

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER®



SEASON OF GHOSTS

ADVENTURE PATH

No Breath to Cry

By Dan Cascone and
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PATHFINDER

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ADVENTURE PATH

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Cycles of Destruction

by Jeremy Blum

Worlds within the Mind

by Joshua Kim

Adventure Toolbox

by Dan Cascone, Dana Ebert, Eleanor Ferron, and Michelle Kim

New Rules

New Rituals

Heroic Legacies

Haunting the Living

Monsters

Akashti (Sobbing Nindoru)

Kagekuma (Lurking Nindoru)

Noppera-bo Impersonator

Shimmerthief

Silsyche

NPCs

Heh Shan-Bao

Mago Kai

CONTENT WARNING

While Pathfinder Adventure Path #198: No Breath to Cry contains typical Pathfinder action and adventure, it also includes content related to claustrophobia and being burned alive. Before you run this adventure, understand that consent from everyone at the table, including players and the Game Master, is vital to a safe and fun play experience. You should talk with your players before beginning the adventure and modify descriptions or events as appropriate.



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No Breath to Cry

Chapter 1: Oblivion of Truth4

Returning to Willowshore from their expedition, the heroes attempt to find the missing governor, Heh Shan-Bao, and unlock the final secrets to their imprisonment within their mysterious mindscape.

Chapter 2: Face-to-Face with Death 22

With a promising ritual that could free them in hand, the heroes must help Willowshore survive Shenmen's cruel winter and the crueler creatures that come to visit their town.

Chapter 3: This Place Is Ours 46

The heroes finally have a chance to confront the forces that seek to erase them and everything they know, opening a path for Willowshore's salvation at last.

ARE WE REALLY DEAD?

At the end of this adventure's first chapter, the PCs discover an astonishing truth: they aren't just trapped in a mindscape—they're dead. Governor Heh Shan-Bao reveals this truth to the PCs in a way that might make them think he's lying to them, or perhaps that he's simply wrong. As the adventure progresses into Chapter 2, this truth becomes increasingly apparent; by the time Chapter 3 happens, the PCs should accept this development and be focused on fixing it.

Still, some groups might become distracted by this plot twist. If you find that your group is side-tracked or frustrated by the revelation that their PCs are dead and have, essentially, been ghosts this whole time, consider explaining the situation to be more akin to them having been killed only to be resurrected or reincarnated in this new area, and that by continuing to research the solution Heh Shan-Bao started, they'll be able to fix the situation he caused.

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ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"No Breath to Cry" is designed for four characters.

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The PCs should begin this adventure at 7th level.

8

The PCs should be 8th level by the time they defeat their noppera-bo doubles.

9

The PCs should be 9th level by the time they reach Mago Kai's fort.

The PCs should reach 10th level by the time they complete the adventure.



Chapter 1: Oblivion of Truth

The town of Willowshore has been trapped in an unending cycle for over a hundred years, but its inhabitants aren't mindless participants in their own unknowing torment. The cycle never plays out in quite the same way. Various supernatural events, choices made differently, and simple turns of luck allow different citizens to stumble upon the truth of their existence each cycle and make attempts to escape. Despite having more than a hundred opportunities to do so, so far none have found success. It doesn't help that their progress is completely reset every time the mindscape reverts to the first day of summer, causing the people of Willowshore to not only forget everything they've learned, but lose all physical evidence of their discoveries.

This time around, on the mindscape's 115th cycle, things are different. Events in the living world have changed the status quo in the mindscape, and a new group of heroes, the PCs, achieved incredible discoveries about the "curse" that has kept them trapped. But while they now know they're held within a mindscape, they have yet to learn the ultimate truth of their situation—that they're all dead. The "hauntings" that have been plaguing Willowshore are the work of living exorcists attempting to banish the ghostly townsfolk so that the local forest can be safely harvested. Once the spirits of Willowshore have been unmoored and sent on to Pharamasma, Mago Kai and his logging camp can move in and begin sending lumber back to Shenmen's capital.

Now armed with resources recovered from the ruins of the Tan Sugi monastery, the PCs can begin the process of learning what actually happened on the last night of spring, but with the cruelty of a particularly harrowing winter descending upon the town, they'll need to spend their time and resources wisely.

Getting Started

The previous adventure in *Season of Ghosts*, "Let the Leaves Fall," ended with the PCs learning that they're trapped within a cyclic mindscape that resets every year on the last day of spring. With the texts they've recovered from the Tan Sugi monastery, the PCs have the final tools they need to begin researching a ritual that will allow them to escape the Willowshore mindscape and return to the real world.

Once you're ready to begin "No Breath to Cry," proceed with the events detailed in *Red Smoke, Gold Eyes* on page 6. Mago Kai's agents are attempting to exorcise ghosts from the ruins of Willowshore in the living world, and after the PCs' initial encounters with these agents conclude, they should realize that the supernatural threats facing Willowshore are coming from more than just the fiend Kugaptee's influence. To get to the bottom of this mystery, they should make every effort to contact Governor Heh Shan-Bao in his mindscape—wherever that might be!

WILLOWSHORE

Full details on the town of Willowshore are presented in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #196: The Summer That Never Was*, the first adventure in this Adventure Path. A map of Willowshore and its hinterlands appears on the inside front cover of this book. While all of the areas in town and the surroundings that have important roles to play in this adventure are covered extensively in the pages to follow as needed, you'll want to reference the previous adventures for further details—or consult the free *Season of Ghosts Player's Guide*, available at paizo.com, for player-facing, spoiler-free notes on the town and region.

The crisp autumn days and increasingly sparse sunny afternoons are a thing of the past in this adventure. Winters in Shenmen are blustery and cold, with frequent rainstorms and thunderstorms. Snow is rare but not unknown—but this year, the snow will come with a somewhat unexpected force within the confines of the Willowshore mindscape. It won't grow cold enough for the lakes and rivers to freeze, but it will certainly be cold enough that anyone trapped outside overnight will be in grave peril.

When this Adventure Path began, Willowshore was a 4th-level settlement, but as the PCs continue

A DECLINING POPULATION

The town of Willowshore currently has a population of 224 people, after one of the locals mysteriously vanished near the end of the previous adventure (see Week 12: *Vanishings* on page 25 of "Let the Leaves Fall"). If additional NPCs perished during previous games, reduce this population total further as appropriate (alternatively, you can simply keep it at 224 at the beginning of this adventure and assume that a few births in the town have offset previous deaths). As this adventure goes on, certain events or lack of food or security will cause this population total to decline even further. As it does, keep track of Willowshore's final population, as it will impact the Adventure Path's conclusion.

to bolster resources and morale, the town has slowly been rebuilding and recovering, and that recovery continues as this adventure begins. As a result, Willowshore is now a 6th-level settlement. The map on the inside front cover shows the location of all sites visited in this adventure, but you'll want to refer to the Willowshore gazetteer in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #196: The Summer That Never Was* for full details on the town.

WILLOWSHORE

SETTLEMENT 6

TOWN

Isolated town trapped in a cyclic mindscape

Government Appointed governor (town elder)

Population 224 (73% humans, 6% half-elves, 4% halflings, 4% kitsune, 3% elves, 3% tengu, 2% nagaji, 5% others)

Languages Common (Tien), Elven, Halfling, Minatan, Nagaji, Tengu, Tian-hwa, Tian-min

Religions Abadar, Daikitsu, Lady Nanbyo, Pharsma, Sangpotshi, several others

Threats impending winter, malicious spirits, struggling self-sufficiency, supernatural influences

Teeth-Clenching Teamwork Willowshore's residents help one another despite differences. You can attempt to Request help from another Willowshore resident even if they're indifferent or unfriendly, but do so with a -2 circumstance penalty.

"Granny" Hu Ban-niang (LN female Tian-shu guard) retired imperial guard captain and potential town elder

Heh Shan-Bao (LN male Tian-shu governor) appointed administrator of Willowshore; currently missing

"Old" Matsuki Shou (NG male Tian-shu family patriarch) retired carpenter and Willowshore's living history and potential town elder

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CALL THE UNDERSTUDY!

Events in this adventure sometimes reference NPCs who live in Willowshore and who have appeared in previous adventures. Season of Ghosts can be lethal for NPCs, however, and some of the NPCs given roles in this adventure might be dead in your game. In this event, simply swap the deceased NPC with an appropriate living substitute, or make up a new villager to converse with the PCs—perhaps a family member or friend of the dead NPC in question.

WILLOWSHORE REPUTATION

Two rival political factions exist in Willowshore: Southbank (rural-minded citizens focused on self-sufficiency and farming) and Northridge (urbane citizens focused on industry and trade). Rules for building reputation with these two factions appear in the first adventure of Season of Ghosts, as well as on page 164 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*. More opportunities to earn Reputation Points exist in this adventure, but by the time the PCs begin “No Breath to Cry,” they’ll likely already be admired or perhaps even revered by one or both factions. There’s always more to be done in town, but the PCs have already become well known as local heroes.

PREPARATION POINTS

During the previous adventure, the PCs spent weeks preparing Willowshore for the coming winter. As “No Breath to Cry” begins on the first day of winter, the time for preparation has passed, and hopefully Willowshore is ready! This adventure tracks the village’s status via three categories of Preparation Points: Hope Points, Food Points, and Security Points.

As you begin this adventure, make sure the players are aware of the total number of Hope Points, Food Points, and Security Points they’ve accumulated. During this adventure, events will require the expenditure of these points, both on a regular weekly basis and as the results of specific encounters and events, as detailed on the following pages.

If you haven’t played “Let the Leaves Fall,” then you can simply start the PCs with 15 points in each of the three categories (the minimum amount they’ll need to survive the winter unscathed), and then give the party an additional 20 points to allocate as they wish between the three categories. Feel free to increase or decrease these additional points as you see fit if you wish to present easier or more difficult gameplay for your table.

Weekly Attrition

As time passes, the townsfolk grow gloomier and more mentally exhausted by the increasingly harsh weather and frightening supernatural events, consume more and more of their food stores, and scramble to keep their homes repaired as the weather works against them. At the end of every week, make the following adjustments to Willowshore’s Preparation Points.

- Reduce Hope Points by 1d4.
- Reduce Food Points by 1.
- Reduce Security Points by 1.

Repercussions

At the start of the next adventure, any remaining Preparation Points will help to ensure a better result when transitioning Willowshore and its citizens back to life.

No Hope: The people of Willowshore are despondent and frightened, and they rarely exit their homes. Treat Willowshore as a level 1 settlement for the purposes of purchasing items and services. Each time you would normally reduce Hope Points, instead reduce the PCs’ reputation with both of Willowshore’s factions by 2.

No Food: The people of Willowshore are starving. Each time you would normally reduce Hope Points, instead reduce Willowshore’s population by 2d6.

No Security: The people of Willowshore are defenseless. Each time you would normally reduce Security Points, instead reduce Willowshore’s population by 1d6.

Red Smoke, Gold Eyes

During the final week of the previous adventure, one of Willowshore’s citizens mysteriously vanished. No trace of the missing resident will be found; they’ve been exorcised by one of Mago Kai’s exorcists, and their soul has moved on to the afterlife to be judged in the Boneyard. The nature of this disappearance should worry and intrigue the PCs, and as such, the previous adventure suggested timing this vanishing to take place on the last day of fall.

Before the PCs and the people of Willowshore have a chance to look into this mysterious disappearance or start researching the Willowshore mindscape and how best they can contact the town’s missing governor, another vanishing event begins—but this time, Kai’s exorcists are more aggressive in their work. Dozens of these exorcists, dressed in frightening costumes and wielding fire meant to scare off the spirits that haunt the ruins of Willowshore in the living world, begin to work their way through the town. As they do, plumes of red smoke rise from various sites in Willowshore, as if strange invisible flames have engulfed the buildings

at these areas, yet no actual fires appear at these sites. What does await are dangerous hazards engineered by the exorcists—hazards the PCs must defeat before more of Willowshore’s citizens vanish.

This event takes place mid-morning, at a point when the PCs are all gathered together; it’s best for the event to begin as the PCs are traveling outside near downtown Willowshore so that they can spot the eerie plumes of red smoke that start to rise from the Cloud Paper House on the southern shore of Woodraft Lake (otherwise, frightened NPCs quickly seek the PCs out to alert them of the strange event). If the PCs set off to investigate the site at once, they should arrive in time to begin this event without issue.

Any fears that the smoke rising from the paper-making factory resulted from a fire should be put to rest as the PCs approach, for no flames are visible; the crimson color of the plumes appears particularly unnatural. When the PCs arrive on the scene, dozens of frightened townsfolk gathered in the streets tell them that parts of the building have simply been vanishing into smoke, causing the structure to begin to collapse. News that three civilians are trapped inside the strangely smoking and slowly collapsing building should spur the PCs to attempt a swift rescue.

In the real world, Cloud Paper House is now a ruin that can barely support its own weight, but it’s one of the few buildings still standing at all along the lake’s southern shore. Here, Kai’s exorcists have decided to pursue their first significant attempt to banish spirits from the ruins, and as their work proceeds, the real-world ruins begin to “seep” into the mindscape, causing the building to slowly collapse as more parts of it simply vanish.

The red smoke rising from the area is a manifestation of the exorcists’ ritual, which involves the burning of a bonfire and the use of torches, fire, and frightening costumes to drive out “evil spirits.” When the PCs first enter the afflicted area (presented on map on page 8), they’ll catch a brief but unsettling glimpse of one of these exorcists in their frightening attire—read or paraphrase the following.

Four glowing gold eyes blaze into existence in the smoke, moving forward without a body or legs to carry them. A monstrous red visage bleeds into air around them for just a moment, yellowed fangs twisting gruesomely out of its mouth before abruptly vanishing. Black sleeves billow around a crimson body, slipping into reality in torrents of cloth, as they leak rolling clouds of incense before

collapsing into ash and blowing away in the wind. A few paces more, and the golden eyes wink out. The acrid smell of smoke remains, as do calls of help from the collapsing building beyond.

The vision of this exorcist is gone too quickly for anyone to see more, but with a successful DC 23 Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a PC notes that the strangely dressed figure seemed to be performing some sort of ritual, but was likely little more than a figment created by the powerful magic afflicting the region. With a critical success, the PC surmises that the image of the figure might have been projected from another mindscape entirely... perhaps the one that Governor Heh Shan-Bao is trapped in?

The realization that this image was a projection of an exorcist from the real world 115 years in the future shouldn’t come until well into Chapter 3 of this adventure, but once the

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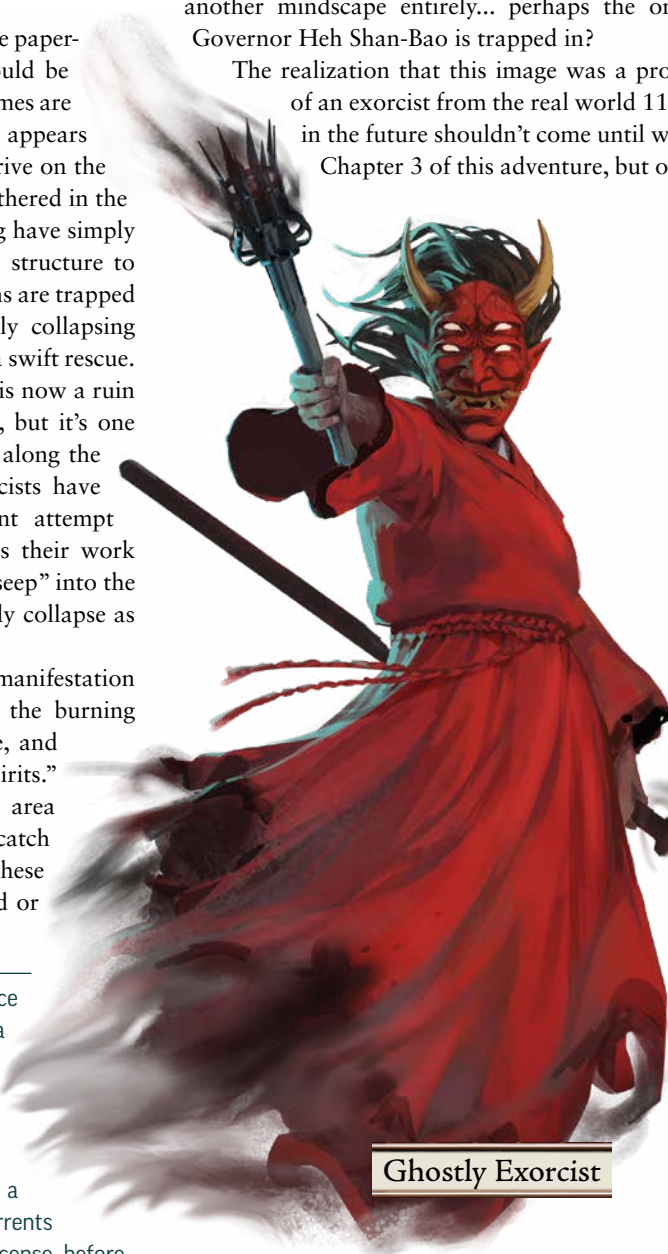
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Ghostly Exorcist



CLOUD PAPER HOUSE
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

A4

A2

A3

A4

A1

A5



PCs do encounter these exorcists in the living world, you should ensure they realize that these agents are one and the same with the supernatural forces the PCs face on the streets of Willowshore while it remains entrapped in its mindscape.

EVENT 1. STRUCTURAL COLLAPSE MODERATE 7

The map above shows a large portion of Cloud Paper House, including a significant section that's in the process of slowly collapsing, along with the facing street and nearby buildings. This event, as well as the next two, all take place in this location.

The three NPCs trapped in the building are in need of rescue, but additional hazards have manifested as a result of the exorcism attempts taking place in the living world. Each of the three NPCs in the ruins faces their own difficulty, and the PCs must perform tasks to get them to safety. If a PC has to carry out an NPC, Aruka and Zhen Luoyang are both Bulk 6, while Yu Er is Bulk 3. For an NPC (or doll) to be safe from the hazard, they must reach the street south of the ruined building, after which they flee to the east or west. The

crowd of onlookers take care of them and see to it they make it safely to somewhere they can recover.

In this encounter, allow the three NPCs to follow the PC rules for dying if they're reduced to 0 Hit Points. A creature of 6th level or lower that dies in this encounter vanishes entirely, their spirit exorcised from the Willowshore mindscape to move on to the afterlife in the Great Beyond, but this outcome shouldn't be apparent to the PCs and other inhabitants of Willowshore; to them, it should simply look as if the character's body suddenly vanishes without a trace. Creatures of 7th level or higher (such as the PCs) who are slain here are beyond the power of these exorcists to banish, and their bodies (and souls) remain trapped in the mindscape if they're killed by this area's hazard.

A1. Aruka: Aruka is a solidly built kitsune woman who was hauling logs when the ceiling fell all around her, knocking her to the ground and pinning her leg under a collapsed table. Since her alternate form is of a human woman and not a fox, her attempts to change shape to escape have proven fruitless. On her

turn each round, she attempts an Athletics check to Escape with a +3 bonus; if she manages to get free, she hobbles her way toward the street and to safety as best she can.

To Escape or Force Open the rubble, she or an adjacent PC must succeed at a DC 23 check. Alternatively, the rubble can be destroyed to free her (AC 15, hardness 10, HP 30 [BT 15]); if the rubble is broken, the DC for checks to Escape and Force Open drops to 18. Aruka currently has 2 HP and is slowed 2 by her wound; if she's healed to full HP, she loses the slowed 2 condition. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Medicine check to Treat Wounds also removes her slowed condition, but the PCs aren't likely to have the luxury of spending 10 minutes to pursue this option unless they have the Battle Medicine feat, in which case they can attempt to remove her slowed condition using that option against the same DC.

A2. Yu Er: Yu Er is a five-year-old girl who snuck into a loft in the rafters to play. When the building began to collapse, she fell through the loft floor but was lucky enough to fall into a mass of paper pulp on the ground and only suffered superficial scrapes. However, she's quite distressed that her favorite doll, Mr. Jelly, remains hanging by its cape from a snapped bamboo pole protruding from the ceiling hole above. The doll is a straw-stuffed, six-limbed humanoid wearing a mask and a cape that, with a successful DC 20 Nature or Society check to Recall Knowledge, a PC can recognize as a caricature of Hwanggot's mysterious Taljjae (detailed on pages 96–101 of *Pathfinder Lost Omens Monsters of Myth*).

One of Yu Er's parents races in to collect her, but the girl resists, crying in fear and reaching up helplessly for Mr. Jelly. Mr. Jelly is snagged at a height of 20 feet off the ground. The doll can potentially be knocked loose via a ranged attack against AC 24. If a ranged Strike hits, the attacker must then succeed at a DC 16 flat check to knock the doll loose; if the ranged Strike is a critical hit, it's automatically knocked loose. Magical solutions like *telekinetic projectile* used to hurl the doll downward can automatically recover the doll. A PC can Climb up the crumbling wall using the loose supports to reach the doll with a successful DC 25 Athletics check, and an adjacent PC can pick up the doll automatically as an Interact action.

Care must be taken when retrieving Mr. Jelly to avoid ripping his cape or some of his stuffing out—



Mr. Jelly

each time an attempt is made to retrieve the doll, the creature making the attempt must succeed at a DC 22 Reflex save or Thievery check to avoid damaging the doll. Once the doll has been damaged, no further checks to avoid further damaging it are necessary—what's torn is torn.

If Mr. Jelly is intact and returned to Yu Er, she calms down immediately. If Mr. Jelly was damaged during the rescue, Yu Er throws an epic tantrum, devastated that her friend got hurt. A PC who has a repair kit can quickly patch the doll up as a three-action activity that requires a successful DC 25 Crafting check (or automatically as a single action even without access to a repair kit if they have the Quick Repair feat), or they can fix the doll by casting *mending* or *item facade* on it. Either way, Yu Er's parents thank the PCs profusely for saving Mr. Jelly. A PC can instead Lie, Request, or Coerce Yu Er into calming down without retrieving Mr. Jelly by succeeding at a DC 25 check.

A3. Zhen Luoyang: This spry, elderly man was delivering a homemade lunch to his nephew (a particularly panicked young man in the crowd watching the disaster unfold) who works in the mill when chaos struck. When the building first began to collapse, a blast of debris showered down on him and left him senseless, but also buried him under a layer of crumbled plaster and dust. In order to locate him while he remains buried, a PC must Search and succeed at a DC 20 Perception check.

Luoyang is unconscious when this event begins, lying prone on the ground. Each round on his turn, he can attempt a DC 20 Fortitude save with a +6 Fortitude save bonus. On a success, he wakes, hobbles to his feet, and limps at a speed of 5 feet toward safety. His wounds can be treated in the same way as for Aruka (see A1, left), in which case he regains his full Speed of 25 feet.

ARUKA

CREATURE -1

Female kitsune apprentice (*Gamemastery Guide* 244)

Initiative Perception +6

YU ER

CREATURE -1

Female human urchin (*Gamemastery Guide* 215)

Initiative Perception +3

ZHEN LUOYANG

CREATURE -1

Male human commoner (*Gamemastery Guide* 214)

Initiative Perception +3

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Hazards: The exorcism in the ruins of Willowshore in the living world manifests here as a pair of spiritual disruptor hazards. At the start of this event, the hazards are located at the two areas marked **A4**.

If the PCs take longer than 6 rounds to resolve the situation and at least one hazard remains active, more of the structure collapses, causing 2d6+6 bludgeoning damage to all within the building (DC 15 basic Reflex save). This repeats every 6 rounds until all of the NPCs are rescued. If this collapse takes place while there are no living characters within the building, the entire structure collapses, and the spiritual disruptors vanish.

SPIRITUAL DISRUPTORS (2)

HAZARD 7

RARE **COMPLEX** **HAUNT**


Stealth +21 (expert)

Description A flickering humanoid shape with four gold eyes, clad in red robes with black sleeves and wielding a torch that burns with red fire and smoke, strides purposefully across the ground, creating distortions in reality around it that cause wood to twist and decay and send agonizing pain through the flesh.

Disable DC 23 (expert) Intimidation to disrupt the haunt's concentration in the living world and break the link to the mindscape, Religion DC 27 (expert) to banish the energy from the mindscape, or Occultism DC 30 (expert) to turn the haunt's energy back against itself to cancel it out


AC 25; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +18, **Will** +15

HP 60 (BT 30); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** mental 10

Manifest  **Trigger** The PCs enter or otherwise interact with the building and its contents; **Effect** A spiritual disruptor manifests at both locations marked **A4**. Both hazards then roll initiative.

Routine (three actions) The spiritual disruptor's first action each round is always to create a pulse of rippling energy in a 10-foot emanation that causes the surrounding structure to appear to age rapidly and become distorted, causing the ground in this area to become difficult terrain. If the spiritual disruptor is adjacent to a living target, it attempts to disrupt that target's life energy by making a Strike with its smoking torch. If the spiritual disruptor isn't adjacent to a living target, it Strides toward the closest target. If it has multiple adjacent targets, the spiritual disruptor favors higher-level targets, selecting randomly from multiple adjacent equal-level targets.

Speed 20 feet

Melee  smoking torch +17, **Damage** 2d10+9 negative

Reset If both hazards are disabled or destroyed, a new one forms adjacent to a randomly determined character still inside the crumbling building after 1d4+2 rounds. Once all three NPCs are rescued or exorcised, these hazards don't reset.

EVENT 2. UNNATURAL UPRISING MODERATE 7

Once the NPCs have been rescued from the building and the spiritual disruptors are gone, the PCs have time to rest and recover. After 10 minutes have passed, or the PCs decide to leave the area (whichever comes first), a second plume of red smoke rises into the air as Mago Kai's exorcists regroup in the living world to begin a second attempt to exorcise the more-robust-than-expected spirits in the region.

Creatures: This time, the exorcists attempt to focus their efforts not on specific pinpoints of spiritual energy (represented by the lingering spirits of townsfolk in the living world), but instead focus on banishing a large mass of generalized spiritual energy infesting the area (represented by the accumulated loss of non-sapient life in the ruins). Smoke wells up at the eastern end of the street at area **A5**, and for a brief moment, several more of the strange gold-eyed, crimson-clad phantasms appear, only to vanish as the attempt to perform the mass exorcism fails in the real world.

Here in the mindscape, though, their attempt has a very real result, forcing this spiritual energy out of the living world into the mindscape, where it infuses the very plants and trees that have grown over the ruins. This corruption of the natural order manifests in the mindscape at area **A5** as two waldgeists appear—distorted shapes that resemble deformed, miniature willow trees with screaming animal faces growing from their trunks. These incorporeal spirits immediately surge forward and float effortlessly to attack the PCs with dangling roots, drifting through the air almost like ghostly jellyfish. While these variant waldgeists are much larger than typical waldgeists, they aren't quite as powerful as normal specimens of their kind.

WILLOWSHORE WALDGEISTS (2)

CREATURE 7

RARE **NE** **LARGE** **INCORPOREAL** **SPIRIT** **UNDEAD**

Variant waldgeist (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 164)

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages Arboreal, Common, Sylvan; *speaks with plants*

Skills Acrobatics +14, Intimidation +14, Nature +16, Stealth +16

Str -5, **Dex** +5, **Con** +3, **Int** +2, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +3

AC 24; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +14, **Will** +16

HP 88, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 5 (except force, ghost touch, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Fleeting Existence These waldgeists are only fleeting manifestations of a failed exorcism. They vanish after 1 minute has passed from their first manifestation in the mindscape.

Speed fly 30 feet

Melee ♦ lignifying root +16 (finesse, magical), **Damage** 2d8+5 negative plus lignify

Primal Innate Spells DC 22, attack +14; **3rd** *wall of thorns*; **Cantrips (4th)** *tanglefoot*; **Constant (4th)** *speak with plants*

Lignify (incapacitation, primal, transmutation) As waldgeist, but DC 22.

EVENT 3. TOMORROW'S SHADOWS LOW 7

Once the two waldgeists are defeated, the exorcists in the living world retreat from the ruins to report to Mago Kai at Karahai on their successes or failures, but the repercussions of their meddling aren't quite over. About 10 minutes after

Event 2: Unnatural Uprising ends, each PC feels a strange chill—the classic sensation some describe as feeling as if “someone just walked over your grave.”

Creatures: A moment later, nebulous black forms rise up from each PC's shadow, the shape taking form and appearing as a smoky, distorted ghost of each character. These figures are echoes of the PCs' own hauntings extending back toward them from the future through the Willowshore mindscape's borders. As these shadowy figures cry out in pain, the PCs recognize themselves in the distorted shapes as the shadowy creatures attack.

Each of these strange figures functions as a typical shadow for the most part, with the exception that they lack the ability to spawn shadows from their foes. Instead, they have the unusual ability to infest the shadows of those whose form they duplicate, as detailed in the short stat block below. As their ability to steal and infest shadows only functions against PCs whose shapes they duplicate, these familiar shadows focus their attacks on those particular PCs, ignoring others in the area entirely unless they have already slain the PC they have duplicated.

This encounter assumes four shadows attack the party; adjust these numbers as needed so each PC faces their own shadow. The shadows fight until destroyed, but once the last of them is finished off, a sense of relief washes over each PC—a feeling that, for now at least, this latest danger has passed.

FAMILIAR SHADOWS (4)

Pathfinder Bestiary 289

Initiative Perception +10

Infest Shadow (curse, necromancy) When a familiar shadow pulls free the shadow of the PC that they duplicate, it twists and writhes for a moment before it immediately slithers back around the character. The



Kawaka

infested shadow seems to writhe and twist on its own, as if willfully ignoring the actions of the character to whom it's attached. The infested shadow has a habit of making distracting and embarrassing motions, and imparts a -2 status penalty to its attached PC's Deception, Diplomacy, and Stealth checks. If the PC is in a situation where they aren't casting a shadow (such as when they're in complete darkness or invisible), these penalties are suppressed, but return as soon as their infested shadow does. If

a PC with an infested shadow gains the dying condition, the shadow breaks free and becomes a shadow spawn (which functions the same as a shadow spawn created by a typical shadow). This shadow spawn won't attack the creature it spawned from, but any other targets are fair game. If the dying character recovers, their shadow spawn immediately dies and their shadow returns to normal—otherwise the only way to be rid of this strange curse is through the use of a spell like *remove curse*.

Steal Shadow (divine, necromancy) As shadow, but this ability only functions against the PC who the shadow appears to duplicate.

WRAPPING UP

The townsfolk remain wary for several minutes after the chaos has been dealt with, waiting to see what horrible thing might happen next. When it seems that the invading force is gone—at least for the time being—the industrial district of Willowshore begins to stir as people emerge, taking the chance to assess the damage before getting down to the unglamorous work of putting their lives back together. A few can be heard wailing if their loved ones have vanished, but the overall attitude of the aftermath depends on how well the PCs managed to mitigate the damage. If the destruction and loss was extensive, Willowshore is silent and somber, collecting the wreckage of their lives with screams of grief as their only accompaniment. If the PCs did well in containing the disasters, the town is more defiant, with older residents loudly complaining and insulting the unseen forces that caused it all.

If all three NPCs were rescued, the party earns 3 Hope Points and increases their reputation with both of Willowshore's factions by 1. The PCs earn 120 XP.

If only two NPCs were rescued, the party earns 1 Hope Point and increases their reputation with one of Willowshore's factions (the party's choice) by 1. The PCs earn 80 XP.

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UNPROVOKED MURDER

The townsfolk of Heh Shan-Bao's Willowshore aren't hostile, but they're certainly unsettling. If a PC attacks any of the citizens, treat them all as if they were commoners (*Gamemastery Guide* 214). Attacked residents shriek in terror and retreat if able, but fight if cornered. If slain, the villager collapses to the ground and their face fades to a blank, featureless ovoid. Their equipment turns out to consist of cheap props when examined. Other townsfolk don't react to the sight of violence unless they're attacked themselves. The PCs might suspect these townsfolk are noppera-bos; they aren't (they're little more than thoughtforms maintained by the mindscape), but they can certainly foreshadow the presence of noppera-bos the PCs will soon face at the governor's manor!

If only one NPC was rescued, the party neither gains nor loses Hope Points. The PCs earn 40 XP.

If no NPCs were rescued, the party loses 2 Hope Points and 1 Reputation Point with each of Willowshore's factions.

If Cloud Paper House collapses, the PCs lose 1 Security Point, and the paper mill can no longer be used as a work site for PCs or to purchase paper and paper products. It likewise remains unavailable for such use if it only suffered damage, but if the PCs spend 4 Security Points, the building can be repaired after 2 weeks of work.

The next day, **Myna Kawaka** (LN male tengu guild leader 3), the owner of Cloud Paper House, visits and gives the PCs a greater smokestick and four *moderate healing potions* in thanks if they saved at least one of the three trapped people, a vial of sovereign glue (*Advanced Player's Guide* 255) and four additional *moderate healing potions* if they saved at least two, and a *potion of quickness* and a *runestone* bearing a *resilient armor rune* if they saved all three. These rewards are cumulative. If the heroes also recovered Mr. Jelly intact, Yu Er's parents personally thank them with a pair of *slippers of spider climbing* before lamenting how difficult it would've been to find an identical replacement for the toy.

If the PCs defeated both waldgeists before they vanished, the townsfolk are further relieved (since if the spirits are allowed to vanish on their own, fears that they might return at any time linger). The town elder gathers resources and, one day later, presents the party with a reward in the form of a pair of leather

bracers of armor I and a celadon vase decorated with phoenixes worth 150 gp.

If the PCs became infested with the familiar shadows' curse after the battle but have no method of removing curses themselves, consider having Shinzo bring a few *scrolls of remove curse* to give to the party for free—explaining that he had a feeling they could use them.

Another Willowshore

Once these events are complete, the PCs and Willowshore receive a break as the exorcists leave the town—though this reprieve is merely a strategic retreat. Regardless of the outcomes of their rituals, the exorcists have realized that something is interfering with their attempts to purify the town. Rather than risk continuing with an unknown and potentially dangerous variable in play, the exorcists decide to investigate the supernatural presence in the ruins of Willowshore more diligently and carefully before proceeding with further exorcism attempts. Their continued efforts, as well as other events, continue to play out in Willowshore as the winter weeks proceed—these events are detailed further in Chapter 2 and play out on as scheduled as time passes. See the sidebar on page 28 for a timeline of winter's events.

Of more importance, though, is the fact that the PCs are now free to pursue investigation of the leads they've uncovered in the previous adventure. They know from their adventures in the Tan Sugi monastery and their discussions with Zhi Hui's ghost that they and everyone else in Willowshore are trapped in a mindscape that keeps repeating the same year over and over, and that the mindscape formed after the town's previous governor, Heh Shan-Bao, tried (and failed) to perform a ritual to protect Willowshore from Kugaptee's influence. The previous adventure ended with the PCs restoring that protection and removing Kugaptee's immediate threat but brought little in the form of revelation on how they and the rest of Willowshore might escape back into the real world. To learn more, the PCs must investigate and research.


Rules for research subsystem appear on pages 154–155 of the *Gamemastery Guide*.

THE WILLOWSHORE MINDSCAPE RESEARCH 7

Solo Investigations You spend the day looking through the collection of books and scrolls gathered from the hidden library in the Tan Sugi monastery; **Maximum RP** 8

Research Checks DC 21 Academia or Library Lore, or DC 23 Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion

Brainstorming Solutions You spend the day discussing



theories and investigating possible solutions with other learned locals in Willowshore; **Maximum RP 4**

Research Checks DC 23 Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion, or DC 25 Diplomacy

2 Research Points Governor Heh Shan-Bao's failed ritual to offer protection from the influence of the dead fiend Kugaptee had the opposite effect; it resulted in the creation of the mindscape the PCs are now trapped in and allowed the fiend's influence to grow stronger in the mindscape.

4 Research Points Kugaptee no longer directly threatens the mindscape, yet the fact that it remains and that supernatural threats continue to threaten Willowshore confirm that there's a greater effect at play. Governor Heh Shan-Bao likely performed the ritual in his manor, and when it failed, he and his manor seemed to have been shunted into their own mindscape, in parallel to the rest of Willowshore.

6 Research Points Normally, to enter or exit a mindscape, one must use a complex ritual called *mindscape door*. While this full ritual's intricacies are beyond discovery using the resources in town and gathered at the Tan Sugi monastery, it should be possible with a little more study to come up with another ritual capable of opening a door into Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape, due to its metaphysically close proximity to Willowshore's mindscape. Perhaps with Heh Shan-Bao's aid, or using references likely still contained within his manor, the full *mindscape door* ritual can be researched, allowing for a full escape from Willowshore's mindscape back into the real world!

8 Research Points The PCs discover the *mindscape shift* ritual (page 75) that allows travel to and from Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape. The PCs earn 120 XP.

SEEKING OUT HEH SHAN-BAO

Once the PCs discover *mindscape shift*, they're free to cast the ritual at any time or place they wish. Until they do so, the plot of "No Breath to Cry" can't progress beyond the regional events scheduled to take place in Chapter 2. The DC of the primary skill check for casting *mindscape shift* is 27, while DC for its secondary skill checks is 22. If the PCs are at least admired by one of Willowshore's factions, that faction can subsidize the cost of casting the ritual up to once per week. If a faction reveres them, that faction can subsidize the cost up to once per day. (If your group features more than four characters, consider increasing the number of targets *mindscape shift* can transport to cover every member of the group rather than forcing the PCs to cast the ritual multiple times to transport the party over.)

The mindscape into which Heh Shan-Bao was transported is a near duplicate of the PCs' version of

Willowshore, except for a few key differences. Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape is much smaller than the one the PCs come from—this mindscape's borders wrap around the boundaries of the town (as shown on the map of Willowshore found on the inside front cover of this book).

Buildings that have been restored or destroyed in the PCs' mindscape aren't altered in Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape—thus, the Cerulean Teahouse remains in ruins here, while Cloud Paper House remains standing. More importantly, Governor Heh's manor remains in its place in downtown Willowshore in this mindscape. Depending on where the PCs cast *mindscape shift*, their transition from their Willowshore into the new mindscape might be impossible to notice or to ignore as the surroundings suddenly appear to fall back into ruin or return to their normal state. Likewise, anyone present in the vicinity when the PCs leave Willowshore might not be there when they arrive in the governor's mindscape.

Note that the PCs must be within Willowshore to successfully use *mindscape shift* to enter Shan-Bao's mindscape. The wards on his manor (page 18) prevent the PCs from appearing within the structure, so if the PCs attempt to cast *mindscape shift* while within the empty lot his manor once stood upon, they'll appear at the edge of the lot once they manifest in the new mindscape.

In fact, as the PCs explore this Willowshore, they soon realize that something seems to be off. The reason is both grim and tragic: when Heh Shan-Bao failed in his ritual and spawned these mindscapes, he was entirely devoured—mind, body, and soul—by Kugaptee. The mindscape the PCs have just entered sprang from the last flickers of the governor's panicked consciousness, as his mind struggles to maintain its individuality before Kugaptee absorbs him entirely.

When the PCs arrive in the governor's mindscape, their impression should be one of a lovely day in their hometown. The early winter air still holds a trace of damp warmth, and crickets can be heard chirping in the grass. The streets smell sweet with incense, wood smoke, and the scent of cooking food. The residents all seem to be in excellent moods and are very friendly whenever the PCs engage with them, though they prioritize their daily routines over conversation with the heroes. In fact, the townsfolk seem a little too friendly—even the most quarrelsome residents are now more playful than argumentative, and their standard jibes lack any true acrimony. Perhaps most unsettling of all is the fact that none of the townsfolk seem to recognize the PCs. Instead, they treat them as welcome but unknown visitors to Willowshore.

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SOFTENED DEATH

While the PCs might feel as physically solid and present in Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape as they did in the Willowshore mindscape, that isn't quite the case. In this mindscape, they're closer to existing as spirits than before, but they won't realize the truth until the end of this chapter. A PC who dies in Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape receives an important clue, though, for rather than dying, that PC's body vanishes from the mindscape and awakens back in the Willowshore mindscape, manifesting there at the same location they were in when mindscape shift was first cast. The PC becomes doomed 1 and has 1 Hit Point upon awakening but is otherwise in the same condition they were before death attempted to take them in the governor's mindscape.

As day progresses toward nightfall, this whole facade begins to thin. Willowshore's residents become stilted, trudging through their daily lives and conversations with glassy stares and vacant answers. Swarms of butterflies land in clusters on random people and the walls of the governor's manor. Small bits of the town, like shop signs or lesser shrines, vanish as if they've been erased from existence. The smells of the streets become unnaturally luscious, leaving those exposed with unquenchable and inappropriate hungers. Governor Heh's "paradise" is being eaten.

At nightfall, all pretense drops. The townsfolk become unresponsive and shuffle to surround the governor's manor, staring hungrily at its doors and windows, though they seem unable to approach the incense and warding fulus that heavily adorn its walls. There they wait, still and silent, until the first light of dawn, at which point they walk back to their homes and go to sleep. A few hours later, they wake, recalling nothing past sundown as if the evening before had never been.

ILL OMENS

While the governor's mindscape plays at normalcy, Kugaptee's evil aura can't be hidden—here, the fiend's influence remains strong. If the PCs take more time wandering and exploring Willowshore, you can use the ominous signs and haunting moments on the following table to unnerve the players.

ILL OMENS IN WILLOWSHORE

d8 Roll	Result
1	Someone bites into a large, ripe persimmon.

The torrent of juice that flows down their mouth and chin smells overwhelmingly sweet but looks exactly like blood; no amount of accusation or persuasion can make the person cognizant of this fact.

2 A PC feels something like a taut strand of hair snap across their cheek while walking forward and takes 1 point of slashing damage. A razor thin cut appears on their face, as if the hair was sharp enough to draw blood.

3 A PC feels something oddly soft brush their skin. A ball of silkworms has fallen from somewhere on high and struck the PC on the way down. The caterpillars writhe helplessly on the ground like maggots, as there are no mulberry trees in winter to feed them.

4 A mysterious black shadow slowly appears on a building that a PC is standing near, as if the walls were being burnt from the inside. An investigation reveals no sign of any fire.

5 A PC hears a sharp crunching noise beneath their feet. An investigation reveals the broken fragments of teeth embedded in their shoes or skin, leaving no lasting damage other than a sense of disquiet.

6 A person minces river fish to prepare them for fermentation into fish paste. The fish have glassy human eyes and prominent human teeth in their mouths.

7 A crimson butterfly emerges from an unexpected nearby location, such as from a cup of tea or out of a PC's mouth when they sneeze. The butterfly flutters around the party for a few rounds before it drops to the ground and melts into a bloodstain.

8 A strangely cold breeze rustles through the area; as it blows across the party, one PC (determined randomly) hears threatening whispers promising death and doom—the voice delivering the whispers seems to be that of a different PC.

YOUR FACE IS MINE

The PCs and Governor Heh aren't the only real occupants of this mindscape—one more set of beings that are fully in control of their actions lurk within its borders. A group of noppera-bos dwell here, manifested from Kugaptee's dead dreams and attracted by the intrusion of a foreign presence. There's one noppera-bo for each PC, and each has the appearance of their associated PC—with the notable exception of the lack of a face. For the moment, these noppera-bos avoid the PCs and don't attack unless they're forced to

in self-defense or the PCs fail at pursuing the governor (page 17). They're more interested in observing the PCs for now, the better to accurately mimic their behavior later on.

Use these noppera-bos to further accentuate the eerie atmosphere of the governor's mindscape. The noppera-bos avoid the PCs for now, but the townsfolk might be confused by them. To the half-real villagers, the PCs and their noppera-bo duplicates are truly identical, which might result in a local greeting a PC with a "Oh welcome back!" or a "Did you forget something?" These interactions should imply that they just met the PC in question even though this encounter might be the PC's first with that particular local.

Creatures: The PCs shouldn't be able to track down and attack their noppera-bo duplicates at this time, but persistent PCs can force an early encounter. If a fight results, nearby mindscape townsfolk react in the same manner that the real townsfolk would if they saw their neighbors attacked by monstrous doubles, but treat the noppera-bos as the "real" people instead of the PCs.

Each noppera-bo impersonator focuses its attacks on the PC it imitates. Full details for noppera-bo impersonators and how to customize them to match your PCs appear on pages 84–85 of this book.

NOPPERA-BO IMPERSONATOR

LEVEL 6

Page 84

Initiative Perception +14

DEAD MAN WALKING MODERATE 7

Though the constant fear, guilt, and torment have left Governor Heh Shan-Bao a traumatized wreck of his former self, he hasn't spent his captivity idle. Unlike the PCs, Heh Shan-Bao understands that he and all of the people of Willowshore died, only to be "reborn" within this mindscape to become trapped between life and death. With this knowledge, Heh Shan-Bao attempts each year to engineer a *transmigrate* ritual that will allow him to escape the mindscape and reincarnate into the living world. From there, he hopes to use his magical knowledge to resurrect the townsfolk, evacuate Willowshore, and then recruit help to perform the ritual to seal Kugaptee more safely.

As with the PCs, since Governor Heh Shan-Bao's memories reset each time his mindscape's yearly cycle resets, he isn't aware that he has repeated these actions 115 times. With more than a year to build his ritual, perhaps he would eventually complete his work on the *transmigrate* ritual, but even then, he would

simply appear in the living world as a ghostly spirit. Fortunately for his own sanity, this truth continues to elude the governor, and when the PCs arrive in his mindscape, he's out gathering supplies for his latest ritual experiments.

Any resident can direct the PCs to the governor—it's no secret that he often makes trips into town to shop or gather supplies and that today his errands have brought him to the Hand of Spring. Alternatively, if the PCs spend an hour exploring Willowshore, you can simply have them spot the governor as he's walking back home from the visit. If you want to prevent having the PCs clash against the manor's wards, feel free to have them automatically encounter the governor on the street as they approach the manor. You might wish to adjust the flavor of some of the obstacles in the chase below if you start this event somewhere else in town.

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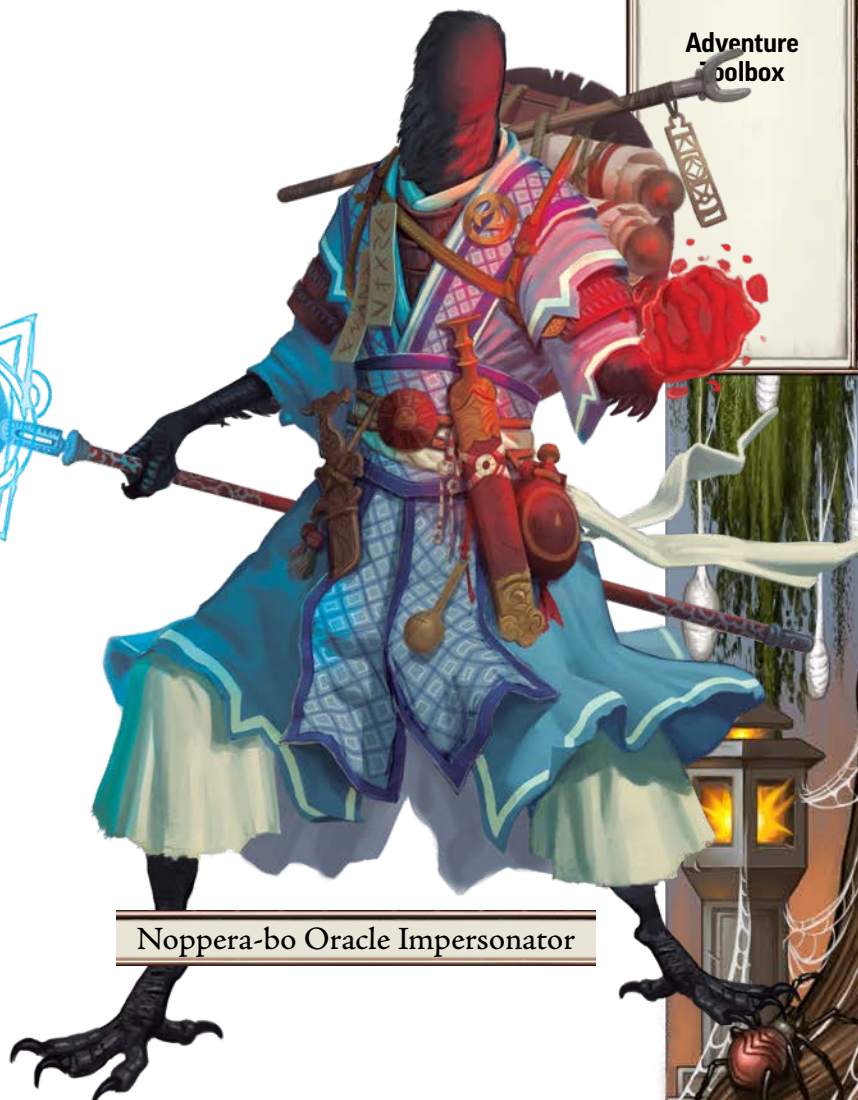
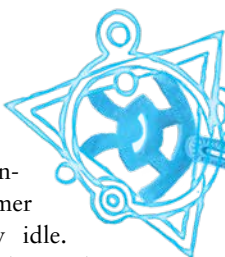
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Noppera-bo Oracle Impersonator



HEAD OFF AT THE PASS

The PCs might deduce Heh Shan-Bao's destination and decide to cut him off there, going directly to his manor to ambush him on arrival. Have each PC attempt a Stealth check against his Perception DC of 25 to surprise the governor. If he spots the PCs lying in wait, he flees again (potentially triggering a new chase) and avoids returning home as long as possible. At dusk, desperation forces him to make an attempt to run into his manor even if the PCs are lying in wait. Allow the PCs a single round to overcome the Last-Ditch Run obstacle. If they fail to overcome it, Shan-Bao slips by them into the manor.

Creatures: To the PCs, Governor Heh is a well-known figure, and while they'll all be able to recognize him on sight, they can immediately tell this man isn't the same man as they remember. Shan-Bao's hair, normally pulled up into a perfect courtly style, now hangs loose and unkempt around his shoulders. His black outer robe is covered in tiny rips and is burned at the edges, looking more like a ragged dressing gown than the fashionable, silver-embroidered garment it originally was. His haunted expression seems to be constantly fighting off frenzied, uncontrollable laughter or an urge to scream in fright.

The governor likewise immediately recognizes the PCs—and quickly realizes they aren't the typical facsimiles of people that inhabit this mindscape. Unfortunately, Governor Heh's immediate reaction is one of paranoia, as he assumes the PCs are something sinister related to Kugaptee. Even more unfortunately, the noppera-bo impersonators who are posing as the heroes are all too happy to reinforce that preconception. The governor immediately attempts to evade the PCs, leading them on a chase throughout town.

This encounter plays out using the chase rules detailed on page 156 of the *Gamemastery Guide*. This is a "chase down" type of chase, in which the PCs pursue the governor. The PCs go second in initiative since they're the pursuers, with Governor Heh starting the chase at obstacle 2: Qi Zhong's Ire. At the end of each round, the governor automatically progresses to the next obstacle without needing to roll any checks to overcome the obstacle. Each round of the chase takes 10 minutes to pass.

If the PCs reach an obstacle before the governor has left it, the chase ends with The Governor Caught. If the

PCs don't manage to catch up to the governor before the end of round 5 of the chase, the chase ends with The Governor Escapes.

1: WHERE IS THE GOVERNOR?

OBSTACLE 7

Chase Points 7; **Overcome** DC 21 Society or DC 19 Willowshore Lore to quickly identify his official robes, DC 23 Stealth to sneak up on him before he notices you, DC 25 Perception to Sense his Motive and intention to slip away

The chase begins as the PCs learn that the governor is currently shopping at the Hand of Spring and attempt to approach without giving themselves away.

2: QI ZHONG'S IRE

OBSTACLE 7

Chase Points 3; **Overcome** DC 21 Religion or Qi Zhong Lore to placate the guardian gecko spirit with the proper prayers, DC 23 Diplomacy to respectfully apologize to Doctor Dami for the sacrilege to the shrine, DC 25 Crafting to quickly repair the damage

If the PCs wildly succeed at the previous obstacle and manage to reach this one on the chase's first round, they'll catch the governor before he realizes they're after him, but if he has moved on, the PCs find the Hand of Spring in chaos, with Doctor Dami in a panic as he and his assistants work to calm down an irate phantom gecko. This creature, a magical guardian of the Hand of Spring, has manifested in a frenzy after Governor Heh slashed at a small paper shrine devoted to Qi Zhong in the clinic's courtyard, knowing this act would create mayhem and hoping it would give him time to get a head start on the race back to his manor.

3: PLOWING THROUGH CROWDS

OBSTACLE 7

Chase Points 4; **Overcome** DC 23 Intimidation to make the merchants step aside and let you pass, DC 25 Acrobatics to balance across the bridge railing where no traffic is in the way, DC 27 Athletics to shove your way through the crowd. Any PC who has a fly Speed, climb Speed, or ability to bypass difficult terrain created by crowds gains a +4 circumstance bonus to these checks.

The governor slips through a throng of haggling merchants who are blocking the way on a bridge that crosses a narrow creek, as if he knew every movement they were going to make in advance. The PCs are met with congested traffic on the bridge and streets, with the merchants and other frustrated travelers forming dense crowds that are difficult to navigate.

4: WHICH WAY DID HE GO?

OBSTACLE 7

Chase Points 4; **Overcome** DC 23 Arcana or Occultism to detect flaws in the illusion, DC 25 Survival to follow the

real governor's trail, DC 27 Perception to notice reality behind the illusion. Any PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Will save to disbelieve the illusion gains a +4 circumstance bonus to these checks. Every PC gains this bonus if the illusion is dispelled.

In a fit of desperation, Governor Heh uses a *scroll of illusory scene* to create multiple versions of himself wandering around downtown Willowshore. These copies move through the area at different intervals, but the rushed illusion is imperfect, and the PCs can use their knowledge of magic to realize what's going on and spot the flaws in the facsimiles.

5: LAST-DITCH RUN

OBSTACLE 7

Chase Points 3; Overcome DC 23 Diplomacy

or Deception to convince the governor that they aren't impostors, DC 25 Athletics to run the governor down, DC 27 Intimidation to force him to stop in his tracks with a yelled threat. A PC who has a Speed of at least 35 gains a +2 circumstance bonus to the Athletics check, while those with a Speed of at least 50 (or who can teleport ahead of him) gain a +4 circumstance bonus to this check.

With the entrance to his manor in sight, the governor breaks into a sprint, desperate to reach the safety of his fulu-warded home.

The Governor Caught

If the PCs catch up to Heh Shan-Bao before he reaches his manor, he slumps and prepares himself for a fight (see his combat encounter on page 19) but doesn't initiate combat. If the PCs don't attack him, he agrees to talk to them but insists they speak in his manor rather than out in the open. He asks for a brush and ink before absentmindedly searching his sleeves and retrieving those items himself, then scrawls a symbol on the back of each PC's hand. He explains that this seal will allow them to enter his manor without fear from the wards he created around his walls. This seal persists as long as the PCs remain in the mindscape or until a PC takes an Interact action to wipe the seal off.

Should the PCs wish to continue exploring before the meeting, Governor Heh tells them to be sure to arrive at his manor before the sun sets, insisting multiple times they don't wash off or smear the ink marking, before retreating to his home.

Reward: If the PCs catch the governor before he reaches his manor, grant them 120 XP.

The Governor Escapes

If Shan-Bao makes it all the way back to his manor, he locks himself in and refuses to exit as long as the PCs remain obviously in town. At this point, the PCs will need to overcome the manor wards to break into the manor or retreat and try once more to contact him in the future.

GHOST WARDS SEVERE 7

The governor understands that things grow more dangerous at night and that Kugaptee's influence is stronger after the sun sets. He also knows that he has become trapped in this mindscape as the result of his failed ritual, but doesn't realize that the people of Willowshore

"survived" in a parallel mindscape. Instead, as each cycle of time plays out, Shan-Bao comes to believe more and more that all that remains of Willowshore's citizens are the "ghosts" that inhabit his mindscape—phantasms who by day ignorantly repeat their daily duties but at night grow angry and vengeful as they march upon his manor.

Tormented by this guilt, every time the cycle repeats, he covers the outer walls of his manor with wards in the form of non-magical fulus and other charms. As each cycle's year plays out, the number of these wards increases, so that by the end of each year the manor is all but mummified in these strips of papers and fluttering prayers. While these individual fulus aren't themselves magic items, the cumulative effect of them draws upon Governor Heh's psyche to protect his manor.

If the PCs manage to bypass this hazard and enter the manor, proceed with *Breaking Into the Manor* on page 18.

Hazard: Beyond preventing the PCs from using *mindscape shift* to enter his manor directly, these wards also protect his manor from the PCs once they arrive in the mindscape. A PC who approaches within 5 feet of the manor finds they can't proceed any further, as if they were physically blocked by an invisible wall when they trigger the magical ward. A PC who remains more than 5 feet from the manor's walls can Investigate the wards as a 10-minute activity, then attempt a DC 25 Religion or Occultism check to Recall Knowledge. On a success, the PC determines these wards are meant to bar the approach of undead, evil spirits, and supernatural creatures from other realms, but has no explanation as to why the wards work against them (other than, perhaps, as visitors



Manor Ward

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GOVERNOR'S MANOR

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

from a different mindscape, these wards interpret the PCs as spirits).

MANOR WARDS

HAZARD 10

UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTAL MAGICAL

Stealth 5

Description Layers of fulus and strips of prayer-printed ribbons are plastered over the walls and entrances to the manor, demarcating a boundary around the mansion where no ghosts or spirits can pass.

Disable DC 35 Arcana, Occultism, or Thievery (master) to compromise the magic to allow entry into the manor, DC 32 Athletics to force your way through the barrier and enter the manor (this doesn't allow other PCs to enter behind you, though!), or *dispel magic* (5th level; counteract DC 28) to counteract the wards

Denied! **Trigger** A creature without a nullifying seal script on their hand approaches within 5 feet of the manor or attempts to damage the manor; **Effect** An explosive blast of magic violently slams against the intruder, who must attempt a DC 33 Reflex save. If the triggering creature isn't adjacent to the manor, it adjusts

the result of this save up by one degree of success.

Critical Success The creature takes 1d12 force damage and is pushed 5 feet away from the manor.

Success The creature takes 2d12+13 force damage and is pushed 5 feet away from the manor.

Failure The creature takes 4d12+16 force damage and is thrown 20 feet back and knocked prone, taking 10 bludgeoning damage from the fall.


Critical Failure As failure, but 100 feet back and knocked prone, taking 50 bludgeoning damage from the fall.

Reset The wards reset automatically, continuing to prevent entry and damaging those attempting to bypass until they're disabled.

Reward: Award the PCs XP for bypassing the hazard if Heh Shan-Bao inks their hands with the seal script that allows them to pass freely through.

BREAKING INTO THE MANOR

If the PCs are unable to get the governor's permission to enter the manor, they could attempt to break into the building to get the critical information they need



once they figure out how to disable or avoid the manor wards entirely (by using *dimension door* to teleport into the manor, for example).

Within the manor, things appear clean and tidy but strangely sterile and empty of life. Governor Heh is the only inhabitant of his manor these days; his servants and guards have simply passed on to their individual afterlives, the few citizens of Willowshore who escaped being trapped in a mindscape.

At this point, any well-reasoned argument or demand by the PCs should automatically succeed at convincing Shan-Bao to sit down and talk, so assuming the PCs don't start a fight, proceed with Know and Despair.

Manor Interior

The governor's manor is made of wood. External walls are thick and solid, but internal walls are made of paper and decorated with scenes of idyllic country life or wilderness landscapes. While the manor had several guards and treasures before the mindscape's formation, today these are missing, leaving the structure feeling almost as if it were a display of some sort, not a home meant to be lived in.

There are no hazards or perils awaiting the PCs in the manor, so allow them to explore as they see fit, using the map on page 18. If they explore during the day, they'll find nothing of interest. After dark, Governor Heh greets them in the courtyard once he notices their arrival, demanding they leave his home at once. He prepares for a fight but won't initiate combat, attacking only if the PCs first attack him, begin to damage his home, or otherwise take any hostile action.

FIGHTING THE GOVERNOR

MODERATE 7

If the PCs engage him in combat, Heh Shan-Bao fights back as best he can. If confronted outside of his manor, his goal is to escape the fight and make it back to the safety of his home, but if attacked in the manor, he fights to the death. That said, Heh Shan-Bao is a scholar, not a fighter. He prefers to keep his distance if forced into a violent conflict. At the start of a fight, he uses as many of his defensive scrolls as possible before using his more offensive scrolls. Only when all of his scrolls have been consumed does he resort to swordplay.

The governor fights to the death, knowing that he'll have another chance to achieve his goal once his mindscape resets. As he dies, though, his soul loses the last grip he has on his own humanity, and he calls out to Kugaptee, gasping out, "I offer thee my soul, Kugaptee! Unbind me from that which was my fate!"

A few moments later, the nindoru's presence reacts as detailed in End of the Dream on page 21.

HEH SHAN-BAO

CREATURE 9

Page 88

Initiative Perception +15

Know and Despair

If the PCs win the governor's trust, he'll agree to speak with them in his manor, offering to escort them there at once if they aren't there already. Governor Heh leads the PCs to the manor's meeting room in the southeast corner, asking them to be seated with him on the cushions that surround one of the long tables. His disheveled appearance and the way he moves without his former precise grace are all the more apparent here in the sterile environment of what looks like an unused meeting room. Despite the lack of any servants in the manor, a spread of food and drink, including hearty meat dishes, hot tea, and plenty of alcohol, waits on the table, a development the governor accepts without surprise (if asked, he shrugs and says, "My servants are gone, but my needs are attended nonetheless in this place," as if that's all that needs to be said—in truth, the mindscape itself keeps him nourished as needed).

After pouring for everyone at the table with shaking hands (perhaps an unexpected display of respect toward the PCs), the sudden, tiny squeak of a small black cat breaks the silence as the feline peeks out from a nest of pillows. The cat's appearance causes the governor to finally speak, his voice now soft and trembling slightly.

"You remember my cat, Black Bean? Such an excellent cat. Such a little cat. You wouldn't be cruel to Black Bean, would you? She would hunt mice for you. She could play with the children."

Heh Shan-Bao then turns to the food, setting out small bowls of rice, black chopsticks plunged upright in the center of all of them. He places them down sharply next to each teacup before abruptly sitting down at his place at the head of the table. The governor's cat squeaks again, scampering from its soft palace into the man's lap, and the governor hesitates before petting the fuzzy creature.

The PCs should automatically recognize that rice with incense sticks or upright chopsticks is meant as an offering for the dead. This, combined with his earlier act of respect by serving tea to the PCs, allows the characters to attempt a DC 25 check to Sense Motive—on a success, they realize the governor is treating them

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not as if they were alive, but as if they were ghosts. The governor is being very blatant in his unspoken message to the PCs, but due to his ruinous state of mind, he has difficulty explaining anything verbally unless asked first. As the conversation progresses, the sun sets (regardless of the time of day when the discussion began), and the PCs can hear the increasing sound of scraping and pounding at the front doors. Heh Shan-Bao ignores it unless the PCs attempt to investigate, at which point he demands the heroes leave it alone unless they want to die. It appears that the governor's wards have somehow weakened, allowing the townsfolk outside to begin trying to break in.

The conversation with the governor should cover most of the talking points below, which includes suggested dialogue for you to read aloud.

Willowshore's Death: If the PCs question the governor's offering of rice, the undead-repelling fulus, or otherwise inquire about the mindscape or how to escape it, Heh Shan-Bao chuckles ruefully before he answers. "Haven't you figured it out? You must have suspected. My fulus, the townsfolk's strange behavior, the impassible barriers around our domain, they all point to the same thing. We are all nothing more than hungry ghosts." If the PCs protest Governor Heh's use of the word "ghost" due to local taboo, the man laughs bleakly, then slams his hand on the table, rattling the teacups. "Don't be so naive! Do you think that friendly greetings will save you from the grave? Do you still avoid whistling or doing laundry at night? Are you scared you'll get offended and eat yourselves? Huh? No... we're all dead. We have no breath to cry now. That time is behind us. We've been dead since the last day of spring. Since Kugaptee killed us all."

Cause of Destruction: "Kugaptee lashed out from his grave beneath the Tan Sugi. What's it they say? 'Cut off the head of an eel and it can still bite.'" The governor sips from his cup of tea, then stares into the liquid for a moment. "Did you know he was down there? Surely you must have at least suspected. Willowshore is a strange place. Who would have thought a backwater village would have such a saintly presence, or such an unfathomable evil?"

Kugaptee's Awakening: If the PCs ask what provoked Kugaptee, Governor Heh pauses a moment, hanging his head in shame before taking a brisk breath to answer: "I did. What a terrible thing I've done. Go

ahead, hate me for it. Let your rage turn you from ghosts into vengeful spirits, and devour all who threaten our town!"

The governor then lapses into unhinged laughter. After calming down (likely not until a PC takes steps to calm him), Heh Shan-Bao sobers and explains, his voice low and ragged.



Heh Shan-Bao

"It was foolish. I wanted to protect Willowshore from Kugaptee, to hide him before the jorogumo found him. An evil as powerful as Kugaptee can't be stopped, only sealed. The more of him that shakes loose, the more he will try to consume us. And so long as that sacred tree remains sickened by his poisons, one of the spider women will be drawn to Kugaptee's grave eventually. They think like me, do you understand? They love powerful servitors


and beautiful people. Well, I'm a sinful man, but I'm a thousand sins short of jorogumo. You never loved me or my empire, but you have no idea what jorogumo will do to you when they arrive.

"I sought to heal the Tan Sugi, to help it to keep the fiend imprisoned, but even in death, Kugaptee was too powerful for me to overcome. I thought I could control him like a mere spirit, but he was beyond what I could have possibly imagined. What a magnificent being! What magnificent evil! A pure-hearted priestess, free of earthly attachments, might have stood a chance. I was nothing to him. He devoured me, every part, inside and out. Do you see now? I am Kugaptee, the beast that slaughtered you all. I am the villain who keeps you imprisoned here!"

The Monsters and Hauntings: "Kugaptee might have killed you, but he's still dead and imprisoned, his tongue lolling hungrily toward your blood. He thinks of nothing but consuming those he has tasted. Those faceless dolls and hissing creatures that plague our town are his first step. When you rashly came here, Kugaptee pulled a tiny piece of your soul away with his teeth and turned it into a servitor. Even now, your doubles hammer at the doors to this manor, eager to take your faces for their own."

We came from a different mindscape than yours: "Nonsense. You've been here all along. Death does things to the mind, you know. It's okay. I understand." Nothing the PCs can say can convince Shan-Bao in this short time they have with him that this mindscape isn't the only one that rose as a result of his failure.

What do we do now? "Why would you ask me? It is too late for forgiveness. We're all dead. In the end, I couldn't protect anything. I failed as a governor. I failed



as a savior. I failed as a human being. Were you hoping I could somehow save you? That my magic could bring you back to life? Or do you want to have it out?"

The PCs now have a choice to either fight the governor or to explain their current situation and ask for his help. Though he can be verbally belligerent due to his stressful situation, Shan-Bao won't fight unless attacked first.

ASKING FOR HELP

Eventually, the PCs should get around to the reason they've come here in the first place—to ask for help in escaping the mindscape they've all been trapped in. Asked directly for aid in escaping, Heh Shan-Bao slumps, then admits something he has been afraid to say this whole time.

"There is a way. We're dead. Kugaptee slew us all. That is to say, I slew us all. But our souls didn't move on to the afterlife. We became trapped here, in cages forged from Kugaptee's dreams and our own fears.

"But with the right tools, any cage can be opened. Alas, those tools lie beyond my reach. I can see them, but I can't use them." His eyes turn hopeful for the first time, and he holds out one gloved hand.

"Perhaps, though... you could finish what I've started? Yes. Yes! You aren't Kugaptee. Your souls and minds remain your own. You can still transmigrate back to the living realm, still reincarnate back from death. Finish what I started! We can all escape if you find the way!"

With that, Governor Heh pulls at the palm of his *glove of storing* and withdraws a thick journal filled with loose pages and scribbled scrolls—the total of his notes on the ritual he hoped would strengthen the Tan Sugi tree as well as those he worked on each mindscape cycle to create a *transmigrate* ritual to escape back to the living world.

Once the governor hands over his notes, he asks one final time, "You won't be cruel to Black Bean, will you? She didn't choose her master. She didn't do anything wrong."

END OF THE DREAM

SEVERE 7

Though the PCs might wish to react to the governor's tragic plea, they won't have time to do so. Once he hands over his journal (or alternatively, once he begs Kugaptee to take him after being defeated in combat), Heh Shan-Bao's body lurches and thrashes as he goes into convulsions. A moment later, his body rips open to the sound of tearing fabric, and a cloud of crimson butterflies erupts from his hollow shell to fill the air around him.

If this takes place in the manor with the backdrop of townsfolk hammering on the doors to the manor, those doors smash inward and the noppera-bo impersonators surge through with a mass of howling, shrieking townsfolk behind them. If this take place elsewhere, then the impersonators and shrieking townsfolk suddenly rush at the PCs from the surroundings, surging out of alleys or from doors or even the woods as appropriate. Kugaptee's remaining influence here in Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape knows that the PCs can achieve what the governor couldn't, and that influence attempts to stop them here.

Creatures: This adventure assumes this fight takes place in the governor's manor, but if it takes place elsewhere, you'll need to provide a map as needed to match the surroundings, perhaps pulling one from a previous city location featured in an earlier Season of Ghosts adventure or repurposing the map on page 18 of this volume.

At this point, the four noppera-bo impersonators step forward to challenge the PCs—the howling and shrieking townsfolk remain behind and cheer on their "heroes," the noppera-bos, but don't take part in the fight. When slain, each of these noppera-bos bursts into a cloud of short-lived red butterflies. As soon as the final one is defeated (or as soon as the PCs are slain), the mindscape around the PCs fades, its purpose for this cycle fulfilled, and they return to the Willowshore mindscape where they cast *mindscape shift* in the first place.

NOPPERA-BO IMPERSONATORS (4) LEVEL 6

Page 84

Initiative Perception +14

Treasure: Heh Shan-Bao's journal (along with his *greater choker of elocution*, +1 *striking longsword*, +1 *resilient padded armor*, and his *glove of storing*) manifest along with the PCs when they return to their own mindscape. The act of returning to this mindscape has transformed the journal as well—it still contains dozens of loose sheets and scrolls (these documents contain the important research the PCs will need in the next chapter, in addition to the formula for *resurrect*), but the journal itself has become a *fulu compendium* (*Pathfinder Secrets of Magic* 161).

Reward: For confronting the governor and obtaining his notes on the *transmigrate* ritual, grant the PCs 120 XP. In addition, if the PCs received Heh Shan-Bao's help willingly, grant the PCs XP as if they'd defeated him in combat.

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Chapter 2: Face-to-Face with Death

As time passes, winter advances on Willowshore. The days grow shorter, and the weather grows colder and crueler. Each week, remember to reduce Hope, Food, and Security Points as detailed on page 6. This chapter details many additional encounters where the PCs might need to spend additional points or, rarely, have a chance to earn a few points back.

While the PCs might not have traveled to Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape in the first week of winter, it's expected they'll do so before the first month passes. As a result, no significant events are scheduled to occur during this adventure's first month—other than those associated with the initial exorcism attempt that begins the adventure. The other events and developments of winter should play out in the order they're presented

in this chapter, starting with the PCs' return from the alternate mindscape.

Winter in Willowshore

When the PCs bring Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape to an end, the governor's soul moves on to become a prisoner of Kugaptee (the PCs will face the repercussions of this occurrence and have a chance to finally save him in the next adventure) while his manor returns to Willowshore, sitting in its lot in the northeastern corner of downtown as if it had never vanished to begin with. The building appears ruined, though. Its doors have been ripped open and the warding fulus that once covered its walls now lie in tatters, allowing anyone to enter the building easily. No villager dares

do so, though, and the PCs are quickly sought out to be made aware of this development.

While there are no more treasures or clues to be discovered in the manor, the first time the PCs return, they hear the sound of plaintive wails coming from within, like a child crying weakly. Should they investigate, they find the sound comes from a little black cat shut inside a battered cupboard. This cat, Black Bean, is frightened, clingy, and starving but otherwise healthy.

EVENT 4. SHINZO'S ANSWERS

Soon after the PCs return to the Willowshore mindscape, they're approached by a familiar face. The mysterious merchant Shinzo and his ever-present raven companion Yix have returned to Willowshore. Full details on Shinzo appear in the first volume of *Season of Ghosts*.

The strange merchant greets the PCs with a wistful smile on his face, and while he's willing to buy and sell as before, he also knows that the PCs have made a significant step toward their self-rescue. As he greets the PCs, he says in a somber tone, "You've uncovered the truth. Congratulations. You don't always. I expect you have many more questions. Now that you know what you are, I am allowed to answer them."

Shinzo will likely provoke questions from the PCs, which he's now able and willing to answer. He suggests retiring to a more comfortable place to chat, such as the Cerulean Teahouse, but is comfortable answering their questions on the spot if the PCs can't wait for explanations.

Who are you? "I am Asahina Shinzo, a reaper of those who subvert the celestial order. Humans call me 'shinigami,' a god of death." PCs who succeed at a DC 26 Religion or Occultism check recognize a shinigami as an incarnation of cosmic law that ensures even supernatural beings can't escape death. They're also aware that Shinzo appears to have developed an unusually human personality for a shinigami—while it isn't unheard of, legends of shinigami who become too close to mortals tend to end in tragedy.

Are we really dead? "Yes, I'm afraid you are, yet you are also alive. You exist trapped between life and death, here in this mindscape, and as long as you do, you cannot move on to the afterlife, yet you can still return to life."

Why didn't you tell us we were dead? "What makes you think I didn't? Unquiet spirits rarely accept the truth of their fates. You forgot my words the second

I spoke them. Only now that you have learned things for yourself can we freely converse."

Why are you here? "For over a hundred years, this town has prayed to every god at every shrine. You begged for understanding. You begged for aid. You begged for mercy," the shinigami replies, his face as hard as marble. The raven atop his wagon caws and flaps its wings, as a low rumble sounds in the distance. "I am your understanding, as now I grant you answers. I am your aid, for I have brought you supplies. I am your mercy, for even though you are dead, you have not yet died."

How long have we been trapped here? "I arrived here seven years after Willowshore died. I've stood vigil here for one hundred and eight years. You have repeated your year a hundred and fifteen times. This may be the last. It may not. That is for you to decide."

What's the living world like now? "Jorogumo rule Shenmen, just as you heard," Shinzo says, after a reluctant pause. "The spider women are not kind. They take their tribute in silver, lumber, and people. Mothers scar the faces of their children, so as to avoid attracting admiration or jealousy. Old men placate the spiders in their houses with crickets, hoping it will buy them one more winter before the monsters take them. Willowshore lies in ruins, as it has for decades, and now a man named Mago Kai seeks to reclaim it, to use it as a base of operations to harvest the region's lumber for his own profit."

If you're a shinigami and we're dead, why haven't you taken us? "The Lady of Graves is patient. Whether you return to resume your lives or go to stand before her in death, all that matters is that the natural order is righted. You'll come to her in the end, either way," Shinzo says, as his raven gives a loud, trilling caw. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Perception check to Sense Motive can tell Shinzo is invested in Willowshore returning to life rather than passing on to death—far more so than an unbiased shinigami should be. It's also clear the shinigami and his raven are at odds with each other about this issue.

Can you help us? "Help? Haven't I been helping you?" Shinzo asks, blinking a few times. He tilts his head to the side, then seems to come to a realization. "My nature is to take life. I cannot grant life to you. I cannot kill without orders, either. But if you give me time, I can bring you information or things you might need from the living world. I can tell you what's going to happen in the future, as well, for some things play



Black Bean

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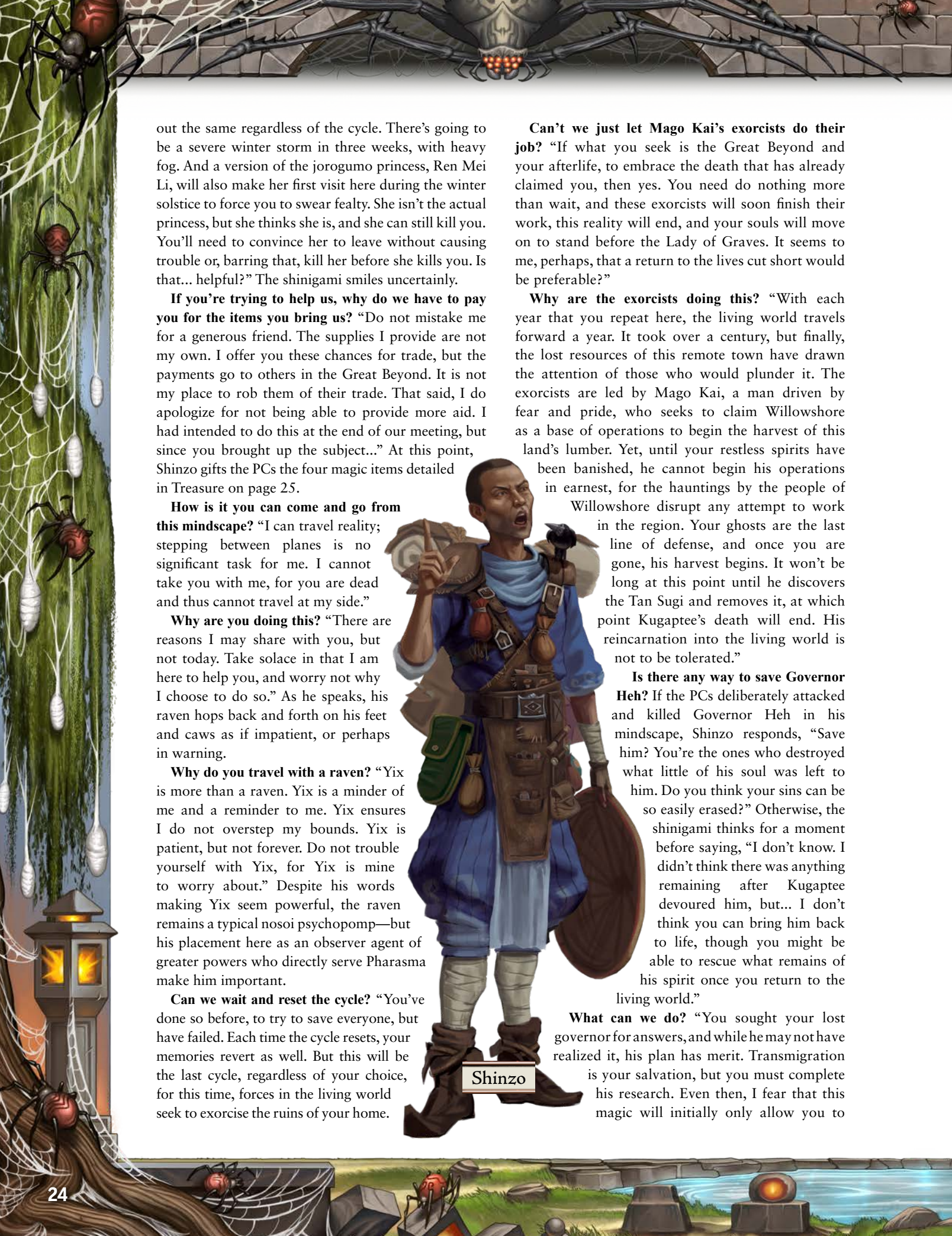
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out the same regardless of the cycle. There's going to be a severe winter storm in three weeks, with heavy fog. And a version of the jorogumo princess, Ren Mei Li, will also make her first visit here during the winter solstice to force you to swear fealty. She isn't the actual princess, but she thinks she is, and she can still kill you. You'll need to convince her to leave without causing trouble or, barring that, kill her before she kills you. Is that... helpful?" The shinigami smiles uncertainly.

If you're trying to help us, why do we have to pay you for the items you bring us? "Do not mistake me for a generous friend. The supplies I provide are not my own. I offer you these chances for trade, but the payments go to others in the Great Beyond. It is not my place to rob them of their trade. That said, I do apologize for not being able to provide more aid. I had intended to do this at the end of our meeting, but since you brought up the subject..." At this point, Shinzo gifts the PCs the four magic items detailed in *Treasure* on page 25.

How is it you can come and go from this mindscape? "I can travel reality; stepping between planes is no significant task for me. I cannot take you with me, for you are dead and thus cannot travel at my side."

Why are you doing this? "There are reasons I may share with you, but not today. Take solace in that I am here to help you, and worry not why I choose to do so." As he speaks, his raven hops back and forth on his feet and caws as if impatient, or perhaps in warning.

Why do you travel with a raven? "Yix is more than a raven. Yix is a minder of me and a reminder to me. Yix ensures I do not overstep my bounds. Yix is patient, but not forever. Do not trouble yourself with Yix, for Yix is mine to worry about." Despite his words making Yix seem powerful, the raven remains a typical nosoi psychopomp—but his placement here as an observer agent of greater powers who directly serve Pharasma make him important.

Can we wait and reset the cycle? "You've done so before, to try to save everyone, but have failed. Each time the cycle resets, your memories revert as well. But this will be the last cycle, regardless of your choice, for this time, forces in the living world seek to exorcise the ruins of your home.


Can't we just let Mago Kai's exorcists do their job? "If what you seek is the Great Beyond and your afterlife, to embrace the death that has already claimed you, then yes. You need do nothing more than wait, and these exorcists will soon finish their work, this reality will end, and your souls will move on to stand before the Lady of Graves. It seems to me, perhaps, that a return to the lives cut short would be preferable?"

Why are the exorcists doing this? "With each year that you repeat here, the living world travels forward a year. It took over a century, but finally, the lost resources of this remote town have drawn the attention of those who would plunder it. The exorcists are led by Mago Kai, a man driven by fear and pride, who seeks to claim Willowshore as a base of operations to begin the harvest of this land's lumber. Yet, until your restless spirits have been banished, he cannot begin his operations in earnest, for the hauntings by the people of Willowshore disrupt any attempt to work in the region. Your ghosts are the last line of defense, and once you are gone, his harvest begins. It won't be long at this point until he discovers the Tan Sugi and removes it, at which point Kugaptee's death will end. His reincarnation into the living world is not to be tolerated."

Is there any way to save Governor Heh? If the PCs deliberately attacked and killed Governor Heh in his mindscape, Shinzo responds, "Save him? You're the ones who destroyed what little of his soul was left to him. Do you think your sins can be so easily erased?" Otherwise, the shinigami thinks for a moment before saying, "I don't know. I didn't think there was anything remaining after Kugaptee devoured him, but... I don't think you can bring him back to life, though you might be able to rescue what remains of his spirit once you return to the living world."

What can we do? "You sought your lost governor for answers, and while he may not have realized it, his plan has merit. Transmigration is your salvation, but you must complete his research. Even then, I fear that this magic will initially only allow you to

Shinzo



manifest as spirits in the living world. Your Eternal Lantern stands still in this reality, but it, like the rest, is a fabrication of thought. In the living realm, Mago Kai has taken this lantern's flame as a trophy. It was the heart of your community, and without it, I fear the most you can do with transmigration is to manifest temporarily as spirits—yet, even as spirits, you should be able to move against him. Return the lantern's flame to Willowshore's ruins, and it will serve as an anchor and a lure. Only then will you and the people of this town be able to find your way back home, and back to life. Alas, I learned little of Mago Kai and his plans—what I've discovered already has strained the limits of what I am allowed to pursue without irrevocable personal repercussions.” (At this, Yix nods his head vigorously and caws loudly once.)

Ending the Meeting: The primary purpose of Shinzo's meeting with the PCs is not only to reveal his role, but to provide the party with a clear path forward. The shinigami remains in town to trade with the PCs before leaving again, but promises to return once every other week to provide new opportunities to shop or to provide help and advice.

Treasure: Either when the PCs ask why he has been charging them money to shop, or at the end of the meeting, Shinzo reveals to the PCs that he has gathered some very special gifts for them—functional replicas of famous magical items once owned by notables from the distant past. These heroic legacies are presented beginning on page 76 of this volume. Shinzo apologizes for not being able to help more and hopes these gifts go some way toward making that apology all the more sincere.

Reward: For discovering that they've repeated this cycle 115 times and learning of Mago Kai, grant the PCs 120 XP.

Current Objectives

The party's main goals for the rest of this chapter are to research and finish Heh Shan-Bao's *transmigrate* ritual in order to return to life, and to protect as many villagers as possible so the villagers can also be returned to life. As Shinzo noted and the PCs might have pieced together themselves, the interference of Mago Kai's exorcists means the PCs can't afford to wait for the cycle to reset for them to try again from a more advantageous position. Should the lumber camp succeed at banishing the mindscape that the heroes and their neighbors currently inhabit, they'll be dead for good. Worse yet, should Kai's workers clear-cut the area and chop down the Tan Sugi, Kugaptee will be able to reincarnate, and the fiend will be unleashed upon Shenmen!

Of course, time doesn't sit still and wait for the PCs, even in death. Over the course of the winter months, various events appear to trouble the residents of Willowshore, and the PCs will have to prepare for and deal with them as they come. Some of these events have set time frames or depend on PC actions, but otherwise, the GM should space them out over the course of the adventure, using them when there's a lull in the main action.

Finally, while the PCs aren't initially aware of this problem, Kai's exorcists have also erected spiritual wards around the region using a holy temple bell. They believe themselves to be quarantining a dangerous supernatural presence in preparation to cleanse it, but these wards also prevent the *transmigrate* ritual from working as intended; when the PCs use the ritual, they return to the living realm as creatures closer to undeath than life—and only temporarily. The PCs must destroy or remove the wards if they wish to return to life, rather than enjoy a pale and fleeting facsimile of it. They're most likely to discover the presence of these wards during the Seance (page 35), but if they don't discover the wards before attempting to revive themselves, the GM should have Shinzo or another supernaturally inclined NPC discover and warn the heroes about the wards.

SPREADING THE NEWS

Should the PCs inform the rest of the villagers that they're dead and actually ghosts, the response is predictably filled with surprise, anguish, and anger. Willowshore's inhabitants prove more mentally resilient than might be expected, however, as after the previous events of the campaign, being dead is simply one more outrage the gods have slung their way. If the PCs have positioned themselves as authorities within the village, some of the more assertive or quarrelsome villagers quickly start to ask what the PCs intend to do about the situation. After all, the heroes brought the problem up, which makes it the heroes' responsibility to fix!

Devout Pharasmin PCs might suggest allowing death to take its natural course instead of seeking to return to life, but this viewpoint proves extremely unpopular among the general public, with some of the villagers threatening to throw anyone with that opinion into the river. Revealing the truth that everyone is dead reduces the party's Hope Points by 2d6 unless they also spread the news that they might be able to find a way to bring everyone back to life using a ritual they recovered from Governor Heh (in which case, the Hope Point reduction is minimized to 2 points).

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Notes on Transmigration

While it's apparent Governor Heh didn't know his mindscape was a smaller version of the larger one Willowshore is trapped in, his research remains valuable and can be summarized as follows.

- The governor's failed attempt to bolster Kugaptee's cage on the last day of spring ended in disaster, killing everyone in town. Governor Heh became trapped in his own small mindscape, while everyone else became trapped in the larger one that includes the region's hinterlands.
- Even though everyone died, they live on now, trapped in this repeating year-long mindscape. Governor Heh's term for a soul forming a new body in a mindscape like this is "transmigration"—a word he also uses interchangeably for the concept of such a person returning to the living world. Transmigration is similar to reincarnation in this definition, save that the new body created for the slain soul isn't a different one, but the same one that soul possessed in its most recent life.
- Governor Heh's formula for a transmute ritual would allow those trapped within this mindscape to use the light shining from Willowshore's Eternal Lantern to travel from this mindscape to the living world, but the notes are incomplete, in part due to his ignorance of the reincarnate ritual, and in part because he was working alone and wasn't particularly well-versed in spirituality. Completing the work will be much easier for someone who knows the reincarnate ritual or is more learned in occult or religious matters.

RITUAL NOTES

Should the truth about Governor Heh's actions be brought to light, the majority of people show open resentment. Heh Shan-Bao was never particularly loved by Willowshore, and they're quick to proclaim the man a fool now. Older villagers, such as Granny Hu, loudly share their thoughts on what the governor should've done instead—though since most of the residents of Willowshore know about the supernatural only through experience and superstition, few of these solutions are actually practical. This news still erodes the townsfolk's trust in their government,

reducing the party's Security Points by 1d4+2. If the PCs credit Governor Heh with a ritual that can return Willowshore to life, however, and they succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy check when doing so, these detractors prove insincere and are quick to forgive (in this case, only 1 Security Point is lost).

If the PCs don't spread this news within a few days of learning it themselves, they risk losing trust among the townsfolk if that news later comes out in public; if this occurs, the PCs lose 2 Reputation Points with each faction each time a significant hidden truth is made public.

Researching Transmigration

The first step toward escaping Willowshore's mindscape and returning to the living world is to read through Governor Heh's notes and journal entries. These notes are written in Common, but reading through them takes 8 hours of work. Once a PC reads the journals and notes, the key elements they learn are summarized in the Ritual Notes sidebar to the left.

The PCs should've discovered the formula for *reincarnate* in the previous adventure, and now armed with these notes and the formula for *resurrect* (even if they can't quite yet learn or cast the ritual themselves), they're in a much better place to complete the governor's work than he ever was. Still, the PCs must spend time continuing to research and develop *transmute* before they can attempt to cast the ritual. To research the ritual, the PCs must spend 8 hours researching the topic, using the following research stat block to track progress.

A PC who knows *reincarnate* or *resurrect* reduces all DCs for these research checks by 2. A PC who knows both rituals reduces all DCs for these research checks by 4.

Note that achieving certain milestones while researching transmigration grants experience points.

TRANSMIGRATION


RESEARCH 8

Solo Investigations You spend the day examining Governor Heh's notes and working out your own theories on how the *transmute* ritual might work; **Maximum RP 3**

Research Checks DC 22 Academia or Library Lore, or DC 24 Arcana or Occultism

Consulting Experts You spend the day discussing the topic with a local expert; the skill check you attempt for this research check varies, depending on the expert you speak to; **Maximum RP 2** per NPC

Research Checks DC 22 Arcana (consulting with Igawa Jubei at Mother's Coil); DC 22 Nature (consulting with the kodama Great Willow north of town); DC 22 Occultism (consulting with Shinzo on one of his visits);



DC 22 Religion (consulting with Elizeth Candora at Her Fluvial Lady of Souls)

Introspection at a Shrine You spend the day in quiet thought or prayer, meditating in the presence of one of Willowshore's many shrines or places of natural beauty; **Maximum RP 3**

Research Checks DC 24 Religion or Occultism

2 Research Points Rituals to bring the dead back to life typically require a dead body (or at least a part of it) to function. In this case, no dead body exists, but Governor Heh's breakthrough idea of using the *Eternal Lantern's* light as a sort of "pathway" between this world and the living realm is a brilliant solution to this problem. Grant the PCs 10 XP.

4 Research Points Including a metaphorical nod and concession toward longevity and life itself is important—feathers from a heron, long believed to live for centuries and capable of "purifying" spirits as they transition to new lives, would make a perfect component for the ritual. The feathers must be gathered from a living bird, who must still be alive when the ritual is cast. Beyond this, the burning of rare incense and specially treated slats of sakaki wood serve as the best components for this ritual, but the process of preparing those sakaki slats is expensive and time consuming (see *Preparing the Sakaki Slats*, right). Even more exciting, hints of a more powerful version of *transmigrate* might allow for many more souls than just the PCs to escape the mindscape. Grant the PCs 20 XP.

6 Research Points Most of Governor Heh's research focused on the concept of sacrifice—in particular, the sacrifice of one life in order to propel another, "worthier" life out of this mindscape purgatory, in which the sacrificed life was ritualistically incinerated in a clay shell within a huge kiln. This was less because of an inborn predilection toward evil on the governor's part and more of a shortcut and a concession due to his lack of knowledge of reincarnation. At this point in the research, though, the PC has an epiphany—by instead placing the person to be transmigrated into such a clay shell and then fired in a huge kiln, the sacrifice of life can be internalized, so that only the target to be transmigrated is affected. Of course, failure to perform the ritual correctly would result in painful (and potentially lethal) burns, but such a risk would be worth it for anyone wishing to avoid having to sacrifice one life for another. The possibility of a greater transmigration ritual is confirmed—and it might even allow the PCs to transmigrate the town's structures into the living world as well to replace the ruins that exist there now. Grant the PCs 30 XP.

8 Research Points The PCs complete the formula for *transmigrate*, a potent ritual that draws much of the power they need for success from the *Eternal Lantern*.

The PCs also know that as long as the *Eternal Lantern* remains unlit in the living world (as revealed to them by Shinzo), they'll only be able to cast the 4th-level version of the ritual, not the 5th-level one that will allow for a more permanent return to the living world. Grant the PCs 60 XP.

Building the Kiln: The PCs must construct a kiln large enough for all of them to be placed in and to be subjected to *transmigrate*. Doing so requires a week's work, an expenditure of 25 gp in resources, and for a character to succeed at a DC 20 Crafting check. If the PCs have the support of Eternal Blaze Ironworks, its owner Yong Wu-Xiu can step in to construct the kiln for them free of charge; pottery is somewhat outside of her skill set, but her knowledge of forges and working with fire allow her to construct a serviceable kiln automatically after a week's work, leaving the PCs free to pursue other downtime activities.

Gathering Heron Feathers: To gather heron feathers from a living heron, a PC must spend a day on the hunt in Willowshore's hinterlands and attempt a DC 20 Survival check. On a success, they net enough feathers to attempt to cast *transmigrate* twice, and with a critical success, they have enough to attempt the ritual six times. If the PCs are supported by Silvermist Lodge or Nine Ear Shrine, their friends at those locations can instead provide these feathers for them as needed for free (as long as they have a day to gather them first).

Preparing the Sakaki Slats: A PC can prepare dozens of sakaki slats, enough to cast the ritual many times over, by soaking them in special oils, but the time required to do so can't be rushed. The oils cost 25 gp (a cost that either of Willowshore's factions can pay if the PCs are at least admired by one of them), and no check is required to prepare them. The process takes about six weeks, which means the earliest the PCs can attempt to cast *transmigrate* is the middle of winter—or perhaps even later if they're late in achieving 4 Research Points on the topic. In this case, consider reducing the time it takes to prepare the slats as needed to at least give the PCs a few weeks to complete Chapter 3.

Winter Events

Regardless of how quickly the PCs learn *transmigrate*, the time needed to prepare the sakaki slats means that they'll need to wait several weeks before making their first attempt to cross over into the living world. During those weeks, though, winter doesn't wait, and as the weeks go by, the town must endure the attrition of hope, food, and security as detailed on page 6 at the start of this adventure.

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In addition to this steady attrition, several additional events take place as winter marches ceaselessly onward. Unlike the previous adventure, where an event took place every week of the season, the events that take place during winter are either scheduled to occur on specific days or are left open to happen at any time. The following timeline summarizes when these 13 events should occur, including those in the previous chapter. Feel free to adjust these dates as needed in your game to account for the ebb and flow of play!

WINTER TIMELINE

The events in this adventure should occur in roughly the following order. Events that aren't keyed to specific days are listed as "Any," but should still take place before those that follow.

Day 1 Event 1: Structural Collapse (page 8), Event 2: Unnatural Uprising (page 10), and Event 3: Tomorrow's Shadows (page 11)

Any The PCs cast *mindscape shift*, visit Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape, and complete Chapter 1.

The day after returning from Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape Event 4: Shinzo's Answers (page 23), and Event 5: Faceless Evil (right) begins; the PCs can start researching *transmigration*

Every 7 days Event 6: Little Gifts (page 29)

Any Event 7: The Fox Ghost (page 29)

Day 10 Event 8: A Lonely Home (page 30)

Any Event 9: The Crane-Wife (page 32)

Day 21 Event 10: The Claylight Festival (page 32); first actual day of winter.

Any Event 11: Nosois' Brunch (page 33)

Any Event 12: The Seance (page 35)

Day 44 This day is the approximate earliest by which the specially prepared sakaki slats the PCs need to cast *transmigrate* as a 4th-level ritual will be ready.

Day 71 Event 13: Interview with a Spider (page 38)

Day 72 New Year's Day; the PCs can begin casting *transmigrate* as a 5th-level ritual at this point.

A good way to run these events is to shift to downtime mode and advance time in a week-by-week format. Each week that passes, adjust Willowshore's attrition as needed, then allow each player to pursue a week-long (or close to it) downtime activity, such as retraining a feat, skill, or class feature; crafting; or earning income. After that, play out any events scheduled to take place during that week with the assumption that these events won't significantly impact the time the PCs spend on a chosen downtime pursuit.

UNEXPECTED TROUBLES

At the start of every week, attempt a DC 16 flat check. On a success, Willowshore faces additional wintery complications. Perhaps someone in town has been eating more than their share, or perhaps decay has spread through some of the food stores. A powerful storm might have done damage to several roofs in town, or sudden rains could've caused some flood damage. Or perhaps rumors of hopelessness and doom have been spreading through town as the citizens begin to realize the gravity of their situation.

If unexpected troubles strike, roll on the following table to determine what takes place and to find out how many additional Preparation Points are lost as a result of the unexpected attrition for the week. A PC can choose to spend their week's downtime to minimize these effects by attempting the indicated skill check (other PCs can take downtime activities to Aid this check). On a critical success, no additional points are lost. On a success, only 1 additional point is lost. On a critical failure, twice as many points are lost. If the PCs use a particularly helpful spell, ritual, or other tactic, you can permit them to increase the result of this check by one degree of success if you like.

UNEXPECTED TROUBLE

Roll	Preparation Point Loss	Minimize with a DC 24...
1-2	1d4 Food Points	Nature or Survival check
3-4	1d4+2 Hope Points	Diplomacy or Performance check
5-6	1d4 Security Points	Athletics or Crafting check

EVENT 5: FACELESS EVIL

MODERATE 8

The governor's manor isn't the only thing that followed the PCs from Governor Heh's mindscape. Even if the PCs slew their noppera-bo impersonators in the previous chapter, more of these disruptive yokai appear in Willowshore to cause trouble after the PCs return. As part of their manifestation, the noppera-bos gain their duplicated PC's face but make sure to operate in parts of town the PCs don't frequent. They initially perform small but spiteful acts, like hiding needles in people's food, insulting NPCs the PCs have befriended, or vandalizing PC-supported locations with paint, before escalating toward murder. Once the PCs catch wind that something is wrong, they need to act quickly to save both their reputations and their fellow villagers.

Creatures: If left to their own devices, the noppera-bos perpetrate an incident every 1d4 days. The PCs are alerted to the noppera-bos' presence the day after the first of these incidents, when an NPC whom the PCs haven't yet befriended (or better yet, one who's become

antagonistic) approaches them angrily, then accuses one of the PCs of “stuffing needles into the dumplings you gave me!” before opening their mouth to show off the uncomfortable wounds they’ve suffered. Without a successful DC 20 Diplomacy check from the accused PC, the NPC goes on to complain about the mean-spirited prank and by the end of the day, the PCs lose 1 Reputation Point from a faction of your choice.

(Keep track of all Reputation Points lost as a result of this event, as the PCs have a good chance of regaining them if they resolve this event well.)

While the residents of Willowshore are initially willing to accept reassurance that the PCs are being framed (enough strange things have happened over the course of the adventure it’s hardly rational to protest), they won’t be placated by this for long. After all, the PCs have been out of the village and have been sticking their noses in strange places, meaning it’s just as likely they’ve been killed and replaced by something horrible—or worse, have secretly fallen to the corruption they’ve been fighting against!

Every 1d4 days, a similar event takes place, along with a corresponding loss of 1 Reputation Point. When the noppera-bo impersonators perform their 5th “prank,” a minor NPC dies as a result (reduce Willowshore’s population by 1), giving them the taste for violence. Every following prank results in a new murder. Every murder that takes place results in a loss of 3 Reputation Points from both factions.

Once per day, a PC can spend a few hours (in addition to any weekly downtime activity they’re pursuing) Investigating this mystery by attempting a secret DC 22 Willowshore Lore, DC 24 Society, or DC 26 Perception check. On a success, they confirm that impersonators have infiltrated the town, and on a critical success, the noppera-bos don’t immediately notice the PCs, giving them time to set up an ambush or lure a noppera-bo away from the others. Faced with the end of their fun, the impersonators fight to the death attempting to eliminate the PCs, gathering as a group if they can before attacking the party.

NOPPERA-BO IMPERSONATORS (4)

LEVEL 6

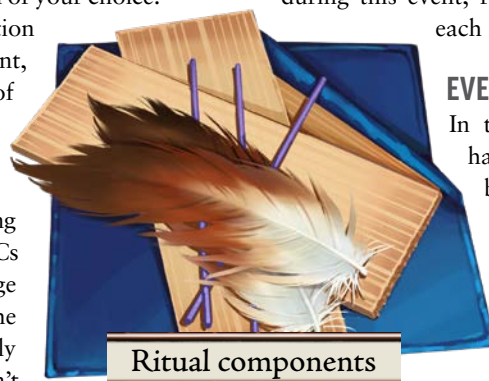
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Initiative Perception +14

Reward: If the PCs publicly reveal the nature of their impersonators, the unsettling revelation costs

the party 1 Hope Point (or 1d6 Hope Points if there has been at least one murder). All Reputation Points they lose as a result of this event are restored if no townsfolk were murdered. Each murder that took place lowers the total Reputation Points restored in this manner by 2.

Grant the PCs 40 XP if no townsfolk were murdered during this event; reduce this XP reward by 10 for each murdered local.



Ritual components

EVENT 6: LITTLE GIFTS

In the previous adventure, the PCs had a chance to befriend the bakeneko Yami. If this friendship persists, Yami continues to bring little gifts to favored PCs. Yami tolerates the presence of Black Bean, should the heroes bring Governor Heh’s cat to the teahouse with them, but the

bakeneko tends to bully the smaller cat by smacking Black Bean on the head.

MORE OF YAMI’S GIFTS

Roll	Result
1	A partially chewed origami crane.
2	A partially eaten sparrow (possibly still alive).
3	A squished lemon.
4	A fresh dumpling from Mama Bao’s.
5	A <i>grim trophy talisman</i> that appears to be a still-bloody human ear.*
6	A waterproof bag of saffron worth 100 gp.*
7	A greater smokestick.*
8	A <i>greater hat of disguise</i> currently taking the form of a zhanjiao putou (a black hat with two long, stiff, wing-like flaps).*

*This gift can only be rolled once; treat further rolls of this gift as 1 platinum coin.

EVENT 7: THE FOX GHOST

TRIVIAL 8

Hunting and foraging is a sparse business in winter, yet still, a few locals continue to ply their trades even as the days grow crueler. In the lead-up to this encounter, some hunters and foragers find several of their traps and blinds have been ripped open and partially burned. Whether the PCs choose to investigate or stumble upon the scene of the crime while traveling, they can catch the culprit in the act in this encounter.

Creature: The culprit appears to be a half-feral human girl clad in a singed dress and clutching a burned fox kit in her arms. She partially burns anything she touches, which is what allowed her to rip open the traps and singe the local trees. This girl

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is Rin, a kitsune ghost who accidentally stumbled into Willowshore's mindscape and became trapped here many cycles ago. She and her baby brother Yuu died when a different human trapper village, convinced the local foxes were the cause of some supernatural misfortune, burned down her mountain home to kill all of the kitsune who lived there.

Due to this trauma, Rin hates human trappers and humans in general. Her attitude begins at unfriendly, as she assumes the PCs will be mad and punish her for destroying the traps. She runs when caught unless the PCs succeed at a DC 27 Diplomacy check to stop her. Kitsune who reveal themselves as such receive a +2 circumstance bonus to this check. If the PCs attack her, threaten her, or critically fail the Diplomacy check, she attempts to inflict her foxfire curse on the offender and then flees. A PC can track Rin down again by following the small singe marks she can't help but leave in passing by succeeding at a DC 28 Survival check.

If the PCs adjust Rin's attitude to indifferent, she's willing to answer questions in between her sobs, though she knows very little outside of her own tragic circumstances. She's also willing to stay in a place where the PCs can find her again but refuses to enter Willowshore unless her attitude is increased to friendly. If she does become friendly, Rin is most often found playing with local youths, alternating between screaming and throwing things at them or helping them with their nighttime pranks. If the PCs ask Rin how they can help her rest, she shrugs and says, "As soon as I can go, I shall, but this place keeps me here for now." When the PCs *transmigrate* Willowshore at the end of the adventure, they'll be able to help Rin further—see Concluding the Adventure on page 61.

RIN

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE CN SMALL GHOST INCORPOREAL KITSUNE SPIRIT UNDEAD

Female kitsune ghost (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 166)

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Common

Skills Stealth +18, Survival +17

Str -5, **Dex** +6, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +6

Mindscape Bound Rin is bound to the Willowshore

mindscape and can travel anywhere within its borders.

AC 26; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +19, **Will** +13

HP 100, negative healing, rejuvenation; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 10 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ burning touch +18 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d8+12 fire plus foxfire curse

Change Shape (divine, polymorph, transmutation, concentrate) Rin transforms into the tailless form of a specific small human. The tailless form can't be altered and resembles her fox-like humanoid form.

Foxfire Curse (curse, fire, evocation, primal) A creature damaged by Rin's burning touch must succeed at a DC 25 Will save or become affected by this curse. During a

cursed creature's moments of triumph, they become limned with spectral flames that punish their allies.

Whenever the cursed creature scores a critical hit, each ally within their reach takes 1d6 persistent fire damage as the cursed creature's hubris sears them.

Treasure: If the PCs increase Rin's attitude to friendly, the ghost thanks the PCs for their kindness and offers them a part of herself as reward—she reaches down to pick up a flat stone off the ground, the stone floating and then igniting with fire in her incorporeal hand. She drops the floating burning stone into a PC's hand, whereupon it instantly cools—revealing itself to be a *runestone* now etched with a *flaming weapon rune*. Rin can perform this trick only once.

Reward: If the PCs increase Rin's attitude to friendly, grant them 120 XP. If she's allowed to come to Willowshore to live, the locals are initially wary; this costs 1d4 Hope Points. Over time, their admiration of the tenacious young ghost and her playful antics causes the locals to realize not all ghosts are cruel.

At the start of each following week when you calculate the town's attrition, Willowshore gains 1 Hope Point.


EVENT 8: A LONELY HOME

TRIVIAL 8

A few weeks after the harrowing events at Cloud



Rin



Paper House on the 10th day of the adventure, the PCs are approached by a nervous-looking Aruka—the kitsune woman who they rescued during the building’s collapse at the start of this adventure. (If Aruka didn’t survive, substitute another NPC the PCs have grown fond of, or even the town’s elder.) She has recovered from her ordeal at the paper mill but worries about her boss, Myna Kawaka, explaining that the structural damage to the building also destroyed Kawaka’s personal quarters on an upper floor. While the building is being repaired, Kawaka relocated to his humble and traditional home on the outskirts of town—a small structure that was left unoccupied after his parents died and he moved into accommodations in the paper mill.

Aruka says that Kawaka hasn’t left that house in a few days, and that upon investigating, she and a few other paper mill employees found him sitting in the middle of the ruined building, shivering from exposure and apparently delirious. When Aruka stepped into the house to try to drag him out to get him to shelter, he fought back and cried out, “No! I need to stay here, at home, where I’ve always belonged!” When bits of rubble and debris began to fly about the place, she knew the building was actually haunted and, with the aid of a few coworkers, managed to drag Kawaka to safety. Since then, the guild leader has been uncommunicative and sullen; he’s safe now in Aruka’s guest room, but she and the other workers fear that Kawaka’s home is infested with an evil spirit. Aruka’s coworkers were ready to burn the ruin down, but she managed to prevent this by promising to ask the PCs for help; she would rather not destroy her boss’s family home if there’s another possible solution.

Aruka asks the PCs to investigate the situation and find out if they can convince the “evil spirit” to let Kawaka go. The tengu’s family home is located in the woods south of town, next to a mostly collapsed barn. Kawaka’s parents initially hoped to start a farm here but never got that venture off the ground, and in the decades since, the place has been abandoned; even the footpath leading to the clearing is overgrown. Aruka offers to escort the PCs to the location if they wish, but won’t enter the clearing in which the decrepit house stands.

Creature: Kawaka’s family home is indeed haunted, but not by a ghost. The actual culprit is a lonely creature known as a silsye. Named Tenon, this lurking spirit moved into the house after its long run as the Myna family home ended when Kawaka, the only child, moved out a few months after his parents’ death years ago. Until Kawaka’s recent return, Tenon lived alone in the slowly crumbling ruin.

This isn’t intended to be a combat encounter—finding Tenon and killing him solves the problem, but it isn’t the best potential solution. Tenon is currently hiding in the building’s ruined walls, frustrated that his guest has been taken away. As soon as the PCs enter, he uses Hallucinatory Home to try to trap all of the PCs inside. If that fails, he steps out of the walls to tearfully ask the PCs to stay here with him—he’s so lonely but also frightened that in a few years, this home might fully crumble apart, and with it, so shall his life. Tenon won’t attack unless provoked, but fights to the death in that case—only to rejuvenate a few days later.

If the PCs speak to him, Tenon explains the situation he faces: he’s bound to this home, and if no one lives here with him, he’ll be lonely forever. Worse, once the home is finally destroyed by erosion and neglect, he’ll die. He only wants someone to come live in the home and repair it so that its tradition as a place of rest and safety can continue. He hopes the PCs can help him solve this problem, but if they seem unable or unwilling, he cries out in despair and attacks—whether this causes the PCs to flee or kill him is irrelevant, since even if they slay him, he’ll just rejuvenate in a few days.

One simple solution is for a PC to commit to living in the farmhouse and repairing it—if a PC volunteers for this responsibility, adjust the result of the following activity up by one degree of success.

SOLVING TENON’S PROBLEM

EXPLORATION SECRET

You spend the day considering a solution to Tenon’s problem, speaking to Kawaka and others in town to try to recruit assistance, and then report the results of your work back to Tenon. Attempt a DC 22 Diplomacy check, a DC 24 Willowshore Lore check, or a DC 24 Society check. This activity can only be attempted once, but other PCs can Aid this attempt by succeeding at a DC 20 Diplomacy, Society, or Willowshore Lore check.

Critical Success The PCs—working with Kawaka, Old Matsuki, and several artisans in town—manage to recruit enough support to begin work on shoring up the old farmhouse immediately, ensuring that it will survive the winter. Kawaka and other townsfolk agree to visit Tenon regularly to keep him from getting lonely until a new family can be found to live in the house. Many townsfolk pitch in to help shore up and protect the building from the winter storms yet to come, at no cost to the PCs or the town’s security. The PCs earn 120 XP and 1d4+1 Hope Points.

Success As critical success, but the PCs must either spend 400 gp or the town must expend 2 Security Points to ensure the house is protected from the coming winter. The PCs earn 80 XP and 1 Hope Point.

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Failure As success, but no one in town is interested in spending time with a potentially dangerous and unpredictable spirit, including Kawaka. A PC can commit to keeping Tenon company through the winter by making several lengthy visits to the house as their weekly downtime activity; however, if no PC performs this in a week, his despair takes over. In a fit of frustration, Tenon accidentally damages the slipshod repair work on the house, causing the house to collapse into ruins, killing Tenon permanently. If this occurs, the tragic news costs 1 Hope Point. The PCs earn 40 XP.

Critical Failure As failure, but a local offers to keep Tenon company. This local should be someone who recently lost a loved one or friend to a vanishing or death in town—choose an NPC who fits your game's story. Unfortunately, this NPC is only volunteering out of a misplaced sense of obligation and has been more affected by their grief than anyone (including themselves) realizes. This NPC's grief compounds with Tenon's, forming a destructive cycle that eventually compels the NPC to burn the house down while they're inside. Reduce Willowshore's population by 1; worse, the tragic end costs 1d4+1 Hope Points.

TENON

CREATURE 6

Male silsyché (page 87)

Initiative Stealth +15

Treasure: If the PCs manage to befriend Tenon, the silsyché reveals something that not even Kawaka knows—hidden in a hollow below one of the ruined house's floorboards is his mother's +1 *thundering shortbow*, a weapon he'd assumed was lost. After holding the shortbow for a moment, Kawaka hands it to the PCs, saying he would be honored if they took this weapon as a gift from him and that his mother would approve of it being in such heroic hands.

EVENT 9. THE CRANE-WIFE

Even if Willowshore's food stores are robust, there are those in town who aren't satisfied with the options available. When one such local hunter encounters a large crane, they kill the bird for food and return home to cook an extravagant meal. Word spreads, and while some in Willowshore might be jealous of this hunter's unexpected bounty, a larger reaction is one of worry. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Willowshore Lore or a DC 20 Society check understands why, for the stories say that cranes mate for life. With a critical success at this check, the PC recalls an old story of a hunter who killed a crane in the winter, only to be visited by a grieving spouse who asks to be killed as well.

Sure enough, the day after the hunter's meal, a newcomer arrives in Willowshore—an unusual event for a town that, for the past half year, has been cut off from the outside world. No one recognizes the strange, beautiful woman as she strides through town, sobbing and calling out one of the PCs' names. Choose the PC from the group who has the strongest ties to the natural world or who you feel is the most compassionate. This strange woman seeks that PC out, then reveals the heartbreaking fact that their husband was slain and they're here to seek death as well. The nameless woman is quiet and polite in her sorrow but refuses to leave until someone kills her or she starves to death. Curiously, the crane-wife doesn't become a crane upon death, calling into question whether the "crane" the hunter captured and ate was a crane in the first place.

This encounter isn't meant to be a combat, but a moral quandary for the PCs to face. The crane-wife could be nothing more than a thoughtform manifested in the mindscape, but this time from the collective despair and worry of the townsfolk rather than from Kugaptee. She could just as easily be a supernatural creature like a naiad or nixie. She could even be someone from Willowshore with a grudge against the hunter who has engineered a complex prank in poor taste with the aid of a *hat of disguise*. Regardless, it's how the PCs handle this complex situation that matters.

This encounter is resolved via Victory Points (*Gamemastery Guide* 148). Once the PCs learn of the situation, ask them each how they wish to handle the crane-wife's request. In most cases, Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation make great options; looking deep into local folklore for advice could suggest Society or Willowshore Lore, while a solution that draws upon knowledge of primal magic would use Nature. Each PC can attempt one skill check to earn Victory Points, to a maximum of four attempts.

Reward: If the PCs earn 5 or more Victory Points, their solution is viewed by Willowshore as the right call, regardless of the option they went with, and the town understands; in this case, the PCs earn 120 XP. If the PCs earn 2 to 4 Victory Points, many in Willowshore are unsettled by the event; the PCs earn 60 XP and lose 1 Hope Point. If the PCs earn 1 or fewer Victory Points, the townsfolk are depressed and haunted by the outcome; the PCs earn no XP and lose 1d4+1 Hope Points.

EVENT 10: THE CLAYLIGHT FESTIVAL

Although the first three weeks of this adventure feature stark weather and the looming season, it isn't

until the 21st day of the month that winter arrives with the solstice. As this day nears, **Ouh Ba-Ming** (N female human priest 3), caretaker of Nine Ear Shrine, approaches the PCs with a proposition. Last season's First Long Night festival did wonders for the town's morale, and even though things seem grim and somber, she suggests that Willowshore participate in another old tradition to celebrate the first day of winter: the Claylight Festival.

Claylight is a much less involved festival than First Long Night but still requires an entire day. On this first true day of winter, the townsfolk create small clay huts and set them out in the fields or along streets with a small light inside. Once the fields are lit up with the tiny huts, the residents grill vegetables over fires and pray for good fortune to come. Ouh Ba-Ming would like at least one PC to take part in preparing for the festival on the week leading up to the solstice. On this week, each PC who wishes to do so must devote their downtime activity that week to that goal, then attempt either a DC 25 Crafting check or a DC 24 Religion check. Villagers come by over the course of the festivities to either praise or mock the heroes' efforts, depending on the results of their checks.

Treasure: While the Claylight Festival might seem like a simple diversion, there are benefits for participating and pleasing the local spirits. For each PC who succeeded at participating in the festival, they find a *moderate healing potion* (to a maximum of four potions) left anonymously on the front porch of the Cerulean Teahouse the next morning.

Reward: If at least one PC succeeds at their skill check to prepare for the Claylight Festival, their efforts are appreciated: Willowshore gains 1 Hope Point, and the PCs gain 80 XP. If all of the PCs take part in these preparations, these awards are increased to 2 Hope Points and 120 XP, as long as at least one PC succeeds at the check. If no PC takes part, the festival is a failure and Willowshore loses 1d4 Hope Points.

EVENT 11: NOSOIS' BRUNCH

MODERATE 8

Before now, the only psychopomp to visit the Willowshore mindscape regularly was Shinzo's nosoi watcher, Yix, but after the PCs return at the end of Chapter 1, four more psychopomps come to visit. These four quickly disperse into the town before Shinzo meets with the PCs, then spend several days observing and waiting, during which their presence causes local flocks of sparrows to behave strangely. Whenever a particularly dangerous event takes place, or on days when townsfolk perish, the sparrows grow particularly loud and agitated.

Creatures: The four nosois each appear as strange crows with glowing green eyes. They never quite take part in the sparrows' flocking but are always nearby. Sightings of these eerie birds swiftly increase, and it doesn't take long before the townsfolk interpret them as a terrible omen, since four is an unlucky number in Shenmen.

The four nosois are named Yamaguchi, Sakaguchi, Iguchi, and Noguchi. They are Yix's professional colleagues and are likewise aware of Shinzo's involvement with the mindscape that encapsulates Willowshore. Unlike Shinzo (and by extension Yix), these four nosois have no particular interest in saving the PCs and their fellow villagers, and they strongly feel that Shinzo has become biased toward mortals in a way that's unbecoming for an arbiter of death. The fact that Shinzo failed to assist Mago Kai's exorcists and



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SWEETEST SOLSTICE

In the previous adventure, the PCs might have discovered and learned a ritual called *sweetest solstice*, which can only be cast during the winter solstice. If the PCs learn this ritual, they can include it in the Claylight Festival.

A critical success at casting *sweetest solstice* grants 4 Food Points.

A success at the ritual grants 1 Food Point.

A critical failure poisons the town. This costs 2d6 Preparation Points, at least half of which must be subtracted from Hope Points, with the remainder being subtracted how the PCs wish from Hope, Food, or Security Points.

instead continues to aid the PCs was the final straw for the nosoio. While they aren't technically authorized by Pharasma to interfere, the bureaucratic psychopomps have begun scheming among themselves to help banish the ghostly mindscape and file the anomaly of Willowshore away in their resolved incident records.

When the four nosoio arrive in Willowshore, their first order of business is to observe the area and its residents to better devise an effective plan later down the road. You can use these four nosoio to add an eerie atmosphere to scenes throughout this adventure. The nosoio don't interfere in events unless presented with an opportunity too tempting to pass up (such as a near-certain chance to help kill a nindoru), preferring to keep a safe distance away from anything that might be dangerous. If the PCs track down the nosoio and confront them in combat, the psychopomps flee at once, abandoning the mindscape entirely the next time Shinzo leaves—this counts as critically failing the following social encounter.

NOSOI PSYCHOPOMPS (4)

Pathfinder Bestiary 270

Initiative Perception +6

CREATURE 1

Tea with the Nosoio

A few days after winter officially begins on the 21st day of the adventure (and assuming the PCs haven't chased them off), the four nosoio approach the PCs at the Cerulean Teahouse, having become more sympathetic to the villagers' struggle. The nosoio still feel the proper course of action is to resolve the unnatural mindscape as fast as possible, however, and have come to believe that the best method of doing so is to aid Mago Kai's exorcists. After some internal deliberation, the psychopomps have decided

to approach the PCs to see what the heroes have to say for themselves first—and to fill their stomachs with sweets and tea while doing so. The nosoio can be slightly dismissive as customers, considering the PCs to be in blatant violation of divine law. Despite their demeanor, treating the psychopomps well can net the heroes information and possible favors down the line.

Entertaining the obnoxious birds is a multi-pronged affair. Perform the following steps in order, but allow the PCs to split the labor between themselves as they see fit. Failings in one area can be compensated for by excelling in another.

Step 1: One PC must prepare the tea powder or leaves with a successful DC 22 Tea Lore or DC 24 Crafting check. Other PCs can Aid this check with a Tea Lore or Crafting check or with Athletics (representing that character grinding the tea leaves into fine powder before the ceremony starts).

Step 2: In addition to the usual ritual meal and sweets, the nosoio demand a mountain of sweet mochi. One PC must prepare this treat, either by pounding the cooked rice with a DC 22 Athletics check or preparing the meal with a DC 24 Crafting check; other PCs can Aid this check.

Step 3: The ceremony should be performed flawlessly by a character who succeeds at a DC 22 Tea Lore or DC 24 Society check; other PCs can Aid this check.

Step 4: Despite the nosoio's own lack of etiquette, decorum must be kept on the hosts' side. One of the participating PCs must attempt a DC 24 Deception or Diplomacy check; other PCs can Aid this check only with Diplomacy.

Determine the Results: Total the PCs' successes from these four checks, awarding an extra success for each critical success and deducting one for each critical failure.

1 or fewer successes: The nosoio are so offended that they leave without a word. In the final chapter, they aid the exorcists in repelling the PCs' ghostly incursion (area C9).

2 or 3 successes: The PCs fail to impress the nosoio with their lackluster ceremony. The birds simply lose interest and depart Willowshore—the situation doesn't become notably worse, but the heroes don't gain anything for their efforts either.

4 or 5 successes: The PCs present a successful tea ceremony and the nosoio relax enough to shamelessly gossip among themselves and to their hosts. They spend much of their early conversation speaking about Shinzo, loudly

opining that the shinigami is too soft and indulgent toward the dead. They also gleefully inform the PCs that Shinzo is still being punished for an infraction against Pharasma and that his punishment prevents him from directly interfering with the fate of mortals. Each nosoi confidently declares they know what Shinzo did to offend the Lady of Graves, but they all have a completely different story—one claims that Shinzo abused his powers for his own benefit, while others insist he spared a mortal life he shouldn't have, let a powerful fiend escape his grasp, or fell in love with a human.

At the end of the ceremony, the nosois pay the PCs in exchange for the tea (see *Treasure* below) and promise to trouble the PCs no further, so long as the residents of Willowshore don't further offend Pharasma.

6 or more successes: The PCs present a critically successful tea ceremony. The nosois gossip and pay as detailed above for a successful tea ceremony, but are also so pleased they offer to help out later when they have the chance, suggesting the PCs “take the time to purify themselves at any shrine of Pharasma they might encounter, should they find themselves in the living world.” This is a reference to an opportunity for unexpected aid in area C9 of Karahai.

Treasure: If the PCs achieve four or more successes while serving tea to the nosois, the psychopomps argue for a few minutes among themselves over which one of them should “pay the bill,” with each loudly proclaiming that they'll cover it. They finally compromise by deciding to split the payment, then argue about the specifics of who should pay what. Finally, they rifle through their feathers, producing a pile of trinkets as compensation. These items consist of a *gallows tooth*, a *jade bauble*, a silver and sapphire ring worth 800 gp, and a *runestone* etched with a *frost weapon rune*.

Reward: If the PCs achieve four or more successes when entertaining the nosois, grant them 120 XP. If they achieve fewer than that but still have at least 1 success, grant them 60 XP.

EVENT 12: THE SEANCE

MODERATE 8

When the hauntings proved to be more tenacious and powerful than Mago Kai's exorcists expected (as a result of the PCs fighting back from within the mindscape), they turned to a less aggressive plan. About a month after their first failed attempt to drive off the spirits, they now hope to perform a seance to communicate with them.

This event should take place at some time before the PCs begin Chapter 3 since this event gives the party their first real chance to learn about what to expect when they transmigrate.

Creatures: Confounded at their setbacks (caused by the PCs), Mago Kai's exorcists return to Willowshore's ruins and engage in a seance to get some answers. Senior exorcist Cao Chen leads the ceremony and is joined by two of his assistants, Pan Fenfang and Sha “Shagua” Guanghao. The priests perform the seance in Karahai's shrine (area C11).

When the seance begins, the PCs suddenly feel themselves yanked away through layers of reality, as if flying at great speed through Willowshore, the forest, and then into a small windowless room that's dimly lit by burning torches and mostly occupied by a massive bronze temple bell that hangs from the ceiling. Five small cages containing colorful birds are set in a large circle, and a number of scrolls equal to the number of PCs lay on the ground inside this circle. Flickering but strangely familiar-looking light radiates down from the bell above to illuminate those scrolls, containing the PCs within the circle. The PCs can't take any actions other than those mentioned below during this encounter.

Allow each PC to first attempt a DC 24 Perception check; those who succeed realize they've been pulled east from Willowshore into a chamber somewhere within the coastal fortress of Karahai. Next, each PC can attempt a DC 24 Religion or Occultism check to

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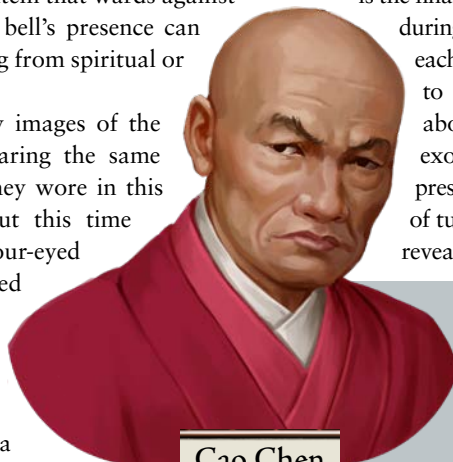
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Recall Knowledge to note that they've appeared in the center of a type of seance, and that the temple bell above them is a powerful holy item that wards against ghosts. They can also tell the bell's presence can interfere with any magic coming from spiritual or undead sources.

A moment later, the ghostly images of the three priests appear, each wearing the same black-sleeved crimson robes they wore in this adventure's first encounter, but this time without the frightening four-eyed masks. Cao Chen is a middle-aged bald human man, Fenfang is a middle-aged human woman who bears an old scar on her right cheek, and Guanghao is a young human man with a well-trimmed beard.



Cao Chen

Running the Seance

The seance plays out using the influence subsystem (*Gamemastery Guide* 151), with each round lasting for a few minutes. A round begins with Chen asking a question of the PCs (who, to him, appear as vague shimmering forms that are indistinguishable from one another). Each round, follow these steps.

Step 1: Chen asks that round's question (listed in Seance Questions, right), and a randomly determined PC is compelled to reply (once selected, that PC shouldn't be selected on future rounds). That PC must attempt a DC 26 Will save. On a success, any PC in the group can reply to the question however they want, but on a failure, the targeted PC must reply to the question as truthfully as they can. If a PC is compelled to reply truthfully, ask that player how they would like to answer, then adjust that answer to match, thematically, the compelled answers listed further below.

If the PCs mention Kugaptee in any of their answers, Chen becomes pensive, considering the scope of the problem. It's clear that he doesn't disbelieve the PCs, but since his inclination is to banish both the PCs and Kugaptee, rather than helping the PCs somehow restore themselves to life, this information won't change the PCs' potential fate.

If a PC isn't compelled to answer, one PC can attempt to answer with a DC 24 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check (the other PCs can Aid this check) to determine the result of their reply. On a success, all checks attempted to Influence and Discover that round during step 2 gain a +2 status bonus (or a +4 status bonus on a critical success). On a critical failure, these checks instead take a -2 status penalty.

Step 2: The priests spend a few moments chanting and focusing before moving on to the next question (or if this is the final round, focusing on ending the seance), during which the PCs realize they can sense each priest's thoughts. Each PC can attempt to Influence or Discover information about the priest of their choice. When an exorcist is successfully Influenced, the PCs' presence causes them to say something out of turn or take an unanticipated action that reveals more to the PCs than they intend.

SEANCE QUESTIONS

The four questions the priests ask the PCs during the seance are as follows—note that what and how the PCs reply won't change the course of this adventure much, but they can give the PCs advantages when they turn the tables on the priests during step 2 following each question.

Round 1: "Who are you?" A PC compelled to answer truthfully must give their name and the names of the other PCs, inform the exorcists of each of their roles in the party, and reveal that they're citizens of Willowshore.

Round 2: "What do you want?" A PC compelled to answer truthfully must say something to the effect of "We seek to come back to life." Allow the PC to add more to this answer if they wish. They can use this opportunity to mention they seek to oppose Kugaptee's escape from death.

Round 3: "Why haven't you moved on?" A compelled PC must answer, "We cannot; we are trapped here," along with any additional clarifications about the dangers they've been facing in the mindscape, as long as they're truthful to the best of the PCs' knowledge. A PC can mention that Kugaptee's will has trapped them.

Round 4: "How did you die?" A compelled PC reveals, "We were slain when our governor failed at a ritual to imprison the fiend Kugaptee," embellishing that however they wish.

CAO CHEN

LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Leader of the exorcists

Perception +18

Will +20

Discovery DC 24 Occultism, DC 26 Perception, DC 22 Religion

Influence Skills DC 22 Diplomacy, DC 24 Religion, DC 26 Intimidation

Influence 2 "Fear not, my students. We are perfectly safe.

Without a focused purpose, these century-old phantoms can no more affect the material world than a fish can light a fire."

Influence 4 "I sense your strength, spirits, but our holy bell, infused with light from your own *Eternal Lantern*, prevents your fell influence and magic from seeping through to our world. As long as this bell shines in Karahai, you cannot harm us. We have time to be patient and methodical, so you would do well to simply comply and answer our questions truthfully."

PAN FENFANG

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Nervous exorcist with a secret

Perception +16

Will +18

Discovery DC 21 Occultism, DC 23 Perception, DC 25 Religion

Influence Skills DC 21 Deception, DC 23 Intimidation, DC 25 Religion

Influence 2 "Like most spirits, they refuse to listen to reason, Master Cao. We must simply accept that this will be a difficult job and get back to it." The use of his name prompts a scowl from Cao Chen.

Influence 4 "There is nothing that can return you to life beyond the most sinister forms of magic, and we will not permit that. Make peace with your fate and pray that Pharasma shows mercy for your sins in death." As she speaks, her face flashes doubt, and the PCs catch a deeper glimpse into her mind—seeing the crimson butterflies that seem to flutter therein. With a successful DC 22 Occultism or Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a PC realizes this exorcist is unknowingly influenced by nindorus.

Weakness Fenfang is hiding something from the other two exorcists. Disillusioned with Mago Kai's methodical approach to purging spirits from Willowshore, Fenfang sought out other sources of divine power. What she believes to be the spirit of Tan Sui-Jing appeared and offered her just that. Unfortunately, this apparition was actually a projection of Kugaptee, drawn to answer her prayers. Fenfang now belongs to a small cult of nindoru followers within the ranks of the exorcists. They still believe that their cause is just, but haven't yet come forward about their new patron, as the nindoru keeps whispering in their ears that they must keep this development secret from Mago Kai. While the PCs aren't sure as to the exact nature of her secret, once they mention Kugaptee's name, Fenfang grows more nervous, and all of her Discovery and Influence Skill DCs are reduced by 2.

SHA "SHAGUA" GUANGHAO

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Young and brash exorcist

Perception +14

Will +16

Discovery DC 20 Occultism, DC 24 Perception, DC 22 Religion

Influence Skills DC 20 Deception, DC 22 Religion, DC 24 Diplomacy

Influence 2 "But master, if the bell and the light keeps the spirits trapped, why can't we just ignore them and get to harvesting all the trees in the region?" This question gets an exaggerated eye-roll and a motion to shush from Cao Chen.

Influence 4 "If you try anything funny, Lord Mago will come in here with his magic bell ringer and banish you away! Like this—hwahhh!" Guanghao mimics forcefully ringing a bell and then is slapped on the back of the head by Fenfang, after which Cao Chen says, "That's not how it works! Did you even read the codex scroll like I told you?"

Ending the Seance

Once the exorcists finish (and all of the PCs' influence rounds have been spent), Cao Chen utters a final prayer and then taps the bell above softly with his torch. The sound of the bell ringing out is unexpectedly overwhelming given such a small tap, and the PCs are hurled back to wherever they were in Willowshore when the seance began. As they return, they're sent reeling and must attempt a DC 24 Will save to resist becoming drained 1 (or drained 2 on a critical failure). They then discover that, for the past several minutes, they've been lying unconscious and unresponsive on the floor. This development might have shocked nearby townsfolk and, when the PCs awaken, they likely face a deluge of questions. The PCs can answer as they wish but must do so delicately with a DC 24 Diplomacy check; failure causes the townsfolk to worry that they might be the next to be conjured by these exorcists, and Willowshore loses 1d4 Hope Points.

Once the PCs return, they realize that, somehow, the bell they saw during the seance has been infused with the light from Willowshore's *Eternal Lantern*, confirming that the lantern must be unlit in the living world. As long as this remains the case, they'll only be able to cast the 4th-level version of *transmigrate*.

Reward: If the PCs gained a total of 4 Influence Points with at least one exorcist, grant them 80 XP. If they gained all 12 possible Influence Points, award the heroes 120 XP instead.

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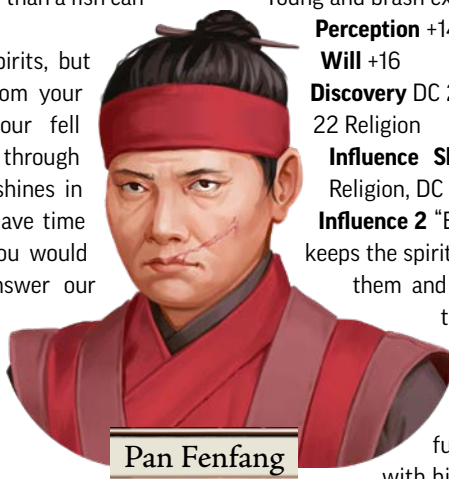
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Pan Fenfang

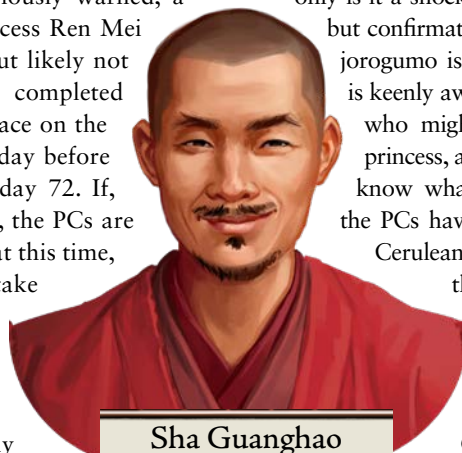
EVENT 13: INTERVIEW WITH A SPIDER MODERATE 8

As the shinigami, Shinzo, previously warned, a “version” of the jorogumo princess Ren Mei Li eventually comes to town, but likely not until well after the PCs have completed Chapter 3, for her visit takes place on the 71st day of the adventure, one day before the lunar new year begins on day 72. If, due to the timing of your game, the PCs are still playing through Chapter 3 at this time, you should have this event take place after the PCs return to Willowshore but a day before they begin casting the 5th-level version of *transmigrate*.

Ren Mei Li is one of many high-ranking members of Lang Loi’s court. Rumors of Lang Loi’s takeover of Shenmen have reached Willowshore, but remember that from the PCs’ perspective, this development only happened a year ago, and so far, the jorogumo queen hasn’t yet turned her attention to Willowshore. In the living world, the advance scouts sent to Willowshore found the place dead, and when they reported back to Ren Mei Li, she traveled to the ruins to investigate them herself.

While in the living world Ren Mei Li eventually found nothing of note on-site other than a fair amount of treasure to loot as offerings to Lady Lang Loi, her occult research into the cause of Willowshore’s doom copied her psyche into the mindscape, though she’s unaware of this. The PCs will encounter Ren Mei Li in the next adventure as well, and how they handle their first meeting here might give them an advantage once they return to the world of the living.

Ren Mei Li’s visit begins with the arrival of a stranger in town at sunrise. This handsome young man wears a silver collar and seeks out Willowshore’s town elder to inform them that the town is now under the rulership of Lady Lang Loi; that one of her princesses, Lady Ren, shall be arriving this very evening; and that Willowshore should make itself ready to receive the new royalty. The strange messenger makes it clear that Ren Mei Li expects to receive a royal welcome, despite Willowshore being far too rustic and poor to provide such a thing on short notice. This move is a cruel game on Ren Mei Li’s part—she intends to drive the villagers into despair and panic as they inevitably fall short of her demands again and again before finally punishing them for their failures. In any event, the mysterious visitor fades away soon after bringing the news, himself merely a precursor thoughtform of the jorogumo princess.



Sha Guanghao

This news catches the town elder off guard—not only is it a shock to see a stranger in the mindscape, but confirmation that Shenmen is now ruled by a jorogumo is frightening indeed. The town elder is keenly aware that the PCs are the only people who might actually placate or threaten the princess, and quickly contacts them to let them know what’s coming that evening. Assuming the PCs have put effort into the upkeep of the Cerulean Teahouse, the town elder feels it’s the best place to receive Lady Ren, but other options might work at the PCs’ suggestion.

Preparing for the Visit

Once the PCs learn that Lady Ren Mei Li is coming to visit, they have only about 8 hours to get things ready for her arrival. If they ask others in Willowshore for advice, Granny Hu makes it clear that the tea and snacks served must be both impeccable and seasonally appropriate, but she warns that Lady Ren will probably make a few unreasonable demands just to flex her power. Old Matsuki suggests getting the princess drunk or, failing that, making sure everyone greeting her is beautifully dressed while keeping their faces plain or obscured. The PCs can attempt a DC 22 check to Gather Information, or to Recall Knowledge with Society; on a success, a PC notes that jorogumo despise tengu, hate cold iron, seek to ensure that the citizens of Shenmen are kept isolated and illiterate, and tend to eat beautiful young men and maim pretty women out of jealousy. On a critical success, the PC also knows they should prepare a gift worth at least 50 gp for Lady Ren when she arrives.

This adventure assumes the PCs prepare a site they’ve already put resources into maintaining, such as the Cerulean Teahouse, to receive Lady Ren. To do so, they must complete the Prepare for Royalty activity.

PREPARE FOR ROYALTY

EXPLORATION

One of the PCs spends 8 hours preparing a chosen site to host Lady Ren. Other PCs can Aid this check, but if no PC even attempts the check to prepare, then treat it as if they’d critically failed at this activity. The PC must attempt a DC 24 Crafting, Society, or Tea Lore check. This check takes a -4 circumstance penalty if the site the PCs choose hasn’t been built up over the course of the campaign.

Critical Success The PCs gain a +1 circumstance bonus to all Influence checks during this encounter.

Success The PCs prepare the site but had to dip into the stores to get everything set up. Reduce Food Points by 1.

Failure As success, but reduce Food Points by 1d4+1.

Critical Failure As Failure, but the shabby job causes the PCs to take a -2 circumstance penalty to all Influence checks during this encounter.

Influencing Ren Mei Li

Ren Mei Li arrives without any bodyguards as a show of her confidence and superiority, believing that bringing a guard makes her look weak and unconfident. The jorogumo princess imperiously arrives to town in her true form and requests the PCs show her around before taking her to wherever they've decided to host the meeting; the town elder accompanies them but has little to do or say during this event, knowing full well that this matter is something only the PCs can handle.

Lady Ren's influence stat block is presented below. This influence encounter plays out over the course of 6 rounds, each of which lasts a varying amount of time and includes additional elements that might complicate the encounter; a full list of the 6 rounds appears after Mei Li's stats. Note that while the living Mei Li is a level 13 creature, her Perception and Will scores are lower than normal here (as one might expect for a level 9 creature), reflecting the fact that she's merely a supernatural echo of the real thing.

REN MEI LI

NE MEDIUM HUMANOID

Intimidating jorogumo princess

Perception +18

Will +18

Discovery DC 22 Diplomacy, DC 20 Jorogumo Lore, DC 26 Perception, DC 24 Society

Influence Skills DC 22 Performance, DC 24 Diplomacy, DC 26 Occultism, DC 28 Deception, DC 30 Intimidation

Influence 4 Lady Ren becomes annoyed that the PCs are ruining her game by being so influential. Each PC should attempt a DC 24 Diplomacy check. If no one succeeds, she casts *outcast's curse* on a random PC; failure at the Diplomacy check results in her casting *outcast's curse* on the attempted diplomat instead. If the PCs attack in response, proceed with "Parting Ways" (page 42).

Influence 8 Lady Ren takes the time to explain how things will change in Willowshore now that jorogumo are in charge. Firstly, she demands tithes to the jorogumo, to be paid every year during the

season of ghosts ritual at the end of each spring; this stipulation is nonnegotiable. Secondly, she demands all tengu who live in or enter the village be executed immediately. Thirdly, she declares that all townsfolk are no longer permitted to read or write, and all books must be turned over to the jorogumo for safekeeping. Finally, all coins and cold iron in the village are to be melted down, so as to avoid the temptation of money corrupting the hearts of mortals. She graciously allows the town until the first tithe is due on the last day of spring to meet these requirements.

Since Lady Ren is a mindscape duplicate, and since the mindscape repeats every year at the end of spring, the easiest thing is to agree with her wholeheartedly

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Ren Mei Li



SILVER COLLARS

While Lady Ren's silver collars might seem like little more than vain trinkets, Shinzo or a PC who's an Expert or better in Jorogumo Lore or Willowshore Lore recognizes them as far more valuable. Mortals who belong to a jorogumo are marked by a signet collar, which can be welded around the mortal's neck so that it can't be removed. Lady Ren intended to do so when she returned home with her prizes, but was obviously stymied by ceasing to exist when she left Willowshore. These collars are avidly sought in modern Shenmen, for they indicate that the wearer is permitted to travel freely, is allowed to read and write, and can trade freely with outsiders. The PCs can wear these collars to reap the obvious social advantages when they return to life. Each collar is worth 50 gp and can be sold for full price.

and then ignore her decrees once she leaves—this pleases her, and all future Influence checks against her gain a +1 status bonus. If they wish, the PCs can attempt to haggle with her. She's willing to negotiate, even going so far as to offer the PCs wealth in recompense. The one exception is the tithes to the jorogumo—Lady Ren can't offer safety from her kin without such an offering. These negotiations should be treated as normal rolls to Influence her.

If the PCs choose to negotiate, Mei Li agrees to remove one of the three non-tithe stipulations she demanded.

Influence 12 Lady Ren inquires about the Tan Sugi. The PCs can plead ignorance without any risk or loss, as Lady Ren doesn't expect the rural folk to know anything of use. The PCs can also choose to indulge her curiosity with the truth or regale her with falsehoods (unlike other instances, her Penalty doesn't apply here). It's obvious from Lady Ren's behavior that she has a sinister interest in the tree and what it might be associated with. If the PCs tell her the truth, she makes it clear that she wishes the tree to be protected and gives the PCs a *messenger's ring* in case any issues arise.

If the PCs chose to negotiate at Influence 8, Ren Mei Li agrees to remove another of the three non-tithe stipulations she demanded.

Influence 16 Against all odds, the PCs have convinced Lady Ren Mei Li that her own existence is just as much in danger as their own. Against her nature, she gives them a bag containing four doses of *dust of corpse animation* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 257) to help protect the town.

If the PCs chose to negotiate at Influence 8, Ren Mei Li agrees to remove another of the three non-tithe stipulations she demanded.

Resistances Ren Mei Li absolutely hates cold iron and tengu. The obvious presence of either immediately offends her; she demands that cold iron be melted down and any tengu (such as Myna Kawaka or Matsu) be executed immediately. Anyone who is a tengu or in clear possession of a cold iron item increases all DCs to Influence her by 2. Fortunately, Lady Ren doesn't demand to witness either of these tasks personally, so making a show of arresting a tengu or hauling off the offending item is enough to placate her. If the PCs refuse, all future Influence check DCs against her increase by 2.

She's also jealous of charming and pretty women. Influence attempts performed by such PCs increase the DC by 2. A PC who succeeds at a Deception check to disguise himself against her Perception DC can negate this impediment, as can willingly scarring their own face.

Weaknesses Influence attempts by charismatic, attractive men decrease the DC by 2. However, on a critical failure, Lady Ren makes a show of examining their face before declaring the man will come with her when she leaves, then she gives them a silver collar to wear (see Parting Ways on page 42).

Lady Ren is delighted by the arachnid form of the town's spider guardian, though she tries her best not to show it. Conversation relating to Ugly Cute reduces the DC to Influence her by 2. However, informing Lady Ren that the spider is known as "ugly" provokes an open sneer and negates the benefit going forward.

Background Of Mei Li's countless sisters, she was one of only five to survive their first year. This is considered a large family by jorogumo standards. While Lady Ren knows she isn't a match for the most powerful jorogumo in Shenmen, she hopes to carve out a secure and comfortable territory for herself. Her cruelty outstrips her ambition, and she's fine with avoiding the attention of her betters.

Appearance Mei Li is a graceful young woman with long black hair and limbs that are a little too quick and slender. She wears her long black hair up in an elegant style, adorned with flowers and pins. She's dressed in an embroidered robe, and she does her best to never let any part of her humanoid body touch dirt.

Personality Lady Ren Mei Li is a monster toying with her prey. She intends to catch hapless peasants in impossible social situations and then punish them as part of a sick game.

Penalty Lady Ren is no stranger to the betrayals and the politicking of the silken courts of Yin-Sichasi. Any time a PC fails to outright lie to her (excepting white lies for flattery and more subtle deceptions), she immediately

casts *mind reading* on them (DC 34 Will save). If a PC fails this save, she can anticipate their next tactic, automatically reducing the result of their next Influence check by one step. On a critical success, the PC immediately learns one piece of information about her as though they'd succeeded at a Discovery check.

Influence Rounds

The six rounds of this influence encounter play out as follows.

Round 1 (1 minute) This round plays out as Ren Mei Li arrives and greets the party. She also expects to be presented with a gift when she meets the PCs, demanding one if the PCs don't offer it immediately. A gift must be worth at least 50 gp to meet her standards and gains the PCs 1 Influence Point. A gift worth less than that (or no gift at all) is accepted with an insincere comment that such an offering is perfectly acceptable for such a lowborn town. There's a risk to setting the princess's initial standards too high, however. If the gift is worth more than 100 gp, the PCs gain 2 Influence Points, but the DCs of all Influence checks during round 2 increase by 1.

This round takes only a minute to play out, and as a result, Discovery checks can be attempted during this round but Influence checks can't.

Round 2 (30 minutes) After the greetings, Lady Ren asks to be escorted through town so she can take in the sights. She's carried in a palanquin by servants who wear silver collars around their necks. The jorogumo princess is unarmed and clearly considers it inconceivable that she might be attacked, though even without weapons, Lady Ren is still extremely dangerous.

Lady Ren takes stock of the townsfolk as she travels through the area. She expects all of the villagers to stoop before her in order to indicate their lower status, even (or especially) if they can't easily bend due to age or other physical limitations. She's quite happy to reach out a spider leg and force someone to bow.

As they go, she comments on the state of the town. Her snarky remarks are thinly veiled insults—unless Willowshore has fewer than 6 Security Points, in which case she openly mocks the damaged buildings, animal excrement, or unkempt roads (resulting in a loss of 1 Hope Point).

Round 3 (10 minutes) Lady Ren dutifully follows the PCs to the location where they've chosen to receive her, though she openly questions their decision, no matter what it is: if the PCs take her to the tea house, she asks why they don't go to the governor's manor, while if brought to the governor's manor, she comments that the tea house looked far more inviting. If allowed to be

seated without first being given a cup of tea or hot wine, the jorogumo comments on the slight and wonders if this is how they treat their honored guests. This is a ploy on Lady Ren's part—offering a hot drink at the door is a very old piece of etiquette that fell out of favor during Imperial Lung Wa. With a successful DC 24 Society or DC 22 Tea Lore check, a PC is aware of this fact, but Lady Ren takes offense at being told she's incorrect or outdated.

Round 4 (30 minutes) Despite her contrivance, Lady Ren refuses wine or any other alcohol if offered, instead requesting tea. She asks about the history of the tea pot and cup while the tea is prepared, clearly expecting a significant answer, but not acting out if one isn't provided.

When served tea, Lady Ren attempts another ploy, asking why her servers didn't kneel to serve her. With a successful DC 24 Society or DC 22 Tea Lore check, a PC knows that while this is technically correct etiquette, it's only done for weddings. As before, the jorogumo takes offense at being told she's incorrect.

For this influence round, one PC can attempt to Influence Lady Ren with a successful DC 24 Crafting or Tea Lore check. This doesn't count as their action for the round. If they forgo this check or fail, the jorogumo pretends to burn her lips on the tea and throws it to the ground before accusing the PCs of making the tea too hot on purpose. The PCs must either succeed at a DC 28 Diplomacy check to smooth the incident over or make a show of allowing the tea preparer to be punished—failure to do either of these things results in a loss of 2 Influence Points. PCs who succeed at a DC 28 Deception check can fake a sufficient punishment; otherwise, they can actually punish the offender by consenting to the tea preparer being webbed to the ground and exposed to Lady Ren's poison. An NPC server exposed to the poison dies. Should the PCs succeed at preparing a pleasing tea for Lady Ren, the spider woman offers a silver collar to the tea server, demanding they put it on.

Round 5 (30 minutes) While enjoying the tea and food prepared for her, Lady Ren grows cross if the heroes perform too well. If the PCs reach this round and Lady Ren hasn't managed to torment or punish at least one person, the DCs of all further Influence checks are raised by 1 (cumulative with any other DC increases).

Round 6 (1 hour) Lady Ren asks if she can expect any post-meal entertainment. Each PC can immediately attempt a free Influence check using Performance, Acrobatics to tumble, Athletics to display a feat of



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strength, or any other skill they can justify to meet the standards of such a fussy audience. On a critical success, Lady Ren is so pleased she demands the performer visit her at her home later in the year, and she gives them a silver collar.

Parting Ways

When the influence encounter ends after round 6, if the PCs failed to accrue at least 6 Influence Points, Ren Mei Li is enraged by the poor treatment she has received and attacks. Likewise, she attacks if at any time the PCs lash out at her (such as if they attack when she casts a spell like *outcast's curse* or *mind reading* on one of them).

If the PCs have 7 to 12 Influence Points, Mei Li attempts to “collect” any pretty men that caught her eye and anyone to whom she gave a collar among the PCs. Each potential victim can attempt a DC 28 Diplomacy or Deception check to dissuade her of her intentions. Should they fail, she insists on taking them with her when she leaves. Should they still decline, she'll first attempt to magically charm them, then resorts to violence if that fails.

If combat breaks out, a fight against a level 13 creature is beyond an extreme encounter for 8th-level PCs. Since this event likely plays out after Chapter 3 is completed, the PCs may already be 9th level, or perhaps even 10th level, but even then, such a fight against a level 13 creature is dangerous. During combat, Ren Mei Li spends her first turn casting *summon animal* to call up a giant tarantula (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 307), then climbs to the ceiling and uses *suggestion* and *web* to separate the PCs. She then attempts to incapacitate and capture any PCs that either particularly offended her or drew her eye. Against the latter, she'll take a –2 circumstance penalty with her strikes to deal nonlethal damage. If reduced to 45 or fewer Hit Points, she attempts to flee back to her palanquin and then out of town. If slain, she rolls onto her back and her spider legs curl inward in a grotesque display before fading away entirely, her thoughtform body vaporizing. Likewise, her four noncombatant human servants fade away if their mistress is defeated or their silver collars are removed. The PCs can also recover her *messenger's ring* and the *dust of corpse animation* if she hasn't already gifted them, but the hardwood chest (see Treasure) is nowhere to be found.

If the PCs have more than 12 Influence Points at the end of the encounter, the jorogumo is secretly pleased with the encounter and doesn't demand any of the PCs return with her, although she hints that, come time to tithe on the last day of spring, she intends to take some

or all of them with her to her palace. Without another word, she returns to her palanquin and her servants carry her to the edge of town, where all of them fade away into nothingness. Any PCs she has taken with her at this point, of course, are now free to return to their lives without repercussion.

Treasure: If the PCs accrued at least 12 Influence Points, a hardwood chest is left behind when the procession fades away at the edge of town. The chest contains six moonstones worth 25 gp each, a *greater persona mask*, and a *greater perfect droplet* (*Secrets of Magic* 171). Additionally, the four silver collars worn by her servants remain behind. If the PCs aren't there to witness her exit, an exploring villager will happen across this treasure and return it to the PCs in a couple days.

Reward: If Lady Ren leaves town without a fight, grant the PCs 160 XP and 1d4 Hope Points.

Other Winter Events

While the preceding events should be enough to reward the PCs with enough experience to gain a level before they begin Chapter 3, you may find that including a few extra events might be necessary in order to shore up some missed opportunities to earn experience. Alternatively, you might find moments during winter while the PCs are waiting for the chance to move on to the next step could use some additional excitement. In these cases, you can use one of the following additional events to liven up the winter.


EVENT 14: THE TREES LIVE

MODERATE 8

This event can take place at any point while the PCs are out wandering in the forest surrounding Willowshore.

Creatures: The legacy of Willowshore's lumber harvesters lives on in more than the abandoned estates and mills within the town. The spirits of nature and the forest have long memories, and not all are easily placated by offerings and rituals. Some of Willowshore's forest guardians despise the villagers for the damage they once did to the wilds and, by a sheer stroke of bad luck, the PCs wander into a thicket of them. Alternatively, an NPC could go missing and the PCs are called upon to track them down—following the NPC's trail leads to this same thicket.

This thicket of anger manifests as a pair of arboreal reapers and an awakened tree. When the PCs encounter the arboreals, the angry plants don't immediately attack—they instead demand an accounting for all the pain and damage done to the woodlands by the people of Willowshore over the years. The arboreals' initial attitude is unfriendly, but if they can be made indifferent, they let the PCs go without a fight. If they abducted an NPC, they'll only release their victim if



the PCs can make them at least friendly. Any failed attempt to adjust the arboreals' attitude automatically shifts them to hostile and causes them to attack; once a fight begins, they battle to the death.

ARBOREAL REAPERS (2)

CREATURE 7

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 20

Initiative Perception +15

AWAKENED TREE

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 25

Initiative Perception +13

Reward: If the PCs achieve a peaceful solution to this encounter, grant them XP as if they'd defeated the creatures in combat. More importantly, the arboreals are impressed by the PCs, and one week later, a delivery of deadwood from trees that have come to a natural end of life appears at the edge of town, neatly stacked. This gift of fine wood provides the town with unexpected resources to repair storm damage, and grants the PCs 2 Security Points.

EVENT 15: REPRISAL

LOW 8

Kugaptee may be imprisoned once more, but his influence remains strong. One way the nindoru's presence can be felt is through the sudden manifestation of an unusually enormous predator, formed directly from the dead fiend's thoughts and sent to track down the PCs to achieve revenge for their actions in the previous adventure.

Creature: This encounter can take place while the PCs are traveling through the hinterlands, or it could begin as the creature trundles into the town's outskirts from deeper in the woods. A bright orange centipede that's nearly a hundred feet long crawls out of the undergrowth to coil upon itself and attack—either PCs, or buildings at the edge of town. As with the very first centipedes the PCs encountered in this campaign, this behemoth roars words out as it fights, “meat... flesh... bones... fingers... hair... skin... eyes...” When it spots the PCs, its words change, and in its lumbering voice, it thunders out a few complete sentences. “You must pay! Kugaptee will rise! Time to die!”

If you have the titan centipede attack town, it scuttles unerringly toward where the PCs are currently located. If the party acts immediately to meet the challenge, they should be able to reach the monster before it does too much damage, but if they take too long (or if they're forced to flee), the centipede's actions can inflict enough damage to Willowshore that its Security Points are reduced by 1d4.

TITAN CENTIPEDE

CREATURE 9

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 50

Initiative Perception +18

EVENT 16: ONE KIND FAVOR

MODERATE 8

This event can take place whenever you wish, but in the days or weeks before you decide it will be taking place, rumors of another haunting should start to spread through Willowshore. When you're ready to begin this event, the town elder seeks the PCs out to ask them to investigate these rumors.

According to the rumors, a pallid ghost with black hair and white eyes has appeared in a local cemetery, standing completely still and silent during the night until she vanishes with the dawn. While certain conservative villagers are quick to proclaim the ghost must deserve her restless death (despite knowing nothing about the circumstances of the ghost's situation), even they don't want the ghost hanging around the town.

Should the PCs investigate after dark, they find the figure haunting the cemetery as described. The spirit ignores the PCs unless they ask her what she wants, at which point she silently beckons them to follow her and glides off into the woods. If the PCs try to attack the ghost, she simply vanishes, appearing unharmed amid the gravestones the next night.

The Ghost's Journey: Following the ghost requires the PCs to work their way through Willowshore's forest during the night. The ghost does not stick to forest paths and is not slowed by rocks or branches, taking a particularly onerous route, and the PCs can tell that the route is unusually circuitous. The ghost moves with unerring certainty, occasionally nodding to herself as if silently counting the steps, but the path she chooses seems to make little sense. Whenever her path comes near a river, she always floats along the water's edge.

In order to keep up with the ghost, one PC must attempt a DC 22 Survival check or a DC 25 Perception check. Other PCs in the group can Aid this check. On a success, the party manages to maintain pace with her despite her meandering. On a failure, each of the PCs must hustle to keep up and become fatigued by the time the ghost finally reaches her destination.

About three hours after the journey begins, the ghost finally reaches the destination—a dry riverbed. The ghost leads the PCs to the dry riverbed, then points to a gravelly patch along the shore. If the PCs have the proper tools, they can dig in this spot—if not, they may have to dig by hand or repeat this journey, and all of its dangers, to return with shovels. Digging with the proper tools requires two successful DC 21

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Athletics checks or one critical success. Digging by hand increases the DC to 25. A critical failure results in the digging PCs becoming fatigued. About 3 feet beneath the earth are human bones wrapped in a burlap shroud.

Once the PCs have retrieved the bones, the ghost leads them back to the cemetery she started at, this time taking a direct route (a journey that takes only 30 minutes). When she returns to where she started, she points again at the dirt where she was originally standing, clearly expecting the PCs to rebury the bones there. If the PCs do not bury the bones, the ghost begins to follow them personally, appearing in their mirrors, standing over their beds and watching them while they sleep, and appearing to distract them at random moments.

Creatures: The PCs can attack the ghost at any time after the journey; if they do so, she fights back until destroyed, only to rejuvenate 2d4 days later to once again appear in the graveyard (or near her bones, if the PCs have moved them). Only by burying her bones where she's indicated will the nameless ghost find peace.

Burying the bones isn't a simple task though, for the site the ghost has chosen already serves as the graves for four long-dead criminals—the ones responsible for killing her in the first place and sinking her remains in the river. These four criminals dig up out of their graves to attack the PCs, gasping out phrases like, "It wasn't us," "We didn't kill her," or "It was an accident!" These excuses swiftly give way to threats like "You'll die just as well!" or "Killing you is just as easy!" The revenants attack the ghost and the PCs alike, but if the ghost is destroyed, their undying vendetta doesn't release them, for her unquiet spirit simply returns in a few days.

If the PCs defeat the revenants, the ghost drops to her knees and sobs in frustration. Her sobs end only when the PCs bury her bones, at which point she sighs in relief and gives the PCs a graceful bow. Who she was in life and why she was murdered is a mystery that you can allow the PCs to eventually solve—or you can simply let it remain a mystery.

FORGOTTEN SPIRIT

CREATURE 4

Female ghost commoner (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 167)

Initiative Perception +10

REVENANTS (4)

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 227

Initiative Perception +10

Reward: If the PCs bury the ghost's bones, grant them XP as if they'd defeated her in combat.

Transmigrating

The timing of when the PCs cast *transmigrate* depends on when they learn the ritual. They should be 9th level before they do so—the in-game requirement of needing to wait for the sakaki slats to be prepared is intended to give enough time to pass for the PCs to play through all of the events in Chapter 2 save for **Event 13: Interview with a Spider** so that they'll have the chance to earn the experience needed.

The PCs should've learned that the light of the *Eternal Lantern* has been extinguished in the living world, and that limits them to casting only the 4th-level version of *transmigrate*. Even if they know this limitation, or have learned that the flame has been taken to Karahai, the transition from Willowshore's mindscape to the living world has one more surprise in store. Kugaptee's influence remains strong, and he fights against the reversal of the PCs' deaths by plunging them into another, much smaller, mindscape in an attempt to kill them before they can proceed.

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

SEVERE 8

As the PCs cast *transmigrate*, and as the flames burn around them and bake them in their clay shells, they feel a baleful voice in their minds that vaguely resembles Governor Heh's—the voice orders them to give in to their desires, to be consumed by emotions strong enough that they can rip themselves free from the clutches of death. Have the players describe the most powerful feelings that motivate their characters at this time. In addition to serving as a roleplaying opportunity, these emotions can help guide the PCs when choosing the ghostly powers they gain in modern-day Shenmen (page 78).

When the ritual ends and the PCs emerge from their clay shells, they don't emerge into the living world—instead, they wake inside a hallway of carved stone.

Two wooden sliding doors cap the ends of this drab, thirty-by-sixty-foot stone-walled chamber. The wooden doors are ornately carved with depictions of a misshapen giant brutally bludgeoning people to death. Despite the relatively smooth the walls and ceilings, the stone floor is crisscrossed with shallow gashes. In the center of the chamber is a ritual altar covered in incense, candles, and other accoutrements.

With a successful DC 22 Arcana or Occultism check to Recall Knowledge, a PC realizes they've emerged in a mindscape wedged between Willowshore and the living world that acts as metaphysical "crumb catcher" for souls not fully consumed by Kugaptee.

The sliding doors have Hardness 5 and 20 HP (BT 10). Their carvings leave a great many holes, so they don't entirely block line of sight when closed, instead providing greater cover to those on the opposite side. The entire mindscape is a closed loop: corridors in areas **B1**, **B2**, **B3**, and **B4** continue seamlessly into their counterparts, connecting the map to itself.

The PCs can feel the living world calling to them, and during each round that passes, the shimmering aura above the altar grows clearer as it transforms into a portal to Dawnstep Bridge. But before that portal is fully formed, the PCs must defeat the nindorus that dwell in this mindscape.

Creatures: As soon as the PCs stand, the light seems to flicker and unsettling whispers fill the air, voices that issue mocking decrees about the PCs abandoning Willowshore for the living world, of how the people they left behind feel betrayed, and of how they'll never be able to regain their trust. These whispers are lies spewed into the mindscape by three kagekuma nindorus that manifest at each location labeled **B5** on the map. They roll Perception for initiative, then make their way toward the central chamber to attack the party—they already have bundles manifested, so their Speed is reduced to 15 feet.

Once one spots a PC, the nindoru Sheds its Bundle to lurch forth quickly and attack. If reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points, a kagekuma casts *dimension door* to retreat to its starting point, manifests a new bundle to gain an AC bonus, and begins stalking the PCs again.

KAGEKUMAS (3)

CREATURE 8

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Initiative Perception +16

Through the Portal: Once the last of the kagekumas are slain, the portal atop the altar flickers and solidifies. The PCs can step through at any point; as they do so, they complete their transmigration and begin Chapter 3. Grant the PCs 80 XP for this momentous achievement.

Any PC who dies in this encounter isn't actually slain unless the whole party dies. As long as at least one PC lives and steps through the portal, all of the PCs wake in the ruins of Willowshore at the start of Chapter 3, but those who died in this encounter are doomed 1.

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Chapter 3: This Place Is Ours


Once the PCs emerge from the borderland between life and death, they find themselves stepping off of the southern side of Dawnstep Bridge into a town much different than the one they know. This place is the real Willowshore—one that has been in ruins for over a century.

The PCs should swiftly realize that their apparently solid bodies are, in fact, temporary constructs of ectoplasm. All of their gear has come with them, so any damage done to their equipment (or new items gained during this chapter) remains constant regardless, but as ectoplasmic souls, the PCs exist between life and undeath. Now is the time to reveal to the players their new powers, as detailed starting on page 78 under *Haunting the Living*.

On to Karahai

Over the last 115 years of neglect, Willowshore has fallen to ruin. The roads are overgrown with foliage, many buildings have crumbled, and Willowshore Dam has collapsed, leaving Woodraft Lake little more than a stinking swamp. Dawnstep Bridge still stands, but the stone structure looks on the verge of collapse. Near to where the PCs emerge stands the *Eternal Lantern*, overgrown with moss but still mostly intact—yet it's unlit, and the inner receptacle that once held blessed coins is missing entirely. Until the PCs recover this receptacle from Karahai, the *Eternal Lantern* remains dark, and the PCs can't escape their mindscape.

The PCs might be compelled to investigate the ruins of Willowshore. Compared to the lively (if troubled)



mindscape that the PCs have been inhabiting up until this point, modern-day Willowshore should feel hollow, empty, and tragic. Nothing of value remains in the ruins, but here and there, the PCs should find evidence of recent camps—particularly at the collapsed ruins of Cloud Paper House—that are evidence of Mago Kai, his employees, and exorcists periodically spending time in the ruins over the past several months.

Even if the PCs don't realize their goal, their link to the stolen flame from the *Eternal Lantern* pulls them eastward toward Karahai. This sensation feels like a compelling memory combined with an almost physical tugging in the gut. The coastal fortress of Karahai and its surrounding village is only a moderate trek southeast along the Duyue River. As the heroes begin their journey toward Mago Kai's coastal fortress and exit Willowshore, they pass smashed pieces of a stone guardian spider near the wreck of Willowshore—the remains of Ugly Cute, who Mago Kai killed in the events leading up to this adventure.

The trip to Karahai should be uneventful. As the PCs travel, they'll see more evidence of recent activity, places where fallen trees have been cut or pulled away from the road, or the sign of foot and wagon traffic in areas where the road has turned mostly to mud. Not far from the point just past Gourd Lake that served as the mindscape's eastern border, the PCs come to Karahai Bridge, once a wooden structure that crossed a gorge through which the Ceiba River flows on its way out to sea. The bridge was swept away many years ago after the banks of the gorge partially collapsed in mudslides, but Mago Kai's workers have rigged a temporary replacement of planks and ropes that the PCs can cross with ease. Less than an hour after crossing the bridge, they turn a final bend and set their eyes on Karahai.

THE HAUNTING OF KARAHAI

Mago Kai and his crew believe the hauntings are contained to the ruins of Willowshore, and until the PCs cast *transmigrate*, they've been correct in this assumption. As the PCs make their way through this adventure, they'll have opportunities to create a sense of foreboding among the fortress's residents, and doing so increases Karahai's Terror Points.

Karahai's Terror Points begin at 0 but increase as indicated in the text. The players should be rewarded for whatever clever tactics they use to induce dread among the occupants by gaining a Terror Point. The simplest way to create terror is to stage a dead body in a way that's particularly grisly or frightening—once that body is discovered (at a time left to you to decide), have one of the PCs attempt a DC 25 Intimidation

TICKING TIMER

Despite the power of the *transmigrate* ritual, it can't keep the PCs manifested as spirits forever. The 4th-level version of the ritual has a duration of 1 month, which should be plenty of time for the PCs to finish Chapter 3. In the event it takes them longer, when the month runs out, they fade away from the living world and return to the Willowshore mindscape, taking their gear with them. If this happens, they'll need to cast the ritual again to try to complete their tasks in the living world once more, but each time the PCs do so, Mago Kai has time to recruit reinforcements and bolster his defenses. How this plays out is left to you to decide, but at the very least, each return trip adds four new Terror Points that the PCs must build up to before they can start to affect the fortress again.

Time passes equally in the mindscape. Though no significant events should occur there while the PCs are gone, remember to deduct Preparation Points each week as appropriate.

check. On a success, the discovery generates 1 Terror Point, or 2 Terror Points on a critical success.

Karahai's Terror Points reduce by 2d6 points every time 24 hours pass without any activity from the PCs that could potentially increase terror.

At different thresholds of Terror Points, NPCs encountered in Karahai might begin a combat with the frightened condition. As normal, the frightened condition reduces by 1 at the end of each creature's turn. Enemy locations and tactics also change based on Terror Point thresholds.

KARAHAI VILLAGE

LOW 9

A tiny village sits on the edge of the Sea of Ghosts. Only about three dozen villagers make their home here, providing domestic services for travelers plying the coastline to the north or south—and since early last spring, supporting Mago Kai's forces after the lumber baron took control of Karahai fortress.

The village buildings are one story, constructed of packed clay with thatch roofs. Though simple, the houses are easy to maintain and have little wear and tear. Most of the village's food and materials are imported, but a small dock supports the operation of a few rickety fishing boats to supplement their stores. The villagers are a hardscrabble lot, but fairly superstitious. As residents of Shenmen, they've had to pay human tithes to the jorogumo and often scar

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A SUMMARY OF TERROR

Terror Threshold	NPC Fear	Fortress Response
1	—	None.
2	—	The two exorcists from area C1 leave to patrol the village. Villagers and cooks inside the fort retreat to the village.
3	Frightened 1	Earth Gate is locked. The Small Wood Gate is locked and guarded by mercenaries from area C6 .
4	Frightened 1	The shrine maidens from area C15 patrol the periphery hall.
5	Frightened 1	All exterior fortress gates (area C2) are closed and locked.
6	Frightened 2	Fenfang and two exorcists retreat to area C16 .
7	Frightened 2	The fortress's nine mercenaries barricade themselves into area C5 . Mago Kai retreats to his quarters in area C20 .
8	Frightened 3	Mago Kai has a shrine maiden cast <i>send</i> to report to allies back in the city of Sze about the situation and ask for reinforcements. Help won't arrive immediately, but within the next several days, exorcists, mercenaries, and shrine maidens the PCs might have defeated are replaced by new ones. Mago Kai can call for reinforcements up to three times.

their own children's faces to avoid attention from the spider women. While it's easy to frighten the villagers, acts performed here don't increase Terror Points past threshold level 2—the villagers have “cried wolf” about supernatural threats too often, after all.

Creatures: At a Terror Point threshold of 2, Mago Kai dispatches two exorcists from area **C1** to investigate and patrol the village. The exorcists are here more to quell the villagers' fears, and they don't expect a real haunting. They patrol the area for a little over an hour before returning to area **C1** in the fortress. If the exorcists spot the PCs, they attack in an attempt to “banish the ghosts.” If one of the exorcists is reduced below 40 Hit Points, both flee back to the barracks (area **C5**).

EXORCISTS (2)

CREATURE 8

RARE LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human priests

Perception +16

Languages Common

Skills Diplomacy +14, Intimidation +16, Medicine +16, Occultism +15, Religion +18

Str +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** +1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Items hide armor, key (opens all gates except Earth gate), +1 striking spear, torch

AC 24; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +14, **Will** +18

HP 135

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ spear +17 (magical, reach), **Damage** 2d6+5 piercing

Melee ♦ torch +16 (agile, finesse, shove), **Damage** 1d4+5 bludgeoning plus 1d6 fire

Divine Prepared Spells DC 26, attack +18; **4th** *divine wrath*, *talking corpse*; **3rd** *dispel magic*, *heal*, *searing*

light; **2nd** *gentle repose*, *heal*, *spiritual weapon*; **1st** *bane*, *command*, *sanctuary*; **Cantrips (4th)** *detect magic*, *divine lance*, *produce flame*, *read aura*, *sigil*

Ritual *consecrate*

Purifying Flames ♦♦ (divine, fire, evocation) The exorcist attempts to Strike a creature with their torch, attacking with great precision and causing the torch's fires to flare up. This Strike gains a +2 status bonus to its attack roll and inflicts an additional 2d6 fire damage on a hit instead of just 1d6 fire damage. An undead, spirit, or transmigrated creature hit by this attack must also attempt a DC 26 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected by this additional effect, and some of the fire flares back onto the exorcist, inflicting 2d6 fire damage to the exorcist (DC 26 basic Reflex save).

Success The creature is unaffected by this additional effect.

Failure The purifying flames cause the creature to become clumsy 1 and stupefied 1 until the end of its next turn.

Critical Failure As failure, but clumsy 2 and stupefied 2 for 1 minute.

Torch Wielder The exorcist treats a torch as a light mace that deals an additional 1d6 fire damage on a hit.

KARAHAI FEATURES

Nestled in the middle of the village, Mago Kai's fortress is a round structure made of packed earth and stone, completely enclosed except for four outer gates, one at each cardinal direction. The building is fortified and clearly built with defense in mind. Tiny lookout windows ring the top of the outer walls, each large enough to stick a head or crossbow through, with a slanting bevel on the inside for ease of access. The

exterior wall is 25 feet high, with a steeply sloped roof that angles upward toward the center and reaches a height of 40 feet. A character must succeed at a DC 25 Athletics check to Climb the vertical wall, but they need only succeed at a DC 10 Athletics to clamber along the steep roof.

Unless otherwise specified, the fortress walls are made of stone conglomerate, functioning as masonry walls. Each gate is made of thick wood reinforced with iron and functions as an iron portcullis, while each door is made of reinforced wood. All doors and gates can be locked (requiring four DC 25 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock) but remain unlocked until certain Terror Point thresholds are reached (see the table on page 48). Additional rules for walls and doors appear on page 515 of the *Core Rulebook*.

As long as the warding bell remains in operation in area C11, the walls, floors, and roofs of the fortress are mystically bolstered and can't be passed through by incorporeal creatures. Doors and gates also receive some of this spiritual reinforcement, but their fluctuating nature means that an incorporeal creature can pass through as a three-action activity with the move trait.

Each of the encounters below assume no Terror Points have accumulated, and the encounter threat reflects this assumption. As Terror Points accumulate, use the chart on page 48 and the Terror entries in each encounter to adjust things (the value after each Terror entry refers to the Terror Point threshold at which the listed change takes place); make sure to note that these adjustments can drastically affect the encounter's threat level.

C1. UPPER RING

SEVERE 9

A 5-foot-wide enclosed hall circumnavigates the fortress within its outer wall at a height of 15 feet. Ladders in the stable (area C4), the barracks (area C5), and the lumber storage (area C8) allow access to this walkway, and narrow arrow slits face out in all directions. A Small creature can Squeeze through one with a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check, while a Tiny creature can fit through without trouble. The hall passes over each of the gates.

Creatures: A pair of Mago Kai's exorcists and four mercenaries are stationed here to keep watch, but pay little attention to their surroundings until 2 Terror Points, when the exorcists are sent out to survey the village and the mercenaries start patrolling the ring. If combat begins, the exorcists fight to the death, but the mercenaries flee to the barracks (area C5) if reduced to 30 or fewer Hit Points.

Terror 2: The exorcists are sent into the village to patrol.

Terror 7: The mercenaries abandon this area and join the others in barricading themselves in the barracks (area C5).

EXORCISTS (2)

CREATURE 8

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Initiative Perception +16

MERCENARY ENFORCERS (4)

CREATURE 6

Warden (*Gamemastery Guide* 225)

Initiative Perception +12



Exorcist

No Breath to Cry

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NOT QUITE UNDEAD

The PCs appear somewhat ghostly to their foes in this chapter, but they're more akin to phantoms than undead. When spellcasters like the exorcists or shrine maidens first confront them, they'll rely upon holy water, *disrupt undead*, *heal*, and other attacks that normally harm undead foes, but upon realizing that the PCs aren't affected, they'll change tactics as appropriate. If a spellcaster learns this and survives an encounter with the PCs, word spreads through the fortress, and no spellcaster will repeat this mistake going forward.

Banishment would be quite effective against the PCs in this state, for a failure to save against this spell would send a PC back to the Willowshore mindscape. Due to the complicated method the PCs must endure to return to the living world, it was a conscious decision not to "arm" this adventure's shrine maidens with this spell, in an effort to protect against a potentially disruptive and frustrating gameplay element.

C2. FORTRESS GATES

These four gates are all closed and locked once the fortress reaches 5 Terror Points.

C2a. Water Gate: This gate is painted black and is decorated with a painting of a jumping carp. A tiny clay statue of Abadar sits on the ground by one of the hinges. This gate is always kept locked.

C2b. Metal Gate: This gate is painted gray and is decorated with a faded but majestic depiction of a white tiger. It's normally unlocked and left open, as the majority of foot traffic seems to pass this way.

C2c. Fire Gate: This gate is painted red and is decorated with a depiction of a phoenix; someone with no artistic skill appears to have touched up the painting recently, and the bird looks a bit bug-eyed. The gate is normally kept closed.

C2d. Wood Gate: This gate is painted green and is decorated with a golden squiggle that vaguely resembles a dragon. The paint on the door looks notably fresh. There are ruts in the ground as if many heavy objects have been dragged through this gate. The door is normally kept closed.

C3. PERIPHERY PATH

LOW 9

This ten-foot-wide path of packed earth is open to the sky above. The buildings to either side of it appear to have been recently reinforced to be more militaristic in appearance,

but here and there, legacies of their prior use as shops and eateries remain in the form of a few golden tassels, hanging bells, or other mercantile adornments.

Due to the security of the fortress, the residents of Karahai's village used these buildings for storage, trade deals, and the occasional market day. While Mago Kai was the one who took the fortress from the villagers, he allows these visits without issue, as it provides his exorcists and workers with easier access to supplies. So long as the Terror Point threshold is below 2, a half dozen or so villagers can be encountered here during the day; at night, they pack up their wares and head to their homes.

Creatures: Every hour or so, the two exorcists from area C1 descend to make a quick patrol of this path unless they've been reassigned to patrol the village.

Terror 4: The two shrine maidens from area C15 instead stand guard here, one posted near Metal Gate (C2b) and one near Wood Gate (C2d), swapping positions every 10 minutes to patrol the path. A shrine maiden who encounters a PC uses *sending* early in the fight to alert Mago Kai of their intrusion.

EXORCISTS (2)

CREATURE 8

Page 48

Initiative Perception +16

SHRINE MAIDENS (2)

CREATURE 9

RARE LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human spiritualists

Perception +20

Languages Common, Celestial

Skills Intimidation +16, Occultism +17, Performance +18, Religion +19

Str +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

Items +1 *leather armor*, *holy water* (3), key ring (includes a key that opens all gates except Earth gate, the key to Earth gate, and a key that unlocks all interior doors except those leading into Mago Kai's quarters and the treasury), light mace, +1 *striking composite shortbow* (20 arrows)

AC 27; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +18, **Will** +19

HP 152

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ light mace +18; **Damage** 1d4+5 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ *composite shortbow* +19 (deadly d10, magical, propulsive, range increment 60 feet); **Damage** 2d6+5 piercing

Divine Spontaneous Spells DC 25, attack +17; **5th** (2 slots) *divine wrath*, *sending*; **4th** (3 slots) *dimensional anchor*, *heal*, *holy cascade*; **3rd** (3 slots) *dispel magic*, *heal*, *searing light*; **2nd** (3 slots) *augury*, *remove fear*,

see invisibility; **1st** (3 slots) *bless, purify food and drink, sanctuary*; **Cantrips (5th)** *chill touch, disrupt undead, divine lance, forbidding ward, shield, stabilize*

Ritual *consecrate*

Spiritual Arrows **◆◆** (divine, evocation) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The shrine maiden nocks an arrow and whispers a chant before unleashing a torrent of holy power in the form of dozens of ghostly glowing arrows. Creatures in a 60-foot line take 10d6 force damage (DC 28 basic Reflex save). On a critical failure, the creature is also immobilized (Escape DC 28) for 1 minute.

Twang **◆◆** (divine, evocation, manipulate, sonic) The shrine maiden strums her bowstring, creating a pulse of energy that lashes out at a target within 20 feet. That creature must attempt a DC 28 Fortitude save.

Critical Success No effect.

Success The target is pushed 5 feet back from the shrine maiden.

Failure The target is pushed 10 feet back from the shrine maiden and falls prone.

Critical Failure The target is flung 15 feet away from the shrine maiden, falls prone, and is slowed 1 for 1 round.

C4. STABLES

TRIVIAL 9

The second paragraph assumes the creature in the fifth stall remains present. Omit it or adjust it as needed if the PCs can see through darkness.

Low fences partition off five pens along the northwest wall of this room. The first two pens by the entrance are occupied by sturdy, shaggy horses, while the other three are empty save for strewn beds of hay. A ladder to the north leads up to a small door that's located in the wall fifteen feet off the ground.

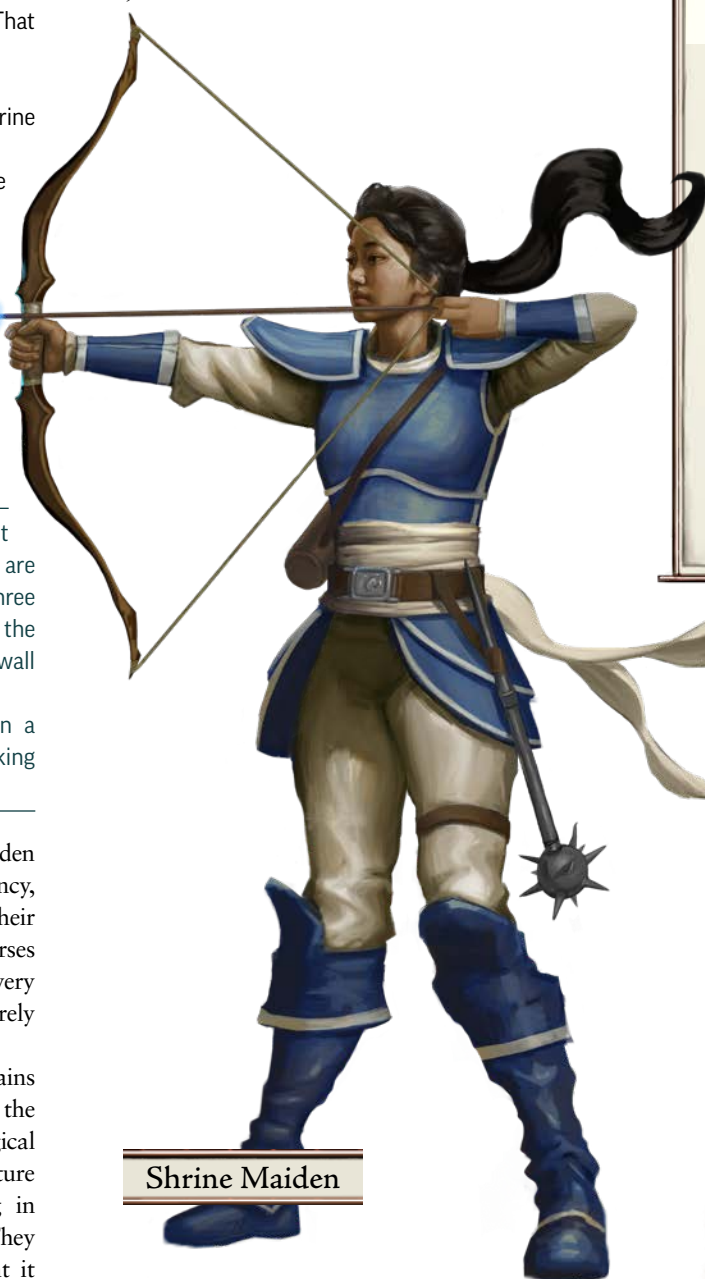
The southern portion of the room is shrouded in a mysterious darkness from which a strange soft clicking sound emanates.

While combat trained, these two steeds are only ridden when a speedy messenger is needed or in an emergency, and since the shrine maidens arrived in the fortress, their access to *sending* spells has rendered these two horses even less useful for swift messages. The horses are very skittish but not a threat to the PCs; they're merely unnerved by the occupant of the furthest stall.

Creature: The stall furthest from the entrance contains a creature far stranger than a mere horse. Here, the mercenaries have captured and kept a strange magical beast known as a shimmerthief, a lizard-like creature Mago Kai and his mercenaries discovered living in the ruins of Willowshore when they first arrived. They managed to capture the creature alive and brought it

back here, where they've kept the beast both as a pet and because chief exorcist Cao Chen is intrigued by it.

What none of them realize is that the creature is intelligent and can speak, although no one in the fortress speaks any of the languages the shimmerthief knows; instead, they've mistaken its attempts to communicate for "weird monster sounds." Unlike the horses, the shimmerthief has been chained into place in its stable stall, its body bound in several iron chains that keep it immobilized. It's also muzzled tightly to keep it from making those weird noises (and also from talking) or using its Unnerving Shriek. It can move about inside its stall, but that's it.



Shrine Maiden

No Breath to Cry

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Chen perceives the shimmerthief as an opportunity to diversify their forces, as the creature thrives in darkness (where evil often lurks). His theory that the creature's ability to consume light might be altered so that it can consume undead energy is unusual, but the more others scoff at the notion, the more Chen becomes convinced that he's on to something. Mago Kai remains unconvinced of the creature's worth, especially given its nature to issue frightening shrieks, but has so far allowed Chen to keep the creature alive.

The shimmerthief can't cast its innate spells while it's muzzled, but its gleam theft aura keeps the area around it quite dark. It starts as unfriendly toward the PCs, though it's extremely innocent in nature, closer to a puppy than a wary human. As it only speaks Draconic, it's possible (as with the fortress's current occupants) that the PCs can't communicate with it.

If the PCs can communicate with the shimmerthief, they are able to learn its sad tale. Releasing it from its chains requires unlocking them (either with the key carried by Chen, or via four DC 25 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock), Forcing Open the chains with a DC 25 Athletics check, or destroying them (Hardness 5, HP 20 [BT 10]). Freeing the shimmerthief automatically adjusts its attitude up one step toward helpful.

If the PCs make the shimmerthief at least friendly, the creature agrees to help them. While it can accompany and fight alongside them, the shimmerthief would prefer (and suggests) an alternative—to skulk around the fortress and torment and frighten its captors. If the PCs allow this option, the shimmerthief's actions automatically add a Terror Point at the rate of 1 per hour for the next 4 hours, after which the creature is discovered and chased off or perhaps slain (at your whim). Canny PCs can make excellent use of the shimmerthief's abilities in area C11.

If the PCs free the shimmerthief but don't establish communication with it, the creature flees the area but, at your discretion, might return to help the PCs out at a later point during the adventure.

If attacked, the monster fights back if it can, but it flees the region if reduced to fewer than 40 Hit Points.

SHIMMERTHIEF

CREATURE 7

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Initiative Perception +15

WAR HORSES (2)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 209

Initiative Perception +6

Reward: If the PCs release and recruit the shimmerthief, grant them 80 XP.

C5. COMMON BARRACKS

Neatly arranged bunk beds, each with a small footlocker, line the walls of this curved room. A ladder in the southwest corner leads up to a small door in the wall about fifteen feet off the ground.

This room is used by the mercenaries and exorcists to rest and relax in. The footlockers contain uniforms, toiletries, and other personal items.

Creatures: In all, there are nine mercenary enforcers and seven exorcists stationed at Karahai. During the day, this room is empty, but at night, they all (save for Cao Chen and Pan Fenfang, who have their own chambers elsewhere) return here to sleep.

Terror 7: All of the mercenary enforcers in the fort who still live return to this room, lock the door, then barricade themselves in. With a successful DC 25 Athletics check, a PC can Force Open the door (this DC increases to 30 if the door is locked).

MERCENARY ENFORCERS (UP TO 9)

CREATURE 6

Warden (*Gamemastery Guide* 225)

Initiative Perception +12

C6. DINING ROOM

MODERATE 9

This area is large dining room containing two low tables in the middle of the room and a long dining shelf along the southwest wall. Numerous cushions have been arranged along the tables and the shelf, providing several places to sit and relax.

Creatures: During the day, five mercenary enforcers relax here, enjoying food or playing tile games with each other. The room is empty at night; if the PCs infiltrate the fortress during mealtime, more of the fortress's occupants might be encountered here. Attacking this room during mealtime grants 1 Terror Point.

Terror 3: The mercenaries in this room relocate to area C12c, lock the gates, and stand guard within.

Terror 7: The mercenaries in this room relocate to area C5 and barricade themselves in.

MERCENARY ENFORCERS (5)


CREATURE 6

Warden (*Gamemastery Guide* 225)

Initiative Perception +12

C7. KITCHEN

This room has red tiled floors and smoke-stained earthen walls. A brick stove sits against the eastern wall, and the northern side of the room has two large windows for ventilation. Heavy pots and pans hang from wooden pegs,



and a large wooden cupboard contains clay bowls and dried spices.

Creatures: A pair of cooks are busy at work during the day, rolling dough, steaming dumplings, and otherwise preparing food. As night falls, they return to their homes in the village. Frightening these two servants is an easy task, and the way they carry on as they flee adds 1 Terror Point to the fortress.

Terror 2: The servants abandon their duties here and return to their homes in the village.

SERVANTS (2)

CREATURE -1

Gamemastery Guide 222

Initiative Perception +9

Treasure: A search of the cabinets turns up a fair amount of supplies for brewing magical tea; in all, there's 150 gp worth of raw materials kept here. Three heavy, well-seasoned cast iron woks can be found hanging from hooks. Each wok is 1 Bulk, is worth 50 gp, and functions as a sterling artisan's tool for Crafting checks to cook meals in them.

C8. LUMBER STORAGE

The walls of this long, curving room are stacked with logs, lumber, and planks of all shapes and sizes, most of them covered in dust. Two ladders, one to the east and one to the south, lead up to small doors in the wall that are located fifteen feet off the ground.

When Mago Kai first arrived in the area, he had dozens of woodcutters with him, and he intended to get them to work processing lumber from Willowshore immediately. When the state of the ruined town became apparent, however, he instead had them work on less viable trees closer to Karahai. By the end of summer, he realized that this lumber was too inferior to justify the cost and sent his woodcutters back home to Sze; the lumber stored here represents what they've managed to harvest so far. Some of it was used to partially repair Karahai Bridge, but most of it has just been gathering dust for the past several months.

The lumber is dry, and if the PCs start a fire here, the arson unsettles the fortress's occupants; this grants 1 Terror Point. The fortress's earthen walls contain the fire, but the loss of what little lumber they've gathered so far frustrates Kai in particular; the next time he's encountered, his frustration is apparent and imparts a -1 circumstance penalty to all of his saving throws against emotion effects.

Treasure: Despite its mismatched nature, the lumber here could go a long way toward fully repairing Karahai Bridge (which is addressed in the next adventure). If the PCs spend 10 minutes Searching here, they'll notice a *greater thunderbird tuft* (*Secrets of Magic* 169) lying apparently forgotten amid the lumber stacks in the northern part of the room. To the south, they find a similarly neglected +2 *striking handaxe*.

C9. PURIFICATION ROOM

MODERATE 9

A stone platform with a five-foot-diameter stone basin built into it sits against the far wall of this room. The basin is filled with clear water, and several bamboo ladles are arranged nearby. A painted ink scroll depicting a sparrow as it perches on the back of a throne hangs on the wall. A blue-skinned woman sits on the throne, her gaze ever watchful.

The water in the basin is regularly purified by the shrine maidens for use by visitors to cleanse themselves before proceeding on to the shrine to the southeast. The scroll on the wall depicts Pharasma on her throne in the Boneyard. A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Religion check to Recall Knowledge is aware of this information, while on a critical success, they know that the basin is used to purify their hands by ladling water onto them.

A PC can perform ablutions here as a 1-minute activity. Doing so might grant them a gift from Pharasma (see Treasure entry on page 54), but regardless, once per week, this activity also causes a sense of foreboding to settle over the other inhabitants of the fortress, granting 1 Terror Point.

Hazard: If the PCs seriously offended the visiting nosois when the birds visited Willowshore in **Event 11: Nosois' Brunch** (page 33), the vengeful nosois use their contacts and the sacred nature of this shrine to Pharasma to create the following hazard. A PC can avoid being noticed by the hazard for 1 round by Sneaking with a successful DC 29 Stealth check.

NOSOIS' VENGEANCE

HAZARD 11

COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +23 (master)

Description The sparrow on the scroll animates, speaking to the PCs in Noguchi's voice (one of the nosois from **Event 11: Nosois' Brunch**): "They're the ones! They're the blasphemers who can't even properly serve tea! Send them along to the Lady!"

Disable DC 36 Thievery (to quickly destroy the scroll without triggering the hazard), DC 33 Religion (to apologize to Pharasma and the nosois for the previous insult), or *dispel magic* (6th level; counteract DC 29).

No Breath to Cry

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Summon Vanths

➤ (conjunction, divine, summon) **Trigger** One of the PCs enters the room and is noticed by the hazard; **Effect** The trap summons four vanths, who then roll initiative and remain for up to 1 minute before the spell ends and the vanths disappear. The summoned vanths can use 3 actions each round and can use reactions, unlike most summoned creatures.

VANTHS (4)

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 210

Initiative Perception +15

Treasure: If the PCs pleased the nosois during **Event 11: Nosois' Brunch** by achieving at least six successes, the psychopomps have arranged for a boon—but a PC must spend 1 minute performing ablutions using water from the basin before the scroll to purify themselves to receive this boon. A PC who does so hears the sound of sparrows singing, then receives in their freshly washed hands one of the following (choose the item that the PC will gain the most use out of): a moderate elixir of life, a pouch containing a dose of *dust of disappearance*, a *rebound fulu* (*Secrets of Magic* 160), or a scroll of a useful 5th-level spell from that PC's magical tradition.

Reward: If no trap awaits the PCs here because they did well in appeasing the nosois, grant them XP as if they'd defeated the summoned vanths in combat.

C10. SHRINE ANTECHAMBER

This stone room is lit by thirty white wax candles that burn along narrow shelves to either side. A raised circular dais sits in the center of the floor, with a carved decorative ring surrounding it. Hundreds of long paper talismans and shide hang like curtains around this ring.

Treasure: If the PCs Search the hanging shide and talismans for 10 minutes, they'll find a *greater spirit-sealing fulu* (*Secrets of Magic* 160).

C11. SHRINE

SEVERE 9

Assuming the PCs already endured **Event 12: The Seance**, they'll automatically recognize this room.

This room is dimly lit by burning torches, and a massive bronze temple bell hangs from the center of the chamber. Five small, empty bird cages are placed around the sides of the room, and the bell's mouth flickers with a pale, eerie radiance.

The PCs automatically recognize the glow issuing from within the bell as the same glow emitted by Willowshore's *Eternal Lantern*.

Creatures: Cao Chen and a shrine maiden are present in this room. The shrine maiden busies herself with cleaning and meditation while Cao Chen kneels in prayer near the hanging bell. If either of them spot the PCs, they attack at once, interpreting the PCs as evil spirits come for vengeance.

If the PCs brought Cao Chen up to Influence 4 during the seance, however, the senior exorcist recognizes them as the spirits he spoke with earlier. With a raised hand, he stays the shrine maiden's attack. He then asks the PCs to step out of the room into the antechamber (area C10) to speak. If the PCs turn him down, he sighs sadly, and he and the shrine maiden attack.

If the PCs speak with Chen, he listens to further warnings about Kugaptee and pleas to deactivate the warding bell, but he warns the PCs that it will be difficult to dissuade Mago Kai. Chen isn't willing to

betray his current employer, as Kai's resources and influence allow him and his exorcists to work within Shenmen with fewer political complications. The exorcist also feels like it would be more pragmatic to stay with Kai and reseal Kugaptee rather than simply convincing the lumber lord to leave and just hope things work out. If he's informed that Kugaptee has corrupted one of the exorcists, Chen becomes alarmed—he isn't willing to act only on the PCs' word but also isn't willing to brush their warnings aside without investigating. Chen sends the shrine maiden to warn Kai and then investigate while telling the PCs to stay where Chen can see them. If the PCs wait patiently as ordered, Kai comes to speak to them in person in 15 minutes, as detailed on page 90.

CAO CHEN

CREATURE 9

LN male human elite exorcist (page 48, *Pathfinder Bestiary* 6)

Initiative Perception +18

SHRINE MAIDEN

CREATURE 9

Page 50

Initiative Perception +20

Hazard: Close proximity to the warding bell exposes the PCs to its sacred aura, causing them to take damage so long as they remain in its presence. Without the bell's ringer, which is carried by Mago Kai, deactivating or destroying it is difficult.



Nosoi Scroll

WARDING BELL

HAZARD 11

COMPLEX MAGICAL

Stealth +0

Description At the heart of the shrine hangs a massive bronze temple bell.

Disable Ringing the bell as an Interact action eight times in succession with the ceremonial ringer (carried by Mago Kai) over the course of three consecutive rounds automatically deactivates the hazard, DC 36 Thievery to extinguish the flame within the bell, DC 36 Religion to appeal to Pharasma to extinguish the flame, or *dispel magic* or a shimmerthief's Drain Light (6th level; counteract DC 29)

AC 31; Fort +24, Ref +18

Hardness 20; **HP** 80 (BT 40); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Flare Up ☞ The warding bell's light increases from a faint flickering to luminous enough that the whole room is brightly lit. The hazard then rolls initiative.

Routine (1 action; divine, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental) The warding bell emits a harrowing ring that can be heard only by undead or transmigrated PCs in area **C11**; affected characters must attempt a DC 30 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected and is temporarily immune to the warding bell's routine for 24 hours.

Success The creature is unaffected.

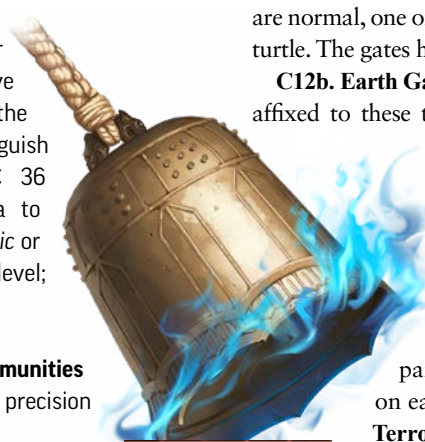
Failure The creature becomes frightened 1 and takes 6d6 mental damage.

Critical Failure The creature becomes frightened 2, takes 12d6 mental damage, and is fleeing as long as it remains frightened.

Reset Reactivating the warding bell requires a complicated rite taking several days.

Reward: If the PCs disable the warding bell, they not only earn experience for the act, but doing so also disables the ghost-proof walls of the fortress (see Karahai Features on page 48). Once the warding bell is disabled, Karahai's Terror Points increase to 3 if they aren't there already, and can't be reduced below 3 for the remainder of this adventure.

Grant the PCs 80 XP for achieving this—one of two tasks required to transmigrate Willowshore back to the living world. Increase this XP reward to 120 XP if they do so without destroying the warding bell, as the sacred bell could be a boon for them once they begin the next adventure.



Warding Bell

C12. INNER GATES

Each of these areas is covered and fenced in on either side by stout wooden walls fitted with gates.

C12a. Inner Water Gate: The black paint on the two gates into this area appears fresher and less weathered than those at area **C2a**. Oddly, while three of the hinges are normal, one on each is designed to look like a smiling turtle. The gates here are always kept closed and locked.

C12b. Earth Gate: A pair of decorative cow horns are affixed to these two gates. If used as handholds, they reduce the Athletics check to Climb over the gate to DC 15. These gates are kept closed; they're also locked once the fortress reaches Terror Threshold 3.

C12c. Small Wood Gate: These gates are left open; when shut, a painted image of a chicken is discernible on each.

Terror 3: Earth Gate and Small Wood Gate are both closed and locked. The five mercenaries from area **C6** stand guard within Small Wood Gate, ready to confront anyone who attempts to enter here or to step into the garden (area **C22**) to confront intruders therein.

Terror 7: Any mercenaries on guard at Small Wood Gate retreat to the barracks (area **C5**).

MERCENARY ENFORCERS (5)

CREATURE 6

Warden (*Gamemastery Guide* 225)

Initiative Perception +12

C13. BATH

TRIVIAL 9

In contrast to the rest of the fortress, the floor of this room is set with tiles. They form a design of concentric circles on the floor and appear to be freshly cleaned. Three bamboo stalls containing squat toilets stand to the northwest, while to the southeast is a large pool for bathing.

Creature: Sha Guanghao, one of the three exorcists who were present for **Event 12: The Seance**, is here. His hunched figure scrubs vigorously at the floor with a small brush, and his spear and unlit torch rest against the northeastern door frame. If confronted, he brandishes the brush like a weapon and declares, "Stay back! I am adept in the mysteries of the universe. With the slightest glance, I can send you straight to the Boneyard!" With a successful DC 19 Perception check to Sense Motive, a PC discerns that Guanghao is all bluster. If he's attacked, he fights back despite his disadvantages. His poor grasp of his own limits means he inadvertently fights to the death.

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On the other hand, if the PCs brought Sha Guanghao up to Influence 4 during the seance, he'll recognize the PCs as the spirits he and the others spoke to earlier. He hesitates, then lowers his brush and reflexively rubs the back of his head, saying, "Wait a minute, Master Cao said you can't be here. How are you here?" Assuming the PCs don't attack or threaten him, Guanghao is willing to answer some questions, albeit with difficulty. Some likely responses are listed below.

Why are you here? "Because I've got great spiritual powers. Real prodigy with that stuff. No lie."

But why are you here scrubbing? "Oh, that. It, uh, builds spiritual energy. Lets me 'cultivate my spirit,'" Guanghao says, repeating the last phrase in a rote monotone. He stares at the floor. "That kind of stuff. At least that's what Master Cao says."

What can you tell us about Master Cao? "Knows a lot of stuff for an old man. Surprisingly fast hands." Guanghao rubs his head once again.

What can you tell us about the fortress? "If memory serves, the foundation was laid down by Imperial Lung Wa about a thousand years ago to rein in the local bandits. Or was it ten thousand years? Anyway, a long time ago. Yeah."

What can you tell us about the current state of the fortress? "It's okay, I guess. The food is all right, especially if you get in the first service. Some of the new mercenaries snore, but if you drop a cloth over their head, you can barely hear it."

What can you tell us about Mago Kai? "The big man? He's pretty tough. Saved me from a giant spider once. I say 'saved,' but I totally had that thing to rights, you know. But it was still kind of amazing to see him throw that big axe of his; he sliced the bug right in half!"

Have you seen a large bronze bell? "Uh, yes. You were there a few weeks ago. You aren't too bright, are you?"

Where is the bell? "In the shrine, of course." He points through the water closet's door to the one down the hall. "Through there, make a right, then head through a couple more doors. You can't miss it."

What happened to the *Eternal Lantern's* flame? "The big man took it and placed it in the bell; you'd have to talk to him to find out more, I suppose."

While Guanghao's answers are mostly less than helpful, he can be convinced to do just about any task with a successful DC 24 Deception check to Lie or a DC 27 Diplomacy check to Request, as long as the task doesn't involve directly harming any fortress residents.

SHA GUANGHAO

CN male human weak exorcist (page 48, *Pathfinder Bestiary* 6)

Initiative Perception +14

CREATURE 7

Reward: If the PCs manage to learn information about the fortress from Sha Guanghao, grant them XP as if they'd defeated him in combat. If they get him to help with a task, grant them an additional 40 XP.

C14. GENERAL STORAGE

SEVERE 9

This shelf-filled room contains an eclectic mess of anything that might be useful but doesn't have its own dedicated space, such as lumber saws, maintenance equipment, bundles of branches, animal pelts, dried bamboo stalks, and clay for patching up holes in the walls.

Creatures: The first time the PCs visit this room, and assuming the fortress's Terror Threshold is lower than 6, three of Mago Kai's exorcists are gathered here, including Pan Fenfang, one of the exorcists who was present during **Event 12: The Seance**. These three exorcists comprise the total of Fenfang's secret cult.

If the PCs avoid being detected, they can eavesdrop on the trio; they'll recognize Fenfang's voice from the seance. Fenfang speaks to one exorcist, who looks nervous, while the third stands intently a few paces behind Fenfang, his spear in hand. The conversation lasts for a few minutes; each minute, all PCs eavesdropping on the conversation must succeed at a DC 26 Stealth check to Avoid Notice and a DC 22 Perception check to hear the quiet conversation. With each minute's success, the PCs learn more, as detailed below.

- **1st Minute:** Fenfang has the nervous exorcist confirm that he is tired of Master Cao's leadership and is eager to hear what Fenfang has to say.
- **2nd Minute:** Fenfang asks the nervous exorcist to swear not to reveal what she's about to tell him under punishment of death, the nervous exorcist agrees, and the intent exorcist breathes a sigh of relief and adopts a less antagonistic stance, raising his spear.
- **3rd Minute:** Fenfang tells the nervous exorcist that she and her ally have been receiving visions from a spirit named Sui-Jing, once a powerful holy woman who died in the area long ago.
- **4th Minute:** Fenfang goes on to explain that Sui-Jing's spirit is trapped below a towering tree beyond the ruins of Willowshore, and that if the nervous exorcist joins with them in their plan to set Sui-Jing free, he'll be able to share in the great rewards Sui-Jing promised in her visions.
- **5th Minute:** The nervous exorcist agrees and joins the cult; Fenfang tells him to return to his duties and that they'll later speak further about a plan to take control of the fort's resources and focus their

efforts on freeing Sui-Jing. Fenfang then retreats to her quarters (area C16), while the other two exorcists head to the dining hall (area C6).

If at any point Fenfang notices the PCs, she confronts them, and upon noticing their eerie, otherworldly appearances, she accuses them of being evil spirits and orders her exorcist allies to help her destroy them while she steps back to observe the fight. While Fenfang carries a spear and torch just like the other exorcists, she doesn't attack with them—for she isn't really Fenfang at all. At some point between the seance and this new meeting with the PCs, Fenfang's corruption by Kugaptee reached a tragic conclusion when she headed into the woods one night. She found a private place where no one else could see and attempted to fight Kugaptee back, only to be attacked, murdered, and replaced by an akashti nindoru that was able to manifest in the area (ironically as a result of Fenfang's unwavering belief).

Now disguised in Fenfang's body, the akashti supports the other exorcists in a fight by casting spells from a distance, starting with *illusory creature* to make it appear as if she summoned a Medium serpentine dragon to join the fight at her side. If Fenfang takes 10 points of damage, that damage causes her manifested body to decay away from her frame, revealing her true form. She howls in rage, and if any exorcists remain alive at this point, they flee the battle at once. If they escape, word of Fenfang's horrific transformation spreads through the fortress, adding 3 Terror Points.

Terror 6: The storage room is empty; Fenfang has retreated to her quarters with her two exorcist allies until the danger has passed.

"FENFANG" CREATURE 10

Akashti nindoru (page 82)

Initiative Perception +17

EXORCISTS (2) CREATURE 8

Page 48

Initiative Perception +16

Reward: Each minute of information the PCs discover grants a 10 XP reward, for a total reward of 50 XP if they overhear the full five minutes.

C15. SHRINE MAIDEN QUARTERS MODERATE 9

This room contains a small oven, three bed rolls, a pair of cupboards, a small shrine to Pharasma, and a bronze gong set against the wall.

Creatures: The shrine maidens stationed here at Karahai have little interest in Willowshore or Mago

Kai's plans for the ruins, having agreed to work for him solely in return for permission to develop the fortress into a temple to Pharasma once Kai moves on to Willowshore. In return, their aid and advice has been instrumental in helping him to protect the fortress; it was they who suggested stealing the *Eternal Lantern's* flame (an act the shrine maidens instead regard as liberating a lost cause from obscurity). The three shrine maidens each work an 8-hour shift guarding the warding bell, while the other two rest and pray here in their quarters. They regard the intruding PCs as manifestations of the evil spirits of the region at worst, or lost spirits at best—regardless, their reaction to the PCs is to put them down as quickly as possible so they can move on to Pharasma's embrace.

Terror 4: These two shrine maidens exit the room to patrol the periphery path (area C3).

SHRINE MAIDENS (2) CREATURE 9

Page 50

Initiative Perception +20

Treasure: A search turns up a *scroll of heal* (5th-level), two *scrolls of remove curse*, four *scrolls of restoration* (4th-level), and a *scroll of sending*.

C16. FENFANG'S CHAMBERS LOW 9

The furniture is sparse, with only a wooden cupboard serving as storage for clothing and books. Dyed woven mats cover the floor, and the walls are decorated with painted religious icons of Pharasma and Tsukiyo. The bed is made out of a clay slab that's set over an oven, allowing it to be heated during the evenings.

This room belonged to the exorcist Fenfang but now belongs to the akashti nindoru who replaced her. While the nindoru disposed of most of Fenfang's remains in the woods after killing her, she "sentimentally" decided to keep the skull as a trophy. She keeps it hidden within the oven built into the bed, where it can be discovered automatically by anyone who Searches the room.

Terror 6: Fenfang and her two exorcists relocate to this room for safety from area C14. If the PCs haven't had a chance to eavesdrop on their conversation there, consider giving them a chance to do so here.

Treasure: Tucked into a book titled *Grandmasters of Quain* is a *scroll of vampiric exsanguination*.

C17. CHEN'S CHAMBERS TRIVIAL 9

The chamber's bed is a simple mat and blanket on the floor. Neat, lacquered altars and a variety of exorcist implements

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rest on shelves to the north and south, while a small bronze gong sits in the northwest corner. A large painted drum hangs from the ceiling in the center of the room.

This room belongs to Cao Chen, Mago Kai's senior exorcist; he returns to this chamber to sleep for a few hours each night but has spent most of his time of late at the shrine (area C11).

Treasure: Hanging from a peg in the bedroom is an elegant incense holder that functions as a *moderate thurible of revelation*.

C18. ARMORY

Racks of swords, spears, and axes split the majority of this room into aisles. Thick, plated armor sits on wooden dummies against the far wall in between the racks, black shields hanging from a few of their arms. Two large war drums sit on the floor. Next to the drums are barrels filled with arrows and crossbow bolts. A workbench in the southwest corner is covered in neatly arranged maintenance tools. At one side is a foot pedal grindstone, while at the other are a small forge and anvil.

Treasure: Most of the items stored here are non-magical weapons and armor of mundane quality, but among the armaments, a PC who Searches can discover a +2 *striking jiu huan dao* (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault* 25), a pair of flasks each containing a dose of *aligned oil (good)*, and a silk cloth wrapped around three *storm arrows*.

More distressingly, the same search turns up fragments of broken metal on the ground around the forge; any PC can identify these fragments as having come from the *Eternal Lantern's* fuel receptacle, suggesting that someone has used the key part of the artifact as base metals to forge something new.

C19. JAIL

These jail cells are wretched and sparsely furnished, with a simple metal bed pan and a woven rush mat as the only furnishings in each.

Each of these cell doors can be Forced Open with a successful DC 28 Athletics check, opened with three DC 25 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock, or unlocked with the Karahai skeleton key carried by Mago Kai.

Creatures: Hu Deming, a villager from Karahai, is currently the only prisoner incarcerated here. He's chained to the floor in the northeastern cell, with a square of wooden boards fastened around his neck. Deming threw a fish at Kai when the lumber baron

took over the fortress and has been imprisoned here ever since. While he's wary of the PCs' intentions, especially considering their strange, ghostly nature, his current condition leaves no opportunity to hide or flee. He agrees to tell them what he knows in exchange for his freedom. Alternatively, a PC who succeeds at a DC 23 Deception check to Lie can get him to open up without intending to follow through on a promise to release him, but once Deming realizes he has been betrayed, or if the PCs fail to Coerce him, he starts yelling for help. If he does so, any patrol on the periphery ring comes to check on him in 1d4 minutes.

While Deming talks the PCs' ears off if given the chance, in reality, his information is limited by his many months of incarceration. He doesn't know how buildings have been repurposed since Mago Kai moved in. Some likely questions and their responses are listed below.

What are you in here for? "Nothing much, really; just got a little rowdy when that blundering ox Kai had the gall to tell me to get out of my own shop."

What can you tell us about the fortress? "Plenty, worked here all my life. Until Kai got here earlier in the year, that is. Fishmongering's a smelly business, but someone's got to do it, right?" Deming gives an exaggerated wink. "It's a pretty simple design. Like a big wheel. Shops all around. Stables to the northwest, pig pen just east of here if I recall."

What can you tell us about Mago Kai? "That greedy, blockheaded, thieving son of a sow? Sure thing! He's a pig's head shoved up a horse's rear, with plenty of bristles on his face to scrub out the insides. He's a soggy softshell turtle. A fish-eyed, scrambled-up egg. His parents would have been better off if his mother had given birth to a chunk of roasted pork. He's two coppers out of a gold coin." Deming continues on in this tirade for at least five minutes, his language growing more colorful and citing more anatomical impossibilities, before he circles back to useful information. "He claims to be some kind of lord from Sze. Doesn't care about us; just whatever lumber and wealth he can squeeze. Carries around a big axe, but I doubt he even knows how to swing it."

Have you seen a large bronze bell? "Uh, let me think. Yeah, they might have had something matching that description on a cart when they first arrived. Banged on it a bit when they first arrived, but not since. Something that fancy is probably locked up in the vault. Southern inner building in the fort. Watch out, though; I heard talk of a drunken soldier wandering in there and being simultaneously dismembered and having their head bashed in for their trouble."

What about Kai's followers? "Can't say I care for any of them personally, on account of them being

that oaf's lackey. But when the big bad yokai comes a-knocking, I'd be lying if I said I didn't want these 'virtuous defenders of the light' standing guard. Well, most of them anyway."

Most of them? "There's something strange going on. A few of the priests have been sneaking around, whispering when they think no one is listening." A shiver goes down the man's spine. "I'm no expert, but there's just something wrong about the whole thing. Something evil. The one with the scar on her cheek seems to be the ringleader of them."

Terror 6: Deming has been stewing in his paranoia about the terrible noises he's been hearing outside of his cell. If he sees the PCs, he lets out a bloodcurdling shriek, adding 1 Terror Point to the total. This alerts the patrol on the periphery ring, in the same manner as it would if Deming had called for help. Of course, as he's imprisoned, he can't exactly escape the ghosts; the PCs can question him as above without having to bargain with him, though his answers involve a lot more crying and begging.

HU DEMING

CREATURE -1

Male human merchant (*Gamemastery Guide* 244)

Initiative Perception +6

Reward: If the PCs rescue Hu Deming and learn his information, grant them 80 XP.

C20. KAI'S QUARTERS

TRIVIAL 9

In contrast to the rest of the fortress, a modicum of luxury graces this room. While nothing particularly ostentatious catches the eye, these personal chambers feature solid and polished wooden furniture. Folding screens displaying elegant hunting scenes give parts of the room a nod toward privacy, and a smoking charcoal burner against the north wall provides heat, giving the area a pleasant smell and warmth. Two low tables, one set with a tea service and snacks and another covered with scrolls, sit in the western portion of the room, while to the east the chamber seems more akin to a bedroom. A large iron door with an imposing lock sits in the eastern wall, while a pair of expensive-looking axes adorn the walls to either side of it.

This chamber, once used as the fort commander's chambers (a position that had remained vacant since the fall of Lung Wa), now serves the same purpose for Mago Kai. The scattered scrolls on the table outline his plans for Willowshore's ruins, running from exorcism to razing much of the ruins and then rebuilding a more efficient and industrial logging compound on the town's bones. Several notes map out potential

regions nearby that might supply rare timber "that will certainly appease Governor Chou Mingxia for at least a year." Among these sites, the grove west of town where the Tan Sugi grows seems of particular interest.

Of more immediate significance is a codex that describes the use of a protective item called a warding bell. The method to activate the bell consists of a series of chants, offerings, and rhythmic rings, coinciding with the casting of a *consecrate* ritual. The notes include the method by which Kai, the shrine maidens, and the exorcists extracted the fuel receptacle from Willowshore's *Eternal Lantern*, then reformed the metal into a ringer for the bell that would imbue it, through proper rites and sacrifice, with a sort of "inversion" of the protection the flame within it afforded Willowshore. This power instead helps to keep the spirits of Willowshore trapped so they can't easily spread from the ruins. Fortunately for the PCs, the notes also describe how the ringer can be used to disarm the warding bell by striking it eight times in succession.

Creatures: The four elegant axes mounted on the walls on opposite sides of the door to area C21 are no mere decorations. If any creature enters the room while Kai isn't present, the four axes suddenly animate and swoop to attack, flying through the air as if wielded by invisible warriors. If Kai is in the room, he issues a brief command and snaps his fingers; with an Interact action, he can command the axes to attack all creatures in the room save himself.

The four axes function as animated objects. If destroyed, they drop to the ground and shatter as



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if made from glass. Until then, the axes fight any intruders in this room until defeated; they don't pursue foes out of the area.

ANIMATED AXES (4) CREATURE 5

LN TINY CONSTRUCT MINDLESS

Variant animated object (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 20)

Perception +9; darkvision

Skills Acrobatics +13

Str +5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -5

AC 23 (19 when broken); **Fort** +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +7

HP 65; **Hardness** 8; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious

Construct Armor As animated broom, but reduced to AC 19 when broken.

Speed fly 20 feet

Melee ♦ battle axe +14 (sweep); **Damage** 1d8+7 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed

Terror 7: Mago Kai retreats to his room for safety. As in area C22, he'll first try to speak with the PCs, but if battle ensues, he fights to the bitter end.

C21. TREASURY MODERATE 9

The iron door to this room is kept locked; the only key that can open it is the Karahai fortress key Mago Kai carries. Otherwise, a character can Force it Open with a successful DC 30 Athletics check or unlock it with four DC 30 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock.

At first glance, the room appears somewhat underwhelming, as its shelves and displays are mostly empty. Unadorned wooden chests sit on the central shelf, while a haphazardly placed idol depicting Kofusachi stands almost as an afterthought on the southeastern shelf.

Treasure: All of Kai's resources and funds are kept within the chests. While he has used up most of his initial funding and resources getting set up in Karahai and on his initial attempts to reclaim Willowshore, what remains here is still significant. Within the chests can be found folded bolts of silk, slats of ivory, bronze vessels, and boat-shaped silver ingots stacked on top of one another. In the event of an emergency, the simple square chests can easily be packed onto lumber wagons and carried out of the fortress. The contents of the treasury amount to a collection of silver ingots, ivory,

and silk worth 1,400 gp total, along with a *fire-jump ring* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 260).

C22. GARDEN MODERATE 9

A beautifully tended garden occupies the fortress's central courtyard, a covered well at the center. Several well-pruned cotton trees dot the area at aesthetically pleasing intervals. Their branches are currently bare, giving the impression of jagged spines reaching up toward the sky. A colorful canopy has been erected on poles in the southern part of the garden, under which rugs, a chair, and a table set with tea and snacks has been set up.



Creature: Mago Kai has grown fond of this garden and thinks of the cotton trees almost as a captive audience. While he waits out the winter for his exorcists to finally make Willowshore safe for reclaiming, he spends much of his time here, relaxing with his favorite novels, enjoying tea, or working out his springtime harvest plans once the weather breaks. He finds the brisk winter air bracing, and the canopy keeps the rain away. Since his followers understand he values his privacy, he's most likely encountered here, alone, by the PCs (unless they've been a bit too exuberant in spreading terror through the fortress).

Upon spotting the PCs, Kai leaps up from his chair, perhaps spilling a cup of tea as he reaches for his axe, but then pauses. He has been updated regularly by his exorcists, and even if the PCs haven't accumulated a single point of Terror yet, he recognizes them as spirits from Willowshore. The fact that they've made it this far, despite the warding bell's influence, is all he needs as a warning that these spirits are potentially dangerous foes, and so he hopes to solve this initial encounter with words rather than his axe. If the PCs agree to speak to him, see his NPC entry on page 90 for what they might be able to learn.

If the PCs show any hostility, Kai doesn't hesitate to respond in kind. If brought below 100 Hit Points, he attempts to regroup in his quarters.


Terror 7: Kai retreats to his quarters in area C22 for safety.

MAGO KAI CREATURE 11

Page 91

Initiative Perception +20

Reward: If the PCs convince Mago Kai to help without having to fight him, grant them XP as if



they'd defeated him in combat, and then grant them additional XP for all of the exorcists, mercenaries, and shrine maidens who still live, as if they'd defeated those creatures in combat as well. (Regardless of how much XP the PCs might earn here, they shouldn't earn more than is needed to reach 10th level, but neither should they be penalized for efficient haunting!)

Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs gain the temple bell ringer from Mago Kai, they can easily deactivate the warding bell. As the temple bell ringer was forged from the metal fuel receptacle taken from the *Eternal Lantern*, the PCs feel an urge to return the bell ringer to the *Eternal Lantern* as soon as any of them touch it. If the ringer is placed within the *Eternal Lantern* in the ruins of Willowshore in the living world, the ringer instantly reverts back to its previous form as a receptacle and flares into light without the need for any offerings of coins. This done, the PCs need only wait until the first day of the lunar new year to begin their attempt at the 5th-level version of *transmigrate*. Whether they spend their remaining time in the living world as phantoms or return to the mindscape is up to them, but *transmigrate* must be cast from within the mindscape.

The sooner the PCs cast the ritual, the better, for the overall success of the ritual depends in part on how many Preparation Points the town of Willowshore still has once the ritual is cast. If some or all of these points have been reduced to zero, fewer citizens and buildings will make the transmigration, but if the PCs have enough points, the entire township will make the journey through time and space to return to the living world. See the beginning of the next, and final, adventure in the Season of Ghosts Adventure Path to bring the PCs and Willowshore back to life.

Though Willowshore's salvation might be just in sight, living isn't easy, and the town has many challenges still facing it in the days ahead. The love and effort that the villagers and heroes put into the town might help draw some of its spiritual presence into their new world, but Willowshore still needs to work hard to carve a place in a world that has long forgotten it. Worse yet, the political forces that could only hurt them in the abstract are now very present. Chou Mingxia's obsession with Willowshore's forests won't vanish alongside Mago Kai, and the jorogumo notice the sudden appearance of a new village before too long. The PCs have finally won their lives back from death. Now, it's up to them to protect their lives from the ambitions of the living.

REWARDS FOR PEACE

While this adventure assumes that Mago Kai perishes in a fight with the PCs and that they gain most of the treasure held in Karahai or carried by its defenders, the majority of the creatures found here aren't evil—they merely have plans for the region that ignorantly put the people of Willowshore in peril. However, the next adventure still assumes the PCs will be geared up as expected for 10th-level characters. If your PCs finish Chapter 3 and don't come out of it particularly richer for their efforts—as is likely the case if they negotiate a peaceful solution with Mago Kai—then when they return to Willowshore, they should be greeted by Shinzo on one of his final visits to the mindscape. While this meeting won't be the last time the PCs encounter the mysterious shinigami, it will be their last meeting with him in his role as a merchant. Shinzo congratulates them on finding a peaceful solution in Karahai, noting that even as a “god of death,” he appreciates when mortals find nonviolent solutions to violent conflicts. To prove his admiration, he grants each PC credit to shop among his items—the value of this credit should be enough to bring the PCs' gear up to where it should be for 10th-level characters (approximately 1,500 gp per PC, but feel free to adjust this up to a maximum of 3,000 gp per PC if you feel they're particularly resource poor).

RUNNING OUT OF TIME

The PCs have until their mindscape resets on the last day of spring to successfully cast the 5th-level version of *transmigrate*, but what happens if, for whatever reason, that's simply not enough time? Without being stopped, Mago Kai manages to chop down the Tan Sugi during the last week of spring, and as Kugaptee is released from death, he absorbs the Willowshore mindscape and all who dwell within it—there will be no reset, nor any afterlife for the PCs in this event.

If you want to continue into the next adventure anyway, you can have Shinzo step in to aid the PCs at the last minute to help them transmigrate. Doing so can slightly sour the experience in some group's minds, though, so be sure to communicate with your players if you want to pull this *deus ex machina* in your game, or ask them if the group would rather embrace a failure. Not every story needs to end in a win, and a grim, horrific ending to a horror-themed campaign might not be the worst thing in the world!

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Unlike most fiends, whose origins date back to the depths of time and often predate the very concept of mortal life itself, nindorus are a relatively new arrival on the cosmic stage. Though in time, their presence could potentially spread throughout all corners of reality. Historical documents suggest that the first nindorus came into being during the height of Tian Xia's Yixing empire over three thousand years ago. In that era, a human child was born to samsaran parents only to be given over to a human community shortly thereafter, as his parents hoped their son would live a harmonious existence and reincarnate into a samsaran body during his next life cycle. Instead, this child grew into an angry youth named Sigek who resented his parents for abandoning him. He sought them out as a young adult, but upon discovering his parents weren't even human, his bitterness swiftly bloomed to encompass all samsarans, especially those who followed Sangpotshi. Sigek demanded to know why enlightenment was only achievable via a slow process of death and rebirth, with karma serving as an arbitrary judge of a soul's fate.

As he matured, Sigek became obsessed with achieving perfection outside the cycle of Sangpotshi. He apprenticed himself to a host of powerful spellcasters, eventually entering into a lasting servitude under a lich named Nindoru. The lich filled the impressionable young man's mind with the possibilities of undeath, telling him it was a perfect state that could be achieved without sacrificing experience and wisdom to the laborious whims of reincarnation. Sigek was intrigued but concluded that a soul cage would be a vulnerability he could not afford. After five years of study, Sigek betrayed Nindoru and destroyed the lich, then stole his former master's soul cage for experimentation, keeping the lich's soul trapped within its cage for years. Over those years, Sigek gathered a sizable following of like-minded scholars and those who rejected the teachings of Sangpotshi, while increasingly venerating Fumeiyoshi, Tian Xia's patron of graves. In 4444 IC, Sigek led his sizable congregation in a blasphemous

ritual intended to force Nindoru's trapped soul to reincarnate into something new, something outside of the established cycle of life and death that, Sigek promised, would "Shatter the wheel of Sangpotshi and free us all from the cage of life and death."

Records of Sigek's plans to perform the ritual still exist, as well as documents chronicling his life before the date he chose to perform the rite. But after that fateful day, nothing can be found about Sigek, his experiments, or his cult. He and his followers simply seemed to have vanished, as if cast out of reality itself. Yet later that same year, the first accounts of nindoru fiends began to appear, and most agree that the timing of these two events is no coincidence. For centuries, it was believed that Sigek somehow managed to transform his supplicants into the first nindorus, and the fiends subsequently murdered their creator. But recent evidence has revealed the existence of nindoru demigods, including one bearing the name Sigek—perhaps a sign that the disillusioned human achieved a twisted version of enlightenment by transforming himself into an incarnation of his own destruction.

The most powerful of the nindorus themselves, of course, hold different beliefs, for they claim to have always existed beyond the creation of creation itself, and it was only Sigek's actions that finally allowed them into this cycle of reality—a cycle that the fiends now promise will be the last, for when they have had their way, only the nindorus will remain.

Appearance

The various types of nindorus have a wide variety of forms, yet all of them share certain features in common. The majority have vaguely humanoid shapes and are often mistaken for undead due to their emaciated frames, broken or disjointed limbs, and wound-like features. The uninitiated often assume that nindorus are related to ghouls, and an entry on the creatures in *Defilers of the Empire*, a Tian text published by Lung Wa biologists, incorrectly identified nindorus as "unusual zombie variants." The fact that nindoru

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Nindoru Butterfly

influence can certainly empower mindless undead like zombies into even more horrific shapes and forms certainly doesn't help with this misconception. In fact, this confusion may have contributed to the lack of proper nindoru research over the years, a dangerous oversight that's thankfully now being rectified.

A close inspection of nindorus reveals many characteristics that are entirely their own. Even those with the most bizarre forms usually incorporate some humanoid feature in their shape, be it the growth of arms where no arms should be or the presence of a vaguely face leering from a hidden part of the body, such as the depths of the throat. Nindorus often seem to have blinded, damaged, or entirely missing eyes, yet see with perfect clarity, displaying how creatures who have broken away from the cycle of souls can't possess such organs.

Regardless of the shape they take, a nindoru's body reflects the nature of destruction and symbolizes their role in breaking the cycle of life and death. Arms and legs often appear painfully elongated, broken, or dislocated, yet retain as much (if not more) strength and agility as healthy mortal limbs. Flesh often appears sallow, decaying, or even grievously wounded. These features are the primary reason many mistake nindorus for undead, yet they are very much alive—their supernatural bodies not being bound to

the laws of biology and health. Other nindorus might be entirely missing an expected part of the body, such as the chest or even the entire head—often replacing such body parts with wicker cages, flickering lanterns, or other normally inanimate objects.


When a nindoru dresses or uses weapons or tools, they invariably prefer accessories and devices that are broken, tarnished, or outright destroyed. Most nindorus who use weapons wield broken armaments that their supernatural nature empowers to become magical. When brandished in their disjointed hands, these weapons can inflict grievous wounds, but upon being released, they crumble into dust.

Nindorus form fully grown from souls who have abandoned the very concept of reincarnation or life after death. The most dangerous and powerful nindorus tend to rise from the souls of fallen Sangpots or samsarans who have turned their back on the cycle of life and death, but no soul can “accidentally” become a nindoru. The choice to abandon the cycle and expose one's immortal soul to such a fate often occurs through participation in complex rituals to ensure their soul breaks free from the world, and it must always be made freely while alive (although deception and trickery can delude tragic figures into making this choice without realizing the full ramifications).

One strange element shared by many nindorus are the eerie blood-red butterflies that gather in the hollow spaces in a nindoru's body or seem to crawl, fully formed, from their flesh. To many, the butterfly is a symbol of transformation and change, yet no caterpillar has ever been seen in association with a nindoru, suggesting that these “butterflies” are something more than they appear. Some suggest that nindoru butterflies are a physical manifestation of the nindoru's broken soul, while others believe them to be incarnations of the nindoru's stray thoughts. These butterflies rarely live long after fluttering away from their fiendish host, fading into red smoke or bloodstain-like markings on the wall or floor.

Ecology

Nindorus exist outside the laws of nature, yet they still exist within the natural world—unlike most fiends, their association is with the universe itself, rather than another plane of the Great Beyond. While they themselves do not intrinsically obey the laws of an ecosystem, they are compelled to disrupt environments in a way that almost results in the same sort of role—if only a role that seems entirely self-destructive. Each type of nindoru epitomizes the fracture of a specific



cycle in addition to the generalized fracturing of the life and death cycle that created them.

Nindorus are compelled to feast on souls, but only souls who have drifted through the recurrent stream of Sangpotshi multiple times come close to satisfying their hunger. A nindoru's ideal soul is one that has reincarnated several times and is currently living a life while having memories (either partial or full) of previous lives. To a nindoru, a soul imbued with the collective experience and wisdom of multiple lives is like a fine wine allowed to age just right.

To take this morbid analogy further, one can imagine that nindorus possess the equivalent of a sommelier's skill at discerning a wine's ingredients. They can intuit whether a soul has been reincarnated or not. Those who have survived encounters with nindorus often report that the demons made disturbingly intimate statements about so-called past lives. Most will never be able to verify whether or not these statements were true, as the ability to recall past lives is a gift few possess. Gushiken Giichi, the first to publish a detailed account of a nindoru in the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, said the fiend told him his soul "was the color of an ancient bloodstain" and had once been housed in the body of a warrior who died during the Battle of Eight Bridges after a blade cleaved his head in two. While impossible to confirm, the claim still shook Giichi to his core.

The nindoru feeds on a soul upon the death of its body, metaphysically "shredding" the soul as it exits the slain flesh and rendering it difficult for that soul to be returned—either to life or undeath. These souls are not prevented from traveling on to the afterlife or being reincarnated, for nindorus feed on only a fraction of that soul's energy, but those who come back to life after suffering such an attack often live harsher lives and experience things that might make them feel cursed, doomed, or simply unlucky. Souls reincarnated after being devoured by nindorus tend to find themselves reincarnating as nindorus themselves eventually if they can't find peace along the way.

All nindorus have the ability to manifest physical things from their thoughts, although the least powerful of their kind are limited to the manifestation of weapons, armor, or tools. More powerful nindorus can manifest creatures, alter their environments, or manifest emotions or memories instead of physical objects. These manifestations, regardless of their nature, always appear decrepit, broken, and unpleasant—yet when used by their creators they function as well, if not better, than they would if they were whole. Some report a particularly unnerving variant of this power, in which those facing a nindoru

in battle witness them manifesting broken weapons, tools, or even people from the person's own past, only to use that object or creature against them. This emotional manipulation is a stratagem used by some of the more powerful nindorus; they might manifest a favorite childhood toy, faded image of a long-deceased parent, or a loved one's ring. The nindoru uses this manifestation to its advantage while simultaneously eroding its foe's resolve.

Society

Most of the information that exists on nindoru social structure is fragmented. *Demons, Ghosts and Yokai of the Cursed Lands*, a tome penned by anonymous Gloom Wardens from Shenmen and samsarans from Zi Ha, contains the most detailed information available at the moment.

According to this text, nindorus are most often encountered in small groups, but when enough of them gather in a single region, they band together in nomadic units ranging from ten to fifty. These groups are typically made up of a large number of less powerful nindorus led by a few of the more dangerous variants. This grouping is known as a "ninsat"—a mangling of "ninashsati," an archaic samsaran term for "family." Despite the name, there is little in the way of the care and camaraderie found in many nindoru groups. Instead, ninsats emphasize spreading corruption, decay, loss, and ruin.

The makeup of ninsats changes on a regular basis as members wander off to follow their own compulsions or seek fresh hunting grounds. Ninsats also shift during the rare occasions that the fiends fall into infighting, usually caused by disputes over prey. While a nindoru won't hesitate to murder its kin, it's unable to take nourishment from such kills, so most choose to save their rage for nourishing souls.

Nindorus have little interest in the faiths of mortals or the affairs of the gods, although those who serve some of the few known nindoru demigods (page 66) are notable exceptions. Nindorus tend to ignore the works of other deities, with two exceptions. They feel particularly vicious contempt for Tsukiyo, lord of the moon and the resurrected brother of Fumeiyoshi, as well as Pharasma. Shrines emblazoned with Tsukiyo's jade moon or graveyards protected by Pharasma's spiral are often sought out as territories by a single nindoru or entire ninsats, who derive perverse pleasure from desecrating such areas with carnage.

When it comes to similar fiends with a shared appetite for bloodshed, nindorus have no interest in cooperation and are as likely to fight against demons, devils, or other fiends. Those who call the universe their

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domain, though, such as rakshasas and oni, sometimes find themselves in positions where they might seek an alliance with nindorus. Such alliances may be due to simple geography, as oni in particular are a widespread fiendish presence in Tian Xia, and few nindorus have been seen beyond the Dragon Empires. Regardless, nindorus can tolerate cooperation with other creatures, especially if offered a bountiful supply of souls as payment. Ironically, nindorus have also been seen alongside undead, the creature type they are most often confused with. In these partnerships, nindorus usually act as leaders commanding ghouls, jiang-shi (*Book of the Dead* 156), or even using mindless undead as husks to inhabit and transform into strange amalgamations of undeath and nindoru life.

Known Nindorus

While certainly a wider range of nindorus exist than those detailed here, the following nindorus comprise the most commonly encountered of these rare fiends. Further details on each of these nindorus can be found in the pages of the Season of Ghost Adventure Path's Toolbox bestiaries.

Akashti (Sobbing Nindoru): Of all the nindorus discussed here, akashtis are the most closely associated with undeath. Capable of impersonating the dead, these nindorus are fond of using graveyards as lairs and wearing the recently deceased as disguises. They represent the cycle of grief for a loved one: the sorrow, the eventual acceptance and return to normal life, and that loss becoming a reoccurring source of pain that never entirely goes away.

Argyrzei (Headless Nindoru): Among the most powerful of the better-known nindorus are the argyrzeis, nindorus who appear armored in fragments of broken metal and adorned with countless broken tools and shattered bones. Unsettling red light shines from rents in their flesh or the empty stump atop their torso—a stump always stuffed with blades and shards of metal. These nindorus represent the cycle of creating art, starting with base materials and ending in a finished work that's then recycled into new base materials.

Guhdggi (Wandering Nindoru): Not all nindorus have humanoid shapes, as proven by the frog-like guhdggi. Only their thin humanoid arms—and the leering human faces that grows in the back of their throats—maintains the typical nindoru link to the anthropomorphic form. Guhdggis delight in the capturing of prey in the cages they carry on their backs, and they embody breaking the cycle of repeated journeys and pilgrimages.

Ijda (Forgetful Nindoru): While sojiruh are the most common nindoru, the towering ijdas are the

fiends who most perfectly display the shared features of all their kind. They have long, broken limbs and wield shattered weapons. Their missing heads have been replaced with “skulls” made of wicker cages filled with butterflies. They symbolize the cycle of learning, forgetting, and then remembering only to forget again.

Kagekuma (Lurking Nindoru): Kagekumas are among the shortest of nindorus, with a humanoid frame hidden under immense bundles of cloth, straw, rope, or even lengths of hair, from which a long-necked head might periodically extend. The lurking nindorus prefer lonely victims over those who have strong bonds with friends or family, for they seek to stalk their prey for months or even years, slowly sucking the energy from them and driving their victims to despair. Kagekumas epitomize the cycle of building trust and the inevitable betrayal of breaking that trust.

Meokdan (Hungry Nindoru): The least of their kind, meokdans are emaciated, humanoid-shaped fiends who embody the food chain—from the food's growth to its consumption—and the consumer's eventual consumption by something even higher on that chain. Constantly wracked with hunger, meokdans are known to have little discernment when it comes to what they'll eat.

Shisagishin (Crooked Nindoru): Similar to akashtis, shisagishins prefer to lie in wait among the dead, although they prefer battlefields, plagued villages, and other places of mass death. Capable of imitating corpses, a shisagishin's true form has a tattered lantern for a head and multiple crooked limbs of broken bones. Shisagishins represent the cycle of decay giving rise to new life.

Sojiruh (Shrieking Nindoru): The most common of nindorus are sojiruhs, many of whom were disillusioned or fallen Sangpots in life who chose to turn their back on their faith. With its mouth stitched shut by hair and open rib cages filled with butterflies, sojiruhs are often mistaken as some horrific form of undead. Sojiruhs sometimes have wildly different or more twisted forms, yet they're always recognizable by their empty rib cages and stitched mouths. As the most common of nindorus, they symbolize twisting the cycle of reincarnation itself.

NINDORU ASCETICS

As with other types of fiends, there exists among nindorus much more dangerous entities wielding divine powers. Obscure enough to not have established any widespread faiths, these nindoru demigods, known collectively as the Ascetics, are largely a mystery.

The three most well-known Ascetics are themselves enigmas largely forgotten by modern society. Yet in the regions where they're active, their presence can't be ignored.

Kugaptee: Kugaptee was one of the most formidable nindorus of the last millennium. Said to have four heads and four arms, his reign over a remote reach of central Tian Xia was brought to an end in 6223 IC by the heroine Tan Sui-Jing, although she perished in the same battle when she defeated him. Her soul, reincarnated as an immense sugi tree, grows above Kugaptee's grave, ensuring the dead fiend will never reincarnate and return to this world while the tree remains.

Musagani: Immense Musagani, the largest of all known nindorus, led a ninsat that infiltrated the nation of Zi Ha in 6778 IC, during which Musagani claimed hundreds of victims before finally meeting an end at the hands of the City of Bone and Juniper's taiga giants. Prior to this banishment, Musagani absorbed the souls of 66 giants, swelling to behemoth proportions that no nindoru has replicated in the centuries since.

Sigek: Evidence related to Sigek's return as a nindoru Ascetic was only recently discovered in 7214 IC, when a group of Pathfinders defeated three ninsats targeting samsaran communities in Tianjing. Each ninsat had a lair where dozens of corpses were placed around blue statues that resembled a multi-mawed nindoru with human facial features. The nindorus were in a frenzy when the Pathfinders arrived and fought to the death while repeatedly chanting the phrase "Sigek will be born again!" All the statues were transported to Goka's Lantern Lodge, where they remain under lock and key to this day.

Nindorus in the World

Compared to fiends, nindorus are relatively rare and limited in their presence in Golarion. Their origins in Tian Xia have largely kept their influence to this continent so far. The following locations are notable sites of nindoru activity.

Chu Ye: The cruelty in this oni-ruled kingdom appeals to nindorus, and Chu Ye is home to several large ninsats that work with the agents of Shogun Tsuneni to quell any signs of rebellion. These partnerships are likely fostered due to a shared worship of Fumeiyoshi, as well as similarities between an oni's need for decadent physical pleasures and a nindoru's love for corruption.

Shenmen: The dreary reaches of Shenmen are ideal hunting grounds for nindorus, who relish the misery of the nation's citizenry. Since Shenmen is largely composed

of spread-out villages where missing persons are unfortunately commonplace, these fiends often dart from community to community, slowly picking off locals. Kugaptee commands many followers here, all waiting for the day that their master breaks free.

Tianjing: Nindorus who enjoy feeding on god-touched souls make their home in Tianjing, relishing the extraplanar incursions and bandit takeovers that have made the land sweet with trauma. The blighted portions of Tianjing's Kaimuko Wood are a hideout for many ninsats, and researchers speculate that the local veneration of Sigek may be tied to fiendish corruption.

Zi Ha: Fueled by their long-standing hatred of samsarans, nindorus would rush into Zi Ha by the thousands if they could. The mountainous terrain and Sangpo-Jong's defenses largely keep them at bay, but nindorus who worship Musagani frequently attempt to replicate the Ascetic's invasion and are searching for underground routes into the very heart of the Enlightened Peaks.



Statue of Sigek

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Environs built from the power of thought and tempered by the fires of belief, mindscapes are inner worlds of imagination and emotion made manifest. They are variable in detail and as temperamental as dreams, relying more on latent emotions and repressed memories than on objective correlation to reality, yet to those who find themselves within them, they are as strong and vital as reality itself.

Mindscapes were first presented in *Pathfinder Dark Archive*. Rules for the ones that appear in Season of Ghosts, be they the primary Willowshore mindscape or any one of the smaller mindscapes nested within or “behind” this reality, are presented in the context of each adventure as needed. The PCs themselves shouldn’t realize that they’re in a mindscape at all, in fact, until near the end of the previous adventure when they discover the truth. They’ll learn more about the Willowshore mindscape and its offshoots in this adventure and the next, but the rules presented in *Dark Archive*, as well as the expanded rules presented in this article, aren’t specifically intended to give players of the Season of Ghosts Adventure Path more options. Instead, these rules are aimed at GMs who might wish to expand some of the elements in Season of Ghosts, or to build mindscape-based adventures of their own.

Dark Archive includes several mindscape-themed archetypes, but Season of Ghosts does not assume the players have access to them. Instead, the assumption is that they’re playing characters unwittingly trapped in a mindscape and are thus forced to learn as they go about how they can escape. If you wish to allow the PCs to take archetypes like *Dark Archive*’s mind smith or sleepwalker during character creation or once the party discovers the truth about themselves and Willowshore, remember that these archetypes can alter the way the player interacts with the setting! Likewise, access to the rituals *construct mindscape* and *mindscape door* (from *Dark Archive*) or to those presented in this article can disrupt the storyline of Season of Ghosts in unintended ways, so think carefully before deciding to include them in your campaign!

How Do Mindscapes Work?

Mindscapes vary wildly in scale, power, and form. What rules apply in one rarely apply to another with the exception of visitors who may be able to purposefully identify and manipulate the boundaries of a fabricated reality. While usually requiring an architect to craft, the spontaneous or even accidental generation of a mindscape is possible, as was the case for Willowshore’s.

Mindscapes heavily blur the line between the concrete and the abstract, the metaphorical and the literal. The physical space one presents is drawn from the experiences and memories of its primary inhabitants and the guiding hand of an architect, if one is present.

FRAMEWORK

Framework is the conceptual foundation of the mindscape, a blueprint for how to turn ideas into buildings. Without a framework, a mindscape quickly fades in the manner of a forgotten dream.

anchors: The metaphorical bones and organs that give a mindscape its structure, anchors are fixed, metaphysical manifestations of concepts that represent the connection between the physical realm and the mental one. They are symbolic of the purpose of the mindscape and the memories of its inhabitants. Anchors can be used to freely manipulate a mindscape through the use of mindscape actions. A mindscape always has at least one key anchor that acts as its heart, but can have more, especially as its size and complexity increase. Willowshore’s mindscape has two anchors: the sugi tree into which the hero Tan Sui-Jing reincarnated, and the fiend that the tree keeps dead: Kugaptee.

Knowledge: The flesh that fills out the mindscape. The bounds of a mindscape’s details are the limits of its inhabitant’s memories, though what a person might remember and what they know can be two very different things. When describing physical spaces, it is essential to describe the shiver: the signs of belonging, rich with experience, and the imagined ghosts of yesteryear staining the world

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with lives once-lived, forevermore. In Willowshore's mindscape, its knowledge is drawn from every sapient creature that has been trapped within it, drawing from their memories of life and the region to present a picture-perfect facsimile.

Emotion: The essential lifeblood that keeps a mindscape alive and well. Though the thoughts and emotions of the inhabitants affect the atmosphere of the mindscape, its creator provides the initial "seed" that sets things in motion. Governor Heh Shan-Bao provided the initial spark of emotional energy that came to form Willowshore's mindscape, and his despair and shame at what he caused lies at the heart of its cyclic nature. Heh Shan-Bao hopes to revisit events in his past to prevent his mistake, but since the mindscape exists in a reality that takes place after that mistake, he can never truly return to correct it.

CREATION AND DESTRUCTION

While a mindscape can be created by unique events in the world, as was the case with Willowshore's mindscape, certain rituals allow for the intentional creation of mindscapes. *Dark Archive* provides

details for the *construct mindscape* ritual on page 199 of that book, which allows for the fabrication of a new mindscape from scratch.

A mindscape resists destruction. Just as it's difficult to draw back an idea, notion, or opinion once one gives it voice into a society, undoing the concept of a thought made reality is markedly more difficult.

Some mindscapes have built-in elements that allow for their destruction, although the conditions that can cause that destruction vary. Willowshore's mindscape is one such example, and the procedure for its destruction is synonymous with what the PCs must do in this volume's adventure to escape back into the living realm. When a mindscape is destroyed, the fate of the natives and resources within that mindscape can vary—in most cases, they cease to exist, or in the case of creatures with souls, their souls are released from the mindscape and travel on to the Boneyard as if they had died. The methods by which a mindscape's destruction can be engineered typically include ways that allow those who live in the mindscape to escape into another reality. In the case of Willowshore, when the PCs use the *transmigrate* ritual (see page 75) at the end of this adventure, they have a chance to bring some (and potentially all) of the mindscape's inhabitants out into the living world as well as some (or potentially all) of Willowshore itself—provided they perform the ritual successfully!

Other mindscapes were never meant to exist forever, and over the course of time—be that days, months, years, centuries, or more—they can decay.

A decaying mindscape might grow smaller as time moves on, or specific elements of it may degrade, fade, or even vanish sporadically. PCs who find themselves interacting with a decaying mindscape might need to shore up and delay (if not entirely prevent) its expiration instead of searching for ways to engineer its destruction.

Only the most powerful of ritualists can forcefully undo an existing mindscape, but those who have the skill can use the following rare ritual to achieve this end.

DESTROY MINDSCAPE

RITUAL 10

RARE **ABJURATION**

Cast 1 day; **Cost** the mindscape's anchors;

Secondary Casters 2

Primary Check Arcana or Occultism (legendary);

Secondary Checks Arcana or Occultism, Crafting

Target the mindscape

After you gather the anchors that make up the mindscape's structure, or in the case of anchors too





immense to move, when you gain control over the region surrounding the anchors, you can perform this ritual to tear the mindscape apart from within. The ritual takes but a day to attempt, so those who would oppose such a destructive doom would do well to challenge the enemy by doing what they can to protect their mindscape's anchors. At the GM's discretion, the most powerful of mindscapes, such as those created by a deity, might be immune to this ritual's effects.

Over the course of this ritual's casting, you and the secondary casters unravel the basic and fundamental ideas of the mindscape's anchors. As you do so, flashes of memory tied to the anchor you target flood your mind, before the anchor itself dissipates. The mindscape might react with hostility to this process, manifesting creatures or swaying primary inhabitants to stop you. Regardless of how many anchors in all must be dismantled, it always takes a day to perform this ritual.

Critical Success The mindscape is destroyed, and you and the secondary casters are returned to the plane from which you hailed before entering the mindscape.

Success The mindscape is destroyed, but you and the secondary casters are scattered randomly to locations on other planes.

Failure The mindscape is not destroyed, and you and the secondary casters are scattered randomly to locations on other planes.

Critical Failure The mindscape is not destroyed, and you and the secondary casters become drained 3 and are then each plunged into separate mindscapes. You remain trapped therein until you engineer each of your own escapes. You forget the *destroy mindscape* ritual and must discover it again if you wish to pursue this goal once more.

MINDSCAPE RIPPLES

The kinds of experiences found in the dreaming bubbles of the thought sea are without number, as numerous as the infinitesimal sparks that compose the mind. The abstract becomes physical, the absurd becomes palpable, and the subconscious bleeds into the waking. Mindscapes sometimes react to the thought energy of their inhabitants and can take actions on their behalf or to oppose them, shifting reality to present something unexpected to those within. These events are known collectively as "mindscape ripples." As with wandering monsters, the frequency of mindscape ripples is left to the individual GM to determine (as is the possibility of a particular mindscape having ripples at all). The mindscape ripples that occur in the Willowshore mindscape are specified in the adventure itself. The manifestation of cruel intelligence in the mindscape's animals during the first chapter of the

first adventure of Season of Ghosts is an example of one such ripple, as is the Wall of Ghosts that the PCs faced in the second adventure.

Three types of ripples, listed in order of most common to rarest, are explored below. Each appears with an example of a hazard associated with that sort of ripple—these hazards are presented as 7th-level hazards so that you can use them in this adventure if you wish, but ripples of other levels can exist as well.

Manifestation

A manifestation is the most common form of mindscape phenomenon and refers to any tangible effect created by the mindscape, often in response to an inhabitant's wishes. They can be fleeting or unyielding, conscious or unconscious, creative or destructive, literal or metaphorical. The nature and form of the phenomenon is decided by the GM, but they always draw from the thoughts and feelings of the inhabitants.

The easiest way to use this in an encounter is to describe the sudden appearance of a hostile creature or dangerous hazard in the area. The monstrous manifestations willed into being by Kugaptee's influence are an example of this category in Season of Ghosts, as is the presence of the Wall of Ghosts.

EXPLOSIVE MANIFESTATION

HAZARD 7

UNCOMMON ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 27 (expert)

Description Reality suddenly and violently transforms, shifting from a harmless patch of terrain into something truly deadly as the mindscape draws from memories of pain and agony, revisiting old wounds.

Disable DC 27 Occultism to cause the hazard to fade away without triggering it, or DC 30 Survival to sense what parts of reality are in flux and to avoid the area

Reaction **Trigger** A creature Interacts with the hazardous object, or steps into the hazardous area; **Effect** A sudden blast detonates, centered on the triggering creature's square. This blast fills a 20-foot burst and inflicts 4d10+18 damage to all creatures in the area (DC 25 basic Reflex save). The type of damage is chosen by the GM from physical (bludgeoning or piercing), or from acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic. The description of how this explosion manifests should vary to match the type of damage inflicted, but should also draw from the triggering creature's past, as if memories of old wounds had suddenly come back with a vengeance. An explosive manifestation that deals piercing damage might be conveyed as a sudden blast of spikes radiating up out of the ground (stemming from a creature's memory of the time it fell into a spiked

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pit and almost died). One that deals fire damage might involve the sound of a dragon's roar as the air erupts into flames (coming from a creature's memory of being nearly incinerated by a dragon). A moment later, all evidence of the hazard's manifestation (save for the damage it causes to the creatures in its area) vanish.

Parameter Shift

Where a manifestation affects the physical space and reality in a mindscape, a parameter shift affects the rules of the space. Parameter shifts can be localized to a small area or drastically change an entire mindscape. The nature of the phenomenon is decided by the GM, but they can normally only be initiated by the mindscape's creator, by a powerful creature with access to one or more of the mindscape's anchors, or by the direct will of a god or godlike power.

A parameter shift might cause the current time of day to change, such as suddenly switching from noon to midnight. It could cause an abrupt and unusual (or even impossible) weather event. It could even involve the change or addition of an entire new planar trait like gravity or the plane's essence. Note that physical transformations to landscape, such as the sudden appearance of a castle on a hill, is a manifestation. If gravity in that castle were reversed, that change would be a parameter shift.

TEMPORAL WARP


HAZARD 7

UNCOMMON ENVIRONMENTAL INCAPACITATION

Stealth DC 27 (expert)

Description Just as a fight begins, time suddenly seems to break in the area, causing some elements to freeze in place and others to slow down or speed up, imparting a disjointed and nightmarish sensation upon those present.

Disable DC 27 Occultism to cause the hazard to fade away and release all those affected by it from the hazard's effects, or DC 30 Intimidation to shock a single adjacent creature out of the distortion and free them from the hazard's effects.

Reaction  **Trigger** Initiative is rolled at the start of a combat where the PCs face a type of foe they have fought before; **Effect** As the combat begins, everything suddenly feels distorted and dreamlike. Just as in dreams, time itself seems to stretch or compress in ways that transform everything into a nightmare. All creatures within a 30-foot-burst from the first creature to act in combat must attempt a Will saving throw as, for a brief moment, time appears to stand still.

Critical Success The creature is quickened 1 for 1 minute; it can only use the extra action each round for actions with the move trait.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is slowed 1 for 1 minute.

Critical Failure The creature is stunned 3 as it perceives time to have stopped entirely for it. When it recovers from the stun, it is slowed 1 for 1 minute.

Continuity Break

Some of the telltale signs of being in a mindscape are interruptions or cuts to the flow of being, gaps in memory, and transitions between spaces more thematically than logically connected. Mindscapes are more akin to stories under perpetual revision than a divine set of ironclad laws from which consequence naturally and inexorably arises. As a result, they can change situations, people, and locations suddenly and with little warning. Some continuity breaks are often and go unnoticed by most in the mindscape, while others can be ones that only a few notice despite being major changes. A rapid change to the environment, as if the characters were instantaneously teleported to another region, is one example of a continuity break, as is having natives of the mindscape suddenly act differently, such as if an ally suddenly became a villain.

Take care with using continuity breaks—they can be particularly frustrating to players, especially if they create the notion that the PCs have no agency in the mindscape, or that no matter what they do, the mindscape will simply do something else. It's best to reserve continuity breaks for a climactic encounter in a mindscape, or to build an entire adventure around them, rather than have them occur often.

FALSE VICTORY


HAZARD 7

RARE ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 27 (expert)

Description After a battle concludes, the battlefield shimmers strangely as dead bodies twitch, destroyed objects shake, and feelings of déjà vu grow overwhelmingly strong.

Disable DC 27 Occultism to cause the hazard to fade away before it manifests, or DC 30 Deception to pretend to ignore the growing continuity break and proceed without fear, causing it to collapse in on itself.

Reaction  **Trigger** The PCs conclude an encounter in which a battle took place; **Effect** The mindscape starts to revert the results of the battle, shifting things back to the way they were at the start of the encounter. The reversion takes 1 round to complete, during which the PCs can attempt to disable the hazard or take any other actions to prepare for facing the same encounter over again. At the end of the round, the encounter resets and initiative is rolled again; all foes and environmental elements return to the condition they were in just before the fight began, but the PCs themselves do not.

Sample Mindscapes

The following examples present three mindscapes you can use in your game, or that can inspire you to create some of your own!

DREAMING OF ANOTHER LIFE

MINDSCAPE

RARE FINITE METAMORPHIC

Key Anchor A buried pickaxe found deep in the mine

Entry While exploring an old mine, the PCs step through an invisible, one-way door and enter the mindscape.

Humming, singing, and the unmistakable rhythmic clang of steel striking steel echo constantly through this mindscape. Those who have known the labor of a work site feel the tune and recognize their heart beating in time to its rhythm. No one remembers what these workers are building; they simply know that they must continue to do so, so that their children may live free from their burdens. This mindscape was shaped by the collective anguish of a thousand workers, trapping them in the cycle of work forevermore, doomed only to dream of a better life. To escape this mindscape, the PCs must navigate a mazelike mine whose tunnels constantly open and collapse and are populated by undead miners.

THE FINAL ROOM

MINDSCAPE

RARE FINITE

Key Anchor A blank Harrow card

Entry Willingly participating in a Harrowing performed by a fortune-teller capable of creating a Final Room.

A rare few fortune-tellers have the ability to form a mindscape as part of the process of performing a Harrow reading. Each of these mindscapes are known as the Final Room—for each participant's revelations in these rooms are believed to be their final destinies. A Final Room is a finite mindscape that takes place in a single room, although the size of the room can be anything from a cozy parlor to a vast cathedral. It is thought that the unconscious mind is more closely attuned to the planes of the Outer Sphere and that tapping into it can provide powerful visions. Whether this is true or simply superstition is difficult to discern. These mindscapes almost always have permanent doors that allow free entry and exit, but beware the unscrupulous fortune-teller who seeks to use a Final Room as an ambush, potentially forcing parties who step into them to face manifestations of Harrow cards in battle (you can use harrowkin from the third volume of the *Stolen Fate* Adventure Path for these encounters).

THE FORSAKEN UTOPIA

MINDSCAPE

RARE FINITE FLOWING

Key Anchor A gemstone that shines like brilliant moonlight

Entry After exploring an ancient ruin that once was part of a lost empire, the PC and their allies are drawn into the Forsaken Utopia the next time they sleep and dream.

This mindscape is a beautiful recreation of a lost kingdom from the ancient past. The architect is a single, powerful spellcaster who faced the destruction of their lost kingdom and attempted to capture what they could to preserve their way of life in the face of an apocalypse. But now, those who once dwelt within the city have degraded to vague shadows, and sinister extraplanar forces may have infiltrated the utopia. What has become of the architect himself is unknown, although it's likely that their death will cause the Forsaken Utopia to collapse. The ruins themselves are alluring, and the city draws visitors in, compelling them to explore, to learn what has been left behind, and to know that its people once lived. Whether or not one can escape the Forsaken Utopia without destroying it (or using a ritual like *mindscape door*) is left to you to decide, but no matter how long one remains in the Forsaken Utopia, upon escaping the travelers find that only a single night's sleep has passed in the real world.

No Breath to Cry

Chapter 1: Oblivion of Truth

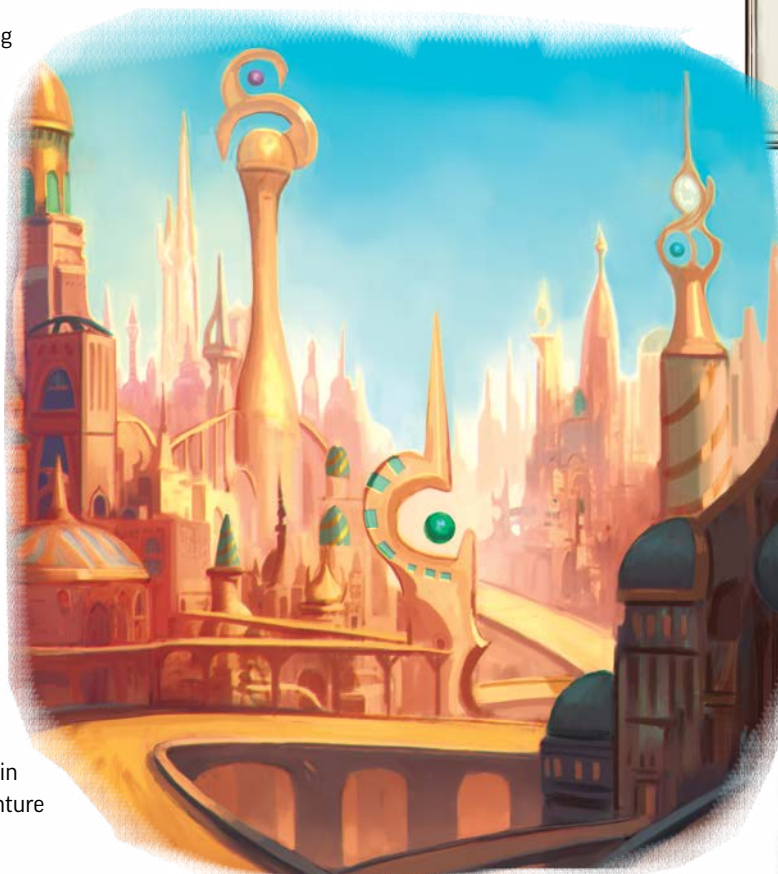
Chapter 2: Face-to-Face with Death

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New Rituals

The following rituals allow the PCs to travel to and from the Willowshore mindscape. Before the PCs can attempt either of them, though, they must research their mysteries during the course of the adventure.

MINDSCAPE SHIFT

RITUAL 3

RARE **CONJURATION** **TELEPORTATION**

Cast 1 hour; **Cost** focusing diagrams and incense worth 28 gp; **Secondary Casters** 3

Primary Check Arcana or Occultism (expert) or Willowshore Lore; **Secondary Checks** Arcana, Deception, Diplomacy, Occultism, Perception, or Willowshore Lore

Range touch; **Targets** yourself and the secondary casters

You attempt to transport the targets from a mindscape they're currently within into an adjacent, nearly identical mindscape, such as to or from the Willowshore mindscape into Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape—the mindscape in which Governor Heh Shan-Bao is trapped. Unlike the use of *mindscape door*, which projects the mind into a mindscape and leaves the physical body behind, *mindscape shift* teleports its targets entirely into the new mindscape. If the mindscape's creator wants to prevent anyone from entering or exiting it, the DC of the primary check is the creator's Will DC if that would be higher than the ritual's normal DC (note that in this adventure, Heh Shan-Bao doesn't seek to take this action against the PCs visiting his mindscape, as he has his own plans for them). When you successfully travel to the other mindscape, you and the targets appear in the same corresponding location you occupied in the previous mindscape, and if no such corresponding location exists in the target mindscape, the ritual automatically has a critical failure result.

Critical Success You transport the targets as intended and can leave a portal back to the previous mindscape that lasts for up to 24 hours. It typically looks like an ordinary door or passage appropriate to the mindscape. Any target of the spell can enter or exit through this portal as they would an ordinary door. If you wish, you can make this door passable by anyone.

Success You transport the targets as intended.

Failure You fail to transport the targets.

Critical Failure Not only do you fail to transport the targets,

you also cause mental feedback to inflict 9d6 mental damage to all ritual casters (DC 26 basic Will save).

Heightened (8th) You can transport the targets to any mindscape you have visited before or have detailed knowledge of. Your arrival point within the target mindscape is somewhere you've visited, or somewhere chosen by the GM.

TRANSMIGRATE

RITUAL 4

UNIQUE **HEALING** **NECROMANCY**

Cast 4 hours; **Cost** heron feathers, incense, and specially prepared sakaki wood; **Secondary Casters** 2

Primary Check Occultism or Religion; **Secondary Checks** Crafting, Nature, Society, or Willowshore Lore

Range 20 feet; **Targets** the PCs

Duration 1 month

A slain creature whose soul became trapped between life and death in the Willowshore mindscape can't escape either back to life or into the afterlife. With the use of this ritual, you can temporarily transmigrate out of the mindscape to appear in the living world in a solid body made of ectoplasm, where you can exist for a short time in a hazy area between life and undeath.

Before casting this ritual, the PCs must construct a kiln made of earth and stone that is large enough for all of them to lie down inside of. Once the kiln is complete, the PCs must prepare beds of clay for themselves in the kiln, surrounding each one with heron feathers placed upright in the clay around the bed. When the four-hour casting of the ritual is completed, the PCs become infused with spiritual energy and must lie down on the still-wet clay beds, after which assistants come in to encase them in a three-inch-thick layer of additional clay. Short lengths of bamboo held in the mouth allow the clay-encased PCs to continue breathing. The incense and sakaki wood is then placed atop each encased PC, the kiln is closed, and the fires lit. Each PC is baked alive within their clay shells, but if the ritual is successful, they're sent into the living world as ectoplasmic apparitions.

Critical Success The clay cracks open and the PCs transmigrate into the border between life and death, a small mindscape in which they face a challenge they must overcome if they're to transmigrate into the living

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world. This encounter is presented on page 45 of this book. During this encounter, the PCs gain a +1 status bonus to all Strikes, saving throws, and skill checks. If they defeat the encounter, they fully transmigrate into the living world for up to 1 month, and retain a +1 status bonus to all skill checks for the first week of this month.

Success As critical success, but without the status bonus to skill checks.

Failure As a critical success, but extra energy is sapped from the PCs. They gain a -1 status penalty to all Strikes, saving throws, and skill checks made in the border between life and death, and if they transmigrate to the living world, they also take a -1 status penalty to all skill checks for the first week of the ritual's month-long duration.

Critical Failure The ritual fails, and the PCs do not enter the border between life and death. Instead, they each take 9d6 fire damage as they each bake in their clay shells (DC 24 basic Fortitude save) before the failed ritual snuffs out the flames and cracks open their partially fired clay casings. The ritual can be attempted again after 24 hours have passed.

Heightened (5th) As long as the Tan Sugi stands tall above Kugaptee's grave (as it does, after the climax of the previous adventure) and Willowshore's *Eternal Lantern* is lit in both the mindscape and the living world, you can draw upon the artifact's power to transmigrate the entire Willowshore mindscape. This more complex version of the ritual has a cast time of 5 days and affects the entire mindscape. Furthermore, this ritual can only be attempted after the first day of the new year in the mindscape (the 72nd day of this adventure), as it also draws upon that milestone societal event to work its magic. Any attempt to cast this version of transmigrate before either of those two requirements are fulfilled causes the casting to fail as it begins, before any checks are attempted or its costs are paid.

This version of the ritual must be cast near Willowshore's *Eternal Lantern*, which is located on the southern side of Dawnstep Bridge. As with the 4th-level version of *transmigrate*, this ritual requires the creation of a kiln within 30 feet of the *Eternal Lantern*, within which a scale model of the town of Willowshore must be crafted from clay. On the first day of casting, the kiln itself is prepared and anointed with aromatic oils. On the second day, a platform of sakaki wood slats is built in the kiln and then anointed with additional oils. On the third day, the town of Willowshore is sculpted on the platform from clay. On the fourth day, heron feathers

and sticks of incense are placed in the sculpture's still drying clay; the sticks of incense are lit and continually replaced through the day as they burn. Finally, on the fifth day, the kiln is lit and the sculpture is fired. The next day, as the people of Willowshore awaken from the ritual, its effects become apparent. See "Concluding the Adventure" on page 61 and Chapter 1 of the next adventure for more details.



Kinburi's Sandals of Bounding

Critical Success The Willowshore mindscape transmigrates wholly into the living world. The full extent of what transmigrates depends on how many Preparation Points remain unspent at the end of this adventure, but the Critical Success at this ritual grants the party an additional 12 Preparation Points to determine this success, as detailed at the start of the next adventure.

Success As critical success, without bonus Preparation Points.

Failure The ritual fails, but a new attempt can be made after 24 hours have passed.

Critical Failure As failure, but the failed ritual also spreads waves of despair through town, causing food stores to rot away and buildings to take damage as if affected by years of neglect. The party loses 12 of their remaining Preparation Points, deducted as they see fit from Hope Points, Food Points, and Security Points. If the party can't deduct the full 12 points from their remaining Preparation Points, reduce all points to 0. Their next attempt to cast the ritual at 5th-level takes a -2 status penalty to its checks.

Heroic Legacies

The following rare magic items were once used by heroic figures in Tian Xia's past. The mysterious merchant Shinzo managed to gather working replicas of these four items, and he offers them as gifts to the PCs at the start of Chapter 2. While knowledge of any of these items' historic past isn't required for a PC to use them, you may find that revealing this lore to the players can help to make these legacies more impactful. You can have Shinzo relate these legends to the PCs as he gives them the items, or you can allow the PCs a chance to recall these stories of heroic deeds and legendary accomplishments themselves by succeeding at a DC 26 Society check or a logically associated Lore check to Recall Knowledge. While these items are unique replicas, you can integrate them into your own game as Rare items if you wish. If you do so, consider renaming them by omitting the NPC name associated with each treasure.

INJIGO'S LOVING EMBRACE

UNIQUE MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Price 675 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; **Bulk** 1

This net was woven by the jorogumo Injigo, who presented it as a gift to her gnome sweetheart, Mara, to keep her safe in their mountain cottage when Injigo left on hunting expeditions.

Injigo's Loving Embrace functions as a typical net (*Advanced Player's Guide* 249). You gain a +1 item bonus to Athletics checks made to Grapple with the net.

Activate ➤➤ *envision*, *Interact*; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You spin the net in the direction of an incorporeal creature within 30 feet that you can see. Lines of silken force whip out to lash around the incorporeal creature, who must attempt a DC 25 Reflex save to avoid becoming immobilized until the end of your next turn. You can Sustain this activation for up to 1 minute, and the creature must succeed at a DC 25 check to Escape the net.

Activate 10 minutes (*envision*, *Interact*); **Frequency** once per week; **Effect** You wrap the net around you like a blanket as you prepare to sleep. As long as you get 8 hours of sleep or analogous rest, you dream of writing love letters to someone you adore: this could be an actual paramour, someone you're interested in, or someone unknown whose identity you don't recall after waking. When you wake, you're filled with a sense of melancholia about those unsent letters, but these feelings distract you from other, more unpleasant thoughts, granting you resistance 5 to mental damage and a +1 item bonus to saving throws against mental effects for the next 8 hours.

KINBURI'S SANDALS OF BOUNDING

UNIQUE INVESTED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Price 700 gp

Usage worn shoes; **Bulk** L

These elevated wooden sandals once belonged to a haughty kitsune named Kinburi. It was well known that her swiftness and grace were unmatched, and observers described her as seeming to glide above the earth with each step. She often challenged others to wager on her speed, but as people began to grow wise, she was forced to conceal her identity or promise to forfeit her sandals if she lost.

These sandals give you a +1 item bonus to Athletics checks to High Jump and Long Jump. In addition, when you use the Leap action, you can move 5 feet further if jumping horizontally or 3 feet higher if jumping vertically.

Activate ➤➤ (*command*) **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** You loudly boast about your grace and agility, then take any combination of two High Jumps or Long Jumps. You

ITEM 9



Vashu's Ninth Life

JUUBUN'S ONE THOUSAND POEMS

ITEM 9

UNIQUE ENCHANTMENT GRIMOIRE MAGICAL

Price 700 gp

Bulk L

This well-worn manuscript is side stitched with fading lilac-colored thread. It is filled with poems written long ago by a philosopher named Seiji Juubun, which contain a lifetime of wisdom, presenting information and advice on a tremendous breadth of topics.

Activate ➤ *envision* (*emotion*, *mental*, *metamagic*)

Frequency once per day; **Effect** If your next action is to Cast a Spell that has the linguistic trait and that targets 1 creature, you are overtaken by Juubun's spirit, and the spoken elements of your spell become impactfully poetic. If the target is an ally, your words inspire them and they gain 10 temporary Hit Points, which last for 1 minute. If the targeted creature is an enemy and the spell requires a saving throw, and if the enemy fails its saving throw, they become sickened 1 as a result of despair and sadness.

VASHU'S NINTH LIFE

ITEM 9

UNIQUE MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Price 700 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

This +1 *striking ghost touch katana* is made from a whisker stolen from the king of cats over three hundred years ago by a catfolk rogue named Vashu Vigar. He sought the magic of the whisker to preternaturally extend his life, and some believe he still lives, having successfully divested himself of the sword to escape the king's wrath in the end.

Activate ◇ (*envision*) **Trigger** Your turn ends; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** You extend your senses through the blade, allowing you to react to nearby movement. *Vashu's Ninth Life* gains the parry trait and raises itself into parrying position, granting you a +1 circumstance bonus to AC until the start of your next turn.

Activate ➤ (*envision*) **Trigger** You slay a living creature with *Vashu's Ninth Life*; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** A portion of the slain creature's life force travels through the blade and into your soul, bolstering your own life. You gain the benefits of the Diehard feat for 1 minute. This causes you to die from the dying condition at dying 5 rather than dying 4.

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A NOTE FOR GMS

The spirit powers presented here aren't intended for play outside of Chapter 3 of this volume's adventure—they grant additional powers to PCs beyond their normal capabilities and should not be used in play beyond that chapter. The ghost archetype from *Pathfinder Book of the Dead* (page 46) is an excellent option for longer-term games where you want to allow ghostly PCs.

Haunting the Living

When the PCs *transmigrate* into the living world during the third chapter of this adventure, they're ectoplasmic beings trapped somewhere between life and undeath. While in this state, the PCs function mostly normally, but appear as semi-solid ectoplasmic versions of themselves. They aren't quite transparent, but their solid bodies seem to waver and shimmer along the edges, giving them an eerie, unsettling appearance. While in this state, they're living creatures but gain some of the following abilities similar to those shared by undead creatures. As living creatures more akin to phantoms, they remain susceptible to negative damage and are healed by positive energy.

Undead Vision: They gain low-light vision, or darkvision if their ancestry already has low-light vision.

Transmigrated Survival: A PC in this state never gains the wounded condition, but instead becomes exposed to soul degradation upon recovering from the dying condition (see below). If a PC dies while transmigrated, they awaken, alive, in the Willowshore mindscape and gain the doomed 1 condition.

Transmigrated Protection: They gain a +2 circumstance bonus to saving throws (or any other defense) against disease, poison, sleep, and any effects that would impose the paralyzed condition.

Spirit Powers: While in this state, the PCs can also interact with the living world via their newfound spirit powers. When the PCs manifest their transmigrated bodies in the living world, they each gain two minor spirit powers and one major spirit power from the spirit powers listed below. Every time the PCs do their daily preparations, they can reselect their chosen spirit powers. When a spirit power calls for a saving throw, use the higher of that PC's class DC or spell DC. Any spirit powers calling for attack rolls use this DC – 10. Use the PC's own level for determining the effects of any counteract checks.

Soul Degradation: Initially, PCs will likely revel in their newfound spirit powers. Whenever a transmigrated PC comes close to death, however, they risk losing themselves entirely to their ghostly nature.

Each time a dying transmigrated PC would normally gain the wounded condition, they're instead exposed to soul degradation and must attempt a new saving throw to resist increasing the stage of this curse.

SOUL DEGRADATION

CURSE 7

RARE CURSE MAGICAL

The PC's sense of self becomes subsumed by ghostly desires, eventually rendering them a senseless shell. Soul degradation doesn't increase or decrease its stage over the passage of time. Instead, each time a transmigrated PC recovers from the dying condition, they must attempt a new saving throw against this curse. Certain events or effects that the PCs might encounter in Chapter 3 of this adventure can also force them to save against soul degradation. Once the effects of *transmigration* end for a PC, they immediately and fully recover from soul degradation.

Saving Throw DC 23 Will; **Stage 1** weakness 5 to positive damage; **Stage 2** weakness 10 to positive damage; **Stage 3** weakness 10 to positive damage, and each time the PC critically fails an attack roll or skill check they're stunned 1 as their mind obsesses over the failure; **Stage 4** as stage 3; **Stage 5** as stage 3; **Stage 6** The PC is reduced to an unthinking haunt. Until the curse is removed or the duration of the *transmigrate* ritual ends, they repeat a short loop of actions and are no longer under the control of the player (unlimited duration).

MINOR SPIRIT POWERS

The following powers represent the extreme force of a PC's emotions or willpower affecting the living realm. These powers are often unsettling in manifestation: they're, quite literally, acts of haunting objects, places, and people. Encourage each player to pick powers that correspond with their character's personal desires and grudges. If one of your players has a character whose personality doesn't quite match any of these options, you can adjust the names and flavor of these abilities to give those players more appropriate choices for their characters. Alternatively, you can use these spirit powers as inspiration for new options of your own design.

CURIOSITY

MINOR SPIRIT POWER

RARE DIVINATION LINGUISTIC MENTAL OCCULT

A desire for knowledge can be a powerful motivation. This focus also commonly manifests in young or otherwise innocent spirits, as they're bound mainly by a desire to see the world a little longer. You reach out to touch an adjacent living target, and for a moment, your hand becomes incorporeal as it passes through their body. The target must attempt a Will save, after which they're immune to this power.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success You perceive vague surface thoughts from the target and find out whether its Intelligence modifier is higher than, equal to, or lower than yours.

Failure As success, but you can probe into the target's mind and attempt to uncover the answer to a question you telepathically pose to them. The target can attempt a Deception check against your spirit power's DC; if the target succeeds, you don't learn the answer, and on a critical success, the target gives you a false answer you believe is truthful.

Critical Failure As failure, but once you resolve the telepathic question and its answer, the target loses all memory of this event.

DELUSION

MINOR SPIRIT POWER

RARE AUDITORY ILLUSION OCCULT OLFACTORY VISUAL

You weave illusions to fool mortal senses. However, the metaphysical distance between the spirit world and that of the living distorts how these figments appear to living viewers. To undead, and to creatures with illusion-piercing abilities such as true seeing, the images appear as you intend for them to. To other observers, these illusions always take on a macabre tone. Blood, bone, and shadow replace more mundane materials in the composition. Speech is warped to resemble either shrill screams or low-pitched growls and is generally unintelligible. You gain a +2 status bonus to Deception checks.

Once per day, you can cast one of the following spells as a 5th-level innate occult spell: *hallucinatory terrain*, *illusory creature*, or *illusory object*.

DUTY

MINOR SPIRIT POWER

RARE ENCHANTMENT INCAPACITATION LINGUISTIC MENTAL OCCULT

Stoic resolve or plain stubbornness form the core of this focus. While the dead can't demand their flesh persist beyond their time, they can still impose some of their iron will on other people. This focus expresses itself as an ability to whisper in the ears of the living. You whisper to a target within 30 feet that you can see. The target must then attempt a Will saving throw, after which they're immune to this power.

Critical Success The target hears your whispered words but isn't otherwise affected.

Success The target is unnerved by your whispered words, and becomes frightened 1.

Failure The target hears your whispered words and must obey your suggested course of action for 1 minute, until it has completed the task, or until the task becomes self-destructive or has other obvious negative effects.

Your suggested course of action must be phrased in such a way as to seem like a logical course of action to the target.

Critical Failure As failure but the base duration is 1 hour.

LOVE

MINOR SPIRIT POWER

RARE DIVINATION MENTAL OCCULT

A powerful and all-consuming devotion, love for another can sometimes reach them beyond the grave. Romantic, familial, or platonic love can be the driving force behind this focus. It expresses itself as an aura of empathy for animals, who are sensitive toward otherworldly beings and easier to influence with ghostly emotions than more logical creatures. You can ask questions of, receive answers from, and use the Diplomacy skill with animals. When you are within 30 feet of a trusted ally (such as another PC), you gain a +1 status bonus to Will saving throws. This increases to a +2 status bonus if a trusted ally you love is within this range.



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Obsession

OBSSESSION

MINOR SPIRIT POWER

RARE EVOCATION OCCULT

This spirit power represents an extreme fixation on a particular object. While this is most often a result of insatiable greed, this could also represent fondness for a cherished heirloom or attachment to a defining piece of art that a person created. This focus is appropriate for a character particularly attached to their wealth or to a particular piece of gear. It expresses itself as an ability to telekinetically control small objects. You can cast *telekinetic projectile* at will as an innate occult spell.


Once per day, you can cast one of the following spells as a 5th-level innate occult spell: *animate rope* (Advanced Player's Guide 214), *animated assault* (Advanced Player's Guide 214), or *telekinetic haul*.

PASSION

MINOR SPIRIT POWER

RARE EVOCATION FIRE OCCULT

Even in death, the flames of excitement burn hot. Be it the result of ignited enthusiasm or burning anger inspired by love for another or something more, the chill of the grave can't quench the hero's emotions. You kindle your passion into actual flames for 1 minute. During this time, your body is engulfed in fire of a color of your choice that sheds bright light in a 40-foot radius (and dim light to the next 40 feet). Your melee Strikes inflict an additional 1d6 points of fire damage, you gain resistance 10 to fire, and you gain the following reaction.

Reactive Scorch  **Trigger** A creature Strikes you; **Effect** The creature takes 2d6 fire damage (basic Reflex save).

SPITE

MINOR SPIRIT POWER

RARE CURSE NECROMANCY OCCULT

Even if a person was kind in life, the dead have many reasons to spite the living, and the violent grudges of the departed are why ghosts are so often feared. This focus isn't just fueled by hate; righteous fury can empower these abilities, though even the most virtuous of feelings can become twisted over time. Spite takes the form of curses, punishing the target with various bodily maladies. Point to a target you can see within 30 feet. The target must then attempt a Will saving throw, after which they're immune to this power.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target's skin itches uncontrollably. If the target doesn't spend an action to scratch at the itch, they become flat-footed until the start of their next turn. This effect lasts for 1 minute.

Failure The target's skin breaks out in painful lesions and unsightly sores. The victim becomes enfeebled 2, clumsy 2, and drained 2 for 24 hours.

Critical Failure As failure, but the target is also slowed 1 for the duration.

MAJOR SPIRIT POWERS

These spirit powers tap further into the heroes' undead-adjacent state, giving them the abilities of ghosts and other spirits. These abilities can be extremely potent in the hands of player characters and allow for creative solutions to standard adventuring problems. Since major spirit powers are more about granting more significant ghost-themed abilities and aren't associated with emotions and personality traits, players shouldn't run into thematic disconnects when choosing a major spirit power, but just as with minor spirit ones, you should feel free to change names and themes as you see fit in order to give your players more appealing choices for them to make.

CHILLING PARALYSIS

MAJOR SPIRIT POWER

RARE COLD INCAPACITATION NECROMANCY OCCULT

Frequency once per hour

The unnatural cold of your touch freezes muscles and locks joints, leaving your victims shivering and unable to move. Attempt a melee weapon or unarmed Strike against a target. If you hit, in addition to all the Strike's normal effects, the target must attempt a Fortitude save.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The supernatural cold causes the target to shiver and quake, making them slowed 1 until the end of their next turn.

Failure The supernatural cold paralyzes the target for 1 round, then leaves them slowed 1 for 1 round after.

Critical Failure The target becomes frozen in place by the cold, and is paralyzed for 1 minute. It can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns, and the DC cumulatively decreases by 1 on each attempt. Once the target recovers, they're slowed 1 for 1 round.

DEMATERIALIZER

MAJOR SPIRIT POWER

RARE NECROMANCY OCCULT

Frequency once per day

You cause your body to flicker and fade, becoming truly ghostlike in appearance and becoming unable to touch or to be touched in turn. You become incorporeal for 1 round (Pathfinder Bestiary 346), and can sustain this effect for up to 5 rounds.

FLICKERING FIGURE

MAJOR SPIRIT POWER

RARE ILLUSION OCCULT VISUAL

Frequency once per day

You transform your body so it appears to grow translucent, so that your appearance shimmers and blends with your surroundings. You become concealed and can use this concealment to Hide. This effect lasts for 10 minutes.

FLIGHT

RARE OCCULT TRANSMUTATION

Frequency once per day

Unbound by the weight of flesh and bones, you become untouched by even the most basic of mortal experiences—gravity. You gain a fly Speed equal to your Speed or 30 feet, whichever is greater, for 10 minutes. While flying, you may grow more ghostly in appearance, or you might leave some sort of temporary flickering trail in the air while you travel as you see fit.

GRUDGE

RARE EMOTION ENCHANTMENT FEAR INCAPACITATION MENTAL OCCULT

Your hatred is so powerful that it can overwhelm another's mind. Choose a creature within 30 feet of you that's aware of you. That creature sees your expression suddenly transform into a supernaturally distorted visage of hatred, and must attempt a Will save. Since this perception of your hatred is all perceived directly in the target's mind, it does not have the visual trait—if the target can't see you, your hatred manifests in different ways that the target will have no problem observing. Perhaps your voice manifests as a sinister whisper in their ears, or maybe you flood them with a scent that invokes a horrific memory. The creature is then immune to Grudge for 24 hours.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature becomes frightened 1

Failure The creature becomes frightened 2, falls prone from the shock, and is fleeing as long as it remains frightened.

Critical Failure The creature faints from fear, becoming unconscious. It becomes frightened 2 and is fleeing as soon as it is no longer unconscious.

RESIST DEATH

RARE NECROMANCY OCCULT

Your spirit is so single-minded in its purpose that even obliteration of your transmigrated body isn't enough to stop them. The next time you are reduced to 0 Hit Points within the next 24 hours, you are instead reduced to 10 Hit Points and are exposed to Soul Degradation.

RIVER'S REFLECTION

RARE MANIPULATE METAMAGIC

Existing between life and death can offer insights when it comes to channeling the energies of life and death. If the next action you use is to Cast a Spell with the positive or negative traits, that spell's effects on living and undead targets are reversed. All negative damage becomes positive damage and vice versa. Any ability to heal living creatures or undead creatures is similarly swapped.

MAJOR SPIRIT POWER

SAP LIFE

RARE NECROMANCY NEGATIVE OCCULT

Just as some undead hunger for life, you feel the urge to draw vitality from the living. Attempt an unarmed Strike against a foe. If you hit, you inflict 4d6 negative damage and restore 10 Hit Points to yourself.

UNDYING FLESH

RARE ABJURATION OCCULT

You are a fearsome and vengeful spirit, and certain physical weapons seem to have little effect on you. Choose bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing; you gain resistance 10 to that damage type. Whether your resistance to that damage manifests in the form of a weapon appearing to pass harmlessly through your body or by appearing to leave grievous wounds that you ignore is left to you to decide, but once the decision is made, you can't change it.

MAJOR SPIRIT POWER

MAJOR SPIRIT POWER

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DEATHLY INVADERS

Sometimes, akashtis ambush and murder targets not to bask in the grief of their loved ones, but instead to assume their form and infiltrate an organization from within to corrupt established bonds of camaraderie. Inevitably, though, these akashtis grow bored with deception and lead their new allies into a trap for slaughter.

Akashti (Sobbing Nindoru)

Akashtis are manipulative fiends who prey on those in mourning; they assume the form of a recently deceased loved one so they can infiltrate homes, then murder and consume the souls of grieving families. Sometimes called a “copycorpse,” an akashti in its true form appears as a skin-covered skeleton with sharp talons on its fingers and tears of blood dripping from its lidless eyes. Its skull appears open like a bowl, and inside nest handfuls of crimson butterflies. When an akashti hides within its manifested body, close investigation can sometimes reveal the truth when the scalp of the supposed beloved one returned to life seems to subtly ripple and bulge as the butterflies within writhe. Akashtis embody the complex cycle of grief.

AKASHTI

CREATURE 10

RARE CE MEDIUM FIEND NINDORU

Perception +19; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, Necril

Skills Deception +23, Diplomacy +21, Occultism +17, Society +19, Stealth +21

Str +5, Dex +5, Con +3, Int +3, Wis +3, Cha +7

AC 29; Fort +17, Ref +21, Will +19

HP 175; Immune death effects; Weaknesses silver 10;

Resistances negative 10

Soul Shred Creatures killed by an akashti are difficult to

bring back to life or animate as undead. The akashti automatically attempts to counteract any attempt to resurrect or animate as undead any creature that it has killed (counteract modifier +19, counteract level 5). If the akashti who slew the creature is slain, the creature can be brought back from death or become undead normally.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claw +21 (agile, finesse, magical), Damage 2d6+11 slashing plus 1d6 mental

Occult Innate Spells DC 29, attack +21; 5th *crushing despair*, *illusory creature*;

4th *glibness*, *phantom pain*, *talking corpse*; 2nd *item facade*; Cantrips (5th) *daze*, *ghost sound*, *message*

Manifest Body (concentrate, conjuration, occult) Frequency once per day; Effect

The akashti manifests a hollow humanoid body around its slender skeletal frame over the course of 10 minutes of concentration. If this time is spent within 10 feet of a humanoid body that has been dead for less than a week, the akashti’s manifested body looks identical to that of the dead humanoid when they lived and functions as a disguise of that creature. If the akashti can consume a portion of the body it’s duplicating, it gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Deception checks to Impersonate the creature. While wearing a manifested body, the akashti loses its claw Strike, and its voice sounds like that of the dead creature; it doesn’t possess any of the dead creature’s memories or skills and must rely on deception to continue the charade in the face of scrutiny. An akashti’s manifested body decays swiftly if it doesn’t take 10 minutes once per day to maintain the manifestation of the false flesh. The body has 10 Hit Points and the same defenses as the akashti. When the body is destroyed, the akashti emerges unharmed and the fleshy shell left behind scatters into a cloud of red butterflies that swiftly fade into red mist.

Stunning Despair ♦♦ (auditory, enchantment, incapacitation, mental, occult)

The akashti unleashes overwhelming sobs of despair. Creatures within 30 feet must attempt a DC 29 Will save or become stunned 1 (stunned 3 on a critical failure). The akashti can’t use Stunning Despair again for 1d4 rounds.

Kagekuma (Lurking Nindoru)

Kagekumas exist in the periphery, lurking in the very shadows of their prey. Known in some regions as “shade fiends,” this nindoru’s ability to appear as uninteresting figures in the crowd allows them to feed even in populated areas. A kagekuma appears as a hunched over humanoid with a long neck and a fanged mouth, but when wearing a bundle, the creature’s head and neck tuck in tight between its shoulders to become entirely obscured. The kagekuma personifies the cycle of trust being built and broken over and over again through the course of a complex relationship.

KAGEKUMA

CREATURE 8

RARE CE MEDIUM FIEND NINDORU

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, Necril

Skills Deception +18 (+20 to Impersonate a peasant or laborer), Occultism +15, Society +17, Stealth +18, Survival +16, Thievery +18

Str +4, **Dex** +6, **Con** +3, **Int** +3, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +4

Items broken kusarigama (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault* 27)

AC 25 (27 with bundle); **Fort** +15, **Ref** +16, **Will** +18

HP 135; **Immunities** death effects; **Weaknesses** silver 5; **Resistances** negative 5

Soul Shred As akashti, but counteract modifier +16, counteract level 4.

Speed 25 feet (or 15 feet with bundle)

Melee ♦ *kusarigama* +19 (disarm, magical, monk, reach, trip, versatile B), **Damage** 2d8+7 slashing plus 1d6 mental

Melee ♦ bite +18 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d6+7 piercing plus 1d6 mental

Occult Innate Spells DC 26, attack +18; **4th** *dimension door*, *modify memory*; **3rd** *fear*, *nondetection*; **2nd** *blur*, *item facade*; **Cantrips (4th)** *daze*, *message*, *telekinetic projectile*

Manifest Bundle ♦♦ (concentrate, conjuration, occult) **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** The kagekuma manifests a large bundle of straw, reeds, rope, yarn, hair, or the like, all lashed together with cords and strapped to its back. The kagekuma’s AC increases to 27 as long as its bundle remains manifested, but its Speed is reduced to 15 feet.

Ruin Wielder When a kagekuma wields a broken, non-magical weapon, they don’t take any of the disadvantages of the weapon being broken. While the kagekuma wields it, the weapon becomes a +1 *striking* weapon, and it deals an additional 1d6 mental damage on a successful hit.

Shadow Bite ♦♦ (necromancy, occult) **Requirements** The kagekuma is casting a shadow; **Effect** The kagekuma targets an adjacent creature that’s casting a shadow, then its shadow feeds on that creature’s shadow. If the kagekuma has a manifested bundle, observers (including the creature whose shadow is being bitten) can notice the kagekuma’s Shadow Bite only if they succeed at a DC 38 Perception check. The target must succeed at a DC 26 Fortitude save or become drained 1 (drained 2 on a critical failure).

Shed Bundle ♦♦ **Requirements** The kagekuma has a manifested bundle; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The kagekuma causes its bundle to vanish, Strides, and then attempts a kusarigama Strike and a bite Strike.



KAGEKUMA BUNDLES

A kagekuma’s bundle is more than just a disguise and armor—it’s a physical indication of how many lives they’ve cut short and how many souls they’ve supped upon. Whether the bundle is composed of straw, ropes, hair, or other materials, the individual lengths symbolize a sort of “reaper’s harvest,” with each strand in the bundle representing a metaphorical lifeline that the nindoru has severed and collected—to an extent that the multitude of lives taken overwhelms the nindoru’s own presence in the world.

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IMPERSONATOR ADJUSTMENTS

Since the exact mix of PCs in each Season of Ghosts campaign will vary, the statistics here should be adjusted as needed to match each PC as closely as possible. Don't worry too much about exactly matching each character's rules choices since monsters follow different rules than PCs do—rather, look at ways you can present these creatures in ways that make them feel like monstrous duplicates. Each noppera-bo impersonator is faceless, but their gear and equipment should look identical to what the PCs have when they arrive in Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape. Of course, the bulk of this equipment is all part of the illusion—when a noppera-bo impersonator is slain, their gear shifts and transforms into ragged, broken props that only vaguely resemble the items carried and used by each PC.

Noppera-bo

Noppera-bos are faceless yokai who delight in tricking others. The noppera-bo impersonators present in this adventure are direct manifestations of Kugaptee's lingering presence in Governor Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape. When this latest mindscape cycle began, the duplicate PCs who dwelled in this mindscape were like the other townsfolk—phantasmal but harmless. As the PCs grew in power in the Willowshore mindscape, the sinister thought energy in Heh Shan-Bao's mindscape reacted and transformed the PCs' duplicates into dangerous monsters: noppera-bo impersonators.

NOPPERA-BO IMPERSONATOR

CREATURE 6

RARE CE MEDIUM ABERRATION

Perception +14; no face

Languages Common; telepathy 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +12, Athletics +12, Deception +14, Intimidation +14

Str +4, **Dex** +4, **Con** +4, **Int** +4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

No Face The noppera-bo has no sense of vision, but their hearing is precise. They don't breathe and are immune to effects that require breathing. They gain sustenance by absorbing fluids through their skin—traditionally by immersing their hands or faceless head into the fluid to “drink” through osmosis; they can also benefit from consumables, such as potions or elixirs, in this way.

AC 22; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +14, **Will** +14

HP 93; **Immunities** inhaled, olfactory, visual; **Weaknesses** sensitive hearing

Sensitive Hearing As long as the noppera-bo is deafened, they're slowed 1.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ false weapon +15, **Damage** 2d8+8 mental

Ranged ✦ false weapon +15, **Damage** 2d4+8 mental

False Weapon A noppera-bo impersonator carries a +1 *striking weapon* that looks identical to the favored weapon of the PC being impersonated. If the PC favors unarmed strikes, it appears as hand wraps. If the PC favors a ranged weapon, then the noppera-bo impersonator has no melee weapon and instead uses the ranged weapon rules above; otherwise, the noppera-bo impersonator has no ranged weapon. If the PCs favors no weapon, then the noppera-bo wields a club as its false weapon. This false weapon is only partially real and inflicts only mental damage when it hits; it gains none of the original weapon's traits or magical enhancements. If a noppera-bo impersonator's false weapon is broken, disarmed, or set down, it fades away. The noppera-bo impersonator can craft a replacement false weapon by spending 10 minutes to recreate one.

IMPERSONATOR ROLES

A noppera-bo impersonator plays one of three roles; you'll need to decide what each impersonator's role is depending on the PC being impersonated.

MARTIAL IMPERSONATOR

Enhanced Weapon Increase the noppera-bo impersonator's attack modifiers and damage of their Strikes by 2.

Hearty Increase the noppera-bo's Fortitude save modifier by 3, but decrease their Will save modifier by 3.

Impersonated Abilities The noppera-bo impersonator gains one of the following abilities of your choice.

Armored The noppera-bo appears to be heavily armored, and they increase their AC to 24.

Attack of Opportunity ➤

Shield Carrier The noppera-bo carries a *minor sturdy shield* (that transforms into a useless prop if it's destroyed, dropped, or upon the noppera-bo's death), and they gain the Shield Block general feat.

Weapon Perk The noppera-bo chooses one of these weapon traits to add to their false weapon: agile, deadly d8, forceful, parry, reach, shove, sweep, or trip.

SKILLED IMPERSONATOR

Deft Increase the noppera-bo's Reflex save modifier by 3, but decrease their Fortitude save modifier by 3.

Enhanced Skills Increase the noppera-bo impersonator's skill modifiers by 2.

Impersonated Abilities The noppera-bo impersonator gains one of the following abilities of your choice.

Commander The noppera-bo impersonator gains a minion that they can command. This creature takes the form of the impersonated PC's animal companion, eidolon, or other fighting companion creature; choose a 4th-level creature that approximates the impersonated companion creature's abilities. This creature gains the minion trait.

Elemental Attack **◆◆** (evocation, magical) Choose from air, earth, fire, metal, water, or wood (this choice can't be changed once you select it for the impersonator). The noppera-bo impersonator targets a creature within 60 feet and creates a detonation of that element; that creature takes 4d6 slashing (air), bludgeoning (earth, water, or wood), piercing (metal), or fire (fire) damage (DC 24 basic Reflex save). Elemental Attack gains the appropriate elemental trait.

Sneak Attack The noppera-bo impersonator deals an additional 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Weapon Perk The noppera-bo impersonator chooses one of the following weapon traits to add to their false weapon: agile, backstabber, disarm, finesse, sweep, or trip.

SPELLCASTING IMPERSONATOR

Determined Increase the noppera-bo's Will save modifier by 3, but decrease their Reflex save modifier by 3.

Impersonated Spellcasting The noppera-bo impersonator gains one of the following suites of innate spells, matching the spellcasting tradition utilized by the PC being impersonated. You can adjust the spells to make a more perfect fit for the impersonation.

Arcane Innate Spells DC 24, attack +16; **3rd** *fireball*, *slow*; **2nd** *acid arrow*, *mirror image*; **1st** *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips (3rd)** *electric arc*, *ray of frost*

Divine Innate Spells DC 24, attack +16; **3rd** *heal*, *vampiric touch*; **2nd** *dispel magic*, *sound burst*; **1st** *bane*, *command*; **Cantrips (3rd)** *chill touch*, *shield*

Occult Innate Spells DC 24, attack +16; **3rd** *paralyze*, *phantom pain*; **2nd** *illusory creature*, *paranoia*; **1st** *color spray*, *soothe*; **Cantrips (3rd)** *daze*, *telekinetic projectile*

Primal Innate Spells DC 24, attack +16; **3rd** *lightning bolt*, *wall of thorns*; **2nd** *flaming sphere*, *web*; **1st** *grease*, *spider sting*; **Cantrips (3rd)** *acid splash*, *tanglefoot*

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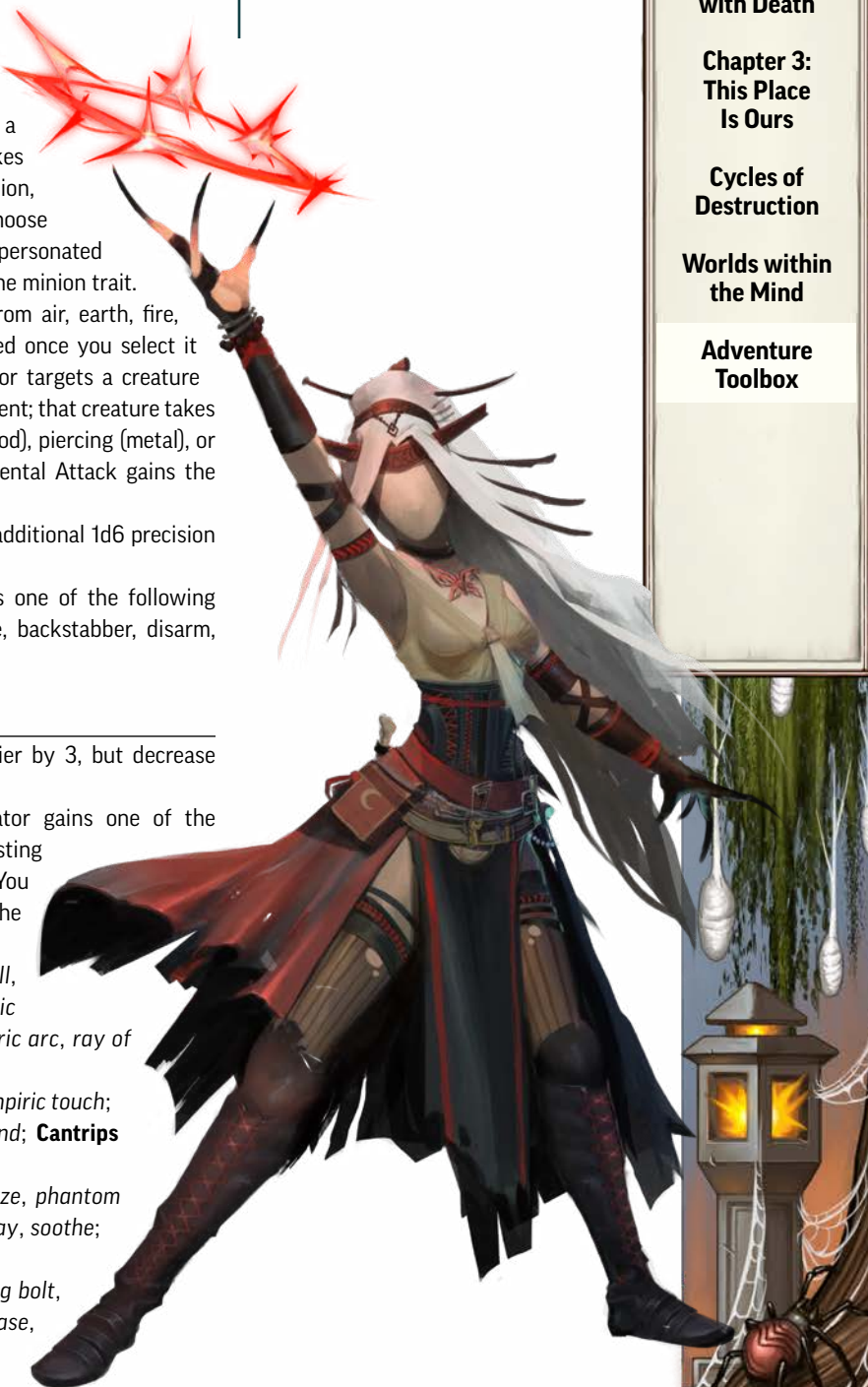
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ALTERNATE DIETS

Some shimmerthieves develop a taste for and the capacity to consume energy forms far more insidious than light, allowing them to feed on life energy or thought energy instead of light. Such behavior is considered monstrous by most shimmerthieves and a reason for exile. Shimmerthieves with these proclivities are dangerous predators that maintain the ability to feed on light and purposely create pockets of darkness to trap and feed on victims. A shimmerthief that feeds on life energy deals negative damage with their jaws, while one that feeds on thought energy deals mental damage with their jaws.

Shimmerthief

Shimmerthieves are blind, lizard-like cave dwellers with an insatiable yearning to consume the rare delicacy of light. This hunger compels them to travel beyond their subterranean lairs to the surface to feed, leaving pockets of darkness behind as they go.

They're far from unintelligent yet prefer to avoid other sapient creatures, aware that many find them off-putting. They become independent at a young age but are protective of their kind, and they travel in small groups when able. Prudent shimmerthieves try to avoid feeding on light in busy areas, but such places are also the most tempting, as bustling populations mean more light sources.

SHIMMERTHIEF

CREATURE 7

UNCOMMON CN MEDIUM BEAST

Perception +15; echolocation 120 feet, shimmervision

Languages Draconic

Skills Stealth +17, Survival +17

Str +4, **Dex** +6, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +0

Echolocation A shimmerthief can use their hearing as a precise sense at the listed range.

Shimmervision A shimmerthief's sight allows them to sense sources of light from the same distance as creatures with standard vision but doesn't allow them to make out details. They can't detect anything other than light sources using this vision.

AC 25; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +17, **Will** +15

HP 119; **Immunities** blinded, dazzled, visual

Gleam Theft (aura, darkness, primal) 10 feet. A shimmerthief constantly absorbs ambient light. Bright light in their aura becomes dim light, and dim light becomes darkness.

A shimmerthief can suppress or activate this aura as a single action with the concentrate trait.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ jaws + 17, **Damage** 2d8+10 piercing

Melee ♦ claw +17 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+10 slashing

Primal Innate Spells DC 25, attack +17; **4th** darkness; **2nd** blur, darkness (at will)

Drain Light ♦♦ (abjuration, darkness, primal) The shimmerthief targets a light source within 30 feet, then attempts to counteract it with a spell attack roll. If they succeed, the shimmerthief regains 2d8+10 Hit Points (4d8+20 Hit Points on a critical success).

Lasting Darkness ↻ **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** The shimmerthief casts *darkness* as a 2nd-level spell; **Effect** The duration of the shimmerthief's *darkness* increases to 24 hours.

Unnerving Shriek ♦♦ (auditory, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental, primal) The shimmerthief releases an unearthly wail, forcing creatures within 60 feet to attempt a DC 24 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is frightened 1.

Failure The creature is frightened 2.

Critical Failure The creature is frightened 2 and fleeing for as long as it remains frightened.

Silsyche

When a home is abandoned after it has been lived in for generations, sometimes the building itself mourns the loss of its family so greatly that it attracts the pity of a kami who has yet to claim a ward. Similar to how a tsukumogami manifests (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 276), such a conjoining of spiritual power can result in the formation of a silsyché—a spirit of an abandoned home who craves companionship. A silsyché never aims to outright harm those who enter the homes they form from. They are merely desperate for connection and lack the understanding that most others don't take kindly to captivity.

The silsyché's true form is a slender, childlike shimmering figure with a headpiece resembling the structure they initially manifested from. These representations of the silsyché's first home reflect the warmth and welcome they yearn for, potentially even displaying mementos of the house's inhabitants that have long gone.

SILSYCHE

CREATURE 6

UNCOMMON CN SMALL INCORPOREAL KAMI SPIRIT

Perception +14; darkvision

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +13, Stealth +15

Str -5, **Dex** +5, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +0

AC 23; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +17, **Will** +12

HP 68, rejuvenation; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 5 (except force, *ghost touch*, or negative; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Inhabit Home (divine, transmutation) The silsyché inhabits a modest building and controls it. While the building is possessed, its decor shifts to reflect the silsyché's mood, such as being filled with bright light (when the silsyché is happy) or appearing old and filthy (if they're depressed). A silsyché can't willingly leave their home; if forced out of their home, the silsyché takes 3d10 force damage (DC 25 basic Fortitude save) at the start of each of their turns.

Rejuvenation (divine, necromancy) When a silsyché is slain, they re-form after 2d4 days within the abandoned home that serves as their domain. A silsyché can be permanently killed only if their home is completely destroyed.

Speed fly 30 feet

Melee ♦ touch +15 (agile, finesse, magical), **Damage** 2d8+6 mental

Occult Innate Spells DC 24, attack +16; **3rd** *item facade*; **2nd** *illusory object* (×3);

Cantrips (3rd) *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *telekinetic projectile*

Hallucinatory Home ♦♦♦ (charm, divine, emotion, illusion, mental) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The silsyché creates a hospitable but illusory environment in an attempt to entice their targets into staying, including food and amenities. Creatures in the building must attempt a DC 24 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature perceives the home to be as the silsyché's illusion presents it but isn't compelled to stay.

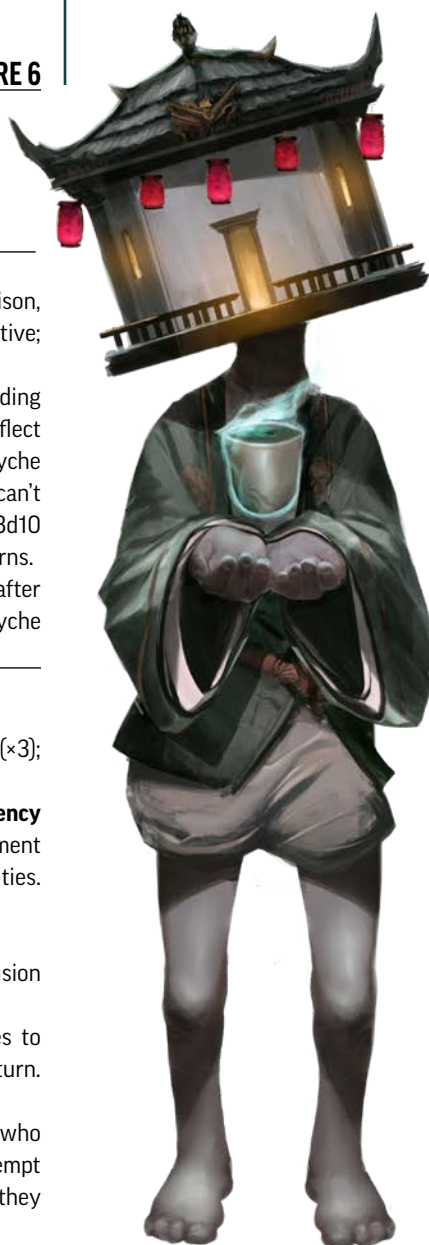
Failure The creature becomes fascinated with the building and refuses to leave. The creature can attempt another Will save at the end of each turn. On a success, they're no longer fascinated.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature becomes hostile to anyone who tries to make them leave the building. The creature can only attempt another Will save to end the effect at the end of any turn in which they attack an ally.



RANGE OF POSSESSION

Most silsychés bond with a single home, typically a small building with one or two floors. More powerful silsychés can bond with larger structures, like fortresses or castles, or even large vehicles like sailing ships. Legends of entire towns being claimed by a single, incredibly powerful silsyché persist in stories to this day.



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Heh Shan-Bao

Guilt-Racked Governor of Willowshore



Had any trace of Heh Shan-Bao survived into modern day Tian Xia, he could've served historians well as a model of a late Imperial Lung Wa official. He came from a long family line of minor bureaucrats and government workers. His civil exam results were brilliant. He was strict, authoritarian, well-educated in the classics, and could even be charming when he needed to be. He was also completely corrupt—a trait that sadly reinforced how typical he was among Lung Wa's crumbling regime. His habit of performing political favors for friends and superiors barely registered as improper conduct to the public. However, his habit of carrying on affairs with other people's wives was viewed less charitably and ultimately proved his downfall, though not until Shan-Bao made the error of backing the wrong horse in a minor government spat. Demoted and mocked by his colleagues, he found himself serving as the petty governor of Willowshore, a village in the backwaters of Shenmen.

For all his faults (and they were many), Governor Heh never blamed the citizens of Willowshore for his predicament. The villagers knew very little of Heh Shan-Bao, save that he was foreign and they didn't like him, which meant that his exile served as a fresh start of a kind. Shan-Bao knew that the townsfolk were hardly to blame for Willowshore's deficiencies—that was an issue of government, and as the local government official, it fell on him to remedy it. If Willowshore was to be a location suitable for him to inhabit, it needed better infrastructure. Trade routes had to be maintained, local industry needed to be promoted, educators would need to be lured in to tutor promising youths, and the threat of a lingering evil buried below the ruins of nearby Tan Sugi monastery would need to be addressed. Most importantly, imperial law and order needed to be upheld. Willowshore's obscurity caused numerous problems that could be solved, and Shan-Bao liked solving problems.

It all fell apart in four years, alongside the Lung Wa empire. Rotted from the inside by government malfeasance and a bloated aristocracy, a series of natural disasters proved the final blow to any


semblance of centralized imperial authority in 7106 IC. In the aftermath of the empire's fall, its peripheries were abandoned to fend for themselves. Willowshore's remote nature helped to keep the town safe as the bandits and monsters of Shenmen closed in, but then news spread that jorogumo had begun to take control of Shenmen. Governor Heh didn't need to guess at what would happen next. His spiritual servitors warned him of the voracious tithes that jorogumo demanded of their subjects. Worse yet, some of the nation's new rulers had an affinity for the malevolent spirits that inhabited Shenmen.

The governor's fears returned to the imprisoned evil below the ruined monastery, and he worried that, should the jorogumo discover it, the repercussions would be dire. Whether the land's new rulers punished Willowshore for "harboring" a potential competitor or whether the jorogumo rulers used Kugaptee to bolster their own power, Governor Heh Shan-Bao focused on solving this looming problem as swiftly as he could.

No one who ever knew Heh Shan-Bao would've called him a man of character. Yet, unlike the local lumber bosses and other officials, he never once considered fleeing and leaving Willowshore to its fate. Instead, he turned his considerable magical training toward finding a way to heal the Tan Sugi tree, rifling through ancient documents and summoning spirits to advise him. The only surefire method he found was a ceremony that involved capturing an innocent with mystic power and ritually ending their life at the base of the sacred tree.

Governor Heh destroyed every text and implement that could've enacted such an awful ceremony. His sins had always been human, yet his pride drew a sharp line that wouldn't be crossed when it came to such vile rites. Instead, he deconstructed the rite from within, then sought to rebuild it in a way that would restore the Tan Sugi tree from afar, without the need for him to travel to the dangerous site or to sacrifice an innocent.

Unfortunately, he vastly underestimated Kugaptee's power, and when he performed the rite he hoped would bolster the Tan Sugi, all he did was open himself up to Kugaptee's direct influence. His worldly and



sin-stained soul was unable to resist the fiend, and he was utterly consumed by the sealed horror. The ritual Shan-Bao performed, tainted by his grisly murder, combined with Kugaptee's power and unleashed a vortex of hungry ghosts and nindoru fiends upon the people of Willowshore, slaughtering them all and then capturing everything in two separate mindscapes—one for the unknowing citizens of the town and one for the governor. With these two bottled realities, Kugaptee's imprisoned power could slowly build over the repeating years until, finally, he would be strong enough to rip free from the Tan Sugi's roots and reincarnate into the world.

Shan-Bao, now trapped in a mindscape prison of his own, has lived with this knowledge for more cycles than he knows, but even now, he continues to work toward redemption—a goal he'll never achieve without outside help.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Heh Shan-Bao is a complex figure in this Adventure Path, and deliberately so. He was never a good man, and his actions as a government official worsened the lives of innumerable imperial subjects. His ill-fated confrontation with Kugaptee is directly responsible for the PCs' deaths and Willowshore's plight. It would be easy to condemn him and move on, and perhaps such a decision would be correct. However, Governor Heh's failures in Willowshore all stemmed directly from his refusal to sacrifice the townsfolk for his own benefit. He has been condemned to eternal damnation and oblivion solely because he tried to do the right thing but lacked the skill, conviction, and compassion to see it through, a tragic figure whom the PCs can condemn or forgive in time as they see fit.

The version of Shan-Bao the PCs encounter in this adventure can't be rescued from his prison—when the PCs transmigrate Willowshore, Shan-Bao will be reborn as well, but not as the man the PCs meet in this adventure. When he returns

to life, he does so as a monster firmly in Kugaptee's thrall—see the next adventure, “To Bloom Below the Web,” for further details.

HEH SHAN-BAO

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male human governor

Perception +15

Languages Aklo, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Minkaian, Nagaji, Samsaran, Tengu

Skills Arcana +19, Crafting +17, Deception +17, Diplomacy +19, Intimidation +17, Religion +13, Society +19, Willowshore Lore +19

Str +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +4

Items *greater choker of elocution* (grants Celestial, Draconic, and Nagaji), +1 *striking longsword*, +1 *resilient padded armor*, ritual notes and journals held within a *glove of storing*

Temporary Scrolls *scroll of crisis of faith* (4th level), *scroll of fire shield*, *scroll of flame strike*, *scroll of haste*, *scroll of hydraulic torrent*, *scroll of illusory creature* (5th level), *scroll of illusory scene*, *scroll of mirror image*, *scroll of soothe* (4th level)

AC 25; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +18, **Will** +16

HP 135

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *longsword* +17 (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 2d8+5 slashing

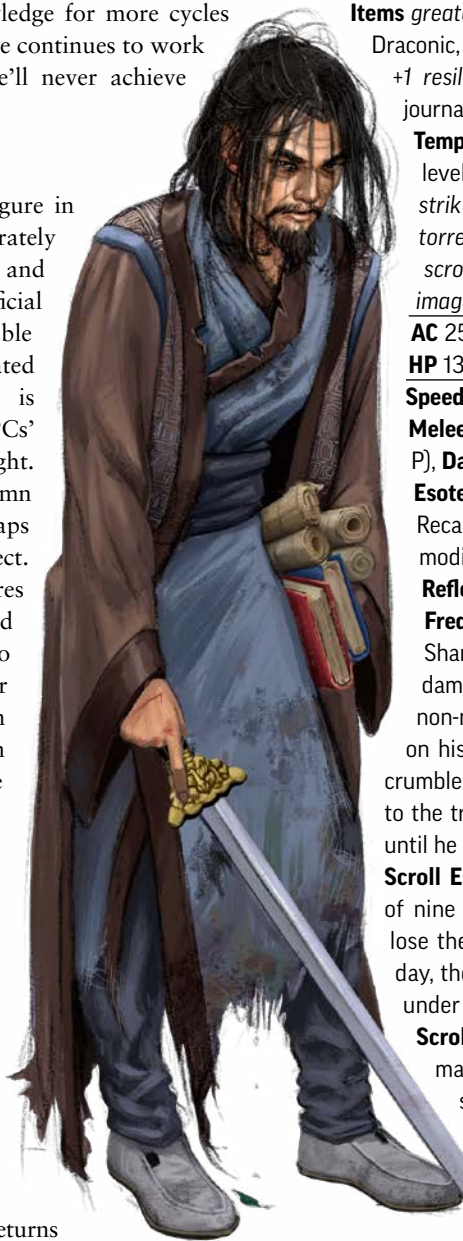
Esoteric Lore Heh Shan-Bao can attempt to Recall Knowledge on any topic with a +15 modifier.

Reflecting Ward ☞ (abjuration, occult)

Frequency twice per day; **Trigger** Heh Shan-Bao would take any form of energy damage; **Effect** One of the many otherwise non-magical fulus Heh Shan-Bao keeps on his person flashes with golden light and crumbles to ash, granting him resistance 10 to the triggering damage type for 1 minute, or until he uses this ability again.

Scroll Esoterica Heh Shan-Bao creates a set of nine temporary scrolls each morning that lose their magic after 24 hours. On a typical day, the governor has the scrolls listed above under Temporary Scrolls available for use.

Scroll Thaumaturgy Heh Shan-Bao's magical training allows him to activate scrolls of any tradition despite having no actual spellcasting power of his own. His spell DC is 28, and his spell attack is +20 for any scroll he uses.



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Mago Kai

Ghost-Hunting Lumber Baron

For the entirety of his life, Mago Kai has served the dead. Born to a living family in the ghost-ruled city of Sze, his childhood was one of fear and obedience. Yet he endured and worked his way up the city's bureaucracy, dodging the corrupt machinations of its spectral courtiers. He learned to understand ghosts, how to exploit their mental loops and static fixations for his own gain. Though he despised those he worked for, he could easily hide it behind his equal contempt for their rivals. When everyone around him was either lackey or enemy, he could shrug off, even relish, their downfall with relative ease. It wasn't an happy life, but Mago Kai did thrive.

Eventually, Kai's success caught the attention of Chou Mingxia, Sze's undead ruler. Incompetent in life and doubly so in death, Mingxia was obsessed with the idea of clear-cutting the forests of Shenmen and sending the lumber back to Lung Wa, pulling in a fortune from the empire's capital. Kai knew well enough the fabled empire was no more, but lumber was silver, silver was silver, and a few forged documents could see the goods sold to neighboring nations for a tidy profit. With the ghosts of Sze unable to personally check his operations, it was also easy enough to skim a little off the top here and there.

For Mago Kai, what started as merely a desire for survival has grown into ambition for power. But lately, even his ambition has started to give way to something else: hope—hope that one day he'll have the resources to purge Sze of the dead. He does his best to squash this feeling, telling himself that sort of sentimentality is what gets people killed, but his previous successes have made such stray thoughts hard to ignore. He thinks he's good enough to do it, and that alone makes it inevitable that he'll try.

To this end, Kai has amassed a small cadre of mercenaries, priests, and exorcists to his cause. Silver from his lumber harvests proved sufficient to bribe any local jorogumo who took umbrage, and some of them are now even on friendly terms with the lumber lord and his tiny army. His current setbacks have been frustrating, but Kai learned long ago how to roll with the punches. He'll figure something out. He always does.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

When first confronted by the PCs, Mago Kai calls for a truce, as he's eager to know more about the spirits who have been giving his exorcists such trouble. He isn't interested in a back-and-forth discussion; he's simply looking for answers. If the PCs agree to speak to him, he asks the following questions. He allows each PC a chance to answer, and if at least one PC succeeds, the question is answered to his satisfaction. If the PCs have concrete evidence of Kugaptee's influence (such as proof that one of his exorcists has been replaced by a nindoru), the PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus to all these skill checks.

"What is it you want from me? Why don't you just move along to your afterlives? What is it that makes you cling to your ruined town so?" Answer with DC 27 Deception, DC 30 Occultism, or DC 28 Willowshore Lore.

"Every ghost wants things. If we gave you everything you wanted, there'd be nothing left for the living. What makes you so special that I should care?" Answer with DC 27 Deception, DC 29 Diplomacy, DC 29 Intimidation.

"The governor of Sze, Chou Mingxia, demanded these woods. If I don't deliver, she'll probably cut my head off. What's in this for me that's worth risking my neck?" Answer with DC 29 Diplomacy, DC 30 Nature, DC 28 Society.

"Hmm, I don't know. If I were to abandon my plans, how would I profit?" Answer with DC 30 Crafting, DC 29 Intimidation, DC 27 Mercantile Lore.

If the PCs mention Kugaptee in any of their questions, Kai asks the following bonus question.

"This evil spirit you mention, Kugaptee. What threat does he pose us all if he's dead? Why would chopping down a tree growing over his grave be a bad thing?" Answer with DC 26 Occultism, DC 28 Religion, or DC 27 Nindoru Lore.

If Kai learns that the PCs have been trapped in a mindscape and that they have a method that might be able to return their entire town to life, the idea of "saving" that many ghosts appeals to him. He asks the following question at the very end of the interaction.

"So, if I allow you to use this ritual to come back to life, I'd be something of a hero to Willowshore, wouldn't I? Would there be a place for me there? A role worthy of

my gifts and position? Or would I regret letting you all come back to life?" Answer with DC 31 Deception, DC 26 Diplomacy, or DC 28 Religion.

Mago Kai's Decision

Once Kai has asked his questions, total the number of satisfactory answers the PCs gave him.

2 or Fewer Satisfactory Answers: "No, I don't think so. No matter the province, you ghosts are all the same." He hefts his axe and attacks.

3 or 4 Satisfactory Answers: "Huh! I tell you what. You make amends for everything you've cost me. Then I'll turn off the damn bell and give you back your flame. Do we have a deal?" Kai demands the PCs return any items they've stolen from the fortress as well as compensate him for any damage done to Karahai, any injuries they've caused, and any deaths that have resulted from their actions. If the PCs agree, Kai is true to his word and turns off the warding bell, but he does continue his lumber operations despite any protests from the newly resurrected Willowshore residents; this will have repercussions in the final installment of the Season of Ghosts Adventure Path.

5 or 6 Satisfactory Answers: "You know what? I don't need this. I'll have to rush a few plans, but I've got enough other profitable sites. I'm done. Here you go. Good luck with Chou Mingxia. The next person she sends will be a lot more desperate." With that pronouncement, Kai tosses the bell ringer at the PCs' feet, walks to his quarters to collect his papers and belongings, and leaves with his exorcists. He pretends not to hear any further question from the PCs. It's possible that the PCs might encounter him again in the next adventure, in which case this peaceful resolution might result in an unexpected advantage.

MAGO KAI

CREATURE 11

UNIQUE N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male human fighter

Perception +17

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +22, Crafting +16, Deception +19, Intimidation +21, Ghost Lore +18, Society +16, Sze Lore +18

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +1, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +4

Items buzzsaw axe (*Secrets of Magic* 181), +1 resilient lamellar breastplate (*Treasure Vault* 9), hatchets (5), Karahai fortress key (opens all locks in Karahai), temple bell ringer

AC 29; **Fort** +24, **Ref** +18, **Will** +21

HP 220

Attack of Opportunity ⤵

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ buzzsaw axe +24 (sweep), **Damage** 2d8+11 slashing plus 2d6 mental

Melee ♦ headbutt +22 (agile, nonlethal, press), **Damage** 2d4+11 bludgeoning plus 2d6 mental

Ranged ♦ hatchet +19 (agile, sweep, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+11 slashing

Ghost Killer Mago Kai had intricate magical tattoos inscribed on his back and chest to interact more easily with his ghostly masters. Weapons and unarmed attacks wielded by Mago Kai function as *ghost touch* weapons, and he inflicts an additional 2d6 mental damage with melee Strikes against incorporeal creatures or transmigrated PCs.

No Breath to Cry

Chapter 1:
Oblivion of Truth

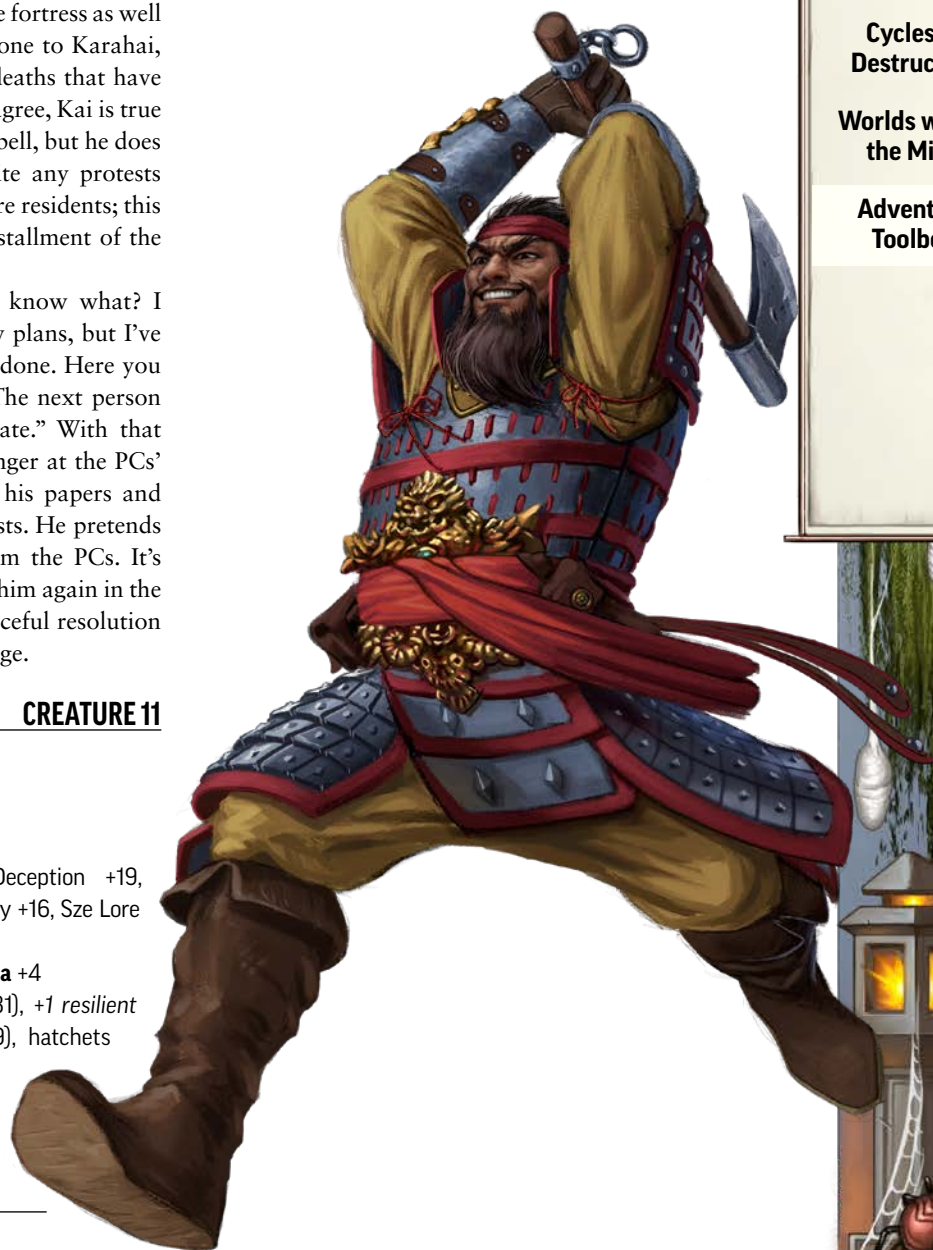
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Next Month

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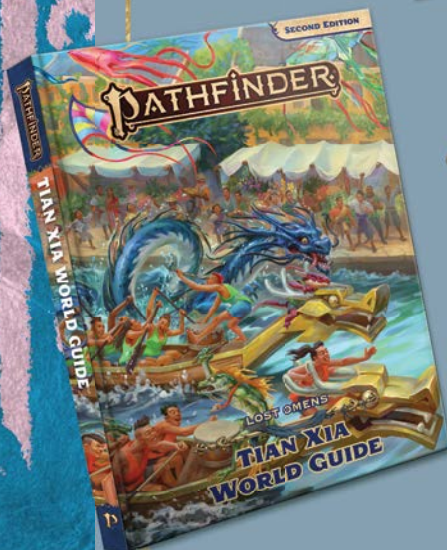
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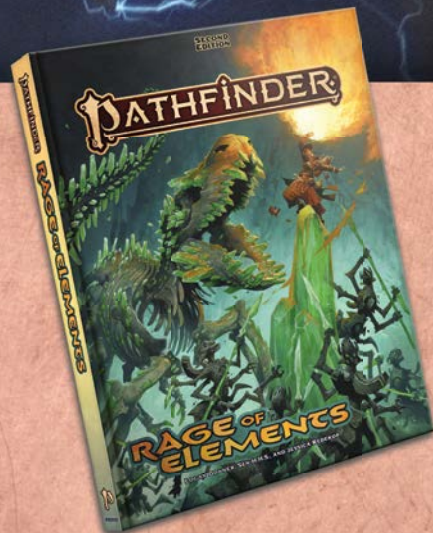
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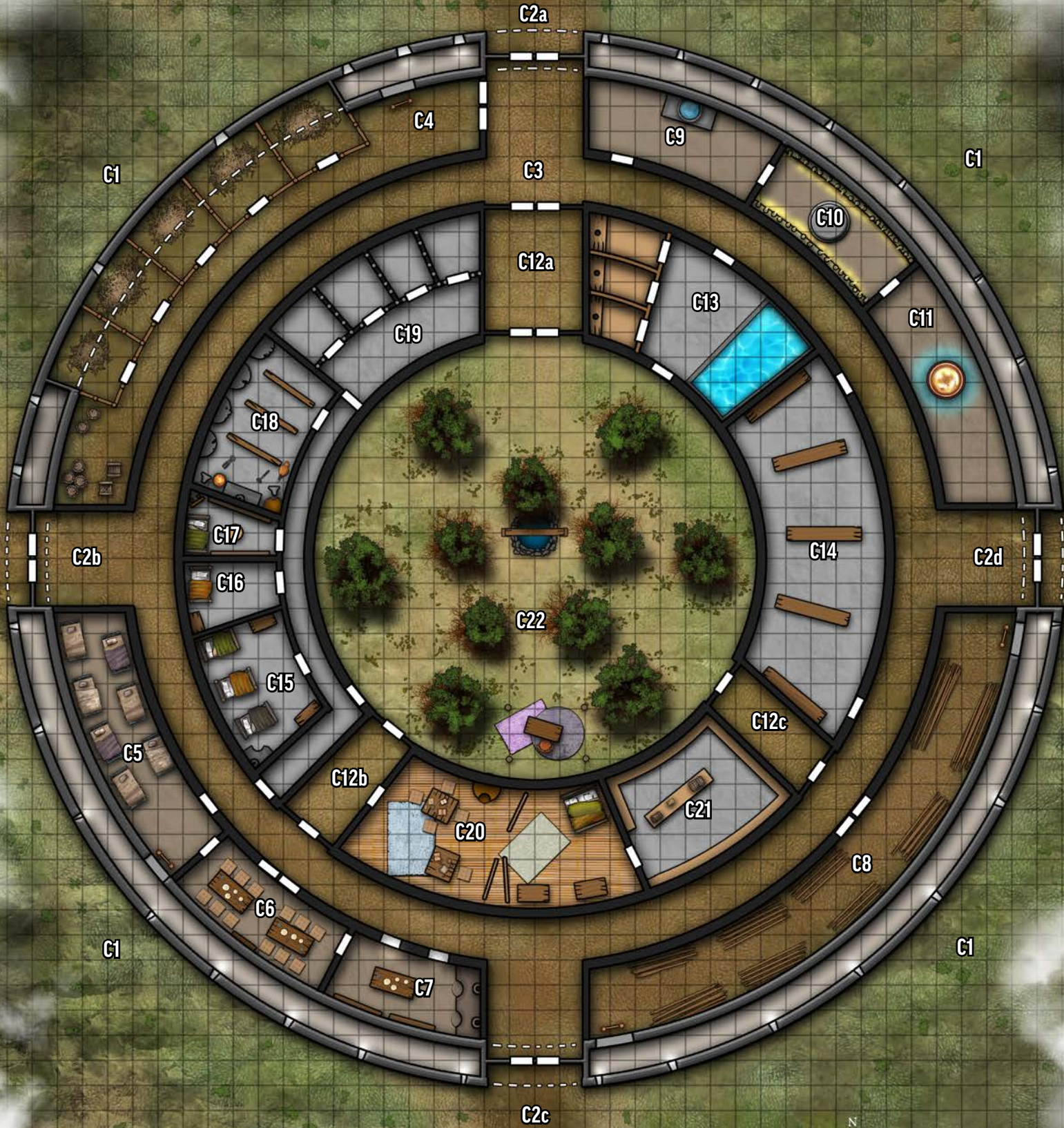


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KARAHAI

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