The Petrified Frog

By Jason Flowers

Challenge

 In the City of the Rich Frog trade rules all, and relationships drive that trade; for good and ill. Despite their status, the Dragonfly minor clan enjoys a heightened level of influence here. From afar the Dragon are content to allow the Tonbo family to manage their holding, to the consternation of the Lion and Unicorn present in the port City. Compounding this uneasy peace is Miya Tetsua, the city governor, and his friendship with Tonbo Kuma, leader of the local Dragonfly population. The Dragonfly rely on this friendship to keep them at an equal status with the Great Clans. Some samurai claim this relationship limits Miya Tetsua’s fairness, but so far nothing has happened to elevate or diminish Tonbo Kuma’s faction in the City of the Rich Frog.

 As a token of their friendship, Miya Tetsua gifted Kuma with a statuette in the shape of a frog, carved from a petrified piece of Saibonshoki, the grandest willow tree in all Rokugan. This gift was the spark of much gossip in the City of the Rich Frog, for a piece of the ancient willow in the shape of the god of the river junctions would be a powerful artifact. When the statuette is stolen, Tonbo Hidane, a representative of Tonbo Kuma, approaches the player characters to recover it. The loss of such a valuable item would bring great dishonor to the Dragonfly and potentially a loss of esteem with Miya Tetsua. It must be found.

Focus

 During the investigation, the player characters will cross paths with a representative of the Lion or Unicorn clan who is also seeking the Frog. If no PC is of those clans, they will actively oppose the player characters during the investigation at every stage. But if they share a clan with a party member, they may approach that PC and ask the samurai to turn over the statuette for the good of their own Clan.

 *It may be tempting for Player Characters of the Lion or Unicorn to attempt to advance their own Clan interest, but it would be dishonorable to work against a samurai, like Tonbo Hidane, who has sincerely asked for assistance.*

 The search for the thief will lead the PCs across the Three Sides River to the western bank controlled by the Unicorn Clan. Whether the Unicorn are responsible or not is up to you, but eventually the PCs will run the culprit to ground. This will likely involve a daring and harrowing chase through the Unicorn District, putting themselves and bystanders at risk.

 Finally, the statue is in hand. Any shugenja, or spiritually attuned samurai, can learn that the Petrified Frog does possess some supernatural ability. It could be a powerful nemuranai that allows the wielder to control the river junction’s waters. Perhaps it has been used as a meishodo talisman, trapping a powerful kami inside. It could even have been used as a vessel for a powerful entity from one of the Spirit Realms.

Strike

 The statue is presented to Tonbo Hidane as planned, but the player characters find out a short time later that the statuette was never returned to Tonbo Kuma’s residence. Was Hidane a traitor to his clan or an imposter in disguise? Maybe they will have to team up with the third-party who hounded them during their earlier search? Whatever they decide, there is a short window to recover the statuette again before they must confess to being deceived and responsible for the Petrified Frog’s permanent loss.