JADE REGENT SESSION SUMMARY 12/09/2012

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Ernest indicates that he is very concerned about the impending Freezering and thus must depart early. Bruce barely even notices, because he’s busy handing out the Official BRT Xmas Gift. Paul doesn’t notice because he is obsessed with the neat cat-themed wrapping paper. Chris muses on the wisdom of using the Amatatsu Seal if bringing it out of its box means the oni will know where the characters are. Patrick grumbles about taxing everyone to fund Raise Dead spells. And Tim indicates that he’s going to be just a little bit late…

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OUR JUST REWARDS

At the end of last session Yoshihiro thought about distributing shares of treasure to everyone… he did this somewhat before the characters traveled to Yugureda Shosaito’s island. This remains a virtual treasure distribution, one that several characters withdraw from to make some nice magical objects.

THE VILLAGE NEAR SHIZUNOEA

Having chased away the Ja Noi oni guarding the docks, the characters debate heading directly to the house Shizunoea or taking a side trip to the pearl-divers’ village to gather intelligence and explain that they are going to be liberated in the name of the
Amatatsu heir. All agree that providing Yugureda Shosaito with enough time to properly prepare a defense is the only honorable answer, so they head to the village.

The pearl divers’ village is a cluster of mud-walled huts. The characters are impressed in spite of themselves. Gobo notes, “These are much nicer than I would have expected.”

Harwynian agrees, “I would find remaining in this village only moderately distasteful.”

V’lk notes that most of the huts are abandoned. A few old, emaciated villagers stare at them. Some of them carry buckets from pearl diving. Several have bluish-tinted skin. The characters debate whether the skin color is an indicator of something unusual in the villagers’ ancestry. V’ilk tries offering them food; they are not interested.

Yoshihiro finds a convenient soapbox and commences speechifying, “Greetings, oh villagers! We are here to liberate you from your cruel oppressor! Does he oppress you? You can tell us!”

As he talks, some of the characters notice that the villagers’ hygiene is really bad: their nails are very long, and dirty… and sharp. He tries flinging meat to them… which interests them more. Bjorn casts Summon Nature’s Ally and tosses them a badger. They fall upon it and rip it to shreds with teeth and claws.

Yoshihiro notes, “That’s not right… do you think they’re freaks or undead?”

Gobo says, “I don’t know…”

Yoshihiro comments, “Aren’t you supposed to be the cleric?”

V’ilk recommends telling them that Yoshihiro is the new lord and master and demanding taxes right now. Yoshihiro waits until they finish eating the badger, then follows that path. He suggests that their taxes will be lower if they cooperate and tell what they know about the current lord. They do not seem to care. He offers, “I’ll trade you a bucket of pearls for another badger?” They do not respond.

The characters leave the village, unsure if they will need to exterminate the locals after they deal with the local evil magician.
THE HOUSE OF SHOSAITO

Shosaito’s house is a gloomy, dark house that was once much finer. It is fortified with a palisade, but the gates to the north and east are open. The characters approach from the east. The house looks almost deserted.

The characters pass the gate. They find two courtyards, each with an outdoors oven. Gobo checks one. It has been recently used and is full of ash. He finds nothing else.

The characters investigate some of the outbuildings first, starting with the servants’ quarters. The servants, who appear to be normal human women, shriek when Yoshihiro opens the door. They clutch each other and look at the characters nervously. Yoshihiro does his best to reassure them. He indicates that they are here to liberate the geisha Osayumi who is being held against her will by the master.

The housekeepers indicate that Osayumi did arrive about a month ago. The master took her down to his Shadow Maze, where they are not allowed to go. They explain that the villagers have been afflicted by disease.

V’lk hands them a pair of pants and some socks in need of mending. He gestures to them to repair them. The housekeepers go to work.

THE MAIN HOUSE

The characters enter the main house through a side entrance. 100 playing cards are scattered across the floor of the room. Gobo examines some of the cards. He finds that they are inscribed with parts of a poem. Harwynian identifies them as cards for the game utagaruta, in which the players identify cards with matching halves of traditional poems. This is not a normal deck – there are arcane writings mixed in with the poetry. Harwynian thinks the writings are related to the Magic Jar spell, but the set is somehow incomplete so it may not have the desired effect. Harwynian collects the cards and cannot resist putting them into proper order before he packs them away.

The characters proceed on to the main reception room. Shoji screens for the walls of the room. Tatami mats are placed upon the floor. A lantern hangs from the center of
the ceiling. A traditional shogi-ban board and table is placed under the lantern. Gobo examines it and decides that there is a game in progress – white is winning. The shogi-ban is magical, radiating strong necromancy and illusion magic.

After deciding to not touch the shogi-ban the characters explore the rest of the house. They find nothing that would be out of place in an upper-class Minkaian house. They find their way to a tea room, where Harwynian sets up a quick tea ceremony, using an expensive tea set and some nice powdered green tea. The others roll their eyes.

**Downstairs Into the Shadow Maze**
The characters find stairs next to the tea room and head down, expecting to head into the Shadow Maze. They find a cellar with a large number of barrels of different types of sake. Bjorn tries some. V’lk notes that some of the sake is quite old (and probably spoiled), but that alchemy has been used to keep it from decaying.

Yoshihiro organizes a toast from one of the bottles, using the carved drinking horns the characters bought some time ago. The characters get a bit toasted.

**Passage Into the Shadow Maze**

There are passages out to the north and east. Bjorn slurs out, “The north passage gets the most use! Osayumi must be that way!” V’lk sneaks down the passage, following the tracks. The trail suddenly stops in a place where the walls are engraved with arcane symbols. The floor is covered in agitated dust and the corridor ahead seems blurry, as if two versions of it are superimposed.

Gobo casts *Light* on Harwynian’s blade. Something doesn’t work properly – something stops him from casting it. The characters fetch the lantern from upstairs. The light is wrong, only black and white. Harwynian decides to pull out his *Darkvision* scroll and cast it.

The characters follow the dark corridors until they find a round stone moon-gate. Harwynian notes that the entire area is magical, but is able to discern a minor spell upon the gate – perhaps a trigger or an alarm. V’lk looks for traps but finds nothing. The characters decide to move on.

Down another passage, the characters find a doorway obscured by a curtain of beads. The characters are unable to tell the color of the beads because everything is black and white. Camphor beads have a distinctive smell, and Bjorn is absolutely certain that the beads in the curtain are not camphor – with his extensive knowledge of natural materials and unnatural sense of smell, he knows that the curtain is made of mulberry beads.

Further down the corridor the characters find another moon-gate made out of stone, and then a gate blocked with a curtain of cloth (which Harwynian is instantly able to identify as silk). Yoshihiro has *Suishen* cast *Daylight*, he hopes to see the color of the
silk. The sword is able to cast the spell, though against opposition. On the shadow quasi-plane there are almost no colors so the purple moon-gate and the white silk curtain are still difficult to distinguish. The first moon-gate is clearly orange.

**Dreadwraiths Beyond the Mulberry Bead Curtain**

The characters decide to go through the mulberry bead gate, holding the camphor beads forth to ward off whatever awful curse the gate holds. As the characters walk in, four nasty-looking creatures fade into existence. They do not seem to be afraid of the beads. Three are nothing more than a massive dark shape with flickering red pinpoints for eyes. The fourth is also translucent and ghostly, but has hideous and twisted features that are almost visible. Yoshihiro holds his breath, as he knows that undead cannot see you unless you are breathing.

The large shadow forms flow towards the characters and attack, immediately drawing life force away from Yoshihiro and Shalelu. Gobo howls, “Dreadwraiths!”

Bjorn invokes the *Undead Bane* effect of his *Nine-Ringed Spirit Sword* and tears into one of the wraiths. Shalelu follows up and destroys the creature. Gobo stacks on a *Holy Smite* that harms all the wraiths and blinds them as an additional benefit.

Yoshihiro and V’lk flank the smaller specter and slash away at it. Bits of avulsed ectoplasm drift away into the air.
Bjorn waits until a dreadwraith emerges from the wall, and then chops it into shadowy remnants. He kisses the ectoplasm-sprayed rings on the back of his blade. Harwynian lines up on the remaining dreadwraith and sprays it with *Magic Missiles*, leaving it almost destroyed. V’lk, Yoshihiro and Gobo finish it and make good on the specter besides.

**Divining the Secrets of the Shadow Maze**

The characters continue exploring the Shadow Maze, attempting to match the visible curtains and moon gates against the clues left by Osayumi. Things are going well until they find a trapped mirror at the end of a corridor. The party is engulfed with an illusory shadow magic *Lightning Bolt* that leaves a fair number of the more credulous characters rather damaged. Gobo goes around healing everyone afterwards.

The characters explore more, trying to only follow paths recommended by Osayumi’s clues. One *Scorching Ray* mirror later, they curse the Shadow Maze. V’lk notices that Harwynian is checking his hair in a mirror. He takes the mirror and hands it to Yoshihiro, who discovers that looking around the corner with a mirror is still enough to get it to shoot *Magic Missiles* at him. The characters send Harwynian and Gobo to investigate the mirror to figure out what triggers it. Gobo is able to determine that the mirrors are triggered by light shining upon them. The characters already all have *Darkvision* (one way or another), so they douse the lanterns and proceed in darkness.

**Osayumi’s Prison**

Shortly afterwards the characters find a curtain of camphor beads. They go through, pass a couple of mirror traps that are harmless to them, and emerge into a dry, comfortable room decorated with tapestries and cushions. The characters can see color, so it is also (apparently) out of the Shadow Maze. There is a statue of an eight-armed goddess with a strange stringed instrument in her hands. Gobo recognizes her as a Vudrani death goddess. Two women sit facing each other in the center of the room, immobile as statues. One is middle aged and elegant. The other is dressed as a geisha. Their eyes are half-closed.
As the characters move into the room a creature advances upon them. It has a tiger’s body, a fanged monkey’s head and a serpent for a tail. Gobo asks, “What the hell is that?”

The creature hisses, “You can always ask me.”

Yoshihiro takes it up on its offer. “What are you, then?”

“I am Tosokake. I am a nue. And I will not allow you to touch the master’s women.”

“Can we try a game of riddles?”

“The only riddle I am interested in is ‘What do you taste like?’”

V’lk steps behind another character, casts *Greater Invisibility*, and vanishes without allowing Tosokake to notice. The conversation continues on, but it doesn’t go all that far. Meanwhile, V’lk moves into position for a sneak attack. He strikes but only lightly wounds the creature, leading Yoshihiro to conclude, “Uh oh, it’s full of hit points!”

The nue bites V’lk twice, leaving him both energy drained and poisoned. He is just thankful that he didn’t also get rended.

Bjorn moves in from the other side and swings with sword and shield. He gains great appreciation for the creature’s capabilities as he hits only once with his shield and not at all with his blade.

V’lk manages three excellent hits in spite of his weakened soul, leaving the creature critically wounded. Gobo follows up with a *Searing Light*, burning it down. And Yoshihiro lops off both of its heads.

V’lk gasps out a pair of *Neutralize Poison* spells to stop the poison damage. The damage leaves him weak as a kitten, at least until Gobo hits him with *Restoration* to fix the situation (and his negative level).

**The Master’s Women**

Harwynian examines the two women. He finds that they are cold to the touch, apparently dead but preserved with a *Gentle Repose* spell. Their souls have been emptied out of their bodies – they are otherwise completely unharmed. Given the cards found
earlier, it is quite likely that they are trapped by *Magic Jar* spells. A *Magic Jar* is typically a gem or a large crystal, and until the jar is found there is little the characters can do for them.

The characters pass through into a study. There is a low writing table, a cabinet, some bookshelves (with a few magical scrolls among mundane items) and a closed, dark case on the floor closed with silk ribbons. V’lk checks over the case, and then opens it. Inside, he finds a magical samisen. Harwynian identifies it as Osayumi’s *Samisen of Oracular Vision*. In addition to being a masterwork samisen (+2 to skill rolls), it can cast three magical effects when played:

- *Legend Lore* with the string of the past (1/day)
- *Scrying* with the string of the present (1/day)
- *Divination* with the string of the future (1/day)

The cabinet includes several potions:

- *Potion of Bull’s Strength*
- *Potion of Cure Moderate Wounds*
- *Potion of Protection from Cold*
- *Potion of Water Breathing*

The magical scrolls on the bookshelf are all arcane:

- *Bestow Curse*
- *Ice Storm*
- *Lightning Bolt*

Harwynian claims all three scrolls. Beyond the scrolls, there are a number of business records, account books and maps. The business records describe Shosaito’s pearl-trading business. The maps are general maps of Minkai.
SHOSAITO’S SECRET CHAMBERS

The characters search the study for secret doors. Bjorn finds an empty shelf on the east wall that is curiously dust free. He shoves it into the wall and opens the secret door. Beyond, he sees a stone-paved corridor.

Bjorn draws steel and marches into the corridor. There are two doors; V’lk and Bjorn hear nothing at either. They consult silently and enter the first to see a laboratory. The array of ominous torture implements and other hardware make it clear that the owner is not a well person. V’lk is excited to find a collection of three skulls on a shelf. Bjorn finds a box containing a dozen large but misshapen pearls (200 gold each) and a stack of shards of mother-of-pearl (100 gold total).

The characters move on to the next door. The see a large room scented with green tea and panels of grey wood imitating the structure of shoji walls. The floor is of marble tiles. But all of the colors are washed out and dim. Sitting in a pool of darkness is the evil Yugureda Shosaito, looking every bit the evil magician. He tells the characters, “You shouldn’t come in to slaughter me so quickly. After all, you still want to save the girl.”
He goes on to explain that something went wrong with the ritual to transfer his wife’s soul to Osayumi’s body. His wife’s soul is gone, but Osayumi’s soul is trapped in one of the pearls in the bowl to his side. “You must find the proper pearl!” He knocks the bowl over in dramatic fashion, spraying pearls across the floor in a 30’ cone.

V’lk leaps into action, casting Blessing of Fervor on everyone. Two undead shadow creatures emerge from the portal next to the magician and advance upon the characters. Bjorn rushes to the attack, supported by Gobo who sends the chill of the interstellar void down upon Shosaito. Shalelu sends an arrow at the magician, only to see it deflected aside by his defenses. V’lk stabs Shosaito, only to feel a huge amount of resistance: the villainous merchant is protected by Stoneskin! How dare he use defensive magic!

One of the shadows touches V’lk, drawing down his strength. V’lk groans and thinks, “Oh no… not again!”

Then Yugureda Shosaito rolls into action. He leads with a Quickened Lightning Bolt that nearly roasts Harwynian, Gobo and Shalelu, then follows with Chain Lightning to leave Gobo one massive damage save away from instant death and Harwynian only barely on his feet.

Bjorn responds with a massive array of strikes against Shosaito. His attacks leave the magician desperately injured; only his Stoneskin keeps him standing. Gobo notes that everyone has been hurt badly, and casts Mass Cure Light Wounds to help. Harwynian hits Shosaito and both shadows with a Persistent Slow. The shadows are slowed, but the wizard shrugs off the spell.

Shosaito strikes Bjorn with a Finger of Death. The hardy northman refuses to succumb. He feels his heart shrinking, but he manages to survive. Bjorn strikes back, boasting, “It will take more than a mere crushed heart to stop me, for I am possessed of the righteous anger of the Glacial Stalking Ostrich!” The others conclude that Shosaito’s spells might have missed Bjorn’s heart, possibly landing in his brain.
Shosaito’s *Displacement* allows him to evade almost all of the ranger’s attacks, but not all of them. His shield bash knocks Shosaito down and stuns him. And then Harwynian uses *Telekinesis* to grapple him. Then Bjorn piles into him and kills him.

As soon as Shosaito dies, the link to the shadow plane is broken – the entire Shadow Maze and the dark gateway are gone, along with the shadows.

**THE END OF THE SESSION**

The session ends with the characters victorious against the villainous magician Yugureda Shosaito. There is some loot, but I had to depart before it could be recorded in the session summary – in particular, the soul jar containing Osayumi’s soul was hidden in Shosaito’s sanctum, along with some other nice items.