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Tiny **crossover** with *Combination* by Leeza Sei.

Special thanks go to my editor Solo!

A. Kniggendorf: Continuing Education Course 3-6-1 - Onmyojutsu

A Tokyo Babylon / X fanfic
based on the homonymous manga books by Clamp.

Autumn 1998
Tuesday, 14:38

Conference room 16-II at the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department was a modern seminar location, sporting automated blinds and a data projector in addition to the standard blackboard and overhead projector which took up the space behind the lectern in front of six rows of office-grey desks and black swinging chairs.

Seishiro put his bag on the first table of the front row and hung up his coat. He was twenty minutes early for the class, but the prospect of staying in the Mori office on the other side of the Sakurada-dori had not appealed. Besides, had 16-II been one of the older rooms, it would have been necessary to talk the secretary into printing transparencies for him. He'd already asked her for a cup of coffee when he'd hung up his coat. Now he sat down, stretched out his long legs comfortably under the table, and had a first sip. Free time, even if only a few minutes, was exceedingly rare for him these days.

The door opened and two men entered the room, obviously checking the preparations for the planned lecture. The older of the two seemed to be nearing his sixties; judging by the aura of authority, he was probably the chief of this department while the younger, a sharp-eyed, plain-clothed detective appeared to be his protégé. Seishiro watched them with mild curiosity.

"Sasaki-kun, go and tell the Kimaro-san to prepare green tea. We can't treat an onmyoji like our normal substitute teachers. Make sure we have seat cushions; the chairs might be too uncomfortable for an old man used to sitting on tatami. Do we have one without arm rests? We wouldn't want his robes to get tangled."

"Yes, chief. I'll take care of it." Sasaki hurried out of the room. Seishiro heard him talking outside, while the room slowly filled with -- mostly plain-clothed -- detectives and policemen.

"Hontaru-kun is fetching a cushion from the coffee room and he sent somebody to bring up a chair from the reception hall." Sasaki informed his superior when he returned. "Kimaro-san will bring sencha tea in a few minutes."

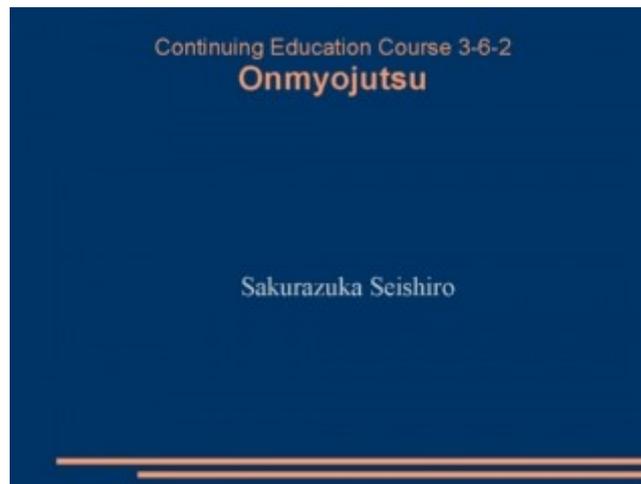
"Sencha?" The chief didn't appear to be happy about that. "I guess there's no time to go out and buy Gyokuro. Let's hope that the sencha will do." He looked at the large clock above the door. "And somebody ought to go down and check where our speaker is; I don't want him to get lost like the last time. And we'll need rice paper for the blackboard and a calligraphy brush and--"

Seishiro took the last sip of his coffee and took pity on them. "Actually," he said, pushing back his chair to go and claim the lectern. "All I need is a wall outlet--" He unzipped his bag and took out the cables. "--for the laptop."

Amusement rippled in the audience while the chief and Sasaki stared at him. Seishiro knew what they were seeing: a man in his early thirties, wearing partially colored glasses and a navy blue business suit with a white shirt and a burgundy tie secured half-way by a gold clip adorned with a plain cross. "Sakurazuka Seishiro." He bowed superficially and tapped on the NPSC ID on his lapel before he smiled at Sasaki: "Thank you for the tea, but I'd prefer another cup of your coffee, it's excellent. And if you could get me a glass of water and a floor cloth, please."

He searched for the power outlet under the lectern and connected his laptop with the beamer, while Sasaki went to get coffee, water and floor cloth. By the time Seishiro had finished powering up and logging in, the requested items stood on the desk next to the lectern. Seishiro took a sip from his fresh coffee and put the cup down next to his laptop. "If somebody would be so kind as to close the blinds, please? Thank you."

He called up the first slide -- Title and Introduction -- and waited for the room to become dark and quiet.



"As some of you might have overheard a moment ago, my name's Sakurazuka Seishiro. I've been sent by the National Public Safety Commission to teach you about how to handle the increasing number of paranormal -- or better: magical -- events within your jurisdiction." He paused briefly to take a large silver coin out of his pocket.

"What is magic, actually?" he asked the audience, holding up the coin. "It this magic?" He made the coin wander over his knuckles. "Or this?" He snapped his fingers and the coin was gone. Looking expectantly at the audience, he waited for the first two or three hesitant nods, then he shook the coin from his cuff back into his palm. "No, ladies and gentlemen. That is illusion."

"This--" He pointed at the glass of water on the table and tossed an ofuda at it. "--is magic." The water climbed out of the glass as a diminutive humanoid, walked to the edge of the lectern and bowed to the shocked audience. Seishiro snapped his fingers and the water splashed to the floor, forming a small puddle. Seishiro rounded the desk and wiped up the puddle, then hung the wet cloth on the corner of the lectern, before returning his attention to the audience.

"As you just saw, magic doesn't seem to go conform with the laws of nature as we know them. The most important word in the last sentence, however, is *seem*. The water still exists physically -- or I wouldn't have needed the floor cloth. It was held together by normal molecular forces -- or it wouldn't have splashed to the floor as a liquid when I ended the spell. Nevertheless, it walked to the edge of the desk and bowed. How?" He waited until he had spotted a few helpless faces in the audience before answering his own question.

"The spell enclosed the water with magical power and forced it into a vaguely humanoid shape. That water-filled magical enclosure was then moved to the edge of the desk to greet you.

"In short: Magic is power. A form of power somebody not spiritually gifted usually can't see or feel directly, though he or she might well see, feel -- or suffer from -- its effects. To govern, control, and understand the rules of that power and its applications, that's onmyojutsu and somebody who mastered it is an onmyoji." He nodded at the chief and his assistant Sasaki. "Even if not all of us are old men in ceremonial robes." He pressed a key and called up the table of contents.

Table of Contents

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- Practitioners vs. Laypersons
- What is Onmyojutsu?
- Protections and Precautions
- Signs of Magic
- Magical symbols
- How to report magical events
- Contact information

"In this lecture I will give you a brief overview of the history of onmyojutsu in Japan, the important distinction between dealing with practitioners and laymen -- you will see the latter are entirely more dangerous-- and the effects and dangers of magic in general and how to recognize its application. You will learn what precautions and protections you can take for yourself and the general populace. And most importantly, you will learn how to report magical events -- and how *not* to report them -- to avoid endangering yourself and the practitioner you will have to call in on your case.

"In the next hour, you will hear a lot of things that your common sense tells you are ridiculous. Or impossible. Or never going to happen." He looked back over the rows of attentive listening detectives in front of him. "In that case, I want you to look at the wet cloth and recall that it's wet from water that had greeted you at the beginning of this course."

He tapped on his laptop again, calling up a slide with a very brief history of onmyojutsu next to a classical drawing of Abe no Seimei on the right.

History of Onmyojutsu in Japan

- 6th century: Chinese practitioners bring onmyojutsu to Japan
- 7th century: foundation of the onmyo-ryo as part of the Department of State
- 19th century: onmyojutsu prohibited as superstition
- Post occupation: restrictions on onmyojutsu are lifted; onmyoji in Japan are supervised by the Sumeragi clan in Kyoto



Abe no Seimei (921-1006)

"As you can see, some practitioners were indeed old men wearing ceremonial robes -- in the tenth century." He smirked and threw a brief glance at the slide displayed in his back, before addressing the audience more seriously. "Onmyojutsu was brought to Japan at the end of the fifth century together with other aspects of the Chinese culture. The first practitioners in Japan soon gained considerable influence at court. The onmyo-ryo, the bureau of onmyo, was founded in the sixth century and the ritsuryo law codes aligned it with the Department of State.

"The onmyo-ryo was state-controlled until the middle of the nineteenth century, when in the wake of the Meiji Restoration and the Westernization of the country, onmyojutsu was banned as a superstition. However, the events of the years following that ban proved that to be a fatal misconception and the practice was reinstated in 1952 after the end of the occupation, though neither the court routines nor the Onmyo-ryo itself were reinstalled."

Seishiro watched his audience briefly. A few were taking notes, more were doodling, most were listening. Good.

"Today's pop-culture is responsible for the fact that nowadays onmyoji are either seen as charlatans -- which is why the majority of you probably wonder why your department required you to sit here -- or as a kind of shinto priests -- which is a slightly more flattering perception, but you will see soon that it is equally inadequate." He called up the next slide.

Practitioners vs. Laypersons

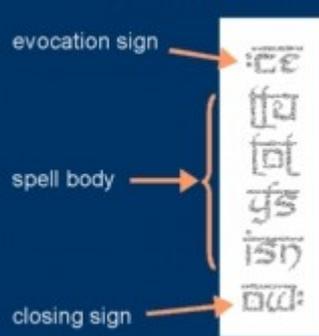
- analyze and protect from preternatural threats:
 - evil spirits
 - abusive magicians
 - unintended magic
- handle spiritual events in general
- in Heian times performed also:
 - astronomical & calendar calculations
 - divination
- unaware of the risks
- unable to handle the consequences
- are dangerous to themselves and others
- use information published post 1850 (o. prohibited)

**DO NOT COPY
MAGICAL SYMBOLS!!**

"Onmyoji are specialists in magic and divination, practitioners who protect Japan and its population from evil spirits and from people knowingly or unknowingly abusing spiritual powers. And we usually don't come in easily identifiable clothes. In fact, I haven't worn a shikifuku in years, and if you call the Sumeragi in an emergency, you might meet a young man in black jeans and sweater -- their current head is in his twenties and has a deplorable fashion sense. Nevertheless, these people are your best chance to deal with the onmyojutsu-related threats you may face." Seishiro ticked them off on his fingers. "First, evil spirits that haven't been discovered before; second, dark practitioners who knowingly abuse their art; and third, laypersons who wittingly or unwittingly tap into spiritual powers. The latter are actually the most dangerous.

"Before I continue--" He waited for a moment until the last of the audience had stopped scribbling. "Do not copy, outline, draw, or doodle the characters and symbols you'll see on the next slides. Do not write them down. You will get handouts with the most crucial symbols at the end of the lecture. These handouts are printed on laminated paper, making it very hard to accidentally draw on them with most pens. That is on purpose. The symbols I'll show you are the real thing. They are rastered instead of solidly drawn and therefore inactive. Your copy wouldn't have that protection and you could end up with an active spell. Then a practitioner would have to come here and clean up the mess you created." He studied the audience one by one, catching one or two smiling. Perfect.

What is Onmyojutsu?



evocation sign

spell body

closing sign

- system of spells oral and written
- power focus
- abides the laws of nature, *but*
- triggers events of *low probability*

His next slide showed a large picture of a common ofuda surrounded by captions. The symbol in its center was printed as a raster of fine separate black dots and appeared grey from a distance; if activated it would trigger cellulolysis on the paper it was written on. Seishiro expected to have a demonstration soon.

"Onmyojutsu as well as magic in general is a system of verbal and written spells, designed to focus power. As I have explained in the beginning, magic is not exempt from the laws of physics; but it can be used to trigger events with a low probability. If I drop a glass cup, it is very probable that it is going to shatter. If I drop the resulting shards again, it is very improbable that they recombine into a glass cup. But it is not impossible and magic can actually do that." He smiled briefly and added, "However, it's way easier even for a practitioner just to go and buy a new cup.

"In addition, it is possible to work magic on the quantum scale, where everything is based on probability." He looked into the audience, spotting some worried faces and a few busy scribblers. Soon. "But fortunately, as far as I know there aren't any professional quantum physicists among the practitioners and--"

A couple of screams and hastily pushed back chairs interrupted him as expected.

"Ladies and gentlemen, some of your colleagues have kindly demonstrated that you don't need to have a clue to create magical havoc. It also isn't necessary to have greater than average talent for it, which is why laypersons -- even unwitting laypersons like you -- are the most dangerous.

"Please sit down again. The spell you copied simply splits the cellulose of the paper it is written on into the saccharides of which it was composed. It is a minor event that -- despite its impressive effect -- is completely harmless. The spells on the following slides are not. In fact, they are among the most deadly you can come across in my profession."

He waited briefly until the shocked detectives had reclaimed their seats.

"As an art, onmyojutsu is a lot like drawing. Everybody can learn to draw to a certain extent and produce acceptable results -- otherwise all the artschools for children would be out of business -- but creating a masterpiece takes talent and a deep understanding of what you're doing. With onmyojutsu it's the same. You drew the symbol. It triggered. Your paper crumbled into a heap of sugars and trace elements. But I imagine few of you understand how that happened physically, and virtually none of you could have composed the spell on their own."

Seishiro noted that Sasaki in the front row actually looked as if he wanted to say something, then decided not to risk it. That was interesting. He had better keep an eye on that one.

"Since magic abides by physical laws, it shouldn't be a surprise for you that it also has repercussions. Newton's third law requires that any action causes an opposing reaction, and the same holds for magic. A spell taps into power, and the power it requires is going to be reclaimed. This is called magical backlash. It often, but not always, follows a short time after the actual spell and can be as, or even more, dangerous than the spell itself, because it isn't focused in its purpose. So if you escaped the original spell, do not believe the danger is over. It is not. Practitioners know how to handle backlash properly; amateurs often don't even know that it exists. Untreated backlash results in sickness, injuries, even death."

A few faces in the audience looked grey. "Don't worry about your demonstration. The spell I had you copy is harmless. Bacteria and fungi perform cellulolysis all the time." And headaches hadn't killed anybody, yet. "Are there any questions so far?"

A female detective with strictly tied hair said, "Mamahara Ito, from the 27th district, sir. What kind of symptoms can we expect to see in victims of magical spells, and is it possible to distinguish between the victims of spells and spellcasters who were struck by an unexpected backlash?"

"The symptoms of a magical spell being used on someone are highly dependent on the spell itself, Mamahara-san. A backlash, however, is unfocused magical power resulting mostly in internal damage. Common symptoms in weak cases go from headaches to migraines, nausea, vomiting and dysentery; in stronger cases there is bleeding from the orifices, bodily deformations, missing limbs, and finally death."

In front of him, Sasaki frowned and slowly raised his hand, indicating a question.

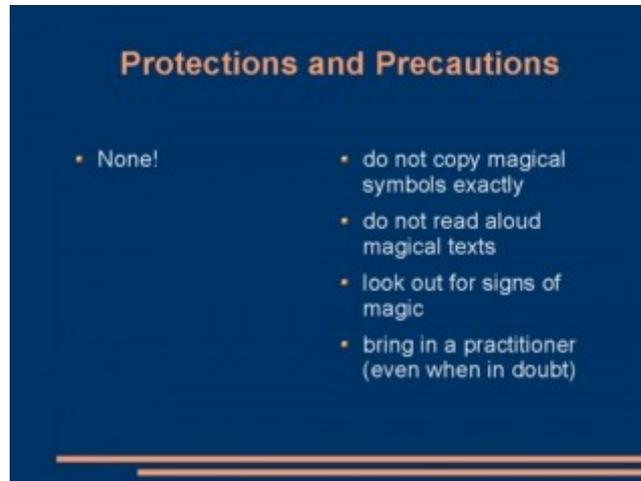
"Yes, please?"

"Sasaki Keiji, from Criminal Investigations. Please excuse the personal nature of my question, sensei, but did you lose your eye in a magical incident?"

"No, Sasaki-kun, that happened in a knife attack a few years ago." Seishiro turned his attention pointedly towards the back rows of the audience. He would have to get darker glasses, if he didn't

want to waste power on concealing the dulled lens. He wasn't sure the transplants would be ripe before 1999.

He banished the thought and called up the next slide with a brisk tap on the keyboard. "Let's now come to the most important question: what protections against magic are available to you?"



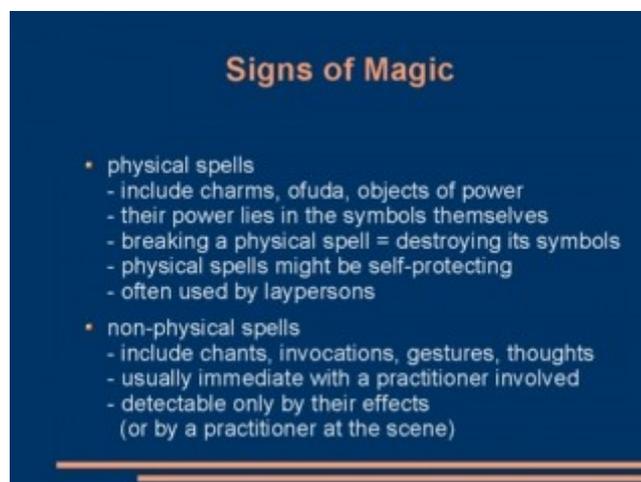
"To make it short: None."

Seishiro waited for a moment to let that statement sink in. "While it is comparatively easy to attack or influence somebody with magic, it is a lot more difficult to protect yourself when facing a magical attack. Purchased charms -- though some of them do hold power -- are seldom effective. If the attack is directed specifically at you, the chances that a common protection charm will be strong enough to save you are close to nil.

"Basically, there are two ways to defend oneself from a magical assault: one would be an unspecific defense -- very much like charms -- backed up by the power of a truly gifted practitioner. But few practitioners are strong enough to maintain protection from a distance for long, and even those think twice before offering such protection because it is very strenuous and exposes them to harm. The second option is a specific defense tailored to the kind of attack you face. For that you have to have the knowledge and skill not only to recognize the type of assault but also to meet it in time. A master of the arts can do that. You can't."

He took a sip from his cooled coffee.

"Which makes precautions all the more important to you. Do not copy magical -- or seemingly magical -- symbols exactly. Do not read aloud -- or use voice software on -- a text that might hold magical content. We will later see how you can document and report them anyway. Most importantly: Keep your eyes open for anything that indicates that magic is or was being used and bring in a practitioner if there are any signs of magic."

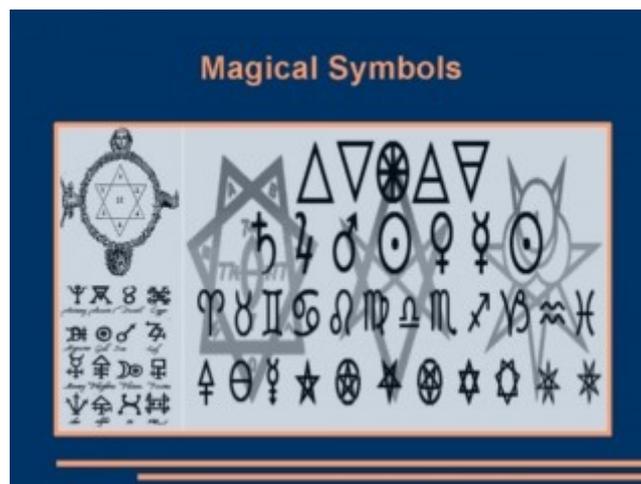


"Most often you'll come across magical items, collectively called 'physical spells', which includes charms, ofuda, objects of power -- like a dog killed and buried on holy ground, or something removed from a spiritually strong area like Mount Fuji. They can also be made from common objects by applying magical symbols to them.

"Note that in most cases the power lies in the symbols themselves, not in the material they are written on or the ink used for it. Special substances like blood or holy water may increase their effect, but the power per se is always with the symbol not the surrounding. If you shoot at an ofuda, you won't have an effect if you don't destroy the symbols on it. So burning would be more efficient, but it is possible to weave spells in a way to protect their carrier material from such damage as long as the spell is active.

"The next slide will show you the most commonly found symbols. Note that I can't give you a complete set of symbols that indicate spells. While Shinto, Buddhism, and Taoism are the dominant belief systems involved in spell casting in Japan, there are countless other options for tapping into spiritual power. Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Wicca are only the most prominent ones. Some are very similar to the structure of Onmyojutsu, others -- like Nordic runes -- are completely different. A Christian cross surrounded by Latin prayers taps as deeply into the spiritual powers as a practitioner's fervent prayer to Amida Buddha. And may be equally dangerous if directed against you."

"Remember, the characters on the next slide are the real thing. If you copy those, you'll give us a nice interpretation of the more dramatic scenes in *The Exorcist*. So spare yourselves the pea soup and me the unpleasantness of cleaning that up. You'll get a safe handout at the end of the lecture." He called up the symbol slide.



"Physical spells may be found on an ofuda attached to the object; they may be written or carved directly into the object, or even near the object. A strong spell doesn't have to be in plain sight as long as its form remains intact. It can be wrapped up, locked in a closet, or even buried in the yard. There was a case with a curse drawn on the ceiling in the apartment below the victim's bedroom. On another occasion, the spell was covered with wallpaper. If the effect is short-term, it can even be put into a medical capsule for the victim to swallow. In that case the spell will be effective as long as the capsule hasn't dissolved.

"Remember: these are just examples. There are countless possibilities how a spell can be concealed. If you come across any of the symbols on this slide in any context, it is likely that you are dealing with applied magic. But if something that looks suspicious to you and isn't on the list shows up in a case of yours -- trust your suspicion and report it. The worst thing that can happen then is that a practitioner grumbles at you for getting him up at 2 a.m. to look at a kid's doodle."

Not that he believed Subaru would actually grumble at them -- his prey was entirely too nice for its own good in that regard-- but Seishiro didn't intend to tell them that.

"In any case: being embarrassed is preferable to being dead."

How to report magical events - - and how not to report them!

- distort images: photograph spells at 45°
- use a digital camera and recorder
- record film and sound at lowest quality (50% white noise)
- use a raster display for viewing
- in case of copied spells:
 - inform the practitioner before viewing
 - distort the copy at playback
 - caution: analog recordings are *active spells!*

He threw a brief glance over his shoulder at the new displayed slide. "So how to report magical events without endangering you and the practitioner you call?

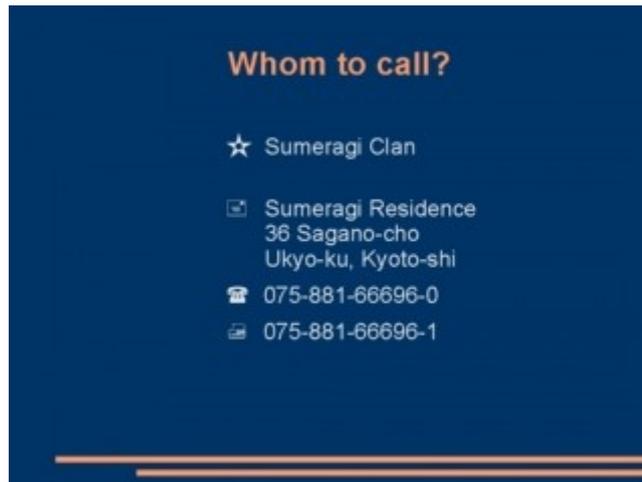
"The best option is actually to call a practitioner the moment you recognize you're dealing with magic. Seal off the area and retreat as far as possible then wait for his or her arrival. However, you may encounter magical evidence at crime scenes or when immediate magical assistance isn't available. Then it is necessary to record the evidence, but as your colleagues so nicely demonstrated earlier: producing a copy of the spell is a bad idea. And the same goes for any kind of recording or duplication, be it electronic, analogous, photographic, or otherwise. The power is in the symbol. If you copy the symbol or record the spell, you get the real thing, which is to be avoided at all costs since it endangers you and whoever has to work with your evidence later." He looked across the audience. "So how to record magical items and events?"

"The answer is simple: distort them. If you document spells or magical items, use a camera and photograph the object at about a 45-degree angle. The symbols on the picture are then distorted and don't hold power of their own, but a practitioner looking at your evidence will still be able to recognize them. The same goes for film or sound records.

"If you have reason to believe that a spell -- verbal, visual, or otherwise -- was recorded on film, tape or computer memory, make sure you extract it in bad quality. A sound recording with 50% white noise is still somewhat understandable, but any curse or spell in it doesn't work any more. Photographs or movie tapes can be reproduced using a raster display with results very much like the characters and symbols you see on my slides. But be aware that -- at least with traditional photography and movie tapes -- the negatives are active spells and therefore have to be destroyed. Digital cameras, though expensive, are a lot safer since the pictures aren't stored in their physical form. If possible use those.

"Take care that a practitioner is present when the evidence is viewed first."

He drew a deep breath and continued with the final slide.



"So, whom to call? No, not the ghostbusters." A few nervous laughs rippled through the audience at that and Seishiro waited until the room had quieted again. "Responsible for handling magical events within Japan are the Sumeragi, who coordinate virtually all affairs related to onmyojutsu these days. If you come across any possible case of magical influence within your work, you have to contact them immediately." He briefly indicated the displayed slide, holding contact address, phone and fax number of the Sumeragi estate in Kyoto. "Ninety-nine per cent of what you're likely going to face will be the business of the Sumeragi. They have four or five practitioners within Tokyo at all times, including their strongest talent. I've been told that they usually respond to an official call within an hour." He met a lot of unsure looks across the auditorium and allowed himself a satisfied smile. "Yes, this slide is *safe* to copy. And it is also in the handouts you'll find next to the door. Thank you for your attention."

"Excuse me, sensei. Do you belong to the Sumeragi as well?"

Seishiro looked up from unplugging his laptop to find Sasaki standing behind him. "No, I'm not affiliated with them. I work for Sakura Enterprises which is currently supervised by the NPSC." He rolled up the power cable.

"Then why did you give us their number instead of yours? In case of emergencies over here, you're likely closest."

Seishiro put his laptop into the bag and reached for his coat. "Because I'm only called when exorcism isn't an option." He nodded at the detective. "Sayonara, Sasaki-kun."

End.

Note:

The Sumeragi's address and phone number(s) above are fictitious.
66696 on a letter phone is ONMYO!