

Carol of the Cursed Holly

A Fate's Edge One-Shot Adventure

Premise

The remote mountain village of Frosthollow, nestled in a valley perpetually shrouded in winter twilight, is preparing for its annual “Feast of the Endless Night” – a solstice celebration meant to ward off the dark. However, the Cantor traditionally leading the festivities, Elara Nightweaver, has gone mad. Influenced by the Patron **Thrysos, King of Revels**, her carols now carry an infectious, compulsive joy that’s driving the villagers into a dangerous, ecstatic frenzy. They work themselves to exhaustion decorating, feasting non-stop, and dancing. Worse, whispers suggest the **Pale Shepherd** (thresholds, guidance) is claiming souls drawn by this false revelry, and the **Silent Choir** (mercy, silence) seeks to end the cacophony permanently, perhaps by silencing the village entirely.

Setting

Frosthollow is a collection of timber-framed houses blanketed in snow, surrounding a central stone chapel and a large, open square where the Feast is held. The air is crisp, and the perpetual twilight casts long shadows. The village is isolated, a day’s hard travel from the nearest settlement.

Player Characters (PCs)

Assume a mixed group of 3-4 players, ideally with varied skill sets (combat, magic, social, stealth). They might be:

- A sellsword seeking shelter or a contract.
- A Runekeeper investigating strange magical disturbances.
- A local hunter or guide with deep knowledge of the area.
- An exiled minor noble or scholar fleeing something (or someone).

Hook

The PCs arrive in Frosthollow seeking shelter from a sudden, fierce winter storm or are drawn by a specific request (a bounty on the “mad Cantor,” a plea for help from a surviving villager who fled, a need for supplies, or perhaps they are investigators from a nearby town responding to reports of strange lights/sounds). Upon arrival (or shortly after), they witness the effects of the “Cheer”: villagers caroling off-key with manic grins, decorating trees with their own hair or clothing, or

dancing frantically until they collapse.

Key NPCs

Elara Nightweaver (Mad Cantor - Thrysos' Influence)

Once beloved, now gaunt and wild-eyed, her voice carries an otherworldly resonance. She wears a crown of holly that seems to grow into her scalp. She believes she's bringing true joy and light to the world, but it's a joy that consumes.

Thrysos (Patron - Ecstasy & Excess)

Manifests subtly through Elara and the revelry. His influence makes resistance feel wrong, makes the revelry feel *necessary*. His goal is to sustain and grow the revel until it consumes the village and perhaps spreads.

The Pale Shepherd (Patron - Thresholds & Liminality)

Drawn by the unnatural energy and the souls teetering on the brink due to exhaustion and madness. The Shepherd seeks to guide *some* souls peacefully away, but also sees this as a potential "corral" for lost memories or unwanted truths (perhaps related to the village's past). Its presence might manifest as fleeting shadows, a lost lamb, or a sense of being watched by something benevolent yet distant.

The Silent Choir (Patron - Mercy & Silence)

Perceives the revelry as a cacophony of false joy masking underlying pain and desperation. The Choir seeks to impose silence, to end the suffering by ending the noise. This could manifest through a local priest who becomes obsessed with "silencing the heresy" or through direct supernatural effects like objects becoming impossible to speak near.

Greta Frostwhisper (Survivor/Villager)

An elderly woman who hid in the chapel's bell tower when the madness began. She's terrified but sane, knows the village's history, and can warn the PCs. She believes the holly crown is the source.

Father Markus (Possibly Influenced)

The village priest, struggling against the revelry. He might be helpful or an obstacle depending on which Patron influences him.

Structure

1. Introduction (Establishing the Situation)

- **Scene:** PCs arrive in Frosthollow during/just before the storm. They encounter the initial signs of madness (the revelry).
- **Key NPCs Introduced:** Elara (briefly, singing), Villagers (affected), Greta (if found early), Father Markus (conflicted).
- **Major Objective:** Understand the source of the madness and stop it before the Feast of the

Endless Night (set for tonight/soon).

- **Story Beats Generated:** Initial confusion, witnessing the effects of the “Cheer,” potential minor conflict with frenzied villagers.

2. Development (Challenges and Investigation)

- **Challenge 1: Surviving the Revelry:** Simply navigating the village is difficult. PCs must resist the urge to join in (Resolve tests, perhaps gaining Fatigue or a “Revelry” Condition if they fail). Helping affected villagers without getting pulled in is a challenge.
- **Challenge 2: Investigating the Source:** PCs need to learn about Elara, the holly crown, and the strange influences. This involves:
 - Talking to Greta (if found) for history/context.
 - Investigating Elara’s home/lair (the chapel or a decorated grove) for clues about Thrysos’ influence.
 - Dealing with Father Markus, who might be helpful or an obstacle.
 - Possibly encountering manifestations of the Pale Shepherd or the Silent Choir.
- **Challenge 3: Countering the Influences:** Direct action against the supernatural forces.
 - Dealing with Thrysos: Disrupt revelry, confront Elara, break his hold (ritual, opposing magic).
 - Dealing with the Pale Shepherd: Protect souls, negotiate, understand its intent.
 - Dealing with the Silent Choir: Understand its motive, stop its agent, find peaceful resolution.
- **Key Scenes:** The chaotic village square, Elara’s lair (the chapel), Greta’s hiding place (bell tower), confrontations with patrons/villagers.

3. Climax (Major Confrontation)

- **Scene:** The Feast of the Endless Night. Elara, at the height of her power, leads the final revel. Patron influences are strongest.
- **Objective:** Stop Elara and break the spell of the “Cheer.” This likely involves:
 - A social/mental challenge to resist/counter the joy (Wits+Resolve vs. Thrysos).
 - A potential physical/magical confrontation with Elara.
 - A crucial act to destroy/remove the holly crown (ritual, magic, trickery).
 - Managing Patron interactions (leveraging one against another?).

4. Resolution (Consequences)

- **If Successful:** The “Cheer” is broken. Elara is freed/defeated. Villagers recover. Decide Patron fates and the village’s future.
- **If Partial Success:** Revelry dampened, core problem remains. Setup for future threat.

- **If Unsuccessful:** Revelry consumes, Choir silences, Shepherd claims souls. Dark ending.

GM Tools & Dials

- **Patron Prominence:** Adjust how overtly the Patrons act. Thrysos should be most obvious. Shepherd and Choir can be subtle.
- **Revelry Mechanic:** Represent the compulsive “Cheer” with a clock (e.g., “Village Hysteria [6]”). Actions feeding it advance it. Countering it slows/reduces it.
- **Temptation:** Make the revelry *feel* good initially. PCs need rolls to resist joining. Offer minor benefits at the cost of advancing the Hysteria clock.
- **Environmental Hazards:** The winter storm, perpetual twilight, potential avalanches or structural damage.
- **Deck Usage:** Draw from Wilds/Dungeon generator for unexpected complications (hidden cellar, mad animal, structural damage).

Conclusion

This one-shot provides a mix of social investigation, potential combat (with frenzied villagers or the Cantor), magical problem-solving, and dealing with the complex, morally ambiguous influences of multiple Patrons, all wrapped in a wintry, folk-horror atmosphere.

Duel to the Death: Miniatures Optional Extension

This module enhances the martial arts tournament scenario with optional miniatures-based combat. It preserves Fate’s Edge narrative focus while adding tactical depth, cultural nuance, and opportunities for dramatic spectacle worthy of the Seven Bell Court. Groups may use only the sections they enjoy; nothing here is required for play.

[title=The Purpose of the Arena] In Sihai, mastery is precision. In Nihon, mastery is lethality. In Ayokha, mastery is spectacle.

When the world watches, every motion has meaning.

Miniatures combat is not merely about striking an opponent. It is about honor, form, spirit, and intent. The Seven Bell Court judges every bout, and the crowd shapes the battlefield through awe, fear, and fury.

Use minis when blows are more than violence—when the duel itself could shape nations.

Options & Dials

Choose your table’s desired level of tactical complexity. All options preserve narrative focus.

|X|X|X|X|

Play Style				Use Minis For		Skip Minis For		Recommended Rules	
Narrative Focused		Final duel only		Everything else		Abstract zones; Seven Bell Scoring only			
Tactical Light		Qualifiers, ambushes, riots		Diplomatic scenes		Movement + flanking only			

Full Tactical — All major conflicts — Facing, reach, terrain effects

Visual Tone Dials

|X|X|X|

Culture Style Mechanical Expression

Sihai	Wuxia precision	Long leaps, redirect attacks, bonus to Form
Nihon	Lethal minimalism	Hidden weapons, stealth zones, bonus to Spirit under pressure
Ayokha	Ceremonial spectacle	Crowd interaction, environmental effects, bonus to Intent

Cinematic Maneuvers

Any combatant—PC or NPC—may use these maneuvers in miniature-based scenes. Each one encourages motion, spectacle, and cultural style.

|>p3cm|X|X|

Maneuver Trigger Effect

Heaven-Shaking Leap	Start turn with full movement available	Jump 3 hexes ignoring terrain; +1d on first strike
Flow Like Silk	Use Withdraw instead of Attack	+2 Defense until next turn
Iron Lotus Counter	Enemy misses melee attack	Immediate counterattack at +1d
Tiger’s Pounce	Charge 3+ hexes in a straight line	+1 Harm <i>or</i> +2 Crowd Mood
Honor Bind	Spare helpless foe	+2 Spirit points on Seven Bell Scoring
Shadow Step (if stealthy)	Begin turn Hidden	Teleport 2 hexes to new cover; +1d next attack

The Seven Bell Arena

|X|X|

Arena Feature Mechanical Effect

Judges’ Platform (elevated)	+1d to Notice; +1 Spirit if bowing before judges
Crowd Sections	Influence Crowd Mood clock (cheers, jeers)

Ceremonial Gates Entering through proper gate grants +1 Intent

Temple Banners On defense, gain +1 Form when fighting near banners

Champion Miniatures Profiles

Master Li Wei (Sihai)

Size Medium; Speed 4; Moves Close→Near in one action.

- **Melee:** +3d (Elemental Strike), +2d (Unarmed)
- **Special:** Five Elements Flow (change element once/round), Celestial Balance (ignore first Fear each scene), Harmony Shield (+2 Armor vs. elemental attacks)
- **Weakness:** Emotionally Compromised when rivalry escalates

Shinobi Kage (Nihon)

Size Medium; Speed 5; Can Dash as movement.

- **Melee:** +3d (Kusarigama), +2d (Tanto)
- **Special:** Shadow Step (teleport 2 hexes once/scene), Multi-Weapon (swap with no penalty), Psychological Warfare (-1d to foes when Crowd Mood ≥ 3)
- **Weakness:** Exposed after Shadow Step

Cultural Terrain Bonuses

Terrain Feature	Sihai	Nihon	Ayokha
Temple Banner	+1 Spirit	+1 Form	+1 Intent
Shadowed Corners	—	+2 Stealth	+1 Spirit
Water Pools	+1 Form	—	+2 Intent
Open Floor	+1 Intent	—	-1 Spirit

Seven Bell Court Scoring

|X|X|

Event **Seven Bell Score**

Exemplary Technique (perfect attack + ideal position) +2 Form

Mercy Shown (decline killing blow) +2 Spirit

Protect Innocents / Defend Honored Guests +2 Intent

Shameful Excess (cruelty, humiliation) -1 Spirit

Cowardice or Dishonor in view of crowd -2 Intent

Conspiracy Fight Clocks

Sabotage Clock [4]

Each time a PC rolls a *Miss* in combat:

- collapsing scaffolds
- poisoned darts
- hidden explosives

When full: **arena catastrophe** and civilians endangered.

Crowd Panic Clock [6]

Violence, dishonor, or chaos fill segments. When full: stampede, riot, and diplomatic disaster.

Sample Encounter: The Dojo Defense

[title=Setup] Scale: 12×12 hexes. Saboteurs attempt to burn or sabotage the training grounds.

Objectives:

- Prevent further sabotage
- Capture conspirators alive
- Protect students and evidence

Threats:

- Falling beams (DV 3 to avoid, Harm 2)
- Oil slicks (risk falling Prone)
- Saboteurs using shadows for +1d attacks

Seven Bell Scoring:

- +2 Spirit: Rescue civilians
- +2 Form: Perfect defense with no casualties
- +2 Intent: Preserve tournament integrity

Why Miniatures Matter

[X|X]

Without Minis With Minis

Duel is abstract Duel becomes a wuxia set-piece

Crowd is background Crowd affects Position, dice, politics

Champions feel similar Cultural styles emerge in motion

Conspiracy is hidden Sabotage is visible and explosive

PCs watch the duel PCs intervene, protect innocents, sway judges

Eastern Patron Translation Table

Re-Theming Western Patrons for Eastern Adventures

This translation table adapts Western-style patrons to the spiritual, philosophical, and cultural frameworks of **Sihai**, **Nihon**, and **Ayokha**. Each Patron maintains their metaphysical identity and game mechanics, but their symbols, rites, and cultural expectations are re-expressed through Eastern idioms.

[colback=black!2,colframe=black!40,title=**Design Philosophy**]

- **Maintain Core Themes:** The Patron's nature and rites never change.
- **Cultural Reskinning:** Names, symbols, and rituals change to match the region.
- **Mechanical Integrity:** All game effects and Rites function identically.
- **Regional Interpretation:** The same Patron may be feared in one land and revered in another.

Translation Table

@p3.3cmp3.1cmp3.1cmp3.2cmp3cm@ **Western Patron Sihai Equivalent Nihon Equivalent Ayokha Equivalent Core Theme**

The Oath The Mandate The Bushido Code The Celestial Vow Binding Promises
Sealed Gate The Great Wall The Barrier Kami The Threshold Guardians Boundaries / Closure
Raéyn The Celestial Bureaucracy The Tide Masters The Monsoon Lords Storms / Tides
Khemesh The Sunken Palace The Deep Kami The Abyssal Nat Abyssal Pressure
The Witness The Imperial Historians The Chroniclers The Memory Keepers Truth / Revelation
Mab The Courtesan's Guild The Geisha Houses The Dance Temples Glamour / Courts
Sacred Geometry The Feng Shui Masters The Architect Monks The Sacred Masons Perfect Forms
Clockwork Monad The Canal Engineers The Mechanist Guilds The Water Clock Keepers Mech-
anism / Process
Varnek Karn The Ancestor Cults The Death Shrines The Bone Temples Necromancy / Dominion
Nidhoggr The Primordial Forests The Ancient Kami The Root Spirits Deep Earth / Rot
The Traveler The Silk Road Merchants The Wandering Monks The Trade Winds Roads / Ways
Oath of Flame & Light The Celestial Court The Shrine Keepers The Temple Flames Dawn /

Vows

Carrion King The Decomposition Cycle The Scavenger Kami The Rot Spirits Renewal / Carrion
Gallows Bell The Executioner's Code The Death Poets The Final Judgment Doom / Last Rites
Old Man of the Black Forest The Primal Spirits The Wild Kami The Untamed Nat Primal
Humanity
Ikasha The Shadow Sects The Ninja Clans The Night Spirits Shadow / Potential
Inaea The Hearth Temples The Family Shrines The Ancestral Fires Mercy / Hearth
Mykkiel The Law Courts The Magistrate Temples The Justice Shrines Judgment / Writ
Maelstraeus The Merchant Lords The Trading Houses The Gold Temples Infernal Bargaining
Livaea The Seduction Arts The Temptation Scrolls The Desire Spirits Temptation / Desire
Aliyah The Cursed Saints The Bound Kami The Chained Spirits Curses / Corruption

Detailed Cultural Variations

9.3.1 The Oath → The Mandate / Bushido / Celestial Vow

Sihai: The Mandate (*Tianming*)

- **Symbol:** Golden seal upon red lacquer.
- **Patron's Gift:** *Imperial Voice* — Gain +1d to Command when invoking official authority.
- **Favored Rites:** Oaths of service, binding decrees, magistrate contracts.
- **Corruption Tell:** Skin becomes papery and stamped with red seals; speech becomes legalistic, emotionless.

Nihon: The Bushido Code (*Bushidō*)

- **Symbol:** Paired katana and inkbrush.
- **Patron's Gift:** *Warrior's Rectitude* — +1d Melee when defending honor or clan.
- **Favored Rites:** Duels, testimony, loyalty oaths, ritual confessions.
- **Corruption Tell:** User hallucinates dishonor everywhere; bleeding ink from pores.

Ayokha: The Celestial Vow

- **Symbol:** Conch-shell etched with sigils.
- **Patron's Gift:** *Heaven-Backed Speech* — +1d Sway when speaking a sacred vow.
- **Favored Rites:** Temple contracts, marriage oaths, diplomatic binding.
- **Corruption Tell:** Voice becomes too beautiful; others must Save or obey.

9.3.2 Sealed Gate → Great Wall / Barrier Kami / Threshold Guardians

Sihai: The Great Wall

- **Symbol:** Miniature stone brick wrapped in red cord.
- **Patron's Gift:** *Bastion of Empire* — +1 Armor when protecting others.

- **Corruption Tell:** Masonry patterns appear beneath the skin; paranoia and xenophobia intensify.

Nihon: The Barrier Kami

- **Symbol:** Paper wards (ofuda) sealed in wax.
- **Patron's Gift:** *Purifying Seal* — +1d Arcana to repel spirits or demons.
- **Corruption Tell:** Locked joints; speech comes only in ritual language.

Ayokha: The Threshold Guardians

- **Symbol:** Carved jade key.
- **Patron's Gift:** *Gatekeeper's Sight* — +1d Insight to read intentions.
- **Corruption Tell:** Eyes resemble padlocks; obsession with control escalates.

9.3.3 Raéyn → Celestial Bureaucracy / Tide Masters / Monsoon Lords

Sihai: The Celestial Bureaucracy

- **Symbol:** Silver brush pen.
- **Patron's Gift:** *Storm Decree* — Once per scene, amplify or calm wind/rain.
- **Corruption Tell:** Paper birds swarm the character; storms whisper their name.

Nihon: The Tide Masters

- **Symbol:** Shell inlaid with gold.
- **Patron's Gift:** *Salt-Sense* — +1d Survival for navigation and sea prediction.
- **Corruption Tell:** Hair floats as if underwater; breath smells of seawater.

Ayokha: The Monsoon Lords

- **Symbol:** Knotted wind-chime of bone and pearl.
- **Patron's Gift:** *Wind-Reader* — +1d Notice to detect incoming threats.
- **Corruption Tell:** Skin cracks like parched earth; voice becomes thunderous.

Rivalries in Eastern Context

@p3cmp3cmp3cmp3cm@ **Patron Sihai Rival Nihon Rival Ayokha Rival**

The Mandate Ancestor Cults Death Poets Abyssal Nat

The Bushido Code Celestial Bureaucracy Shadow Sects Rot Spirits

The Celestial Vow Merchant Lords Ninja Clans Justice Shrines

The Great Wall Silk Road Merchants Wandering Monks Threshold Guardians

The Barrier Kami Trade Winds Ancient Kami Night Spirits

Corruption Themes by Region

Sihai Corruption

- Loss of face, rigid legalism, obsession with hierarchy.
- Bureaucratic stamps or seals spread across the skin.

Nihon Corruption

- Honor becomes suicidal pride.
- Beautiful black rot spreads like ink beneath veins.

Ayokha Corruption

- Ritual without meaning; divine perfection eclipses empathy.
- Voice becomes too compelling; mortals obey without question.

Sample Patron Encounters (Eastern Expression)

The Mandate (Sihai) A courier kneels, delivering a jade-sealed edict: investigate corruption. Refusing brings dishonor—and perhaps divine punishment.

The Bushido Code (Nihon) A formal challenge scroll appears at dawn. Resolve a feud between samurai houses. Failure stains everyone’s honor.

The Celestial Vow (Ayokha) Dream-message from a forgotten temple flame: restore worship—or the spirits will claim the shrine entirely.

Integration with *Duel to the Death*

- **The Crimson Merchants’ Guild** = Sihai Merchant Lords / Nihon Trading Houses / Ayokha Gold Temples.
- **Master Li Wei** may serve the Celestial Bureaucracy or Temple Flames.
- **Shinobi Kage** may serve the Night Spirits or Shadow Sects.

Conclusion

These cultural translations preserve mechanical identity while enriching play with meaningful, respectful cultural differences. A Patron remains a Patron—whether worshipped by monk, samurai, or spice-merchant.