43-48)	Dead

TECHNIQUES

Way of the Crab: Add Earth (3) to hit and damage. No penalty for heavy armor.

Kaiu School, Rank 2: +1k1 for Battle skill, +1k1 for Engineering.

EQUIPMENT

Heavy armor, helm, traveling pack, "*Sanjikan*" (Kaiu katana, Str +3k3), wakizashi (Str +2k2), tetsubo (Str +2k2), kaiken (Str +1k2), boots, kimono, polishing and sharpening equipment, surveying and sketching tools, abacus, bag of carved wooden tokens representing army units, joss sticks.

Make hope nothing, and nothing is of consequence.

--Tao of Shinsei

SKILLS

Archery 1	History 3
Armorer 1	Horsemanship 2
Athletics 2	Jujutsu 2
Battle 4	Kenjutsu 3
Ciphers 2	Locksmith 1
Defense 3	Lore: Shadowlands 2
Engineering 3	Siege 2
Etiquette 1	Tetsubo 3
Explosives 2	Traps 3
Heraldry 2	Weaponsmith 3

ADVANTAGES

Ancestor: Hida Akemi (+2 damage dice, against opponents twice your size, +2 points to initiative when in enclosed space).

Multiple Schools

Dangerous Attraction (a lesser form of Dangerous Beauty: +2 dice)

Kaiu Blade

DISADVANTAGES

Bad Reputation (murderess)

Obligation (Kitsuki Fumiko)

Phobia (being alone with men)

Dark Secret (see history)

HISTORY

Your Childhood

It wasn't easy growing up at the Kaiu Wall with a face made for the Doji court. From a shamefully young age, you were aware of the stares of men. It was not long before it was more than stares, for Crab soldiers are full of wild blood, and will speak their mind about anything. By the time you were eleven, you knew better than to walk the halls without an escort.

You did your best to hide it behind restrictive clothes and unbrushed hair. But your father never understood your reticence, and would often call you out for a drunken night with his friends to show off "his little princess." It was constantly uncomfortable: you were wanted, but never welcome.

Hoping to escape the trap of marriage you knew would come too soon, you asked your mother to beg your father for permission to become a samurai-ko. She was silent, but you persuaded him anyway, and you spent the happiest two years of your life behind a metal mask and heavy armor. Wild screaming, knocking bushi down -- the Hida school gave you direction.

Unfortunately, your father was no more reliable than sensitive, and when one of your instructors, a glorious Hida war hero named Suzuru, took a fancy to you, your father withdrew his support of your schooling. Within a month, you were married.

Your Marriage

Your entire life is now structured to minimize your memories of this time.

Hida Suzuru commanded in the Shadowlands before a mishealed leg relegated him to teaching. Though other bushi praised the vigorous leader he once was, as his wife, you got what was left -- a short-tempered, bitter wreck who hated the world for what it had done to him.

Temperamental you could understand. Drinking you could understand. But he made no sense, and trying to understand him led to yelling and then beating. If you drew the attention of other men, he beat you. If you ever tried to look less than beautiful, he berated you and made you sleep with the dogs he said you resembled.

It got worse as the years went on. While at first he allowed you to transfer your studies from the Hida school to the closer and more "proper" Kaiu-ryu, after you received public praise from

one of your male instructors, he grew convinced your studies were actually an affair. He searched your room, he quizzed you on where you were and sniffed your breath and body, and eventually you gave up.

After that were two desperately long years as a virtual prisoner in your home, seeing no one but a peasant herbalist whose aid you sought to make certain you would never bear this monster a child. The isolation may have driven you a little crazy.

Your Escape

In the end, you think, it was the sword.

Suzuru had been given a Kaiu blade years ago because he'd happened to stay near Kisada's *karo* when the fighting got thick. He was asked to name it what he chose, and he said if he had such a great opportunity, it would be called *Koken*, "only a sword." They thought he was humble.

You knew better.

It was a sword that could cut through iron bars, pounded on Kaiu's forge for months, imbued with the souls of nobler samurai than him. But he had done his duty, and now he rested. He rested from his injuries, he rested from the Wall, he rested from responsibility in the Yasuki caravans he was assigned, until finally, he kept it the back of the house near the ash heap.

When Suzuru returned to find you polishing and sharpening *Koken*, he made dark comments about honor, but you clung to the sword, unwilling to give it up to one like him. A debate turned into a yelling match, and when he realized he was losing, he struck out with a pitcher of *shochu*. Instinctively, you blocked it with the scabbarded sword. He grabbed you, tried to beat you, and the rest became a quick, painful blur.

It was not you alone who killed your husband. Each sword has a spirit, and though shugenja alone are said to awaken them, you know better.

When the magistrates saw the headless body, *jigai* (suicide) was the best you could hope for. They brought witch-hunters and shugenja who shook their heads, but you insisted it was not madness. Suzuru had abdicated his responsibilities as a samurai and the sword had brought down justice for it. The *daimyo* agreed to abide by the ruling of a traveling Dragon magistrate, Kitsuki Fumiko.

Fumiko was the first person you told about everything. The schools, the yelling, the

beatings, all of it. When you were done, she swore she would have executed him herself. She got you off with an exile from the Kaiu lands...and soon invited you into her own employ. Fumiko wanted you as both a bushi *and* an engineer, and respected you for your mind and your contributions.

You have blossomed. You have come to love your new freedom. And you have found out that your mind is not the problem.

Your Secret Shame

It was through Fumiko that you met Shosuro Yakawa, her husband... and the love of your life. You were so shy when you first left Crab lands, still looking over your shoulder constantly, half-expecting to find Suzuru. Yakawa understood your fear of being left alone, stayed with you and talked through the long nights, told you about training as a bushi in Scorpion lands, and encouraged you to talk about the Hida school, back when you were happy.

He was the kind of man you thought didn't exist, at least not for you, and your love for him grew daily. When, in Kitsuki Castle's gardens, he confessed his love for you, you couldn't believe it. Was this your reward for enduring so many years of hell? And he was the husband of your best friend and savior. Was this your punishment for murder?

Your own longing you could have ignored, but when he told you of his love and passion, you could not deny him anything, and kisses soon turned into something else.

Only a few times.

Only when Fumiko is away.

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

Shosuro Yakawa: You owe Fumiko for preserving your life. You owe Yakawa for preserving your soul. Without him, you would have been a hollow shell, and you know it. But now you live in constant fear. A wrong word, one too many glances, an inappropriate touch, and you could lose them both. You cannot show anything. You have practiced being meek and silent and normal, and you are sure you can keep it up until you think of something to do.

The question is, can he?

Kitsu Mihime: The Lion shugenja who visited Crab lands were usually polite and self-effacing, more interested in the dead than the living. Mihime quickly destroyed that impression. Earthy, rude, spoiled and too bright for her own

good, she's lived a life you could only dream of -- adoring parents, the respect of her whole clan, private schooling -- and she has no idea how lucky she is. You're a little intimidated by her carefree attitude, and part of you would like to teach her a lesson, but every now and then, she's great.

Kitsuki Fumiko: A wonderful, kind, brilliant, woman who is disturbingly perfect. Born a peasant, she earned samurai status by saving her *daimyo* from assassins, and was made a magistrate by Togashi Yokuni himself. She listened to your story, she saved your life when it would have been easier to condemn you, and she still makes time to speak with you alone, even on her busiest days. You have no idea why Yakawa isn't madly in love with her, but you need him more. You wish her every blessing the Fortunes can bestow upon her...except her husband's love.

Asahina Jikoji: At first you thought this shugenja was being quiet because he was looking down on you, but as you got to know him, you realized he had his own burden of shame. He is in the early stages of the Shadowlands Taint, gained in battle against *umibozu*. In most of the Empire, they do not accept the price such battles bring. You are the only one who knows his secret, and you will keep it that way. Jikoji is a good man and a loyal magistrate. Such an accident should not keep him from serving Rokugan.

Kanimoto: You were glad when this Mantis bushi left the team to return to the Mantis islands. Although he always treated you kindly, his rough manners are so like Suzuru and the other bushi at the Wall. You always felt like he was laughing at you whenever you turned your back... and watching you whenever you didn't. Smile, nod, and make it clear he will get nowhere.

YOUR DAISHO:

Sanjikan ("Counselor") is the new name you have engraved upon *Koken*, for it is far more than just a sword. Like nearly all Kaiu blades, *Sanjikan* does not need sharpening, but you tend to run a rock against it late at night just to calm your nerves. Sometimes you talk to it; your way of making up for all the neglect it suffered. It's a very good listener.

Rules recap: No one but the owner of a Kaiu blade gets to touch it except under careful

presentation. If you lose the blade, you drop an Honor Rank. If someone so much as touches the blade without your permission, you lose an Honor Point, for the blade is insulted.

The wakizashi you wear with it, *Chinchaku*, is not the world's finest blade, but it was the first one you forged at the Kaiu school as part of their basic courses, and as such it is exactly the size, sharpness and heft you like. The blade has a little more soft steel than hard -- the better to cut through unarmored tissue.

NAME: Kitsu Mihime
CLAN: Lion
SCHOOLS: Kitsu Shugenja
RANK: 3

Age: 18 **Sex:** Female **Height:** 5'4"
Physical Description: Tall and slender, with white-streaked hair and leonine muscularity. Wild smile tinged with cruelty. Think Angelina Jolie if raised by Lions.

FIRE 3
Intelligence 4
Agility 3

AIR 2
Awareness 3
Reflexes 2

EARTH 2
Willpower 3
Stamina 2

WATER 4
Perception 4
Strength 4

VOID 4

GLORY 5.8
HONOR 1.9
INSIGHT 185
TN TO BE HIT 10

Wounds	Dice Penalty
____(0-4)	-0
____(5-8)	-1
____(8-12)	-2
____(13-16)	-3
____(17-20)	-4
____(21-24)	Down
____(25-28)	Out
____(29-32)	Dead

SCHOOL TECHNIQUES

You have 1 Free Raise to all Water spells.

EQUIPMENT

Fine kimono, tabi, geta, traveling pack and scroll satchel; fine wakizashi (Str +3k2); 4 koku, 50 bu and 50 zeni; writing implements; and a servant (Hoji) with a few "essentials" in a basket-backpack.

"Essentials": Three spare changes of clothes, Unicorn leather boots, nunchaku from your "ass-kicking" phase (Str + 2k2), a bottle of shochu, wrapped tea set, bandages and a splint, gift box, wind chimes, door wedge, a sharp chain for sawing, opium pipe, flint n' tinder, spare hair picks and combs, Akodo's *Leadership* with doodles in the margins, and candy from a Crane baby.

Why remember so many rules when there is only one? Never be caught.

--Bayushi Kachiko

SKILLS

Battle 1	Investigation 1
Calligraphy 2	Lore: Ancestor 3
Courtier 2	Lore: Lion Clan 2
Defense 2	Lore: Shugenja 2
Etiquette 2	Meditation 2
Forgery 2	Naginata 3
Heraldry 2	Sincerity 3
History 3	Stealth 3

ADVANTAGES

Crafty (All Low Skills at 1)
Half-Blooded (Can sense ghosts and Ancestor spirits. They can communicate to you, but you cannot speak back.)
Social Position (from the *sodan-senzo* line)
Innate Ability (see "Spells")
True Friend (Kanimoto)

DISADVANTAGES

Spoiled (Willpower test, TN 15)
Bad Reputation (Obstinate)

SPELLS

Sense (innate)
Commune (innate)
Summon (innate)
Sukinjin's Gift (Water, innate)
The Path to Inner Peace (Water, innate)
The Light of Amaterasu (Fire)
Essence of Air (Air)
Howl of Isora (Air)
Bo of Water (Water, innate)
Wall of Bamboo (Water)
Kharmic Vengeance (Water)
The Fury of Osano-Wo (Fire)
Sharing the Strength of Many (Earth)

HISTORY

Your Family

You have memories of a time before you were seven years old, when your parents treated you no differently from your brothers.

Dim memories.

Once you were taken to the hall of ancestors and proved you could hear their voices, everything changed. Since then, there has not been a single thing asked of you. No more chores, no more punishments when you were bad, no more admonitions to treat your brothers nicely. Instead, your childhood was a long chain of castles as you were taken around to every Kitsu family and made to show off your gift, while dozens of adults gave you things and told you how much honor you brought them by your very presence.

It didn't take long for you to believe them.

Your brothers complained that you were spoiled, and privately, you'll concede that you probably were, but the ancestors speak and the Lion obey. That's just the way it works. The Fortunes know that.

Besides, your brothers didn't understand that it was not all rice-candy and silk kimonos. There were constant lessons, the entire lineage of the Kitsu family to memorize, creepy and arrogant dead people to speak to, and the constant knowledge and snide looks that said you still weren't good enough. As a half-blood, your gift will mostly serve to be passed on to the next generation, when your parents pick a suitable husband without consulting you.

Your Rebellion

You weren't about to stand for that. For a clan called the Lion, there sure are a lot of sheep in it. You met Kanimoto, a scrappy Mantis

kid, the clans kept around for the prodigy duels, at your first Winter Court, and the two of you made sure to always keep things interesting when the Matsu and Akodo got snotty. When a pack of Akodo ridiculed him about his lineage, you faked the voice of his ancestors so he had the right to demand a duel. He did the rest, and there was something terribly exciting about seeing the Akodo bleed, and know it was your thoughts that had caused it.

Your teachers berated you afterward about the clan all standing together, but you could smell their cowardice and scapegoating ten *ri* away. It struck you as typical Lion: they bow and scrape before their ancestors, then turn and spit on their own children. Why would they expect this pattern to ever stop?

As you grew older, the command structure of the clan chafed constantly. You were playing middle child between the Lion clan and the forces of the universe. And frankly, between the way of the universe and the way of the Lion, the big kitty goes down.

Becoming a Magistrate

You've escaped the trap of marriage...for now. And it wasn't easy. Pulling favors with a Dragon magistrate you had carefully arranged to coincidentally meet at Winter Court, you got her to convince your parents and lord to get you a position as a magistrate.

Working under Kitsuki Fumiko.

Yeah.

The peasant.

But, though it's hard for you to admit it out loud, you think she's been good for you. You've changed since you became a magistrate. For once, you found things more important than yourself. You *like* solving problems, you *like* the gratitude of people whose lives you actually saved. It's great... and there's one less ancestor out there.

You still hear the ancestors, but now, you can find it in yourself to ignore what they tell you, and once or twice, you've lied to them and thought it worked. You're getting praise for the job you did instead of the blood in your veins, you've had a chance to train with bushi, to fight bandits and travel all over the map.

Now, after years, you're finally getting to see Kanimoto again. You had a strange feeling when you landed. It was as if by stepping onto the Mantis isles, you were coming home.

WHAT YOU AND THE VOICES IN YOUR HEAD THINK OF THE OTHERS

Shosuro Yakawa:

One of the first people to ever *catch* you in your little lying and cheating games, and the only one not to condemn you for them. He understands the frustration you had growing up, and encourages you to find any way you can to help your fellow magistrates, even if Rokugan would frown on the methods.

You're sure your family would look askance on you taking advice from a Scorpion (and your great-uncle Mojatsu screams "CRUSH THE INSECT!" every now and then, but that's his Beiden Pass thing). Honestly, though, you can see little to condemn in Yakawa that the rest of Rokugan does not repeat in more secrecy.

Kaiu Watsuko: You could knock this pale imitation bushi over with a feather. Not that she's not impressive with a sword, but she's so shy she practically faints whenever you look at her. Yeah, yeah, she's had tough breaks in her past, but she's not going to solve anything by looking pretty and soulfully moping.

(Okay, so she's really successful at turning on your dead grandfather, but you fail to see how that helps. Or even how you'd bring the subject up.)

It's time for her to sit up and realize she's on her way to becoming one of those pesky ghosts bemoaning their fate and keeping everybody awake. She's got only one life to live before she becomes a nagging ancestor spirit, and she'd better not waste it.

Kitsuki Fumiko: Aunt Hiroko, who's generally got some good advice, says that no one not born to samurai privilege is worthy of having it. This is one thing you disagree on, and it has taken you *forever* to get the point across since you can't actually talk *back* to her.

Fumiko is one of the most honest, honorable, and dedicated people you've ever met. Her sense of justice even shames you into good behavior most of the time. Not that you would ever let her know how much you respect her. She *does* seem a little intimidated by your social rank, and you want to keep it that way.

Asahina Jikoji: This boy reminds you way too much of everyone you grew up with in Lion lands. All honorable and polite and brooding about some secret that probably wouldn't bother anyone if he just quit being all moody and told

people about it.

On the other hand, he's got some really interesting air magics that you've never seen in Kitsu lands, and it's kind of fun getting to chat with a shugenja who isn't spending all his time feeling unworthy because he's not a *sodan-senzo*.

Unfortunately, Aunt Hiroko starts lecturing you about giving away School secrets whenever you hang out and chat with him, so that's a serious annoyance.

Kanimoto: Man, it feels like a long time since you two were kids together. You've never known anyone like him. I mean, sure, you two have as many spats as anyone, with *your* tempers, but you always make up. You were so happy when he joined you as a magistrate for a while, and the team seemed bland as boiled rice when he was gone. Now you're finally getting to travel to his home, and you can't wait.

It's funny, though, your ancestors always suspect there's some kind of attraction going on between you just because you're a girl and he's a man now. It's ridiculous. You're friends, just like when you were kids. It doesn't change just because you grew up.

Besides, you tell them, you couldn't *possibly* get turned on when the spirits of your ancestors are yelling in your head, screaming "stop, stop, stop." You're not that kind of girl.

Really.

NAME: Asahina Jikoji
CLAN: Crane
SCHOOL: Asahina Shugenja **RANK:** 3

Age: 29 **Sex:** Male **Height:**
5'9"

Physical Description: Stately, narrow, speaks as if he never hurries, seems as if he's been forty years old his entire life; think a Rokugani Anthony Hopkins.

FIRE 2
Intelligence 3
Agility 2

AIR 4
Awareness 4
Reflexes 4

EARTH 2
Willpower 3
Stamina 2

WATER 3
Perception 3
Strength 3

VOID 3

GLORY 4.8
HONOR 3.2
INSIGHT 185
TN TO BE HIT 20

Wounds	Dice Penalty
____(0-4)	-1
____(5-8)	-2
____(9-12)	-3
____(13-16)	-4
____(17-20)	-5
____(21-24)	Down
____(25-28)	Out
____(29-32)	Dead

SCHOOL TECHNIQUE

You have 1 Free Raise to all Air spells.

ADVANTAGES

Inheritance (see "*Tsangusuri*")
Innate Ability (marked under Spells)
Benten's Blessing (Keep an extra die in all social situations; keep 2 extra dice if they are already attracted to you.)

DISADVANTAGES

Dark Secret (see text)
Low Pain Threshold (figured into Wound Penalties already)

Water may thank the wave for its motion, but it is the beach that measures it.

--Kakita Kasuretsu

EQUIPMENT

Fine kimono, traveling pack, scroll satchel, tabi and geta. Fine tanto (Str +2k2), surgery and acupuncture kit, personal grooming kit, tea mix, tea cup, five fine gift boxes, 9 koku and 20 bu, The Waters of Clarity, the Jumpfish Net, and The Kimono of Breaking Waves.

SKILLS

Calligraphy 2	Lore: Crane Clan 1
Courtier 4	Lore: Imperial Family 2
Craft: Sailing 1	Lore: Phoenix Clan 1
Defense 2	Lore: Shugenja 3
Etiquette 3	Medicine 3
Heraldry 2	Meditation 2
History 2	Shintao 2
Horsemanship 1	Sincerity 3
Investigation 2	<i>Tsangusuri</i> 4
Law 2	Yarijutsu 2

SPELLS

Sense
Commune
Summon (innate)
Sharing the Strength of Many (Earth)
Way of Earth (Earth)
Grounding Energy (Earth, innate)
Hands of Jirojin (Earth, innate)
Path to Inner Peace (Water, innate)
Calm Mind (Water)

Accounts of Shorihotsu (Air)
Command the Mind (Air, innate)
Way of Deception (Air)
Secrets on the Wind (Air)
Yari of Air (Air, innate)
Wisdom the Wind Brings (Air, innate)

HISTORY

Your Family

One nice thing about the Asahina family -- your childhood was remarkably safe. No hostage deals, no parental suicides, and not much more exciting comes by than a land squabble or missives from the daimyo. Having traveled around, you're quite certain it's the best place in Rokugan to raise children.

You grew up in Two-Cliff, a small hamlet along the Crane coast. Your father was a respected, if not spectacular, shugenja, and your mother filled her days with you and your sisters, with entertaining a barrage of guests she felt were important, and with keeping your home welcoming to the spirits. You could barely set a drink down in the house without getting a lecture on feng shui.

It was a simple routine in the Asahina school. Rise in the morning, greet the spirits, study spellcraft until a lunch of plain rice and pickles, afternoon in the library, then an evening of prayer and thanksgiving.

You believed it all. Everything your teachers taught about the sanctity of peace, the duty of the Asahina to surrender even to a dishonorable enemy rather than perpetuate the even-greater crime of violence. You believed that prayers to the kami would keep you safe, that your ancestors watched over you at night, and that bad things don't happen to honorable people.

And then you went sailing.

Your Curse

It was a simple pleasure trip down the southern coast of Crane lands, a summer cruise with five friends from court; couples and near-couples, and best of all, no servants to gossip. You had laughter and soulful talks and forbidden touches that felt like the most important thing in the world.

Kakita Yoguri, the would-be acrobat. Asahina Yukio, who was going to re-work the gender politics of the Emerald Magistrates as soon as she could get an appointment. Doji Sato, who was planning on avoiding responsibility as long as he could, and Kakita Akimiko, who was attached to his hip. And then

there was Shiyomi.

It took Sato four months to try and set you up with Asahina Shiyomi. She was wedged in Otosan Uchi's court system and dragged around by her family who made her manage tax forms. Sato knew the two of you would get along: she had the same ideas you did about acupuncture and the meridians of the land and sea and didn't find *any* of the Kakita Jesters funny, because it was just cheap sex humor they were going for. Shiyomi was a little older than you, and so grateful to be out in the sun rather than squinting in candle-light. The first night on the boat, you kissed.

The second night, you hid under her corpse.

The Taint

The wind blew west, and you found yourself far away from the coast. You reached out for the spirits, and they weren't there, just as the storm came up. You could hear the sounds of...things...moving in the waters below and make out the slight outline of a fin and a face.

Yukio got out the katana, just in case, and you prayed to the kami, trusting that they would deliver you without violence.

But when the *umibozu* reached with webbed hands out of the water to board the boat, your words left you. One grabbed Yukio and pulled her halfway through the rail, and just as you got near, the second one tore her apart.

There was nothing in your scroll satchel that would help but there was nothing that would help, only pleasant diversions of illusion and courtly magics which meant nothing. Your friends were screaming and dying, and finally, you reached for fire, and set your own sails alight. That drove the beasts back, but not before one gave you a huge, oozing gash down your arm. You, Akimiko, and Shiyomi barricaded yourself below decks... with the one remaining. It tore her apart, but you beat it with a stool, and when the door broke down, you held still, beneath the mess. They came, they sniffed, and then they left. Alone with Akimiko, you sailed back to shore, a different man in more ways than you knew.

For it was only months later, when you felt a strange tingle against your fingers as you picked up a jade comb, that you began to understand. Casting a spell to detect the Taint of the Fallen One, you found it... in yourself. You have taken to walking slowly so as not to give it away: where once you were healthy and strong, your skin and joints are now tender to the touch. You stay pale in the light of Lady Sun, and

occasionally, in the presence of dead flesh, you feel a strange, repellent hunger.

You told no one of this, for your life at court would be over. The Tainted cannot marry, cannot sire children, cannot hold position in the clan or Empire.

You didn't tell Akimiko.

And you certainly didn't want to continue teaching at the Asahina school. The kami did nothing to save an innocent life.

You have to do it for them.

Becoming a Magistrate

You requested permission to leave the School and travel as a magistrate, and though your parents objected, your teachers knew that your loyalties had shifted and were glad to let you go.

In return for an Agasha to share knowledge with the Asahina School, you were given into the service of a Dragon magistrate, Kitsuki Fumiko. With her, you have found new purpose in life. You seek the truth, and it is not always pleasant, but it is worth more than fiction. Your pacifism is a courtesy reserved only for those who deserve it. Those not human, not loyal to the Emperor, not born of the Sun and Moon... they get their judgment.

You thought yourself original when you suggested judging not by those who are high or low in the Celestial Order, but by the facts. It was a surprise to you to learn that the Kitsuki have believed this all along.

Fumiko herself was born to low station, and raised up by the gratitude of a samurai she saved, not the kami. You have learned from her to ignore the clothes men wear and the palaces they inhabit, and to look instead straight at their hearts. Still, you know that your best way to serve justice is often by being the one to walk lightly in the courts.

Once in a while, you can even convince yourself that's why you've never returned to them.

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

Shosuro Yakawa: Entirely too slick and sure of himself. You know the type: born to privilege, taught that he can get away with anything, never suffered a moment in his life. And he's married to Fumiko, so that's unlikely to change. Still, even though you're sure he's hiding something behind the glib smile and too-quick words, he is a skilled magistrate, and his devotion to justice is unquestioned. You do not wish to earn his

enmity, but you are glad it is not you who married into his family.

Kitsu Mihime: She makes Yakawa look like the most humble beggar. Apparently she is one of the few heirs to some Lion ancestral gift, and has spent all her life being told the sun rises and sets on her whims. She is arrogant, spoiled, self-centered, creative, dedicated and tireless. Had someone disciplined her once or twice as a child, she might have become someone great. As it is, you are afraid that as soon as helping people starts to bore her, she'll be on to the next diversion without a second thought.

Kitsuki Fumiko: Level-headed and practical, she is gentle without being ineffective. A brilliant magistrate, she is careful to treat all on her team equally, though you know she cares deeply for her husband. It is refreshing, somehow, to meet someone not raised in the moral morass of the courts, and you have learned much from her about the value of truth.

Kaiu Watsuko: Your best friend. She suffered terrible abuse at the hands of her husband before Fumiko rescued and employed her. Though her scars are emotional, not physical, you relate to the quiet pain she tries to hide from everyone. She is the only one you have told about your affliction, and she did not condemn you for it. In her lands, she said, it is not considered the end of life, but the proof that you are valorous enough to live it. You wish you could believe her.

Kanimoto: A brash young bushi, he is everything your teachers at the Asahina school warned you away from. He is rude, violent, uncultured, descended from peasant stock, and a member of the Mantis to boot. And you were really starting to like him. He is...at least straightforward if not always honest, and was always reliable when he worked on the magistrate team. He has been gone for some months now, back to the islands. You hope he has not changed when you meet him again.

YOUR SHADOWLANDS TAINT

Fu Leng has a foothold on your soul. The Jade Petal Tea you drink once a day can stave off its slow spread. Though you have yet to give in, you have heard tales of the legendary strength the Taint can give.

By voluntarily taking a Taint point, you may add 1 to the total of any roll involving a physical

Trait. You can take more than one point at once.

Your starting Taint rank is 0.6.

Rank: _____

Points: _____

YOUR TSANGUSURI (Magical Items)

The Jumpfish Net: You made this early in your career. One lays the net out near the ocean and shouts, "(Fish type, fish type), jump in the net! I promise you _____!"

You have to promise something different every time for each type of fish. The fish in the nearby area beach themselves in the net. Typically, you then eat them.

You often get strange looks when you do this in public, but you rarely lack for a side dish. It doesn't work on sea mammals or crustaceans, in case you're wondering.

The Kimono of Breaking Waves: Kakita Wamatsu, a wealthy duelist who taught you the rudiments of spear-play, requested in return you make him something useful. Collecting over three hundred abalone, you powdered them and wove their strength into a kimono. But you had enough left over to make a second one, which you now wear.

Once per day, when something strikes the kimono, you can roll Water, with a TN of the number of Wounds, and the strike will do no damage. You don't spend anything to do this, but you can only try once.

Waters of Clarity: You carry four cups' worth of these around in a wineskin. When you make tea with them, it allows the drinker to regain up to their maximum Void.

NAME: Shosuro Yakawa
CLAN: Scorpion
SCHOOL: Bayushi Bushi
RANK: 3

Age: 31 **Sex:** Male **Height:** 5'6"
Physical Description: Dashing, slim man, with copper mask around the right eye and gold chains leading to both ears.

FIRE 3
Intelligence 3
Agility 4

AIR 4
Awareness 4
Reflexes 4

EARTH 3
Willpower 3
Stamina 3

WATER 2
Perception 3
Strength 2

VOID 3

GLORY 4.4
HONOR 3.7 (1.7)
INSIGHT 185
TN TO BE HIT 20

SCHOOL TECHNIQUES

Way of the Scorpion: Roll 2k2 for initiative.

Pincers and Tail: Roll Agility + Kenjutsu, TN of target's Reflexes x 5. The TN to hit them next round is 5.

Strike at the Tail: Roll Agility + Kenjutsu, TN of opponent's Weapon Skill x 5 to disarm them.

Two raises and the weapon ends up in your own hands.

Wounds	Dice Penalty
____(0-6)	-0
____(7-12)	-1
____(13-18)	-2
____(19-24)	-3
____(25-30)	-4
____(31-36)	Down
____(37-42)	Out
____(43-48)	Dead

ADVANTAGES

Ancestor: Shosuro Furuyari (Free Raise to Acting and Mimic).

Voice (roll 1 extra die for speaking)

Perceived Honor (when people try to guess your Honor, it appears 2 higher than it is).

DISADVANTAGES

Dark Secret (see History)

Fascination: Misfortune

A man divided by duty has not a single leg to stand on.

--Bayushi Tange

SKILLS

Acting 4	Iaijutsu 1
Archery 1	Investigation 3
Courtier 3	Kenjutsu 3
Defense 3	Lore: Scorpion 2
Etiquette 2	Mimic 2
Heraldry 1	Poison 1
History 1	Sincerity 3
Horsemanship 1	Stealth 4

EQUIPMENT

Fine katana (Str + 4k2), fine wakizashi (Str +3k2), two hidden aiguchi (Str +1k2), light armor, helm, mask, very long thread, fine kimono, tabi and geta; 20 bu, yumi and 20 ya (Str +2k2), face-paint, glue and hair kit in secret compartment in travel pack, breathing tube, "escape kimono" with sharp edge hidden in sleeve (Str-1k1), traveling papers for every Clan in Rokugan, sake jug of "Jiroji 967" (to be served at room temperature).

HISTORY

Your Family

Your life began in a considerably more glorious place than it's going to end. Never did you have a kimono that was not silk, or a playmate not carefully picked from the most cultured and elegant of Scorpion lineages. True, you were a second son in a minor family, but it was a family whose land hosted the *sake* barons of central Rokugan and not a few silver mines.

Though neither of your parents were formally schooled, they were eager to have at least one of their children attend the infamously difficult Bayushi-ryu, and when your unusual grace caught a visiting bushi's attention, they showered you with praise...

Your Schooling

...right before shipping you off to a strange castle, filled with children from more important families than you, who were encouraged to lie, cheat, bully and inform on each other to get ahead.

It was frightening, but it didn't take you long to see the other children were just as scared. You were quick enough to see that by talking loudly of loyalty while rewarding informants and playing favorites among the students, the teachers were hoping to foster competition among the younger generation, while encouraging staunch devotion to themselves.

But you played the game, getting your teachers' attention despite your humble background. Not so much for your skills as a bushi, though they were always adequate, but for your talents in the other games they made you play. There were games of stealth and disguise, where you hid in the woods for hours and attacked the teachers dressed as "demons," but were always coincidentally using the strokes that would kill a human. Soon you were "playing" more advanced versions where you snuck into neighboring houses to "find prizes" like "secret documents" and "spells." But their owners had never agreed to participate.

Your First Career

Even before you reached gempukku you knew you were meant to be a spy for the Scorpion Clan. It felt right when you devised ruses to visit as someone's "old cousin" and made up harmless stories on the spot. Your classmates marveled at your improvisation as time and again you pretended to live in a village or a castle, and turned away any awkward

questions with a flair for acting and disguise.

But what you found out was not so harmless. You were just past eighteen and pretending to be a courtier when a skirmish broke out at Beiden Pass, and the Lion pushed into the surrounding three villages -- not because they wanted them, but because they would take the food and shrink back into the Pass, where they could hold it.

You saw peasants burying their children in shallow graves, without even a coin to pay a shugenja for blessings. You saw women reduced to selling their bodies to feed themselves, and glorious samurai taking out their frustrations with human lives.

Your superiors told you this was the way of the world. Those who suffered were being punished for past sins, and their only use to the Clan was as informants or blackmail to hold over the heads of those who mattered.

A Slight Error

You couldn't believe it was that simple. Though you always brought your clan dirty secrets for their use, you could not find it in yourself to eliminate informants afterward. Was not cautious observation called for first? To see if the killing was necessary?

It was not. A servant was your undoing. He had told you of a Crane lord's heir with a taste for cruelty and eta boys. You thought your superiors would expose the secret and have him discredited, and arranged to reward the servant. But your clan wished him to inherit, to later apply the leverage, and when your informant grew frustrated that the heir had not been punished, he revealed the secret to his lord. The young Crane was made ronin... no use to the Scorpion.

You were unreliable, the Bayushi decided. Your punishment would be to serve the clan in another capacity.

They needed someone to get into the good graces of the Kitsuki magistrates, to marry one of them and gain her absolute trust, so she could be used as a foothold into the most honest family of the Dragon. This would be your duty -- to wed Kitsuki Fumiko, make her adore you and never question your love, to defer to her in all things and increase her reputation above your own...even if she was born a peasant.

Falling in Love

Though you'd always understood that *heimin* were people (inferior people, but still people), it was humiliating to be married to one. Still, you did what you were told, and honestly, Fumiko

wasn't bad. She was uncultured and a little bossy, but with a little Imperial accent, fashion advice, and some silk sheets on the futon, you wrapped her around your finger. But there was one small snag to the plan.

You never expected to fall in love.

Not with Fumiko. That would have been easy.

Fumiko saved the life of a Crab woman, Kaiu Watsuko, a wondrous flower whose life had been one stinking garbage heap. When you heard her story, you could not even imagine the pain she must have suffered. She had endured the Hida school, the Kaiu school, an abusive marriage in Crab lands, murdered her husband and was nearly executed herself, before Fumiko defended her to her lord and took her in as a magistrate.

When you first met her, she was a terrified, shy, traumatized slip of a thing, barely able to go through the motions of life. She needed you in a way the self-sufficient Fumiko never could. You took care of her, talked to her, listened to her stories, and told her how brave she was to have survived them. She was beautiful, and kind and brilliant, and you were lost in her.

You have kept your affair secret, for both of you depend on Fumiko for so much, but you would give up almost anything for Watsuko. You haven't yet decided if that "almost" includes your clan.

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

Kitsu Mihime: You cringe a bit when dealing with this self-centered shugenja. One of the only heirs to some magical ability the Lion covet, she's been spoiled rotten and has no understanding of people less fortunate than her. Just like you used to be. On the other hand, she is useful as a magistrate, and her ability to sense ancestral spirits might be a valuable technique for the Scorpion to study.

Asahina Jikoji: Polite, but moody. You wonder what happened to give this shugenja the air of constant pain he carries with him at all times. There is a secret there, and it's an old habit to try to find out what it is.

Kanimoto: Brash, unsubtle, this Mantis samurai is the kind of man you used to believe didn't exist. Every emotion comes out immediately on his face. Every thought he has he speaks. He hides nothing, and acts immediately on every idea. As a bushi, you can respect him, as a man,

all you feel is a vague pity.

Kitsuki Fumiko: It is regrettable you were ordered to make her love you, because you think you would have liked one another were she not your wife. Fumiko is smart and perceptive, if a bit myopically honest and entirely too practical. But even if she is an efficient magistrate, you notice her plum-picking roots every day. There are little things you must remind her not to stoop to, for otherwise she'll embarrass you all.

Kaiu Watsuko: You never understood why a bushi would waste his time writing poetry... and then you held her hand. Then you wrote a few haiku. And a few senryu. You think they're awful, and you got rid of them as evidence, but you had to tell *someone*.

Fumiko does not know. She cannot know. You waited until she was out of town to... you know, but you're sure she suspects. Check that -- she's a Kitsuki. She doesn't *need* to suspect. Unless you cover your tracks precisely, unless you *become* two different people so when you speak it will be the truth, she will know.

But Watsuko is worth it.

And she needs you.

YOUR DAISHO

Jiki ("Opportunity") is the name of your family katana. Your brother was initially meant to wield it, but he started training with ronin, and chipped the blade in unsupervised practice. He was *not* given first try at the Bayushi-ryu. The sword was polished lightly and slowly, giving it a blurry, non-reflective appearance... so are the hilt-pins, steel dragons you got as a wedding present.

Jiki and its wakizashi *jigi* ("the right time") are both slightly short, the better for quick drawing, and you have studied Kanimoto's technique to the point you can wave two blades around and look intimidating, if not actually use them the way he does.

PC SPELLS: ASAHINA JIKOJI

Sense: TN 5, 2 actions to cast, instantaneous.

Commune: TN 5, 1 action, lasts 1 turn.

Summon (Innate): TN 10, 1 action.

Sharing the Strength of Many (Earth): TN 15, 3 actions, lasts 10 rounds, full concentration. Raises to duration, casting time and bonuses. Allows target to keep an additional die on all actions. Can raise for more, but only equal to the number of shugenja in the ritual.

Way of Earth (Earth): TN 10, 4 actions, lasts Earth x5 rounds, no concentration, raises for casting time and duration. Turns target's skin to stone, raises armor by caster's Earth.

Grounding Energy (Earth, Innate): TN 15, 2 actions, lasts Earth x5 rounds, no concentration, raises for casting time, duration, and radius. This creates an anti-magic zone, Earth x5 feet across. Roll the Earth vs. the opposing shugenja's Ring. If successful, it's quashed.

Hands of Jurojin (Earth, Innate): TN variable, 10 actions, eliminates poisons, total concentration.

Path to Inner Peace (Water, Innate): TN 5, 2 actions, perm., no concentration, raises for time, wounds healed. If successful, this spell heals one wound rank. Each raise heals an additional wound rank, and increases the casting time by one action.

Calm Mind (Water): TN 10, 4 actions, inst., no concentration, raises for time, additional targets. Negates fear effect or other mind-altering effects on the target.

Command the Mind (Air, Innate): TN target's Will x5. 1 action, Duration: 1 command. Full concentration. Raises to the difficulty of the Perception test. Allows the shugenja to implant one thought by looking into a target's eyes. Target rolls Perception vs. Air x5 to resist.

Way of Deception (Air): TN 10, 3 actions, lasts 30 minutes, casual concentration. Raises to detail, duration, difficulty to detect or casting time. Creates illusionary costume and mask over target. Can be detected on Perception/Shugenja

Lore (20) roll. Raises for significant changes in size or appearance.

Secrets on the Wind (Air): TN 10, 6 actions, lasts 10 minutes, full concentration. Raises to duration, casting time and range Lets shugenja listen to any area he is familiar with for 10 minutes (+ 10 min/raise), within 10 miles (+10 miles/raise).

Yari of Air (Air, Innate): TN 10, 3 actions, lasts 10 rounds, no concentration. Raises to casting time, duration, weapon type, damage. Creates a 3k3 yari out of air. Raises add 1k0.

Wisdom the Wind Brings (Air, Innate): TN 10, 2 actions, lasts 1 round, casual concentration. Raises to casting time, and information gathered. Allows the shugenja to determine one of the following on any target: 1 ring, 1 trait, 1 skill rank, 1 advantage or disadvantage.

Accounts of Shorihotsu (Air): TN (Target spells mastery x 5), 5 actions, inst., no concentration, raises for information, time. Requires a raise to analyze an instant spell. Allows a shugenja to identify and analyze a spell that is currently being cast. The shugenja can learn: the element involved, clan and school of the caster, intended target, duration, etc.

PC SPELLS: KITSU MIHIME

Sense (innate): TN 5, 2 actions to cast, instantaneous.

Commune (innate): TN 5, 1 action, lasts 1 turn.

Summon (innate): TN 10, 1 action.

Counterspell: TN 10, 1 action, inst., raises for raising TN of spell targeted. Target another shugenja in the process of casting a spell. The shugenja summons opposing elements (Earth / Air ; Water / Fire). Success raises the TN of the spell being targeted by 10, +5 for each raise taken.

Sukinjin's Gift (Water, innate): TN (TN of spell being reflected, with raises + 10), 1 action, inst., no concentration, raises for range. Target must be within caster's Water x5 feet, +5 feet for each raise made. Success reflects the spell back at the caster.

Bo of Water (Water, Innate): TN 10, 3 actions, no concentration, lasts for 10 rounds, raised for time, duration, weapon type, weapon damage. Creates a magical 3k3 bo staff.

Path to Inner Peace (Water, Innate): TN 5, 2 actions, perm., no concentration, raises for time, wounds healed. If successful, this spell heals one wound rank. Each raise heals an additional wound rank, and increases the casting time by one action.

The Light of Amaterasu (Fire): TN 20, 4 actions, lasts for rounds equal to the caster's Fire, no concentration, raises for time, duration. Target begins to glow, and is immune to all wound penalties for a number of rounds equal to the caster's Fire, +1 for each raise.

Howl of Isora (Air): TN 10, 2 actions, lasts 1 round, Full concentration, raises for casting time, duration, or 100' away per Raise. Agility + Athletics roll at TN 20 or get buffeted around for 1 round.

Essence of Air (Air): TN 15, 3 actions, lasts 1 minute, full concentration. Raises to duration, casting time. Become invisible by decreasing all traits but Air to 1. If shugenja does something conspicuous, can roll Perception vs. Air x5 to notice.

Wall of Bamboo (Water): TN 10, 1 action, lasts 30 minutes, casual concentration. Raises to size and duration. Creates 10-foot high, 5-foot wide wall of bamboo within 50 foot radius. Wall is as long as Waterx5 feet, and can be increased by 10 feet/raise. It takes 3 rounds, and an Athletics + Weapon test, TN 25, to hack a man-sized hole through.

Kharmic Vengeance (Water): TN 15, 2 actions, lasts a number of rounds equal to Water, full concentration. Raises to casting time and duration. Forces the target to relive his worst memories. Target must make a Willpower test vs. Water x5 or curl up into little ball for (Water) rounds. Caster does not learn these memories.

Fury of Osano-Wo (Fire): TN 5, 2 actions, inst., no concentration, raises for damage, casting time, free raise for casting during a rainstorm. Sends a DR2 lightning bolt down at the target.

Sharing the Strength of Many (Earth): TN 15, 3 actions, lasts 10 rounds, full concentration. Raises to duration, casting time and bonuses. Allows target to keep an additional die on all actions. Can raise for more, but only equal to the number of shugenja in the ritual.