

Mysteries of the Yōkai 妖怪
~ 妖怪の謎 ~

SETTING GUIDEBOOK

version 0.1

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To my friends and family, who never
gave up on me even in my darkest
hours.

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Introduction

Ours is a time of both wonder and strife. Once distant, the worlds of mortals and spirits are now closely intertwined. We live in lands where spirits still flourish in the ancient trees; where the soul of a sword can be as important as that of its wielder.

Unfortunately our era is not without its dangers. Open the wrong door and you could become spirited away into another world. Around the corner may lurk a creature that would eat you before you could blink. People hold tight to their charms and whispered blessings in order to keep safe. Fear not, where there are monsters, there will always be those who would protect you as well. While the wicked can come from any place, so too can exemplary guardians arise from humble beginnings to serve even the smallest of causes.

As the lines between worlds continues to blur, those with supernatural abilities become more common. Once exceedingly rare, these individuals who walk through both the realm of mortals and spirits are becoming commonplace. In this era of change, those with power both mystical or mundane live with ever increasing responsibilities. Some would choose to abuse their abilities for personal gain while others might seek to aid those in need of it.



The Times

This is a time of upheaval. The islands of *Nippon* are changing, but the path which these lands will take is not yet known. A new monarch, Emperor Akitsu, sits upon the Chrysanthemum Throne. Though his youth inspires hope for a fresh start, the people's faith in their leaders is still shaken. The corruption and decadence of the previous era is not forgotten. Even though the capital is now in the province of *Seihara* and the era is now named *Kaishin*, many have reason to remain uneasy. Much harm was caused by the negligence of the powerful elite in those times and there has been little indication that this will cease. The populace worries that this new emperor will only perpetuate the mistakes of his predecessors and the Imperial Court.

Those who have met Akitsu, however, are beginning to feel some hope. News of his deeds have yet to spread amongst the people, but the impact of his presence will no doubt resound through all of *Nippon*. The Emperor walks among his people and acts against traditions the nation has upheld for centuries. Traditionalists do not agree with this disregard for their culture and history. With the world is still recovering from the consequences of his grandfather's actions, there are many who would benefit from the young Emperor's downfall. Whispers within the capitol speak of the Shogun and nobles amassing power in order to take rule into their own hands and leave their emperor a mere figurehead.

While many factions are prepared for a great conflict, Emperor Akitsu is winning the people over with the promise of advancement and stability. This changes the status quo.

Those who were prepared for a great clash fear the loss of momentum, and many are unhappy at the loss of their chance to take control for themselves. Much of their power depends on a weak emperor and shaky faith in leadership. But tensions remain high, for if the young Emperor makes a great enough mistake, their justifications for extreme action will return. Many eyes watch their leaders to see who might win when the first strike will be dealt.

Not all changes are brought on by the actions of mortals. A great influx of mystical activity has brought about much change as well. Since legendary times, the gates between the mortal realm and those of the spirits have never been more open. More than ever the people need protection from forces they do not understand, many of which they cannot even see. While a large number of spirits are not inherently malicious, nearly all of them have the potential to be dangerous. The capital needs protection against the vengeful apparitions that would seek to harm the nation and its people. There are rumors of the spirits forming alliances with mortal factions, or even coercing and controlling leaders. Creatures lurk in the capital, but who knows of their intentions.

Change has come to the spirit realms too. The cultures of spirits and humans have begun to intermingle. With the bridges between the worlds open, the sacred Celestial Plain has begun to taint with the corruption and chaos present in mortal world. Humans are straying into the spirit realms, and spirits are immigrating to Nippon. Items from the human world have become popular with spirits and the blending of mortal and spiritual cultures has opened up the world to innovation.

Augmented by the gifts of spirits and kami, masters artisans have improved technology and brought forth advancements in farming, smithing and production. But not all cultural contact has been positive, much conflict has risen from culture clashes and territorial disputes. These quarrels are escalated by the Emperor's decree that places with great spiritual connection should be gifted to the spirits. Many of these lands were already claimed by people and Akitsu's declaration has become a major point of contention.



The World

In this era of spirits the world has become a new frontier. Places that were once familiar have begun to change under the influence of changing spiritual climates. Magical phenomena has become more frequent in times where people are still apprehensive about its presence. Techniques once criticized as superstitious have gained visible effectiveness.

The spirits and creatures known as *yokai* have always been prevalent throughout Nippon, but with the increase of spiritual energy they are growing in strength and numbers. More and more are sighted every day and their influence on mortal affairs grows with their power.

The numbers of mortals born with supernatural abilities have also risen and they are disturbing established systems of power. These people can upset the livelihoods of those around them. The more that these spiritually attuned individuals gather, the less stable the spiritual climates become.

The scholars have never been busier than they are now. These new times bring discoveries that need to be documented and studied. There are new things to see, changes to record, and findings to study. Our world has always had its mysteries, but these changing times have offered us with many more secrets waiting to be found.

THE MYSTERIOUS YOKAI

It is clear that the world does not belong to humans alone. People share this world not only with animals but also the spirits and fantastical creatures known as *yokai*. Though they appear to be mostly unorganized and chaotic, the denizens of the spiritual realms are not without their own rules and compulsions.

For much of history, little was known about yokai due to a lack of spiritually-aware researchers. Currently, much new information is being discovered thanks to the rising numbers of spiritually perceptive people. Scholars hope that studying and documenting yokai will help inform people about how to live in relative harmony with them. By far, the most dangerous thing about encounters with the supernatural is the lack of knowledge. What may be an acceptable way of dealing with one yokai could prove grave insult to another.

The number of yokai in the world is immense and unknowable. In an attempt to organize the chaos, some researchers classify the apparitions into several broader categories: shapeshifters, spirits, monsters, and phenomena.

Shapeshifters are a specific set of yokai that can easily change their shape and qualities. This kind of creature has a close relationship with mortals and it is common to see them intermingling with human civilization while disguised as another person or object.

Spirits are hazy yokai that are the most difficult for common people to perceive. These are most often the restless souls of the dead, though spirits born from other means are also quite common.

Monstrous yokai have the greatest variety in both shape and size. These creatures have the largest physical presence and can often be perceived by even those with a low attunement. They can originate in both the spirit and mortal worlds, but they are always born from mystical influences.

Phenomena often do not have wills of their own. They are yokai that refer to places or events that are simply puzzling or mysterious. The most common types of phenomena yokai result from strange areas within the spiritual climate that begin to manifest within the physical world.

KI: THE ENERGY OF LIFE

All things in the world have some degree of life. Even inanimate objects come into being, come to change, and eventually come to an end. This imbues them with the life force known as *ki*. Those with the knowledge of how to manipulate *ki* are able gain access to abilities that transcend the physical world. Humans tend to use *ki* in one of three ways: manipulating their inner *ki*, manipulating the *ki* of the natural world, or using the *ki* of other beings.

Internal *ki* is the energy created from within an individual. It can be used to enhance a person's physical abilities or even extend outside the body. It is the simplest *ki* to influence, but is the most difficult to master. Even if most of one's power is channeled from an external source, one's personal *ki* is still used to shape that power into the desired effect.

Natural ki is energy that comes from sources around the user, typically from the terrain or atmosphere. Manipulating the ki of nature can allow a practitioner to create natural phenomena like minor storms and tremors. Manipulating natural ki is powerful but incredibly dangerous, as the person may begin to exhibit the traits of the natural ki they're channeling. Some use this to their advantage, but there's always a chance the changes can become permanent.

Bestowed ki is energy that's requested, given, or taken from another being. This kind of ki is often used to augment one's internal ki, similarly to how weapons and armor augment one's body. Because yokai manipulate ki in a different way than humans do, a person who has gained access to a spirit's power will find themselves able to accomplish things others could never dream of.

MAGIC

By nature, the forces that drive magic are mysterious and much is unknown about them. There are many scholars that accept one method of magic, only to contradict the view of another. A discussion of magic often begins by finding a common viewpoint from which to launch a discourse. This is often what defines the a school of magic's nature.

There are many unique schools of magic. They can range from established and methodical institutions to wild and instinctual sects. While most see magic as the manipulation of external phenomena, there are also schools that utilize internal magic to manipulate the ki within the body and enhance martial techniques.

While magic is an everyday occurrence, those skilled enough to willfully manipulate it are scarce. The mundane kinds of magic are subtle and not very perceivable because they affect the spiritual domain instead of the physical. Often, the discernible effects are so minimal that they are seldom recognized as magic at all. The ability to perform visible acts of sorcery is an exceedingly rare talent, usually requiring innate qualities that are not fully understood. It is this visible usage of power that is commonly referred to as magic.

Those who have the gift of magic have several ways to learn its proper usage. There are several established schools, each with long traditions of sorcery. Some learn through intense study, a few practice with their intuition and innate feelings instead, while others are mentored by great yokai or kami—beings capable of bestowing gifts of great power upon students they find worthy.

No one knows the limitations of magic. Those who attempt to test its boundaries rarely survive their own experiments. Most practitioners instead follow some form of tradition, using the knowledge of those who came before them to learn established methods of sorcery.

THE SPIRITUALLY ATTUNED

Throughout the ages, there have been those born with power beyond most other mortals. Most common of these abilities is a great attunement with the spirits and the spiritual world. With the realms of the spirits closer to the mortal world than ever, there has been an influx of the those with mystical power.

While anyone can become aware of spirits with experience, artifacts, or training, those who are spiritually receptive are born with a natural affinity with the spirit world. These traits are desirable for the practice of many arts and can even be useful to skills in domains beyond the spiritual and mystical. Many of the world's masters have some degree of spiritual capability, learned or inherent. Though most are oblivious to the magical nature of their ability, they unknowingly tap into the spiritual domain to gain mystical advantages. A master artist might do this to seek inspiration, or a great athlete might find a second wind past their point of exhaustion.

Unfortunately, those with spiritual power do not necessarily have spiritual awareness of the creatures that lurk just beyond perception. Without training, these souls are most vulnerable to spiritual dangers, especially ones that they might accidentally create. Most of them cannot easily defend themselves against things they cannot perceive or sense. This leaves those with spiritual ability all the more enticing to the power-hungry, becoming the targets of greedy humans and yokai alike, who would try to take that strength for themselves.

Most people fear the unknown and associate the spiritually connected with the potential mayhem they can bring. Often, they end up ostracized from their homes and loved ones. Such treatment only serve to worsen the dangers of their mystical abilities, leaving them open to corruption from negative emotions or predatory yokai. Locating these individuals and providing them with supportive environments is incredibly important to the growth and mastery of their powers. With training, they can learn to at least prevent the potential mayhem their capabilities can cause.

In the past these powerful individuals often remained scattered and disconnected, occasionally forming groups centered around certain schools of thought or certain forms of magic. With the mortal realm closer to that of the spirits, many more individuals have become attuned to the world of spirits while gaining only a passive awareness. The task of finding these spiritual individuals has become monumental for groups seeking to protect them.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN SPIRITUAL POWERS AND YOKAI

Greater numbers of spiritually connected people have caused the populations of yokai to rise as well. They can attract creatures that thrive within their spiritual influence and feed off their residual energy, making encounters with yokai more common around those with high spiritual capacity.

Paranormal abilities do not simply attract danger; they can also create it. Because of their mystical abilities, these individuals have greater impacts on the spiritual world, and can unintentionally manifest spirits from strong feelings such as rage or despair.

The yokai raised from such negative emotions, often referred to as *onryō* or grudges, are extremely dangerous as they specifically prey on mortals. These spirits cause much destruction and death, growing stronger through the energy they consume from their victims. Those with spiritual capability are especially desirable victims for grudges. Their energy can greatly increase the power of these malicious spirits if consumed.

When attuned individuals gather in large enough numbers the spiritual climate can become unstable. As most places lack proper magical infrastructure, the most powerful of these people are forced to roam for the safety of their loved ones and innocent bystanders. This is why many of the attuned become exorcists. Exorcism not only allows them to handle the yokai that would prey on them, but also allows them to manage the consequences of their spiritual power.

THOSE WHO ARE AWARE OF THE SPIRITS

In the age of spirits, those with awareness of the dangers of spirits have become a necessity. In earlier times, only large populous cities needed to protect their districts from dangerous spirits and supernatural forces. For small and remote villages, simple shrines and small rites were enough to keep their lives somewhat free of the spiritual dangers that lurked in the wilds nearby. Knowledge of the spirits was not a requirement for such people, and many of them could live their lives without ever coming into direct contact with yokai.

This is no longer the case. Paranormal incidents have been steadily multiplying. Those fortunate enough to be aware of spirits often have no choice but to band together to help each other. Many have also taken it upon themselves to seek out others who may be in similar danger, but lack the awareness to address it.

The mortal and spirit realms are clashing, and it isn't only humans that are in need of aid. Mortals have always unwittingly caused problems for spirits, but in times past, the impacts of these accidents were much smaller. Now distressed spirits are clashing more with those who have dealt unintended harm. Many of the spiritually aware have taken it upon themselves to aid the spirits in these confrontations as well.

Exorcists have become a valuable commodity, and many of the spiritually attuned have begun to learn exorcism techniques in order to protect themselves against spiritual dangers. However, their lack of experience can sometimes worsen a situation against a spirit that might actually be justified in its distress. Experienced exorcists and spirit handlers are still the best solution towards a clash between humans and spirits.

There are many approaches to dealing with yokai. Be it by exorcism, hard investigation, combat, diplomacy, or even training others to protect themselves, each of the spiritually aware have their own methods of managing the strange apparitions they encounter. Groups have begun to form around those who are skilled with handling yokai related incidents. These parties have begun to wander Nippon offering their services to people or spirits in need. While some do this for a price, many have personal motivations for their work, though it isn't rare to see others perform these services simply for fame or riches.

THE COMMON PEOPLE

In the new era of mystical activity, the life of the everyday person has been greatly affected by the changes in their spiritual environments, but few of them are actually aware of the causes. Flourishing from the greater influx of energy, yokai have become bolder. While the most malicious or power hungry yokai would prefer to consume the energy of people who are more spiritually attuned, the ki of everyday people is often much easier to obtain.

Spiritual incidents are frequently blamed on illnesses or accidents, rather than the actions of vicious yokai. There are some who are able to recognize the signs of yokai activity despite being unable to directly perceive the apparitions. This creates a certain paranoia and superstition among ordinary citizens that can have a power all its own. Such feelings can actually form a new yokai that fulfills the fears and strong sentiments of those who are impacted. There are many creatures that thrive in the spiritual environment created by these emotions. Without the intervention of skilled exorcists, these conditions can only lead to worsening paranormal incidents.

The everyday person fears the unknown, but many of them have an exceptional fear of dangerous spirits. Only a few of these ordinary folk have come into a direct visible contact with one, and almost all who live to tell the tale do so with distress. As spiritual activity becomes common, this attitude has hindered the acceptance of spirits as a part of life.

Even if ordinary people have difficulty perceiving spirits, almost everyone can see spirits in places that are permeated with spiritual energy. These *places of power*, are attractive to all manner of yokai and spirits, which make them havens of spiritual activity. Unfortunately, with the spirit realms closer to the world of mortals, these places of great spiritual connection have expanded, and new havens are manifesting as well. Some even encroach upon the borders of human settlements, blurring the lines between mortal life and that of the spirits, causing clashes as vastly different worlds collide.

MAGIC AND ITS INTERACTION WITH EVERYDAY PEOPLE

Most life has ki. This energy native to living things allows even ordinary people to perform small acts of magic, often without being aware of the magical nature of their actions. While not impressive on a small scale, when done correctly, and with the right amount of people, these little acts can cascade into much larger effects. It is this interaction of ki and small feats of magic that can give everyday people a general and instinctual protection from the supernatural.

While not significant on when alone, such protections strengthen when people gather. This means that a town's border is not only a physical boundary, but also a spiritual one that offers them native mystical protections. The most resilient spiritual defenses often require people's coordination or the use of a focus. These can be as mundane as a festival, a ritual, or even a prayer. Sometimes with the right conditions, especially with the involvement of the spiritually attuned, a town can gain a ki of its own. This allows the town to naturally grow into a place of power ideal for seating an established kami. This ki can even manifest into a brand new guardian kami, so long as the people remain and the conditions hold. While this protection serves townspeople well, travelers are still vulnerable to attacks while traveling the roads between settlements.

Native mystical protections in combination with the defense provided by guardian spirits causes most wild yokai to avoid human settlements in a manner similar to how most wild animals avoid civilization. This, however, does not affect all yokai equally. Similar to the existence of animals that thrive alongside people, there are many yokai that make their homes with and around mortal abodes. Some of these spirits may even be harmful or malicious to the humans that live near them. Instead, most of them are small nuisances.

CLANS AND THE FEUDAL LORDS

The nobility, governors, and feudal lords make up most of the power that rules over the lands of Nippon. While the Imperial Court rules the capital and its policies, clans and their leaders are the bulk of power that rules over the citizens of the nation. Clans can range from small and unknown to large and powerful. The most prominent clans are related by blood to the Emperor's family. Some clans are very much like large businesses, while others wield powers akin to a kingdom within the territory of Nippon. Many of these clans are very large, with a great number of people under their leadership.

Clans are frequently masters of a certain trade. The pass down techniques and skills through their family traditions, drawing great pride from the masteries of their craft. There are clans that specialize in just about anything, from blacksmithing to divination. Schools of swords and martial techniques are built around and named for the clans that developed them. One does not need to be a blood member of a clan to serve them, learn from them, or affiliate with them. Indeed, someone could begin as a student and eventually marry into the clan as a full member with all the benefits and disadvantages that would carry. Clans also tend to employ laborers to assist with the more menial tasks associated with their businesses, which makes clans the greatest source of employment in the nation.

Clan leaders can affiliate themselves with the Imperial Court. Doing so gains them the ability to have sway in the institutions that run the country overall, though it comes at the cost of involvement in the court's political games. While all clans purport to serve their emperor, they each have their own agenda to look out for. Their concerns are largely focused towards the betterment of their clans.

NOBLES OF THE IMPERIAL COURT

The Imperial Court is the main governing body of the nation. With the political tensions dividing the capital, no one knows which faction will end up with control of the government and its power. The ruling elite are mostly concerned with maintaining their influence and compete to ensure it will be maintained regardless of the victor. This means that the political game is at its fiercest. Someone has to win but no one can know exactly who that will be. The support of a noble, clan, or feudal lord could lead one faction to victory or another to failure, creating a great amount of uncertainty. Furthermore, few among the ruling elite are above the betrayal of their allies so long as they aren't caught.

Familiar with the occult, the members of Imperial Court have been making use of magic as a tool for centuries. By hiring powerful sorcerers, the ruling elite use the occult to further their agendas, they often use magic to perform criminal acts that cannot be easily traced

back to them. The use of the occult is so established that some techniques are even state sanctioned through corruption and loopholes in laws.

A consequence from dabbling in the forbidden has been the infiltration of yokai into the Imperial Court. While expressly illegal, the Imperial Court has slowly let them into their politics in exchange for occult services. Some yokai have even compromised the leadership of established clans through manipulation, insurgency, and contracts based on dirty bargains. Under new policies, Akitsu has given the government agency known as The Bureau jurisdiction over these cases in hopes of bringing these kinds of crime to justice under the enforcement of the law.



The Factions

The established systems of power cannot withstand the forces that now hold sway over Nippon. Shifts in the status quo have resulted in offsets in the balance of power. People have not trusted those in the ruling elite for a long time and many of their actions are no longer tolerated in silence. For many ambitious individuals this is an opportune time to vie for greater influence. But not all of them wish to do so for their own gain, others seek to improve the country for all.

EMPEROR AKITSU

Enthroned at the young age of 17, the Emperor of Nippon is the focus of much attention. There are many factions vying for power over Nippon, and Emperor Akitsu sits at the nexus of the coming storm. As the legitimate ruler of the land he has the greatest influence on the direction the nation will take, even if that direction is not one he has chosen.

Akitsu is honorable, generous, and assertive; he works hard for the improvement of his nation and its citizens. Traditionally, the Emperor is not meant to be seen or spoken to by any but his advisors. Yet Akitsu often leaves the palace to follow his ideals of heroism and gallantry, tending to the needs of his people personally and directly. As the emperor he is to be nameless, referred to only by his title, but he gives his personal name freely. Akitsu walks among the populace to show that the emperor's power can be used to serve his people and not just his ministers and nobles. In doing so, he hopes to build a future alongside the people of Japan, both the weak and the powerful.

To traditionalists, this is tantamount to sacrilege. Akitsu's disregard for their customs and history threaten the way things have been for centuries. Furthermore, his policies potentially threaten the social status of their clans, many of which have been in power for centuries. These clans see Akitsu as a wildcard, a factor that cannot be predicted or controlled, something far more frightening than any yokai.

Even amongst Akitsu's supporters, there are many who question his policies towards the spiritual domain. Having lived with the spiritual gifts provided by both his title and his heritage, Akitsu has grown up admiring spirits and their kind, believing them to be respectable citizens of the nation. Many people are uncomfortable with the yokai that Akitsu chooses to surround himself with. Even more are uncomfortable with the two that serve as advisors within his council.

No one knows if young Akitsu's ideals will be right for his land and those who live within it. To many, he is a sign of hope that things may get better in the future. Yet no matter how noble the Emperor is, his youth and naiveté must be addressed quickly. Even the purest of intentions without the experience and wisdom to temper them can lead to disaster.

THE SHOGUN

Once charged with the duties of national unification, the Tai-Shogun, often shortened to Shogun, was given military power in order to bring the regional clans to heel for the sake of Nippon and the nation's unity. The title of Shogun is meant to be temporary, and classically the Shogun is but one branch of military power under the Imperial Court. The Shogun retains their power until their duty is complete, at which time the Shogun's military force is disbanded.

In the mayhem of the events that eventually led to Emperor Akitsu ascending the throne, the Shogun maintained a military force for the sake of keeping order. Now that the country has a new ruler these duties are no longer needed. But the Shogun does not wish to relinquish power. He disagrees with many of the Emperor's policies, and sees the nation potentially falling into disarray from them. After working so hard to unify Nippon, the Shogun does not wish to see his nation fracture further under the rule of incompetent nobles.

By all appearances, it seems that the Shogun is preparing to disband the military coalition of clans and relinquish the title of Tai-Shogun, now that Akitsu has been crowned as emperor. However, whispers among the nobles and feudal lords claim the opposite. Instead of dissolving military power, the Shogun is gathering allies, and seeking more in secret. With the popularity and confidence in the Imperial Court at an all-time low, the Shogun seeks to maintain order and stability in the face of the petty squabbling of the Imperial

Court. The unpopularity of the actions of previous emperors further serves to justify the Shogun's activities against the current emperor. Those who support the Shogun believe the country might be better if the emperor were simply a figurehead and the people were ruled by military leadership.

In opposition to the Shogun's goals, the Emperor is instead growing in popularity. Akitsu's meager actions have left positive impressions on the people he has aided. If the young Emperor were to regain the favor of rule, then the Shogun's political power might wane. This isn't acceptable to the Shogun or anyone who wishes usurp the Emperor's government. Akitsu's desire for visibility is inadvertently shielding him from this political danger. The young emperor's transparency along with a meager but growing number supporters makes him a power that cannot be taken down quietly.

THE BUREAU OF SPIRITUAL AFFAIRS

Once under the control of the Imperial Court nobles, the Bureau has only grown since its establishment in the previous era. Primarily focused on supernatural advisory and mystical sabotage, the Bureau now has far-reaching influence on the Imperial Court. Today the institution has jurisdiction over most mystical affairs, managing supernatural incidents, occult research, and spiritual defense.

The Bureau is a divided establishment. Originally under the control of a small number of elite magical clans, its rising prominence has left the office a target of political infighting. Even as nobles fight for official management over the institution, the Bureau's internal leadership remains well established. The department heads have thrived in the chaos and bureaucracy of the Bureau's management. As such, they have been free to follow self-serving interests, pursuing occult power in the shadows while politicians bicker over official control of the institution.

Under Emperor Akitsu, the Bureau now serves the public at large and not just the elite. It is now responsible for managing and protecting against spiritual incidents and occult crimes for all citizens, regardless of social status. Spirits and sorcerers who were once above the rules have now become subject to the laws that govern Nippon, and are held accountable for their actions against citizens.

Originally allowed to manage its own affairs, Emperor Akitsu has appointed his own Chief of Supernatural Affairs to lead the Bureau in its new direction. By appointing a leader, the Emperor has upset the fragmented status quo. Self-serving divisions now have an clear appointed manager to hold them accountable. The Bureau can no longer officially hoard their secrets and accomplishments and no longer tolerates any illegal actions or research.

These changes have resulted in a more polarized Bureau. Attempts to make the institution more accountable has simply caused department heads to resort to illicit means to hide the true extent of their illegal powers. Divisions that once shared a heated rivalry now band together in secret to undermine the authority of the new chief.

While the new divisions added by the Emperor have been working well so far, they may fall prey to sabotage from the rest of the factions within the Bureau. Many people question if the newly appointed chief is capable of reforming the institution to meet Akitsu's goals.

THE BUREAU AS A SUPERNATURAL ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

Emperor Akitsu's new policies have made the Bureau responsible for the protection of his citizens from supernatural crimes. In order to fulfill these responsibilities, the institution requires many agents trained with skills to handle spiritual incidents. In its current state, the enforcement division of the Bureau is greatly understaffed and unable to perform this duty alone. This forces the office to request help from outside groups with supernatural enforcement while it seeks out and trains new agents.

These outside groups and their methods aren't subject to much scrutiny. It is not uncommon to have the Bureau send out requests to available groups for aid with spiritual incidents that it lacks the infrastructure to address. The quality of such aid varies because the groups who answer the postings are often mercenaries or con-men. This sours the reputation of the experienced exorcist groups who provide legitimate aid and protection to those in need, leaving a lot of people somewhat apprehensive about calling upon the Bureau of Spiritual Affairs for help.

