

To Live and Die in Japan

A d20 Modern horror scenario

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This is a modern day ghost story set in a rural seaside town in Northern Japan. The lives of a group of gaijin (foreigner) English teachers take a turn for the worse when the ghost of a young girl, buried under their apartment 30 years ago, grows restless and lonely...

Background: The PCs in this scenario are a group of English language teachers living in Japan. They live in the small town of Matsushika, population around 8,000 people. It is located on the Eastern shore in the North of Honshu (the main Island of Japan), in the Tohoku region, in the Prefecture of Fukushima. The town is around an hour and a half North of Tokyo, by combination of local train and Shinkansen (bullet train) from Fukushima city. The company for which the PCs work, Vortex English Conversation School, has around 30 branches spread throughout Japan. The branch at which the PCs work is a new one – its doors opened only 10 months ago. The PCs all arrived in town 10 and a half months ago, receiving a generous 2 weeks of training in teaching English before the branch opened. All the PCs have received tertiary level education, be it University, Polytechnic training, or other.

Accommodation: The PCs all live in a company owned apartment building. It is a two story building with 6 apartments, 4 single and 2 double. The apartments are all very small, and somewhat flimsily constructed. It is easy to hear a TV in the next apartment, and even loud snoring can pose a problem. The building is approximately 30 years old. It sits near the edge of town, with a park behind it, a temple about 5 minutes down the road, and no other buildings within twenty feet of the perimeter. There are other houses nearby, though most of them have large fences and tree filled gardens. The apartment is 10 minutes walk away from a train station, which is in turn 10 minutes train ride from the centre of town. There is a Japanese janitor called Yooto who lives in one of the small downstairs apartments. He is a friendly enough chap, who likes to drink beer, and stand around outside his apartment in a dirty white singlet and boxer shorts.

GMs Information: The apartment building was built over an old playground. Sadly, a young girl was hiding in the playground when demolition began, and she was killed. Her remains were never found – by the time her parents realised that she was missing, the foundations for the apartment had already been laid. There were rumours that the girl (Yuki-chan) had been killed, other stories that she had been abducted.

Her parents left town a few months after her disappearance, unable to convince the authorities or the rich developers of the apartment building to search the site for their daughter's remains. The apartments were leased, but each year on the week of the anniversary of the girl's death, a rash of strange occurrences and disappearances plagued the building. It lay unoccupied for many years as a tax write-off, until the Vortex Corporation, in a bid to save money on gaijin accommodation, leased the building for the PCs. Both the girl's parents died this year, making her spirit particularly restless as the game begins. She is trying to have her remains put to rest, but her 30 years of fitful imprisonment have made her angry, unreasonable, and dysfunctional. Her pain causes her to lash out, even as she is seeking help.

TIMELINE:

Saturday, July 25 th	The PCs finish work, and head to the pub. They meet a group of Yakuza. Perry doesn't make it home, and the PCs suffer from nightmares
Sunday, July 26 th	Work is very busy, as Perry is missing. A strange man has been asking about the PCs at the pub. There is a minor earthquake, and creepiness abounds.
Monday, July 27 th	The PCs' weekend. Crows surround the house. Investigation and recreation during the day, massive haunting and confrontation with Yuki-chan at night.
Tuesday, July 27 th	Before sunrise Yuki-chan's parents' ghosts come for her, and the haunting ends.

Introductory Scene: It is Saturday, July 25. It is hot and humid, the rainy season having finished a couple of weeks ago. The air is sticky outside, but inside air-conditioners keep most buildings comfortable. Large, incredibly loud bugs flit around street lights and fill the air with a constant sound of summer, and mosquitoes attempt to make meals out of anyone silly enough to leave their doors or windows open at night.

The players have just finished a hard day at work – a long Saturday. One of the lifer students – the Postman, came in for 7 lessons in a row. The team heads off to the izakaya for a relaxing post-work beer. Perry, the branch Head Teacher, accompanies them. Encourage the players to share their anecdotes from their character backgrounds,

**Perry Nakagawa,
Head Teacher**



Perry is a Canadian-born surfer. His parents moved to Canada from Japan before he was born.

Perry's Japanese is very good, and he used it to great effect in chatting up Japanese girls when he first came to Japan as an English teacher. Unfortunately, he got a girl pregnant, and was intimidated by her overbearing father into marrying her. He is now trapped in Japan, working at what he thought was going to be a temporary job, in need of more cash. He has been promoted to Branch Head Teacher, and is working as much overtime as he can get. Unfortunately for him, his wife has taken over all the household finances. She takes Perry's salary each month, and provides him with a modest allowance to buy lunches. If Perry wants to go out drinking (which he does almost every day), he has to go hungry, or find private students to teach without his wife knowing.

Str 10 Dex 12 Con 14
 Int 13 Wis 7 Cha 15
 Base attack bonus: +3 Hit points: 16
 Feats: Suave Skills: Drive 3, Spot 2

while Perry drinks heavily and complains about his wife not giving him enough money. He has a sneaky plan to open a second bank account for his overtime pay, so his wife won't know about it.

Mid-way through the night a thumping noise is heard in the izakaya. It grows steadily louder until the floor is shaking slightly. The air vibrates with the bass thrum of a car stereo pumping out TATU's *Not Gonna Get Us*. A large silver Lexus van pulls up outside, purple neon lights lining its bottom edges. A group of very serious, slightly scary Japanese men in their late twenties exit the van and enter the izakaya. They are wearing traditional happi coats, and are covered in tattoos of dragons and naked women. They sit down for some hot sake, occasionally glancing at the players in distaste. They are a group of Yakuza, in town to visit one of their grandmothers. Yuusuke Yakimoto left town to work in Tokyo five years ago. Since then he has become involved in the Yakuza to a high extent. They talk a little trash to the izakaya owner (Kenji), and make leery comments about the gaijin women. They then roll out late at night, and drive off in their expensive silver Lexus van.

If the PCs succeed in a Speak Japanese roll DC15, they will understand what is being said. If they take offence at the comments made by the Yakuza, Yuusuke will begin insulting the group in English. He will provoke a fight if the PCs are game (though he would prefer not to - he'd rather just insult them and be able to walk away having won the face off). If insulted heavily, intimidated, or physically beaten, Yuusuke will swear profusely and promise to see the PCs in 3 days (after he has been back to Tokyo to get a gun). As the PCs are leaving the bar, give them player handouts 1 & 2, a rough map of the town and of their apartment block.

4 Yakuza Heavies: (Yuusuke, Yukihiro, Masatoshi, Takahiro)

Str 12 Dex 14 Con 11 Int 10 Wis 10 Cha 8

Base attack bonus: +4 Hit points: 16 Feats: Brawl, Martial Arts

Skills: Drive 3, Spot 2, Intimidate 5

Scene Two - Oddness at the Apartments

Perry excuses himself early, and walks home. The PCs share an apartment building, and will probably walk home together an hour or so later, when the izakaya closes. They usually stop in at the convenience store for more beers and snacks on the way home. The convenience store is brightly lit and sterile white, with soft J-Pop music piping down from hidden speakers. As the PCs enter the 2 clerks both turn to them and shout "Irashai-mase!" to welcome them. The clerk at the counter, a student called Nobonori, is shy and embarrassed when the PCs enter, but serves them politely.

As the PCs near their apartment building, they must each make a spot roll, DC 12. Anyone who succeeds will notice a strange, orangey glow in the sky above their apartment building. It almost looks as though there is a fire somewhere near their

apartment building - maybe someone left their iron on? If someone points it out the others, they will all see it, but it fades quickly, and by the time the PCs reach the building the glow is gone. All is still and quiet at the apartment building, a 2 storey construction with thin walls and metal balconies across the second floor. As the PCs enter their rooms, they each feel a cold shiver run through them. Something is slightly amiss, though they are unable to pinpoint what it is.

Late that night, have the PCs make listen rolls, DC 15. Anyone who succeeds will awaken to the sound of scuttling between the floors (in the ceiling or beneath the floor accordingly). Closer investigation (with a torch or match) will reveal an infestation of cockroaches. The roaches are huge, and fast, and can fly. If they collide with a PC they will leave a small bruise the next day. Several of the characters will have bug spray in their kitchens - such occurrences are not uncommon. Randomly allocate 2 PCs to bear the brunt of the infestation - their rooms should be directly above/below each other. They will be badly shaken by the experience (make a will save DC 15 or be at -1 to all rolls until sunrise). As the PCs get back to sleep, one of them catches a glimpse of a young girl, standing outside the apartment building and staring up forlornly. If they turn to look at her, she vanishes, leaving the PC unsure of whether they saw anything at all.

If anyone takes a photograph inside the apartment building (all the PCs have camera phones), the picture will be slightly distorted, and in the background there will be the figure of a young girl, hair across her face, head hanging down. If emailed to someone else, the photo will look normal – the girl is only there on the phone that took the photo, and in the morning she will be gone.

2 characters awaken during the night screaming. This can be heard throughout the apartment building (the walls are very flimsy). They have each awoken from a nightmare, their dreams being very similar, though not exactly the same (give the players handouts 3 & 4).

A Normal Day at the Office

The Vortex Corporation has a policy of hiring very pretty young Japanese women to work as office staff, salespeople and receptionists at their schools. The Matsushika branch staff are called Shima and Yoshiko. When the PCs arrive at work (at about 1pm) Shima and Yoshiko are very worried. Perry has gone missing. They have phoned his house several times, and his wife is very angry with him but does not know where he is. He did not arrive home last night. They have tried his cell phone, but they got no reply. They are busy trying to rearrange the schedule so that all Perry's students can be squeezed into the PCs lessons. It is going to be a busy Sunday. Today is the last day of the working week for the PCs – the school is open from Wednesday to Sunday, with the PCs having Monday and Tuesday off.

Several of the ‘regulars’ come in for lessons, including the following familiar faces:

The Postman – a student with fairly good English, but terrible interpersonal skills. He is highly aggressive towards other students (intellectually and occasionally physically). He is obsessed with taking photos of the PCs (and any other English teachers he can find). He is incredibly boring, and spends way too much time at Vortex. Everyone is very sick of him. He had 6 lessons today, so everyone had to teach him.

The Gravedigger – a slightly disturbing character, the Gravedigger is an elderly man with wrinkled skin and terrible teeth. His English skills are very poor, and he doesn’t seem to be improving. He books one-on-one lessons, and always ends up talking about the orientation of bodies in graves, with slightly too much enthusiasm. He seems like he may be autistic, or maladjusted. Not too sinister, but definitely creepy! He only ever takes one lesson in a day.

The Old Bastard – Shinji, a businessman in his late 50s. Shinji is a misogynistic, opinionated old coot. He really enjoys showing off his great vocabulary, which includes such gems as ‘interlocutor’, ‘detrimental’, and ‘judiciary’. He tends to misuse words and mistake concepts. If you get on his good side (by talking about how great Japanese culture and history are) he’s not a bad guy, but he really doesn’t play well with others. He came in for 2 lessons today.

Kumiko and Daisuke – Kumiko is a very beautiful young mother, and Daisuke is her 3 year old son. Daisuke has a lot of energy, and is usually either lots of fun or lots of trouble. Kumiko takes lessons while her son is learning through the Kids programme, and she is very popular at the branch for two reasons: she is very enthusiastic and friendly, and she brings fresh baking for the teachers every time she comes in. Kumiko and Daisuke each take one lesson today.

Taka – Taka is a difficult student to teach, as he has the highest vocabulary and knowledge of grammar of any student ever enrolled at Vortex. He locked himself in his apartment for 7 years and studied English intently. The only thing he lacks is pronunciation and fluency – he has 100% comprehension, but his pronunciation is terrible. He has solo lessons, where he works on his pronunciation and picks up the occasional idiom or piece of slang.

Yukihiro – a hugely unmotivated, overweight High School student. Yukihiro doesn’t want to be at Vortex – his parents force him to come. He is a lump of negative energy in class. He claims that he wants to join the Yakuza when he grows up. On rare occasions he does produce some pretty good English.

Video Store Raid

One of the characters, Trent, loves to rent movies. There is a video store near the Vortex School which stocks Hollywood movies, with Japanese subtitles. Sunday night is the night Trent usually visits the video store (the movies are weekly hires). If Matt (or any PC) rents a video, creepiness will ensue when they watch it (see below, under ‘TV Chills’).

Train Station Stalker

As the PCs exit their train at their local train station, they see a sweaty Japanese man standing on the platform alone. As they get closer, they recognise the Postman, the creepy student who is obsessed with taking photos of foreigners. He is wearing a trench coat, and is carrying an expensive digital camera. He pretends not to see the PCs, and tries to lurk inconspicuously at the end of the platform. He surreptitiously tries to photograph the PCs (females especially), then skulks off to his brand new

Lexus Van (no purple lights) which is parked near the station. If the PCs talk to him, he will sweat profusely, look confused, and scamper off to his car.

If they take a train the next day, the Postman will get on just before the doors close, and sit at the opposite end of the carriage to the female PCs, staring at them and mopping his brow with a handkerchief. He is not dangerous, but he is very creepy.

Another Night at the Izakaya

After any hard day at work it is the PCs habit to unwind at the izakaya, and they should be encouraged to do so tonight. At the izakaya, Kenji the barman tells the PCs of a strange gaijin (foreigner) who came into his bar this afternoon. "He had a photograph, of the six of you. He asked me when you would be coming back. I think he wants to meet you. He was tall, with crazy hair. Very thin."

This is a red herring – Charles Rooster works for the Charlie School of English, and is looking to recruit new teachers. His colleagues stole the photo from the Vortex Tokyo headquarters, and sent him off to make the PCs an offer. He has visited Perry's house already (stealing senior teachers is a priority), but met his highly upset wife and did not try to push things. He will drop in on the PCs later, and will ultimately meet a sticky end at the hands of Yuki-chan.

If the PCs ask about Perry, Kenji has not seen him since the previous night.

TV Chills

When the PCs get back to their apartment, there is a definite chill in the air – unusual for July. There is a feeling of breathless anticipation also. The janitor Yooto is nowhere to be seen. At some stage in the evening, someone is likely to turn on the TV or put on a video. If they do this, they will see the following. If not, a TV in a random apartment will turn on by itself, showing the same thing:

The picture is a little grainy, as if shot on a hand-held old video camera. There's a clearing in a forest – tall straight pine trees like they have up North. It's winter – there's a small amount of snow on the ground, and everything looks cold and grey. There is no sound, except for a loud hiss. A van drives slowly into the clearing – a silver van, with purple neon lights lining its bottom edges. It rolls to a halt, and the doors open. Four men, small on the screen as the camera is back at the edge of the clearing, get out and go to the back of the van. One of them opens the rear doors, pulls out a shovel. The others pull out what looks like a sleeping bag, with something or someone inside. It looks heavy, and it sags in their arms. They dump the sleeping bag on the ground and start digging. The hissing noise is getting louder, irritatingly so, but the volume control on the TV doesn't seem to work. You can't change the channel either, or turn the TV off. The men dump the sleeping bag into the hole, and turn to

leave. As they do, you see shapes in the trees around them – shadows moving unnaturally. The picture flickers, the hiss rises to a crescendo, and the TV suddenly goes dark, silent.

If the PCs are spread over several apartments, this scene will play in more than one room. The TV will be completely unresponsive to controls – even unplugging it will not stop it. While it is playing, the temperature in all the apartments will start to drop. A Wilderness Lore roll (DC 12) will pick up a rapid change in temperature – enough to get out the winter clothes and a sleeping bag. Within 5 minutes the temperature goes from a sticky mid-summer 26 degrees Celsius to a jaw-chattering minus 2 degrees. Anyone not wearing a winter jacket will be freezing – at a significant minus to both physical and mental actions.

Did You Feel That?

At the climax of the creepy video and freezing rooms the power cuts out in the apartment building. The lights all go out, and there is complete and eerie silence (unless the PCs are screaming). The ground begins to shake, plates and glasses begin to rattle, and the building creaks ominously. The earthquake is small – enough to shake a few pictures loose from walls, perhaps break a glass or two, but there is no serious damage. However, a crack forms in the kitchen floor of the Janitor. This is directly above the buried remains of the young girl Yuki. Anyone who steps outside immediately after the earthquake will see clearly the pallid form of Yuki, standing at the edge of the park next to the apartment building, pointing at the apartments. Behind her are two shadowy, indistinct forms (the ghosts of Perry and the Janitor). The power comes back on within a minute, and the temperature returns to normal.

In the morning there are hundreds of crows surrounding the apartment complex. They are large, jet black, and completely silent. They sit atop power lines, other buildings, and on the ground. Unless the PCs attack them, the crows will simply sit and watch the PCs pass. If attacked, all of the crows will let out screeching cries and take flight, heading away over the nearby cemetery and the temple and off into the sky.

As the PCs leave the apartment building, have them make a Spot Check, DC 15. Anyone who succeeds will notice a thin man with wild, woolly air, cowering near the road with five crows perching on his curled up form. This is Rooster, the recruiter from Charlie English School. He has been terrified out of his wits by the apparition of Yuki-chan. If someone scares the crows away, or touches Rooster, he will leap up screaming and sprint off into the trees beyond the PCs apartment. He is a very fast runner, and will evade the PCs for the scope of this adventure. He will later return to his senses and flee the area by the train.

Note: At this point, PCs may begin to talk about leaving town. It should be made clear to them that their contracts with Vortex have a heavy punitive clause for any instructor leaving without giving a

month's notice. They also have nowhere to go – unless they tuck their tails between their legs and try to get a flight out of the country, something which will probably take a few days to organise. Equally, they may force the end of the game by breaking into Yooto's apartment and digging up the body of Yuki-chan (see Final Scene, below).

Inside Yooto's Apartment

Yooto, a confirmed bachelor, lived for free in the building and was paid a modest salary by the Vortex Corporation. To get into his apartment, the PCs will either have to break the door down (it is not hugely reinforced) or pick the lock. His kitchen is immaculately clean, with a huge stack of empty beer bottles by the door. His house is packed with furniture – it lines every wall. Everything is still and quiet inside his apartment. A Spot Check by any PC entering the apartment will yield the following:

DC 12 – the crack in the floor of the kitchen goes right through the foundations, which are very shallow. There might be something inside the foundations?

DC 14 – there are finger marks on one wall, going along a cabinet and the wall toward the door (Yooto was dragged out of his apartment by Yuki, one hand over his mouth so he couldn't scream).

DC 18 – there is a torn off fingernail in the welcome mat, with a small blood smear on the wall above it

DC 20 – there is a tiny, pale hand just under the ground inside the crack in the kitchen floor.

Asking Questions:

If the PCs begin to make enquiries the following day they may find the following information:

Government Office – if the PCs visit the local Government office and succeed in a Speak Japanese check at DC 10, they will learn that the apartments were built on July 28, 1973. They were unoccupied for 23 years, from August 1979 to August 2002. The office staff cannot say why the building was empty for so long – only that tax claims on the property show that it was empty.

Real Estate Agent – the PCs will need to make a speak Japanese check DC 12 and a bluff check DC 10 to get the information they are looking for. The Real Estate Agent inherited the business from his brother. When he took over the apartment buildings were on the books, but he was told that nobody would want them. There had been problems with the apartments – people leaving without terminating their leases, recurring repairs, and high turnover of tenants. However, the Vortex Corporation representative had been *very* insistent on getting the cheapest property in town, and had snapped up the property at its 1979 price, well below market value.

Library – with a successful Read Japanese check DC 10, and a successful Research check DC 10, the PCs will find a string of reports from 1973 to 1979 referring to the

apartments. Mention is made of disappearances of residents, a very high number of accidents and injuries occurring at the apartment, and in one of the reports there is a brief description of Yuki, and her disappearance. This article mentions the attempts by her parents to have the site searched, and this being blocked by the developer. If the PCs ask about possible patterns in the disappearances they will notice that almost all of the reports appear in July and August.

Tea House – the elderly owner of the local Tea House remembers the events of the 70s well. She is however leery of foreigners, and will only speak to the PCs if one of them can convince her that they speak good enough Japanese – a DC 15 check. If the PCs are friendly and polite to her, she will tell them about the tragic disappearance of Yuki, her overwrought parents and their departure from town in 1974, and of the rumour of a ghost in the apartment building. If pressed for detail, she will recall that Yuki’s parents, Mr and Mrs Takahashi, moved to Fukushima Prefecture, the town of Haranomachi. (this is enough information to track down their phone number, which will be answered by an Aunt who will inform the PCs of the tragic death of Mr and Mrs Takahashi in a car accident).

Haranomachi – if the PCs decide to visit Haranomachi without calling first, it will cost them 5000 yen each, and will take 4 hours each way. Upon arriving they can ask a police officer to help them find the Takahashis (a common procedure in a small town). The police officer will then inform the PCs of the death of the Takahashis, and will direct them to their house if they wish to give their condolences to the family. The house contains a few photographs of Yuki (recognisable as the ghost), plus assorted other household goods. There is nothing else of interest here.

Possible Solutions to the Conundrum:

The best solution would be for the PCs to dig up the body of Yuki, and take it to the temple to be buried. They could also just stay away from the apartment for a few days (the problems only occur in the week of the anniversary of Yuki’s death). If they wish to perform some kind of exorcism, they must convince the priest from the local temple to help them. This will require a Speak Japanese DC 14, and a bluff DC 15.

If the PCs try to talk to or befriend Yuki, she will meet them outside the apartment. She tells them the following, though it is clear that she is barely able to control her anger:

“It’s cold down here. I’m lonely. I bring friends down here with me, but they never stay. Please come and get me. I can hear my mother and father calling...”

She will then lower her head, and let out a chilling growl. Her body grows to twice its normal size, and she begins to pant. Her whole image distorts into a monstrous shape. She screams:

“Get away from me! Help me!”

PCs must make a will save, DC 15 to stand their ground. Otherwise she chases them back to the apartment building, though she stops short of following them inside.

Final Scene

Though it is not possible to script the final scene of the game, as the outcome will depend upon player action, here are a few suggestions:

✦ The PCs investigate Yooto the janitor’s apartment, find the body and dig it up. If this occurs at night, Yuki will appear outside and call out in a sing-song voice to the PCs. She will be nice to them for a few seconds, then she will become irrationally angry and transform into a monster. She will start to tear the wall of Yooto’s apartment to pieces, trying to get in. One monstrous eye will peer in at the PCs (assuming the flee inside), and she will growl like an animal. Then her parents will arrive, humanoid and calm, and talk to her in soft voices. She will calm down and join them, as they plead (in Japanese) for the PCs to put their daughter to rest.

✦ The PCs do nothing. The manifestations will grow worse, as Yuki becomes more agitated. She will possess one of the PCs for some brief plot exposition and self-utilisation, then she will attack several of the PCs, choking the life from them in her monstrous form. Ideally, her terrifying presence should be used to drive the PCs to action, rather than kill them.

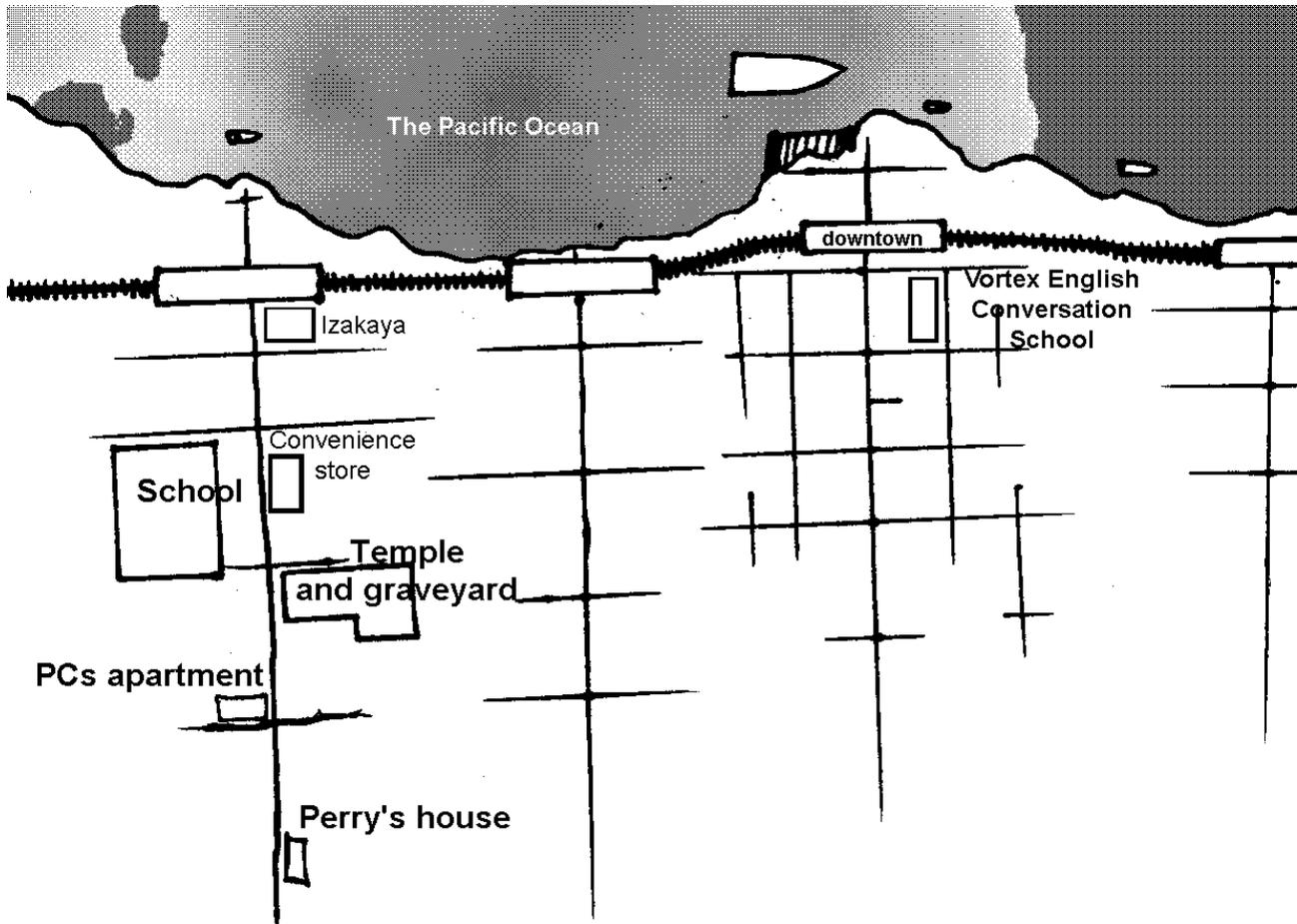
✦ The PCs dig up the body during the day. The ghosts of Yuki’s parents will attend the burial, becoming visible for a few moments as the body is interred.



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PLAYER HANDOUTS

Player Handout #1: Matsushika



Player Handout #2:



Player Handout #3:

You awaken in the middle of the night feeling strangely chilled. Your apartment is dark, silent. You feel a thin sweat covering your body – usual for Summer. However, as you try to get back to sleep, you begin to feel that you are not alone. There is someone in the room, watching you from the darkness. You can feel their eyes upon you, and you're pretty sure that you can hear their breathing – slow, rasping, sinister. You open your eyes wide, try to peer into the thick darkness around you. You reach for the light cord which hangs above your futon. As the light flickers on, you catch a momentary glimpse of a pair of eyes, wide and intense, staring at you from the corner of the room. Sitting bolt upright, you let out an involuntary cry. Then you realise that there is nothing there. It takes some time for you to get back to sleep, and the little sleep you do get is troubled by strange dreams which you can't quite remember in the morning.

Player Handout #4:

Your futon is very uncomfortable, lumpy. You roll around trying to get comfortable. The room is stuffy, the air is full of moisture, and your eyes feel swollen and gummy. As you roll over for the hundredth time, you feel a larger than usual lump under your arm. The lump moves, slides away from you, and you realise that it is alive! You sit bolt upright, eyes wide in the darkness, as a little voice calls out, "Otosan? Otosan?" A form rises up in the darkness in front of you, humanoid, but somehow maddeningly sinister. It sways in the darkness, barely visible, and giggles in a tiny voice. You back up against the wall, filled with an unspeakable terror. Your mouth hangs open, but you are unable to scream. Whatever is in front of you, it's stealing your breath! You lose all thought in a moment of blind panic, then you wake up to the sound of your own voice screaming. You are on your futon, your blanket wrapped around your face. It is 3:13am, and the rest of your night's sleep is fitful.

The PCs (in brief)

Chip Studabaker – ex-military, muscle-bound history buff

Sebastian Edwards (Seabass) – handsome, charming, lazy dancer

Josephine Carter – occasionally morose, beautiful ex-cheerleader

Trent Donovan – manga obsessed, pop culture artist

John Taylor – enormous, intimidating, black ex-football player

Kelly Green – vivacious, hard drinking Tasmanian Aussie

Name: **Chip Studabaker** Class: Smart Level: 1

Starting Occupation: Military Age: 39 Height: 6'1"
Gender: Male Eyes: Blue Hair: Greying

Stat:	#	mod	Hit Points: 9	Saving Throws
Strength	15	+2		
Dexterity	14	+2	Defence: 12	Fortitude: +3
Constitution	17	+3		
Intelligence	16	+3	Initiative: 2	Reflex: +2
Wisdom	10			
Charisma	8	-1	Base Attack: Melee +2	Will: 0
			Ranged+2	

Skill Ranks:

Computer Use 2 (+3), Disable Device 2 (+3), Drive 3 (+2), Forgery 3 (+3), Intimidate 2, Investigate 2 (+3), Knowledge History 4 (+3), Pilot 4 (+2), Speak Japanese 3, Read Japanese 2, Spot 2

Feats/Talents:

Simple Weapon Proficiency (can use baseball bat, sword etc).

Personal Firearms Proficiency (can use handguns etc.)

Confident

Background:

You grew up on the East Coast of America, were a High School Jock, and loved the attention you got. Your family wasn't too well off, so you joined the navy to put yourself through College. You then found that you loved life in the Navy – working out, massive amounts of testosterone (and occasional steroids), the freedom to say any offensive thing that crossed your mind. You managed to get a History Degree whilst serving, then thought you'd try your hand at being a **Navy Seal!** The training was pretty hard, and your knee gave out after a week and a half of the initial training (before they select half of the candidates to go forward, and half to go back to regular service). You took an honourable discharge, and started looking for other work. You'd been in the Navy off and on for the better part of 10 years, so you were looking for a change. You decided to travel to Japan to teach English, partly because of the hot Asian chicks, partly because you'd picked up a little Japanese language whilst stationed at the base on Okinawa, South Japan. You occasionally get excited when holding your umbrella (or any similar item), and hold it up like a machine-gun and make 'rat-at-at' noises at people.

War Story (this is the story you **love** to tell people, whenever you get a chance to crowbar it into conversation):

"Man, did I ever tell you about how I was almost a Navy Seal? I did the training and everything, I was ready to go, but my knee went. I would totally have been doing all that Steven Seagal stuff, like sneaking around on boats and killing people. It would have been badass. I know at least seven ways to kill you, just using office products."

Name: **Sebastian Edwards (Seabass)** Class: Charismatic Level: 1
Starting Occupation: Creative Age: 19 Height: 6'
Gender: Male Eyes: Blue Hair: Blonde

Stat:	#	mod	Hit Points: 8	Saving Throws
Strength	12	+1		
Dexterity	17	+3	Defence: 13	Fortitude: +1
Constitution	10			
Intelligence	11		Initiative: 3	Reflex: +4
Wisdom	8	-1		
Charisma	18	+4	Base Attack: Melee +1	Will: -1
			Ranged+3	

Skill Ranks:

Balance 4 (+3), Bluff 4 (+4 +3), Diplomacy 4 (+4 +2), Gather Information 4 (+4),
Perform: Dance 4 (+3), Speak Japanese 2, Read Japanese 2, Spot -1

Feats/Talents:

Simple Weapon Proficiency (can use baseball bat, sword etc).
Charm (bonus to bluff, diplomacy)

Background:

You are a **very** handsome man, and you know it. You were very popular at school, but your grades weren't too flash. Your main strength was looking good, dancing, and Visual Arts. You went to Art College because the application process was easier than a dance academy, and it was a real blast. You discovered that just about anything can be called a 'sculpture' or an 'installation', and you managed to get pretty good marks. It helped that you completely charmed your lecturers (most of whom were female). You did a bit of dancing on the side, and have kept up your grace and fitness. You did build up a bit of a student loan though, and didn't think that you'd be able to make a huge amount of money sculpting. Looking at the job market, you decided that teaching in Japan had a few advantages: a high salary, short working hours, they'd accept your art degree as a real qualification, and you might be able to get onto Japanese TV (you are, after all, a hugely good looking blond guy).

War Story (this is the story you **love** to tell people, whenever you get a chance to crowbar it into conversation):

Did I ever tell you about how I was nearly cast as James Bond? I mean, that Pierce guy is still playing James Bond, but I was at this restaurant in London, and this guy came in. He was a movie producer, and he was with all these really hot girls. They were eating dinner, and I was dressed in a super sharp suit. I went over to them, flashed a smile at the ladies, and said hi to the producer. He told me that I was the most handsome man he'd ever seen, and that I looked like James Bond. He even gave me his business card, and told me that if I ever went to Hollywood I should give him a call. I swear, if Pierce hadn't had a four movie contract, I'd be having my drinks shaken, not stirred, on the big screen.

[You had a part-time job as a maitre-de at a posh restaurant one summer. They supplied you with a suit, and you had to greet customers. The producer did give you his card, but you think he might have been hitting on you. You like to make the story a little more glamorous though...]

Name: **Josephine Carson (JC)** Class: Fast Level: 1
Starting Occupation: Athletic Age: 23 Height: 5'10"
Gender: Female Eyes: Green Hair: Blonde

Stat:	#	mod	Hit Points: 9	Saving Throws
Strength	12	+1		
Dexterity	14	+2	Defence: 15	Fortitude: +1
Constitution	13	+1		
Intelligence	12	+1	Initiative: 2	Reflex: +5
Wisdom	10			
Charisma	18	+4	Base Attack: Melee +1	Will: +0
			Ranged+2	

Skill Ranks:

Balance 3 (+2), Computer Use 1 (+1), Drive 1 (+2), Escape Artist 2 (+2), Hide 1 (+2), Jump 2 (+1 +3), Move Silently 2 (+2), , Speak Japanese 1, Read Japanese 1, Tumble 2 (+2 +3)

Feats/Talents:

Simple Weapon Proficiency (can use baseball bat, sword etc).

Evasion (bonus defence)

Acrobatic (bonus Jump, Tumble, Balance)

Background:

You grew up in Middle America, were the head of the Cheerleading squad, and dated the Captain of the football team. Your life was pretty much the American Dream. Then you went to College, while your boyfriend got a job at a caryard selling crappy old cars to high school kids. You were learning and growing, while your boyfriend Geoff was stagnating. He went out drinking with his buddies every night, talked about his former glory days (he had stopped training to concentrate on making some money), and hated you having contact with anyone he didn't know. You suspect that he was cheating on you. You would have been angrier, if you hadn't met someone at college. The relationship pretty much fell apart, though neither of you told anyone. People still asked you about Geoff, everyone knew he was seeing a high school sophomore, and then your new boyfriend dumped you. You started drinking more heavily, not enough to stop you passing your courses, but you weren't getting A's any more. People just couldn't keep their noses out of your business though, and eventually it got to be too much. You left for New York, spent a few months working at random jobs, and saving up for a ticket out of America. Then you came to Japan, to just get away from all that crap. You like living here – beer's not too expensive, your workmates don't criticise you for getting drunk most nights, and the work is easy. You've found yourself feeling pretty happy most of the time lately, though you still get down once in a while.

War Story (this is the story you **love** to tell people, whenever you get a chance to crowbar it into conversation):

When I first came to Japan, I spent a week in Tokyo before the Vortex training programme. There were so many creepy Japanese guys around, on the subway, on the streets. They'd just stare at me, really blatantly. And the porn! So many dirty middle aged guys reading porn on the trains! I'm sooo glad we live in the country, where there aren't quite so many pervy guys! There are some pretty cool clubs in Roppongi though, and I didn't have to buy myself a drink that whole week. Lots of American sailors with money to burn, and salarymen who just want to be *seen* with a gaijin girl...

Name: **Trent Donovan**
Starting Occupation: Creative
Gender: Male

Class: Smart
Age: 22
Eyes: Brown

Level: 1
Height: 5'6"
Hair: Shaved

Stat:	#	mod	Hit Points: 7	Saving Throws
Strength	14	+2		
Dexterity	14	+2	Defence: 13	Fortitude: +1
Constitution	13	+1		
Intelligence	18	+4	Initiative: 6	Reflex: +2
Wisdom	14	+2		
Charisma	11		Base Attack: Melee +2	Will: +3
			Ranged +2	

Skill Ranks:

Balance 2 (+2), Computer Use 4 (+4), Craft: Visual Arts: 4 (+4), Craft: Electronic 4 (+4), Disable Device 2 (+4), Forgery 2 (+4), Jump 2 (+2), Knowledge: Art 4 (+4), Knowledge: Pop Culture 4 (+4 +1), Research 3 (+4), Search 2 (+4), Spot 1 (+2), Speak Japanese 1, Read Japanese 1, Tumble 2 (+2)

Feats/Talents:

Simple Weapon Proficiency (can use baseball bat, sword etc).
Personal Firearms Proficiency (can use handguns etc.)
Savant (Pop Culture)
Defensive Martial Arts
Improved Initiative

Background:

You love comics. You grew up reading comic books, and as a teenager got into Japanese Anime and Manga. You are deeply in love with Japanese pop culture, and to a lesser extent American pop culture. You speak a little Japanese, and until recently you had a Japanese girlfriend, Ayumi. She was cute, and dating her was good for your language skills, but in the end her taste in movies and reading material was just too boring. Being single gives you more time to work on your own art anyway. You're developing an idea for a graphic novel which is a fusion of Anime styles and classic twenties U.S. funny papers. It's going to be a watershed work, genre-busting and mid expanding. You have about forty pages sketched, but they're from different sections and in different styles, so you haven't shown anyone. One day though. In the meantime, you enjoy hanging out at the izakaya, just knowing that pretty soon you'll be a famous auteur, and will be able to talk about the *real times* you had in Japan. You figure you'll sound pretty cool.

War Story (this is the story you **love** to tell people, whenever you get a chance to crowbar it into conversation):

“Did you know that Mickey Mouse was invented by a Japanese artist, and Walt Disney plagiarised his ideas? There's documented proof in the Manga Museum in Shibuya. Matsumori Tokugawa was a little known artist in the Edo period who did woodblock prints, and he created a character called 'Miki-Mausu' for a Bunraku theatre. There's a print from before the turn of the century in the museum, and a receipt with Disney's signature on it. Not many people know that Walt Disney travelled to Japan when he was a young man, and was hugely influenced by Manga and Ukiyoe...”

Name: **John Taylor**
Starting Occupation: Athletic
Gender: Male

Class: Strong Level: 1
Age: 22 Height: 6'6"
Eyes: Brown Hair: Brown

Stat:	#	mod	Hit Points: 11	Saving Throws
Strength	18	+4		
Dexterity	16	+3	Defence: 14	Fortitude: +4
Constitution	17	+3		
Intelligence	11		Initiative: 3	Reflex: +3
Wisdom	10			
Charisma	9		Base Attack: Melee +5	Will: +0
			Ranged +4	

Skill Ranks:

Balance 3 (+3), Intimidate 2, Jump 3 (+4 +1), Speak Japanese 1, Tumble 4 (+3)

Feats/Talents:

Simple Weapon Proficiency (can use baseball bat, sword etc).

Brawl

Melee Smash! (bonus to attacks),

Street Fighting

Background:

You never enjoyed school – what was the point? But you loved football. You were a legend on the field, a six and a half foot tall black god. You won a football scholarship to Washington State University, where you did pretty well in your classes and kicked ass on the football field. You signed your first professional contract before your final year even finished – you were going to be a star. You started playing for the Washington Redskins, and it was hard, but you were doing pretty well. Then your collar bone snapped, and you slipped a couple of discs in your back, and were sidelined for a few games. The doctors told you that if you kept playing, you'd probably lose the ability to walk. You tried to get back into the game, but after a few hits you knew that the doctors were right – you were screwed. You thought about trying to get into advertising, selling weight-gain products or cookies or something, but you just weren't famous enough. Then you saw an ad for teaching in Japan – easy money, no risk of injury, and some time away from home to think about where to go next.

War Story (this is the story you **love** to tell people, whenever you get a chance to crowbar it into conversation):

“Damn I'm glad I studied hard through school and College. The football gig was good – money, popularity, scholarships and all. But it could never have lasted. You're an old man in the football game by the time you're 30. I think I'm gonna go into schools when I get back, talk to the young black men who are struggling and looking to sports careers to get them out of a bad situation. I'm gonna advise them to follow that path, but don't cut off any other avenues. Hit the books hard man, stay in school.”

Name: **Kelly Green**
Starting Occupation: Student
Gender: Female

Class: Tough
Age: 23
Eyes: Hazel

Level: 1
Height: 5'9''
Hair: Brown

Stat:	#	mod	Hit Points: 13	Saving Throws
Strength	10			
Dexterity	15	+2	Defence: 13	Fortitude: +6
Constitution	17	+3		
Intelligence	11		Initiative: 2	Reflex: +2
Wisdom	8	-1		
Charisma	14	+2	Base Attack: Melee +1	Will: -1
			Ranged +3	

Skill Ranks:

Climb 1, Concentration 2 (+3), Intimidate 2 (+2), Knowledge: Civics 2, Perform: Guitar 3 (+3), Speak Japanese 1, Spot 2 (-1)

Feats/Talents:

Simple Weapon Proficiency (can use baseball bat, sword etc).

Brawl

Great Fortitude (bonus to fortitude save)

Remain Conscious (you are **very** hard to knock out)

Background:

You are a hard drinking Australian girl from Tasmania. You love to party, have a weird sense of humour, and don't mind getting into the occasional brawl. You studied English literature at University, and you have a hefty student loan which you are paying off slowly by working in Japan. You tend to spend a bit too much on drink, which is hampering your savings plan. You have the toughest liver of anyone you know, and can drink any of your workmates under the table. You had a brief relationship with a young Japanese guy, but it didn't really work out all that well. Now you enjoy spending as much time as possible with JC. She likes to drink, and she's not too stuck up. You find Chet to be a bit much sometimes – the whole ultra-macho thing is a bit of a turn-off.

War Story (this is the story you **love** to tell people, whenever you get a chance to crowbar it into conversation):

“When I first arrived in Japan, I went to the Vortex training in Osaka. There were seven of us Aussies at the training, and we decided to go out for a drink afterwards. We were singing karaoke in this little pub when a whole bunch of Yakuza guys came in. They were really creepy – all tattoos and no facial expressions and cold, dead eyes. Somehow we ended up in a drinking contest with them – don't ask me how. They were obviously cheating, getting the barman to pour our drinks from different bottles. Two of the other Aussies passed out, and one of the guys was getting really aggressive. I thought we were going to get killed, but these really nice salarymen came over and invited us to another club. We got the hell out of there, and went to a hostess bar. The salarymen were really generous, they bought us drinks for the rest of the night, and even got a hotel room for our friends who had passed out. I mean, they were sleazy, but they didn't **do** anything. Man, I'm just glad we got away from those psycho criminal types.”