

J1 - Jirōji's secret box

Jirōji, Sukumo, Spring of 1657

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Background: A secret in a box

Taratomo Umetō was a samurai who was entrusted the magistrature of Sukumo. He resisted the pressure from the Bakufu (Shogunate) to persecute Christians. For this, in 1640 he was deposed to be replaced by a samurai who renamed himself to Nobumune Sukumo. After a defeat on the field of battle, Umetō committed seppuku and asked an archer from his guard to assist. Although unusual, there was no samurai around to help and the magistrate knew and like Jirōji. He made Jirōji promise that his head would return to his heir so it could be enshrined with his ancestors. Umetō's force was wiped and Jirōji barely escaped, a head wrapped in cloth under his arm.

Unfortunately, the daimyo was very upset at Umetō. He declared the clan renegade and ordered the entire family to be crucified. The Umetō estate was distributed to a number of samurais from here and from Kochi (including the Odoko clan). Assisting the Umetō clan was outlawed: if it comes to light that Jirōji is helping the Umetōs, he and his family would be in grave danger. As a result, Jirōji enshrined the head into a jar and hid it into a wall. Umeto's head turned out to be a kami, which made his life miserable at times and culminating with the death of his wife and unborn 3rd child.

Jirōji enlisted the help of a Kannushi to enshrine Umetō's head into a ceremonial chest and place the chest into the family shrine. Jirōji must pray to appease the zugaikostu kami (spirit from the skull). Things have been quieter ever since, this was 16 years ago.

A man claiming to be the surviving son of Umetō has arrived in town and is making claims on the former family estate. The new magistrate, Shiromune Sukumo has not commented nor taken action yet. Jirōji sees this turn of event as a way to get rid of the kami if the claim is true.

Relationship with Zugaikostu

The kami is immaterial and unsettles and bring misery and bad luck to peoples that has angered him. Because Jirōji is unfazeable, the kami is very upset at him and instead demands lots of praise and prayers or else he will start to prey on his family again.

A day in the life of Jirōji

Jirōji is a fisherman and a mentor. He is well known and respected in Sukumo. Sukumo is the largest city in the region, but the fishing community is tightly knit. Jirōji probably has taught to every boatsman and fisherman at some point early in their career. Jirōji lives slightly out of the city on the bank of the river. His home is modest: a living area which gets converted to a bedroom at night, one kitchen and a master's bedroom. Jirōji lives mainly by himself although his son in principle also resides there. His sister lives a few minutes away and is a surrogate mother to his son Tarōzo since he was a toddler. His daughter lives in a home across a small brook with her husband Uji. Jirōji, Tarōzo and Uji are fishing together in a small craft which is otherwise anchored over the mud flats on the shore.

They leave with the rising tide of the morning, regardless of time of day or night. They fish for 12 hours and return by high tide. On the following day, one of the three takes the catches to the city to trade against good and other necessities.

Sukumo

The river, the bay, the mudflats and the city constitutes Jirōji's world. The city is wedged between mountains. Up-river there is a road leading to an even larger city, beyond there would be Kochi, the Provincial capital.

Sukumo is made of a walled city and twice as much suburbs. The magistrate, Shiromune Sukumo, is a stern samurai. His bureaucrats and followers apply the strict laws of the Shogunate with determination. The saying is that it is always better to stay out of the way when official business is coming to you. It is told that Shiromune crucifies and imprisons more people than any other magistrate in the province of Tosa.

Sukumo is big and contains a little bit of everything. Most locals have never seen anything bigger. There is a constant flow of visitors from the small coastal community. Sukumo's economy is largely that of a commercial hub in the periphery of the Empire.

A new samurai in town

News from the city caught Jirōji's ear recently. The rumor has it that one of Umetō's son survived the mass crucifixion and has returned to claim the family's estate. There are no other

details about this in this part of town. However, Jirōji is slated to travel to town on the following day to sell some fish.

Showing too much interest in the Umetō family is possibly a dangerous thing, as he is aware. Someone has got to be able to discreetly confirm the rumor and provide more details.

Jirōji will spend some time meditating that evening, thinking of possible points of contact. In the morning he plans go to town as normal to sell his fish, being as observant as possible without being nosy, and make a few additional social stops, particularly if his meditation brings him any insight. Already he is focusing himself to use extreme caution regarding the Umeto name, or even discussion of Samuri.

Jirōji uses Shinto prayers to assist him in his search on the following day ([houserules](#)). The kannushi's prayer is also rolled in secret.

Jirōji walks down to the shrine dedicated to [Ebisu](#). He donates a silver *shu* to a kannushi against a prayer. The kannushi lights a few candles and begins a slow and deliberate walk around the main hall while Jirōji assist by tapping on a small [shime-daiko](#) drum. The kannushi eventually drops a small ceremonial bell to the ground and gasps. Without a word, he ushers Jirōji out of the temple. The omen is apparently very inauspicious and a kami is angry with him.

Jirōji uses Theology(Shinto)-9 and rolls a 13, he cannot explain what happened but would have passed the easy check to know what should be his next step.

What just happened? Whether the bells slipped or was knocked by a kami is a moot point for Jirōji. Jirōji feels impure: his Will is at -1 instead of +1, thus has Will-9 until purified. Something bad is going on and it could be zugaikotsu itself.

Jirōji feels the weight of the omen on his chest as he walks back home. He doesn't know enough about the meaning of it all but know well enough that he shouldn't seek purification in this temple for the time being. There are many temples in Sukumo that he can visit tomorrow, if he choses to go as planned.

He will go to town as planned, his obligations to his family demand that, but he will plan a stop at a different temple in town. He will also plan to give prayer and praise to the zugaikotsu kami in the morning before leaving.

Jirōji hesitantly enters the family shrine before the first light of day. He prays as to please zugaikotsu to leave him and his family be for the day. However, he fears that the spirit's long sleep may be drawing to an end.

With a heavy heart, he loads the fishes with the help of his son and son-in-law and set for Sukumo. He put on a small protective strip of cloth over his mouth to indicate that he is bound

for a shrine. The fishmongers are dealing with him tersely and offer him less profitable terms than usual. Thus is the price of walking in the shadows of unfavourable Kamis, he thinks to himself.

He then heads to a nearby temple and make a new donation to a kannushi. The ritual takes some valuable time which otherwise would have been spent poking around.

Jirōji is seeking information in Sukumo. His ability to find an informant (IQ-10) is higher than his Current-Affair-6. So his best bet is to find an informant with "uncommon knowledge" (+0). Sukumo is a 10K-sized city (+1). Using AK in support: rolls 13 vs Area Knowledge(Sukumo)-12 (+0). Final tally: Search gets a 9 vs Search Roll-11. Bingo.

Walking away from the temple, Jirōji heads away from the port area and into parts of town that he is unfamiliar with. There is a market uptown which he suspects would have well connected and discreet merchant.

After some meandering, he identified an elfin man working the front of a smith's shop. Smiths are in the know because of their clientele. The man's name is named Narutō. He has a snap-wit about him and certainly seems to know everyone.

Jirōji will take a somewhat direct approach, using his jovial nature to introduce himself. He will tell Naruto that he is always on the lookout for new merchant and craftsman contacts for himself and the other fisherman, as well as always looking for news that he can take back to the more remote fishing village. He asks if he has any news of the town, any newcomers who may be about or any other people who might be looking for contacts among the fishermen.

This calls for an Interrogation-5, or the ability to get specific information from someone. The approach is jovial and Jirōji is jovial (+1). There is no adjustment for social status nor wealth, but Jirōji's elder commands respect (+1). He also uses his Merchant-10 know-how as a supporting skill (Rolls 5 vs Merchant-10) (+1). Final: Rolls 9 vs Interrogation-8 (fails by 1). Naruto resists by 4. Such defeat would normally cause a composure damage, but Jirōji may resist with his jovial attitude (9 vs Will-11).

Naruto once interested in Jirōji soon begins to act otherwise. Jirōji figures out that Naruto realizes that Jirōji isn't a potential client and reads into the chatter that he is looking for something. He becomes evasive, tries to bring the discussion to fishing and how alien this world is to a blacksmith. Jirōji quickly scans the shop to see whether he could buy something but his eye catches on only to a wakizashi which would break the bank.

Jirōji smiles and steps aside as a samurai shoves his way into the shop. He begins complaining loudly about a nick in the edge of his wakizashi that keeps on coming back. Naruto seems a little scared by the angry customer. Jirōji notices people within earshot step aside quietly, although many are keeping an eye on the scene with an air of amusement.

Does Jirōji recognize the Samurai?

Good question. This calls for a Current Affairs(people), which I think should default to Area Knowledge(Sukumo)-12 at -2 rather than IQ. Rolls: 11 vs AK(Sukumo)-10. A marginal failure: not enough for an identification.

Jirōji stands in the middle of the scene and observes as if it unfolded in slow motion. He remembers seeing this samurai in the past but doesn't know his name. He assumes with good odds that he is a house samurai of magistrate Sukumo.

A quick contest against Psychology-4 (whoa, defaults are rough) is done in secret.

The samurai is verbally abusive and the merchant is meek. Violence can be felt in the air. Jirōji considers conciliating as a mean to posture but doesn't know whether the samurai's anger could be defused. As usual, he looks upon the scene with unabashed good spirit as if he was a faraway observer. The crux of the complaint is that Naruto recently re-tempered and heirloom blade and that the edge is apparently not keeping. The samurai is accusing Naruto of having ruined his grandfather's blade.

And a couple of technical/cultural questions that Jirōji would know (and I do not), would it be appropriate/acceptable for him to say anything during the engagement between the Smith and the Samurai to attempt to resolve the situation? That obviously has risks even if acceptable, but I wanted to check on the cultural aspect before responding. Also, are the wakizashi a very personal item (meaning would it be reasonable to offer an exchange for the one on the wall if it was of high quality).

Jirōji will watch until there is a moment of pause, then, giving correct deference to the Samurai, offer "Master Samurai. I am certain that Naruto would be happy to re-temper your grandfather's blade to correct any problems with his work."

This is a textbook case of Diplomacy-9 (not at default!). Modifiers: Status difference (-2), Reputation, Elder (+1). Jiroji's experience as a military man rolls 7 vs Savoir-Faire(military)-13 (+1). Naruto is also going to try a supporting check: rolls 12 vs Merchant-12 (+1). Final tally: rolls 16 vs Diplomacy-10. ouch. Rolls a resist in secret, fails by 3. Contest lost by 3 overall.

Naruto tries to convince the samurai that he can fix the blade and that he will never charge for it. The samurai is still very upset and has moved around, thus cornering both men into the shop. Naruto gives a brief glance of acknowledgement to Jirōji. Another smith moves forward, head bowed down and offers apologies while the samurai is waving his wakizashi in the air as he yells obscenities. He keeps on threatening Naruto for ruining his family heirloom. In the midst of

the yelled monolog, the eyes of the samurai seem to glimmer and his facial features appears more extreme. Naruto is paralyzed by fear, his head low.

Jirōji bows his head to the Samurai, “Master Samurai, although I am just an elder fisherman, I served honorably as an archer in the magistrates army as a younger man, and understand your concern for your grandfather’s blade. I am certain that Naruto can repair it for you if you will allow him.”

Influence check to defuse the situation and adjust reaction upward. Savoir-Faire-13. Modifiers: Status difference (-2), Reputation, Elder (+1). Supported by roll 9 vs Savoir-fair(High Society)-10 (+1). Rolls 9 vs Savoir-faire(Military)-13, MoS: +4. Resisted with MoS: +1 by samurai. Victory by 3.

Jirōji firms up his voice but keeps on smiling. His display of high-society and military etiquette compels the samurai to step back and listen to the elder. For a moment, he seem to wonder whether he may be mistakenly abusing a peer. The lull is enough to cool him down. He puts down his wakizashi on the table.

“This is the last time that I deal with this charlatan.”, he states. You will deliver this weapon to me at the shiro when it is done. “Sukumo is a such a dump...”, his voice trails off as he walks away before getting angry again. He shouts for all to hear that Naruto is incompetent.

Naruto raises his head, tears are coming down his cheeks.

“You saved my life, stranger. At least honor me with your company for tea.”

Reaction from Naruto and Samurai are adjusted.

“I would be honored to join you Naruto. I am Juroji, from the fishing village.” Juroji, will join or follow Naruto.

Once served with tea, he will be more direct than previously. Saying that he knows he does not have much business for a Smith, but will come to him when it is needed. However, he does like to gather news for the fishing community and himself, and has heard that Naruto is well connected with the news of the town.

Roll 13 vs current-affair(people)-13 to determine how much Naruto knows that is relevant to Jiroji.

Naruto shows much respect to Jirōji. The men introduce each others with brief summaries of past achievements, families, ownership. Naruto is a local and knows the city very well too. He, however, deals with nobility as his main source of clients. The samurai in question is named Morisawa and is a recent arrival from Kochi.

"A lot of new samurai have arrived from Kochi as of late." It is simple for Naruto to do the math and infer that Jirōji served under Umetō. "There are words that a son of your general survived and has come back to claim his estate.", he adds.

Jirōji does not press this line of rumors too hard. However, the two men agree that old feud could bring new blood to Sukumo. Jirōji manages to get that Umetō had been seen to the north in the mountains where the family owned extensive land in the past.

The two men part with kind words and a promise to meet again. Naruto reminds Jirōji that Morisawa ...was seen in the mountains to the North of the city where the clan owned extensive land.

The two men part with a promise to meet again. Naruto reminds Jirōji that Morisawa is expecting him to return the wakizashi in a week. He apologizes for dragging the elder fisherman into that story once more. He then offers Jirōji a finely crafted tantō. This is definitely the finest piece of art that Jirōji ever owned. Its balance is perfect, but it isn't ornate and thus legal for heimin to carry it.



Jirōji acquire a good-quality and balanced tantō (knife, fine balance, good materials, include scabbard, value: more than 100 shus?). Also, Jirōji has acquired Naruto as a contact for current affairs.

Jirōji has used IQ-based skills. I'm adding a # to these and am adding one point into IQ.
You may transfer this point into either starred skill if you want.

GM writes in black.

Jason writes in burgundy.

Jeromy writes in purple.

Travis writes in orange.

Technical details are in gray and italicized. One level of indentation