



# FUGU

*“I don’t believe in death or in hell; my life never stopped being hell. I would only fear if I had to go to heaven.”*

– Takeushi, *High and Low*

*“Saltwater games, spectres in sight...”*

– Ring 2

## Gestsuyobi – the Day of the Moon

This adventure follows on from **Origami**, found in the **Kuro Core Rulebook**. We recommend that you play that adventure first if you have not already done so. It is fine if you have run other adventures in the meantime, as long as the player characters have now met, and are aware that their names all appear on the mysterious list of ‘Potentials’.

The player characters may still be getting to know each other, but do at least know they have something strange in common. They should have become (possibly reluctant) allies, but may not yet trust each other. They may not even realise there is anything supernatural going on around them, believing their names are on the mysterious list for political or even criminal reasons, and all they have seen has a rational explanation.

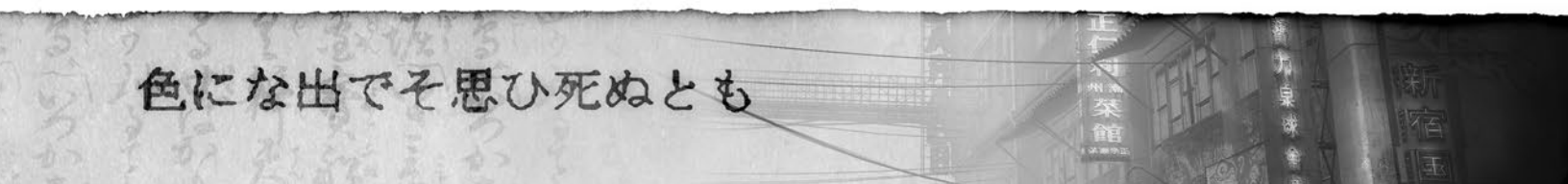
In this phase of the campaign they are working in darkness, having little idea of what is really going on around them, as they reach out blindly into the dark. But in the Gestsuyobi (Moon) phase they will begin to lift the veil. They will see glimpses of the supernatural inside the mundane. They are about to discover that nothing is quite what it seems and that the world is a lot stranger and more frightening than they have ever imagined.

## Overview

In **Fugu** the player characters are drawn to the Kaijin quarter after the discovery of several horribly mutilated corpses. These victims are all named on the list of ‘Potentials’ the characters retrieved in **Origami**. All of the victims have been murdered in the same way, over a very short space of time. There can be no doubt: someone has it in for anyone with the same blood anomalies as the player characters. The murderer has already killed four people in the last two weeks. If they investigate the murders, the player characters will follow the trail to the heart of the huge fish-farm platform of Kaijin. Once aboard they will attempt to capture him in the depths of the station.

## Naming Conventions

Throughout this book the names of Japanese, Chinese and Korean characters are presented in the proper way with family surnames placed before personal or first names. Western names are presented the other way around.



色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも



# PROLOGUE

*Countless odd religions too, it doesn't matter which you choose. One stubborn way to turn your back, this I've tried, and now refuse.*  
– *You Only Live Once*, The Strokes

After surviving the harrowing events of **Origami**, the player characters at least now know each other. Maybe they have stayed in touch, if only to communicate information on their mysterious 'ailment'. Some might have avoided the others, hoping to convince themselves that it all never happened. If they try to track down the other names on the list they will usually come up with too many options for each name. What will they say to people they contact anyway? They might choose to test their own blood. Even those with medical experience will discover very little. The blood marker is easy to test for if you know what you are looking for, but equally easy to overlook. If the player characters insist on tracking down the other Potentials, they might find that sinister organisations warn them off, or at least follow them hoping to be led to yet more Potentials.

Some weeks later, something else in the media grabs their attention. If they have been avoiding the media, Jiro might intervene discretely by sending puzzling messages or net links to their Pods. The item in question is making the front pages in the news: a serial killer is stalking Shin-Edo.

The killer has recently murdered a fourth victim, which follows the same gruesome pattern as the others. There is little to connect the victims except for the manner of their deaths, and that the murders have all occurred in the Kaijin district. In response, the media has declared that the murderer is a serial killer, one they have decided to call 'the Ogre'. The police refuse to issue any statements, which the media has interpreted as meaning they have no idea as to what is going on. With no clue where the Ogre will strike next, the public are getting nervous.

What attracts the interest of the player characters is that the victim's names are all on the list of 'Potentials' that they found. With this as the only link, it seems clear that the killer is targeting people with the same strange blood anomalies as the player characters. They could be the next victims on his list.

## Modus Operandi

A certain amount of gruesome information is commonly available to the media. The murderer kills his victims in the same way, using a kind of butcher's knife. He removes certain organs and then rips the skin off the body. The name the press gave the killer was ill-chosen, as he doesn't ingest anything from his victims. They are just disembowelled after an initial attack with the blade.

If the player characters have media or police contacts they might be able to discover a little more information that hasn't been released to the public.

- The murderer's blade is covered in poison, evidence of which has been found in the wounds. The poison is a powerful neurotoxin called tetrodotoxin.
- Tetrodotoxin is mainly found in poisonous fish, notably the pufferfish used for the famous dish 'Fugu' that must be prepared carefully not to poison the diner.
- The removed organs are the liver, the intestines and the gonads (testicles or ovaries)
- The police are floundering in the investigation; they have no clues and little idea as to where the killer will strike next.
- Originally the police believed these to be Yakuza killings, gangland murders designed to gruesomely warn off competition or take revenge. However, it has become clear that not every victim has Yakuza connections.

## The Victims

Given the high profile nature of the investigation, the media is full of speculation about the murderer and his victims. A lot of background information is freely available on all the victims.

### Victim 1: Itagaki Kimiko

The first murder occurred 16 days ago. Kimiko was a young woman living alone in Kaijin. She worked in a rather shabby restaurant called 'Three Flavours', rumoured to have Yakuza connections. Kimiko was killed in her small apartment room. There were no witnesses.



# KAIJIN

## Victim 2: Wada Hashiba

The second victim, killed four days later, was a labourer in an alimentary algae colourisation and processing factory. He was killed inside his home on the platform; his wife was present, but somehow spared. There are rumours that he was getting additional payments from the Yakuza, possibly for assisting their smuggling operations. Investigators immediately thought his death was due to him crossing his nefarious contacts, who decided to make an example of him with such an imaginative and macabre scene.

## Victim 3: Marubashi Ikaru

The third murder happened 6 days ago. The victim was a man in his forties, a third rate lawyer employed by a large fish processing company. He'd never had any problems with the law, climbing the corporate ladder little by little without breaking the rules. His lack of criminal contacts, unlike the previous two, was what make the police realise that the death was not necessarily part of a crime war.

## Victim 4: Omura Yumiko

The latest victim was a senior executive, killed two days before the adventure begins. Yumiko never had any connection with organised crime, and she had come to the platform three days before she was killed. It was from the third killing, that of Marubashi Ikaru, that the media began to pay real attention to this case. After all, a serial killer sells more newspapers than underworld slayings. Law enforcement agencies have also been forced to rethink their investigations.

## The Truth

The murders are being carried out by a vengeful water spirit who has possessed one of the divers on Kaijin. Normally it remains dormant, but like a fugu fish it can swell up its host with spiritual energy, turning him into a monster. The spirit simply plans to kill for its own entertainment, but when it discovered Potentials it made a point of targeting them. As they are descendants of the kami, it recognises their 'taint' and seeks to kill as many as possible, before they can become a danger. After having had some fun with murder, its current plan is to destroy a large part of the Kaijin district, for no better reason than it enjoys chaos and murder.

The most recent Special Ward in Shin-Edo is man-made; a maze of platforms and underwater walkways spreading over more than 12 km2 called Kaijin district. Located some 30 km away from the rest of the megalopolis in the middle of the sea, Kaijin is a quarter that values and works for its autonomy. The inhabitants would sooner refer to their quarter as their city than Shin-Edo and many regard the people of the mainland with suspicion and a bit of disdain. It is not going to be easy for the characters to investigate the murders quietly and discreetly. They will be seen as outsiders sticking their nose in business that certainly does not concern 'tourists from the coast'.

The characters are free to find a cover story to wander through Kaijin's dusty metal walkways. They may come as simple visitors, although that still makes them outsiders, and few people will want to have much to do with them, although everyone will know who they are. Decent accommodation is expensive for out-of-towners. They might get a temporary contract working for one of the fishing companies. Such work usually comes with accommodation (just a sleep cube; but hey, it is a bed). The work itself involves packing or gutting fish, but the companies also recruit warehouse security and logistics (lifters and carriers) as well as deep sea workers. While fully trained deep sea divers command better salaries, most people can be employed as a deep sea worker. The deep sea diving suits have so many electronic systems that they almost run themselves. Most people willing to do the hard claustrophobic work that being a deep sea diver involves can sign on after completing no more than the company's half day training course (granting a character a free point in the Pilot skill specialisation 'Heavy Diving suit'). While there are agencies on Kaijin recruiting workers, several on-shore agencies book workers and then ferry them across to Kaijin.

Characters with a higher Kaisei or better contacts might come to Kaijin as businessmen looking to invest or sign a contract. Their cover will all depend on their glibness and the skills that they use to bluff who they're speaking to. If they are wealthy enough, they might come as tourists and assume that a few yen will get people to open up a little.

There are several ways to get to the platform of Kaijin. The cheapest is to take a boat. Plenty of fishing ships build their income by taking passengers across in times of poor fishing. With the sea fauna ravaged by pollution, almost every day is a poor fishing day. There are many ferry companies, allowing





trips with a little more comfort, but one must make reservations in advance because it is a very busy route. Kaijin has eight helipads, so wealthy characters might take a helicopter taxi. Air travel is the most expensive but fastest solution; it will only take 10 minutes to make the journey by helicopter.

Once the characters are there, the Gamemaster should take time to describe how different Kaijin is from the rest of Shin-Edo. Kaijin has a startlingly different environment to Shin-Edo, one of the reasons inhabitants think of the place as a separate city. For starters, seeing the sun is a luxury, even more so as you dive deeper below sea level. The upper floors are reserved for the headquarters of the big companies, as well as the visiting residences of the company leaders. The middle levels are filled with comfortable hotels, and welcome visitors, school trips and scientists, but the deeper you go the less luxury and comfort there is. Little by little the large climate controlled translucent walkways, with convenient Neo-Web ports and green plants for decoration, are replaced by narrow, shadowy corridors and gantries with rusty metal walls, exhaling an oppressive odour of seaweed and salt. Occasional leaks of orange water spatter onto the heads of passers-by, while the sound of metal creaking and rumbling is sometimes heard, as if the platform itself is growling.

Power becomes less reliable the deeper into the platforms you go. The way that the lifts creak and struggle, one wonders if they will manage to get back up again. The ever present advertising holograms initiate their programmes, but are often interrupted, as if they no longer have enough battery power. Personalised advertising is regularly short-circuited, offering completely inappropriate services and calling you by another name. The whole structure is hardly 20 years old, but the outside environment has prematurely aged, having suffered more abuse than expected, and received less maintenance than it needed. There was talk of building a second platform in the next 10 years, but the Kuro Incident changed everything and the project was shelved. The coalition government has at least agreed on maintaining Kaijin as it is. The cost of even building a smaller platform would be exorbitant under the current circumstances.

Accommodation comes in several forms on Kaijin, depending on the type of work the workers have. Most workers live in a sleep cube provided by the company. These cubicles are racked together in sets of 400 and are not much larger than a wide coffin (which is what most people call them). These cubicles are also available for out-of-towners. Each cubicle has a glass front that can become opaque, a Neo-Web port and an entertainment centre that offer several media channels (as well as access to erotic channels or 3D programmes).

There are also several more comfortable hotels and residences a little higher up. Most permanent workers live with their families or co-workers in small apartments, each of which consists of four rooms around a kitchen/common area. Hotels offer small rooms for rent as well, much like a small boarding house. The highest levels offer plush executive suites with views across the ocean and personal balconies, but these are rare as the platform is not a favourite destination of the billionaire jet-set.

There are several ways to pass the time in Kaijin on your off-hours. The place is littered with small bars, and some larger ones like the 'Smuggler's Den' that offer some of the best sushi for a modest price. There are several restaurants like the 'Sushi Sea' (see the *Kuro Core Rulebook*, page 46). A few clubs are to be found on Kaijin as well, the most exclusive, or rather expensive, is called 'Scales'. There are also a few small shrines for quiet worship or contemplation.

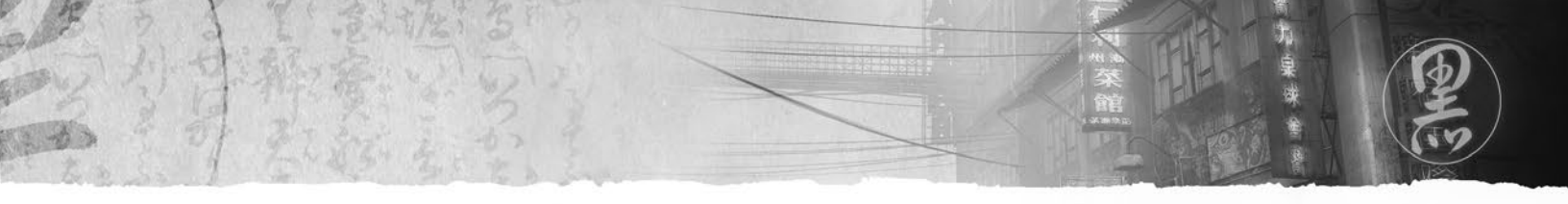
## What if the player characters don't go?

With a murderer on Kaijin seeking to kill Potentials, your player characters might be forgiven for running in the opposite direction. Surely only a gruesome death awaits them if they walk into the arms of the killer?

So the Gamemaster may wish to remind them that forewarned is forearmed. At the moment they know little or nothing about what might be coming after them and with the blockade still in force, they won't get very far if they run. Sooner or later the murderer will come for them, wherever they hide, and they will have no way to prepare a defence.

The more confrontational characters may also realise that they have a tactical advantage. At the moment the killer is in one district, where they might hunt it down and turn the tables. If it leaves the platform who knows where it might go?

Finally, there is the moral angle. People are dying and the player characters are not only connected to the deaths, but have information that the police do not. If they do not at least try and pass this detail on to the investigating officers, more people are going to die.



Kaijin has a thriving black market, often made up of people looking to make ends meet when they could not afford passage back to the mainland. Visitors who spend some time looking around the lower walkways will find a selection of illicit goods on offer, for a price of course.

## Investigations

Once settled into the district, the player characters will want to look around, but they are not the only ones on Kaijin looking into the deaths. There are two journalists on the station that they might talk to, and two investigating officers with their own pathologist. If player characters try to investigate the crime scenes directly, they are easy to find, but they will have to talk to a few contacts or locals to find out where to find the journalists and police.

## The Police

Two inspectors have come over from the mainland to investigate the case. While Kaijin has a police force it only has a very small detective department, usually more experienced with smuggling than murder. Given the higher profile of the case, it made sense to send over more experienced detectives. The two investigating officers have brought over their own pathologist who has hired a mortuary lab to keep the bodies and do his work.

The police will be suspicious of anyone asking about the murders, at first thinking them journalists, so player characters' covers had best be secure. If they reveal the list of Potentials and the link with the murder victims, the police will be very interested, especially if they can prove what they say. If they discover that the player characters are also Potentials the police will want to put them in protective custody.

### Kobayashi Tetsuo

An old cop not far from retirement, Tetsuo is a little over 60, with large dark circles under his eyes, almost a Japanese 'Columbo'. He is quite grumpy and, at first, will not be very nice. The old man has a weakness though: he loves booze and will be much more talkative over a bottle of sake or a glass of beer. The player characters may even run into him in one of the Kaijin bars.

### Hang Jin-Pyo

Tetsuo's partner, also an old cop, is much friendlier and talkative. Jin-Pyo is Korean, 59 years old, with a few locks

of white hair and a face full of wrinkles formed from warm expressions. Nevertheless, he will not spill the beans as soon as the player characters ask him. They will have to build a relationship with him, and show him that they are serious, in order to forge some mutual trust. Jin-Pyo and his partner are living on site for the investigation, only leaving once a week for a day off. It is possible to socialise with him at the Sushi Sea or in any other similar establishment.

### Nakahashi Tahei

Tahei is the medical examiner on the case, and not a police officer. He is a young doctor who has just qualified, and has a very dry sense of humour and a coffee addiction. Despite always keeping a straight face, he has a very black gallows sense of humour, not uncommon among pathologists.

If they befriend Tahei – bringing him freshly brewed coffee will help – he will bring the player characters up to speed on some of the medical clues. If the characters have not made the connection themselves, he can explain that tetrodotoxin (the toxin found on the wounds and that should cover the blade of the murder weapon) is the same as the one in the fugu fish. This famous toxic fish is prepared as sashimi, which is particularly fashionable and expensive, but for which preparation requires a state diploma and still results in a few deaths every year.

If the player characters play nicely with these three law enforcement officers, they may inform the characters as to the killer's methods, the details of the crime scenes and give them their first clues. While their first suspicions led to the underworld, the last two murders have led the officers to completely revise the focus of their investigations. Now they lean towards the serial killer angle. The officers and their pathologist co-worker are still trying to find a commonality between the victims. Sure, some serial killers strike at random, depending on who they meet, but the insular nature of the quarter and their experience and 'gut', leads them to believe that it might be something else. Nevertheless, they are in no way aware of the list connecting the characters.

## The Journalists

There are two journalists covering the case on Kaijin, either of which might offer new insight into the case. They were immediately attracted by the macabre nature of the victim's deaths and thought right away that a serial killer was responsible. The fact that the first victims had connections to the underworld has not misled them, unlike the police. Both are more integrated into the local population and can serve as



guides to certain areas in the quarter. Most people on Kaijin are also happier to talk to journalists than police too.

### Cindy Kang

Cindy is a young Sino-American reporter, stranded in Japan by the Kuro Incident. She is a very pretty mixed heritage woman, barely 30 years old. Being young, she is quite enthusiastic and speaks very fast. She came to Japan working for 'TBTN', an American regional channel, but when she was cut off from her network, she refused to give up reporting and got recruited by 'Jap-One', a private channel owned by a Genocratic press magnate, Bui Gen Eichiro. The 'Ogre affair' is the first serious story she has been able to cover in Japan, and she is very aware that it could help her fragile career. Serious and hard working, she interviews everybody she can find, working round the clock if need be. The player characters can turn her into a solid ally if they bring her news and regularly trade valid information with her.

### Okamoto Gihei

This older journalist is winding down from a highly prestigious career. In his fifties, he is balding, with drawn features and teeth yellowed by tobacco. He used to host the news on a premier Japanese channel before ruining his career by publicly revealing that he belonged to a cult. The evening of the Kuro Incident, he surprised thousands of viewers, podcasters and listeners, by blaming the events of the day on the Japanese government. Live on air he encouraged the Japanese people to revolt for a 'True Japan'. This new Japan would see a stronger emphasis on worship and respect for the divinities, led by the cult, Ikari Kami. When he was immediately fired, he became the cult's spokesman. When Ikari Kami was absorbed by a bigger organisation, he became the director of the cult's official channel. He is covering this event convinced that the 'Ogre' is a man so tainted by modern dissolute living that it has driven him insane.

Okamoto Gihei can be used to give the player characters some of the stranger clues, or a few red herrings. Who is to know these crackpots are not sometimes near the truth? The Gamemaster can mix real scenario information and important events with abstruse dogmatic truths and convoluted reasoning. Okamoto is a crackpot already immersed in a hodgepodge of delusions, some of which have some truly disturbing details.

## The Victims

The names of the victims are now a matter of public record, so tracking down friends, colleagues and the scene of each crime

is reasonably simple. As the police have already interviewed most people, no one is 'off limits' and the crime scenes are no longer guarded. However, the police do keep returning to seek out more clues and will hear about the player characters' investigations if they are not subtle.

### Victim 1: Itagaki Kimiko

The first victim worked on the BCX 719 platform in restaurant called 'Three Flavours'. It is a shabby, tiny and filthy place where their excuse for food actually hides a prostitution ring. Kimiko was 31 years old, and organised the girls and the androids while her associate, Mubura Kotaro, a fat man with a greasy, unhealthy complexion, managed the establishment and the kitchen. Kotaro is very suspicious of anyone asking questions, so the player characters must employ every trick of diplomacy to extract any information from him. At the most he will concede that Itagaki Kimiko was his associate and that she was a partner in the business. Given the nature of the business, both Itagaki and Mubura are part of the local Yakuza, a connection that Mubura might hint at to threaten the player characters if they get too pushy.

He will deny any illegalities and will show his ownership license for the Gynoid androids, which he will call "welcoming hostesses" and not prostitutes. Prostitution is not actually illegal in Japan, however, it is tacitly reserved to certain quarters and it is forbidden on the platform. The human prostitutes will be locked in their rooms during any interview, and the androids will not be of any use. Itagaki Kimiko's apartment is actually an upstairs room at the 'restaurant'. However, there were no witnesses as the attack was so quiet that no one noticed. She was found by one of the girls (Aki, 21 years old) when she failed to hand out the schedule for the girls that afternoon.

### Victim 2: Wada Hashiba

The second victim was 38 years old and worked in the Tsubachi establishment, a factory specialising in the processing and colourisation of food algae on ACX 413 platform. He was a skilled worker and worked on a production line on a lower level. He separated algae and threw away any too tainted by any toxins that had escaped the vast filters. He was murdered at home, in his tiny lodgings made up of one tiny room in a block two floors below the factory. His wife, Wada Akiko, was sleeping beside him. She was awakened by noises and a movement, which she assumed was her husband. Before she could wake up properly she was rendered unconscious by a blow to the forehead. When she woke up her husband was dead and lay eviscerated in the bed. She has seen nothing and cannot say anything that can identify the killer.



As the investigation progressed, the police officers managed to get hold of evidence (through financial tracking) of deposits and movements of money that seemed large for someone with Washida's job. His widow eventually confessed that her deceased husband was corrupt. A certain Mr Reed would pay him to look the other way when a cargo of algae too polluted for trade went missing. She has never seen or met Mr Reed.

## Mr Reed

Mr Reed is a small-time gangster who runs a smuggling ring. It repackages substandard food that it then smuggles off Kaijin to sell to the poor neighbourhoods in Shin-Edo. While this makes many people ill, both Mr Reed and the smuggling ring are just a red herring in the scenario. You can launch the characters after him if you think that they are moving too quickly or if you wish to take them into Kaijin's darker places.

### Victim 3: Marubashi Ikaru

The third victim was aged 43 and had never had any hint of trouble with the law.

Marubashi Ikaru was a lawyer working in the legal department of a mid-sized company called SFP (Sea Food Packaging), a fish conditioning firm. He was a lawyer with a very average, lacklustre career, and his presence in Kaijin was the only exceptional thing about him. He was to check over the clauses during the signing of a contract with a new client and was there simply for a day, but the post-Kuro incident typhoons that regularly beset Japan prevented the helicopter from taking him back. He decided to spend the night in the second-class hotel where he was killed.

Interestingly, this murder had a witness, an Italian engineer, Fabio Pescatore, Murabashi's temporary neighbour, who heard struggling noises. He opened his door slightly to check the hallway and saw a massive, arched silhouette quickly and silently moving away up the corridor. More than its appearance, he was stunned by the smell emanating from the figure. It was a salty stench, reeking of iodine and rotten fish. He quickly shut the door, almost vomiting, with no wish to investigate the hulking figure any further. Lit with only one weak red emergency lamp, the corridor was almost pitch black at the time, so Pescatore was unable to see any more details.

### Victim 4: Omura Yumiko

The last victim to date was an executive in the Russian-Nipponese company Koryakovsky & Ichikawa, which specialises in advertising sea delicacies. Yumiko was currently preparing the marketing strategy of a client company, Shibu Corp. In Kaijin for four days, she counted on staying the week to complete her work and then return to her home in Shin-Edo.

She was killed while out on a heavy drinking session with her co-workers. As if pulled by a mighty arm, she disappeared into one of the floor's oxygenation tunnels. Her screams sounded for a moment in the tunnel, but were cut off abruptly. Kaijin is very much a place that never sleeps; the fish companies operate a 24-hour shift pattern, so many other businesses do the same. This meant that there were several witnesses to this surprise kidnapping. Unfortunately the speed of the abduction meant that what witnesses there were did not get a good look at the perpetrator. From what little information they have gleaned from those present, the police have concluded that the kidnapper had Herculean strength. After all, Omura Yumiko was a very strong and healthy young woman. The body was found a few hours later, at a much lower level, between two rubbish bins in a sector mostly occupied by industries and a few squats. There, on the street, nobody noticed the smell of the murderer, because the smell of fish and water is ubiquitous.

## Some Important Details

It is very hard to notice (make sure the characters get this information after being very observant) because the whole ward oozes humidity, but the places where the killer has appeared are filled with a sort of mould. Brown stains taint the walls of the tunnels where he has been, such as the corridor in the hotel where the lawyer Marubashi was staying. Following his appearance, the humidity rate increases astronomically. Metal areas will have rusted quickly and the few plants nearby will have withered.

Moreover, there's another disturbing correlation. In Marubashi's hotel room there were some sugar bags on a low table, beside a coffee cup. The bags are torn open but contain not sugar, but salt. The same goes for the sugar bags inside Omura's handbag. If questioned on the subject, Mubura Kotaro, the Three Flavours manager (and Itagaki Kimiko's partner) might confess that a joker recently played a prank on him, because all the sugar containers in his establishment were filled with salt...

Sugar seems to have turned to salt. Salt is a key element of the Shinto religion. It is a necessary ingredient to any purification ritual.



# FEAR OF THE DARK

The purpose of this chapter is to energise the investigations, featuring a first contact between the creature and its pursuers – the player characters. Indeed, during the investigation, maybe when they reach the place where Omura's body was discovered, the more perceptive characters (Perception check) will notice a foul odour in the air. Soon they will hear strident, shrill screams, which come from walkways farther away. When the player characters arrive on a meshed walkway (which feels very unstable due to being fixed to the ceiling by cables) they will see on the lower level an arched shadow sliding around a little building with great alacrity, but hesitating to enter. The screams are coming from inside. It is the killer tracking a new victim?

The creature is hardly visible and not just because the lights are dim, which might create doubt in the minds of the players, or at least the characters. Is it a hunchbacked man, or a monster? The darkness will make it hard to be certain. Any character equipped with a Gantai will see it filled with static before the screen turns grey, disrupted by some kind of pulsing. Any character equipped with audio biotech will distinctively hear high-pitched noises, like claws scratching a blackboard or a factory whistle.

If the player characters chase after the creature, it will show an agility worthy of the best gymnasts and will leap from walkways to tunnels, holding on to tubes, climbing over pillars, quickly leaving behind the most agile of characters, especially after leaping over a distance impossible for a normal human being.

Inside the tiny building, an artificial (modelled after a teenage Japanese girl) will explain to the player characters how she was chased here by a horrifying monster when she was going home after shopping for her boss. She did not see its face, but smelled a horrible stench. She screamed for help while running away. She is a home robot with overclocked programming, probably to act as a prostitute. She is quite a basic model and has been reprogrammed to be seductive. Completely unimpressed by this event, our charming silicon hostess will come on to each of the characters while she is answering their questions. You cannot hold it against her, it is just her programming.

Two questions should be foremost in the player character's minds:

- What saved the android from the killer's attack?
- Why was an android attacked in the first place?

It is not obvious what has protected the Artificial from the serial killer's wild attack, but it is simple to deduce. She took refuge in an abandoned shrine, its pediment decorated with a dusty shimenawa, a rope woven in rice straw supposedly to keep demons away. Was it the traditional Shinto object that repelled the murderer? It is impossible to be sure, but together with the salt there are now enough elements for one to start thinking of traditional Japanese rites. At this time, it is impossible to know why the killer attacked an android. In fact, the android houses a spirit that drew the killer's rage. Her name is Onna, and the player characters will meet her again properly at Domino's club in the last adventure, Kami (see page 102).

## Strange Disappearances

The next night all the player characters have a strange and rather frightening dream. The whole of the Kaijin platform quarter is swaying, almost to breaking point. Stars are falling into the water, torn from the sky by huge tornadoes, causing gigantic waves. They hear a sort of dull pressure coming from the deep that keeps getting louder. Around them, people panic, crushing each other in their rush to escape. The ground becomes slippery; people are drowned in strange organic liquids. From the top of a heap of flesh, a man watches them. This huge, hunchbacked man has a horribly deformed face, protruding eyes and a mouth twisted by small fine teeth. He turns to the player characters to address them and raises a hand in their direction, but before he can speak each of them is woken by their Pod ringing.

It is one of their contacts, either a journalist or a police officer, depending on who they have got close to. The contact has unearthed something vital. A worker has disappeared, and is now the subject of a manhunt, as the date of the disappearance is the same as the first murder. Moreover, according to his co-workers, he had been exhibiting very strange behaviour before he vanished.

The worker in question is Niwa Fumihiko. He was a deep sea diver working at DeepTek. This company is a state contractor for the maintenance of Kaijin's foundations. Its divers work to maintain the supporting pillars, to ensure that the bedrock does not crumble and to study the porosity and the rust in the supporting materials. They are trained to use the bulky high-tech diving suits and command arthropods (giant robots with metal legs similar to those of sea spiders or crabs) to aid them in their work.



Seeking out more information the player characters may be led to Niwa's team leader, Yamana Bunjiro. He gave Niwa a special leave of absence two weeks ago, but when he didn't return to work, he contacted Niwa's girlfriend, Sagara Kaoru. She claimed that Niwa disappeared the day before. Worried, she was about to contact the police. They went together to report the disappearance this morning.

## Storm Warning

As soon as the player characters turn on the TV or check their Pods, they will learn that a typhoon is building, preventing all communication with the rest of the city. A level 3 alert has been declared, because the tornado risks passing near Kaijin. The alert blocks all traffic and obliges companies to activate secure evacuation routes, which means that some corridors have ground lights, showing the path to follow in case of emergency evacuation. All structures are also obliged to open their safety relays, large sealed and pressurised capsules that can hold some 30 people. Nevertheless, no one seems alarmed and the characters will learn that such tornadoes are very regular, especially after the Kuro Incident.

### Typhoon Alerts

Being on the open sea, Kaijin is somewhat at the mercy of rough seas and high winds. There are five levels of alert on Kaijin, the details of which are posted around the platform for visitors. When the sea is too rough to allow evacuation, there are several parts of the station designated 'safe zones'. These are tougher parts of the station that can be sealed and can float if torn from the station. Such areas are marked in green

**Level 1 – Warning:** Small boats may be in danger; residents are generally warned to take care.

**Level 2 – Secure:** Residents are warned to secure all doors and windows and not venture outside. Small boat traffic no longer allowed.

**Level 3 – Danger:** Non-essential workers are advised to stay at home. Entertainment areas are closed.

**Level 4 – Emergency:** The station has become dangerous, all non-essential workers are advised to leave or make their way to a secure area.

**Level 5 – Evacuation:** The platform is no longer safe and all residents are advised to leave or get to a safe area.

## Rapture of the Deep

The DeepTek areas of the platform are in the deepest levels of Kaijin where there are no residential places. All around there are only metal structures, massive imposing structures, Cyclopean pillars the size of buildings, monstrous hydraulic cylinders, decompression hatches the size of interchanges and arthropod hangar bays. The noises of pressure on metal are even more frightening. The area is near a depth of 250m beneath the sea surface and the walls are some 15 metres thick. Only professionals roam through these levels, as well as security androids. However, it is not a forbidden area and it is easily possible to arrange a meeting with Yamana Bunjiro if the player characters are polite or use their contacts.

Yamana is an athletic 30 year-old man sporting a goatee. He will tell the characters that Niwa evinced strange behaviour in the few days before he was given his leave of absence, roughly two weeks ago. Often exhausted and inattentive, his daydreams almost caused the death of a co-worker, when he got in the way of a dangerous underwater manoeuvre. After that incident he was placed on a two week forced leave. Yamana believes Niwa was subject to inert gas narcosis, also known as "the rapture of the deep". This is an excessive exposure to nitrogen, which leads to a state of drunkenness, euphoria, even incoherent and inappropriate behaviour. This behaviour can sometimes cause death, such as removing a diving suit underwater for instance.

This type of incident is rare since the new diving suits are equipped with better circulation and use an artificial amniotic liquid. Nitrogen is supposed to be better filtered and adapted to the depths. Yamana believes Niwa must have damaged his suit, or perhaps a nanocentipede failed to unclog a small hole in one of the many gas injectors in the fluid. This must have led to a bad calibration of the gaseous mix of amniotic liquid, exposing Niwa to a nitrogen overdose. While Yamana has not found a problem with Niwa's suit, he believes it is the only possible explanation for his behaviour.

If the player characters inquire about the sort of behaviour Niwa manifested, Yamana remembers the first delusion quite well. Niwa claimed that he was caught by a ghost who melted through his hard suit without any trouble and entered his body. Niwa insisted that he was very ill, as if poisoned and had to go home sick for the rest of the day. Yamana may put the player characters in touch with Dr Shibata in base CCX-1236, who was Niwa's doctor. He is responsible for the 'health of human and artificial resources' of the company, and had several sessions with Niwa after the incident.



The player characters will have to be cunning to get an interview with Dr Shibata. He is not at liberty to divulge any private medical records to just anyone. However, he is curious about the case and would welcome any insight he can be given if he trusts that the conversation will remain confidential. Dr Shibata is an old man, with degrees in robotics and medicine, and is convinced that “the living is but one state of existence.” He deliberately confuses human organs with the parts of artificials. His lab is at the end of the complex and is quite isolated. The walls are covered with stuffed deep-sea fish. He can explain that his tests proved Niwa was not suffering from nitrogen overexposure, but from an abnormally high presence of a very specific neurotoxin: tetrodotoxin. Shibata will state that such a dose is certainly lethal. Niwa’s skin also had a yellow colouring, an unusual symptom for inert gas narcosis. Shibata thinks it was caused by the neurotoxin.

## Interviewing Kaoru

Sagara Kaoru, Niwa’s girlfriend of two years, is a young woman in her twenties. She works in DeepTek’s cafeteria and is very worried about Niwa so will happily help any investigation. However, her co-workers will halt any interview that seems to be upsetting her at work. Kaoru will explain that during his leave she found Niwa quiet and constantly daydreaming. He would also leave their apartment every night. She feared something had gone wrong at his job, but didn’t dare to ask him because of his condition. Knowing it to be a hard and dangerous job, she felt it better to let him recover slowly, but things were not getting better and the evening before he was due to go back to work, he went out as usual without saying where and never came back.

During their talk with the young woman she will receive a message on her Pod. It is a visiospeak, a previously recorded message. Kaoru will issue a cry of fright as it is from Niwa! The image is not clear, as there is not much light and the signal quality is poor, but his face appears transformed, his protuberant eyes radiating a cold light.

*“Kaoru, forgive me... I... I must go and meet my destiny. I will no longer have a place here. The kami... The tornado... I must go. I loved you. Forget me... Get away from them, I can feel them near you... And, most of all, leave the station as soon as possible!”*

Niwa cuts off the conversation moments later, overcome by a mixture of emotions. However, the image allows the characters to see a sign denoting the level and junction of Niwa’s position. He is further down, in the deepest parts of the platform.

At the end of the message, a feminine voice with robotic undertones issues from all security devices across the platform.

*“Attention, because of non-optimal weather conditions, a Level 4 alert is in effect. All residents must remain in their homes. Employees please remain in your companies. This is not a drill, I repeat, this is not a drill.”*

## INTO THE DEEP

In this final act you should work to increase the stress on the player characters. The station is being emptied, and people look worried because the Level 4 alert has never been activated before, except during the Kuro Incident. The next level up is full evacuation. Faces downcast and pale, people hurry to get home or prepare to remain at their workplaces. Everybody is checking the evacuation routes with new diligence. Only the androids remain, politely but firmly enjoining stragglers to go to their places. During this ordered chaos the player characters feel the station moving a little. For example, the surface in glasses of water ripples gently with each vibration.

As soon as the player characters leave Sagara Kaoru, one of them (perhaps the one that saw him in the previous scene) also gets a message from Niwa on his Pod. Obviously no longer in control, Niwa insults the character. Hatred oozes from his voice. He says he knows who they are, why they are there and who guides them (“that overexcited stooge”, he will say). He will threaten that he will soon have their organs and their skin. Then he smashes his Pod against a wall and the signal vanishes.

A few minutes later, a dull thud is heard by the player characters and a violent shock shakes the whole of Kaijin. Alarms sound across the complex. If the characters were in the lift (possibly taking them down to Niwa) it might stop, forcing them to find a way to break out and climb the shaft to get out.

At this point a Level 5 alert is immediately issued: full evacuation is ordered. Clearly something has exploded in the foundations. Those who cannot evacuate are ordered to find shelter in the ‘safe zones’. The explosion is Niwa’s doing. If no one stops him, he will blow up all the foundations of Kaijin.

If the player characters attempt to go to DeepTek, they must avoid the security androids. They forbid access to everyone and try to secure the area while waiting for the people in charge of evaluating and repairing the damage. The androids may use



force in order to make the player characters abandon their chase and move to a safe zone, but they will remain unfailingly polite, even during a firefight.

As the player characters reach the lowest levels they find them all deserted. Niwa's trail becomes easier to follow as he has torn the security doors off their hinges, much to the concern of the local AI trying to maintain lockdown procedures. Player characters with Microphotonics skill might interrogate the AI (a male-voiced AI called Nick) who can give them a location for Niwa. He used his ID code to leave the station, but he didn't observe optimal safety procedures. What the AI means is that he left the station without a diving suit!

## Following Outside

If the player characters want to stop Niwa causing harm, they must find a way of leaving the station themselves. While there are mini subs available, the best way to go outside is by using a hard suit. There are small submarines, but using suits means that they will be able to take on Niwa as a group rather than as a crew of a single vessel.

Using and wearing these exoskeletons is not that easy, but their servomotors are commanded by an AI embedded in each suit making it possible to use them without training. The programming is rudimentary, if adequate, and will help the characters to operate this huge armour of metal and cables weighing more than a tonne and a half. The AI can also take command of the systems to return an unconscious or dead diver back to base. At this point the player characters might be very glad that they took the basic diving course before they came to the Kaijin platform district.

Once equipped, the player characters will have a lot of trouble moving while in the 'open air'. As soon as they are in front of the hatch, their AIs will warn them, with a voice as sweet as it is fake, of the injection of amniotic liquid, recommending that they shut their eyes and try not to fight the process. The AI will offer to play soothing music to help relax the new diver as the suit floods with breathing fluid. The choice of relaxing music will depend on the previous user, and might range from Easy Listening and Classical to Heavy Metal and J-Pop.

Humorous song or not, the suit fills up little by little with a thick pinkish liquid that smells like raw eggs. This a horrible sensation, stuck in a huge suit of armour, wearing an oppressive helmet that limits your field of vision and is slowly filling

with liquid. Soon the helmets are full. If the characters have not closed their eyes, they will not be able to see very well for a moment. They will get used to it, but everything will have a pinkish tint. Then the AI will turn on the Gantai, lighting up their field of vision with a lot of diverse virtual parameters. Calmly breathing the liquid is extremely difficult as the body's natural reaction will be to resist what feels like drowning. Those with training will find it a lot easier. The player characters will initially suffer the impression of suffocating and drowning. Then the liquid will envelop them and they will regain control, though the weird feeling of no longer having to breathe is unprecedented.







Now that they are ready to move to the depths they will probably want to find some equipment to neutralise Niwa. They just need to find some tools that can be turned to offensive purposes, thus a firing pin and some steel bars can become a harpoon, a grinder will become a formidable chainsaw and so on. These weapons are scaled to the armour, so heavy that a single man would be unable to lift them.

Once equipped, the player characters need to move into the airlock chambers. These fill with water, gently lifting the weight from the exoskeleton. Once submerged the suits feel light and mobile, and the player characters cannot feel the deathly cold of the icy water.

Finally, the outside doors open and they can leave the platform. The pollution limits much of the visibility. The suits' spotlights illuminate a tainted, grey coloured water filled with all sorts of debris, but do not manage to pierce the opacity very far. Some little fish swim in front of the characters, as if surprised by the lights, and suddenly rush around the divers, following their air bubbles. In effect, the exoskeleton servomotors work like space suits and increase mobility by letting streams of gas escape at the joints. This creates bubbles quickly absorbed by the myriad fish, hungry for this easily obtainable oxygen. Some fish even have a weird light that hangs in front of their mouths to better attract their prey.

After a little moment of adaptation, the AI issues greenish cloud into the water that repels the fish, but makes the water even harder to see through. The characters are surrounded by the most absolute silence. Only the beeps in their suits or the crackling of the communications disrupt the blanket of sepulchral silence enveloping them. When the cloud dissipates, they see several explosive charges mounted on the main platform struts, ready to use, but not yet armed...

## Confronting Niwa

The end of the scenario should be handled with care. The player characters are going to have to face the monster Niwa has become. Unfortunately, with visibility as it is, it will be hard to get a good look at him. The pollution is such that it is impossible to distinguish anything beyond a few metres, and Niwa is furiously fast. He has mutated into something weird and terrifying. He is able to swim here unencumbered by a suit, without any trouble, despite the cold and the pressure. Bare-chested, pale, with a deformed back and hollow cheeks, he has become a ghost from the depths, passing fleetingly before the divers' eyes.

Niwa will take an evil pleasure in frightening the player characters, often climbing onto their backs. Thus a character watching in his Gantai using his rear-mounted cameras that show what is going on behind him will see Niwa's misshapen silhouette appear suddenly, watching him with an evil eye, before disappearing again.

Even though their Gantai all show that no sound is being picked up from outside of their diving suits, the player characters will distinctively hear Niwa's voice addressing them, whispering horrors about the end times and the Yomi-No-Kumi. He will tell them of the Oni, those terrifying demons, ogres that will soon devour them. Then he will attack...

In fact, he will try to attack the exoskeletons' weak spots. Attacking the joints, he will try to tear cables with his toxin-filled claws to immobilise them and leave them there, paralysed, so they can never reach the airlock, dying while smothered by a slowly depleting amniotic fluid. If the player characters do too well, and Niwa is in trouble, he may also try to detonate the explosive charges around the characters.

Finally, using the tools they gathered in the diving suit room, the player characters should manage to fatally wound Niwa. As he lies dying in the sand, letting out blood in the shape of blackish swirls, he will have one last spasm. In a hiccup, he spits blood, bubbles and a strange shape not unlike an octopus' ink cloud. This shape is similar to a large, swollen, yellowish fish. It will spiral away from the characters, barely looking real, joining the fog and losing itself among the footholds of the structure. Those characters more knowledgeable in oceanography will identify its ghostly form as that of a fugu fish.

# CONCLUSION

With Niwa defeated, it is time for the characters to get back inside Kaijin. The evacuation of part of the complex is over. The typhoon has moved away northward and the alert level has been lowered to Level 3. Maintenance teams will be suiting up to repair any armatures damaged by the explosion. When they discover other divers in the water, they will want to know who the player characters are and what they were doing outside.

Kaijin – half emptied of its population and with the other half locked in secure areas – looks like a ghost town. There is little to keep the player characters here now, that is unless they would like to explain Niwa's weird fate to his girlfriend? Will she even believe them if they do? It may be better to return to coastal Shin-Edo and try to answer other important questions. Why did Niwa attack an android? Why did the typhoon follow him? What does it mean, when the sugar turned to salt?

In short, the adventure will end with the player characters having more new questions than answers.



# NPCS

## Niwa

### Characteristics

DEX 4	STR 4	STA 5	REF 4
INT 4	PER 4	CHA 2	WIL 2

### Secondary Characteristics

HIT 60	SW 20	DT -20	
DEF 22	REA 5	ACT 2	MOV 4

### Skills

#### Combat Skills

- Hand to Hand 3
  - Brawling 4
- Firearms 3
- Melee 3
  - Dagger 5
- Academic Skills
- Natural Sciences 4
  - Fish Farming 5\*
  - Oceanography 5
- Physical Sciences 3
  - Hydrodynamics 4\*

#### General Skills

- Athletics 4
  - Dodge 5
  - Swimming 6
- Deception 3
  - Sneaking 4
- Pilot 4
  - Heavy Diving Suit 6
  - Submersible 5
- Popular Culture 2
  - Politics 4
- Spiritual 2
  - Occult 3
- Survival 2
  - Aquatic 5
- Technical Skills
- Explosives 2
- Mechanics 3
  - Heavy Diving Suit 5
  - Sea Platform Maintenance 6
- Medicine 1
  - Surgery 2
- Contacts 2
  - Maritime 4



# CONTINUING THE DAY OF THE MOON

While the Gamemaster is free to move on to the next adventure, we offer a few adventure outlines that continue the themes of **Fugu**. These adventure hooks offer a glimpse of the supernatural inside the mundane, and are designed to unnerve rather than directly challenge the player characters. They show the player characters that just as they are beginning to peer into the darkness, something in the shadows may be staring right back at them. After each adventure in this phase they should still be able to convince themselves that anything apparently supernatural was just a trick of the light or the effects of tiredness or overwork.

These adventures also allow the player characters to explore the more mundane aspects of the **Kuro** setting. In fact, it is worthwhile for the Gamemaster to run a few minor encounters of a purely mundane nature to allow the player characters to explore Shin-Edo. They might go shopping in Ginza or go searching for particular electrical parts in Akihibara. They might take a date to see the historic parts of Asakusa or have a wild night clubbing in Shinjuku. They had best make the most of the opportunity for normality as things are only going to get more complicated!

## The Watcher

One of the player characters notices they are being watched on their journey to work. The watcher, who otherwise appears normal, stares at them for the entire journey. They are always a little distance away, such as a few seats down on a crowded train. So the character would have to risk embarrassment by yelling at them in a public place. Even then, they simply leave at the next station and refuse to engage.

Eventually, the player character will manage to catch the person who will stutter a fearful apology and tell the player character they can “see who they really are”. They will refuse to elucidate any further though, and remain fearful of the player character. The next time they see the watcher he hands them a piece of paper before committing suicide in front of them (possibly by walking in front of a train). The paper simply says “*You are not the only one. They are everywhere.*”

## Ripples of the Future

People in a particular area are getting ill. The infection produces fever and muscle pains and often leaves the sufferer delirious. The source of the infection has proven difficult to find, mainly as the area is poor and the government is overworked. No one has died of the disease yet, but the young and elderly might be at risk as the symptoms are very powerful.

If the player characters investigate they will discover the various homes infected have all drawn water from a local well. Water supplies in the district are intermittent and only a few of the old families know about the ancient well. Unsure how many homes the well might be able to provide for, its users are very cagey about telling anyone else about it.

The well is indeed the source of the infection, and a test of the water will show it to be impure. However, no scientist will be able to identify the pathogen involved. If people stop drinking from the well they no longer suffer from the illness. Unfortunately, this will be a hard sell as the water looks pure and tastes fine, and without it some people will be without any water.

What makes this supernatural is what people see when delirious under the infection. While they remember nothing of their dreams, they are seeing the future. Those caught in the throes of the infection get a glimpse of the horrors to come. Those who listen to their ramblings and muttered nightmares might learn vital clues about the future, if they believe them.

## Strange Occurrences

Since the Kuro incident, people are reporting strange things happening a lot more frequently. Most of these occurrences are unnerving, but don't seem dangerous. There are a lot of omens in the air these days. Some examples might include:

- Animals seem to congregate at some of the local shrines, especially feral dogs. They are usually calm and quiet if left alone but become violent when someone tries to remove them.
- Each time someone dies in a particular district, crows gather near their home. Some people are getting nervous of crows as an omen of death. There are some reports that people have seen crows gather around them before they die.
- Many homes get power from cables strung along the street, which often hum with electricity. Some people seem to think there is more to this hum than usual. People talk of hearing



voices carried on the air. While most people dismiss it, some places have attracted small groups of people listening out for the voices of what they believe might be the dead.

- A new game has developed a bug when played using a Gantai. It seems to generate extra figures in the background that do nothing but stand with their backs to the player. Those who play the game a lot have managed to get around the figures to see what they look like. Those that are recognisable have the same face as the player, and do nothing but scream silently in horror.

## Surveillance

The player characters begin to get emails from an unknown source. The mails have no subject or sender information and contain a single video file. Each file is five minutes of footage of the player character's house or place of business. It is unclear how the footage has been taken, but it is most likely from a Gantai or other portable device as it is not the best quality.

After a few of these videos are sent, the footage begins to also contain shots of the player character. They will remember doing whatever mundane task they were doing at the time only a day or two ago. What is interesting is that they have an odd halo shimmering around their body. No one else has this aura, or seems to notice it. Somehow, someone has found a way to show who might be a Potential using film.

It will take a very good hacker to determine the source of the emails, but it is possible. However, after a little while it suddenly becomes very simple, as if the sender has stopped trying to hide. The trail leads to the private home of a hacker who they will find dead surrounded by computers and monitors. He has been sending them the footage, and has left a message for the Potentials: *"I'm sorry, they made me do it."* Investigating his system the player characters will be able to discover the footage has also been sent to another address, but the identity of that recipient has been completely deleted.

## Text Message

One of the player characters gets a text message they find strange and unnerving. It is not the subject of the text, which simply suggests they meet up at a particular park the next day. What is strange is that the sender is an old friend of the player character who died in the Kuro incident. In fact, the player character even went to their funeral! The texts continue, regular as clockwork at the same hour each day. What is more frightening is that the hour they arrive is the same hour the old friend died.

If the player character decides to find out who is behind the texts, there is a technological trail they can follow. Hidden in the text message code is detail on the sender's phone, which a decent hacker will be able to uncover. With this information the phone sending the messages can be traced next time they make contact.

The phone belongs to a teenager, who bought it from the old friend's family when they sold some of their possessions. However, the teenager has no recollection of sending the messages; any record of such seems to have been removed from the phone. It will be simple to choose to believe the teenager is lying and just covered his tracks well. After a confrontation with the teenager the texts stop anyway. I

If the player character does go to the meeting as asked, they get one final message on their phone: *"Beware, my friend. The darkness is coming and it knows who you are."*