

Nothing is so bad that it can't get worse...

The Sting of Betrayal

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Monday, January 10, 2005



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Nothing is so bad that it can't get worse. The people of Kamigawa know this better than anyone else. Already they've had to deal with the anger of their gods, but when other parties get into the act, the world will have a rough time indeed. But of course, that's not going to stop anyone from enjoying the great cards that will arise from the conflict, not to mention the [Meet the Betrayers](#) short stories that continue the saga begun in *Champions* and the novels. We had some great stories, and great feedback, the last time around, so be sure to check them out! But first, you'll need to know a little about the environment in which these stories take place, because there have been some serious changes.

Betrayers of Kamigawa continues the saga of the Kami War, and of Toshiro Umezawa ("Toshi" for short), an antihero who seems to have struck a chord with players. And why not: it's been a while since **Magic** has had a protagonist so selfish, yet slick, with a certain charm that seems to appeal to more than just Michiko Konda. Not surprising, since he's the first storyline "hero" to be represented by a black card. But more on the card later.



Art by Wayne Reynolds

When we last left Kamigawa, the war had already been raging for years, but the balance of power is about to seriously shift. Both Toshi and Michiko continue their quest to find the origins of the Kami War, though each for somewhat different reasons. Those who are still trusted within the walls of [Eiganjo Castle](#) are delving deeper into the secrets of [Daimyo Konda](#), who seems to have something to do with this whole mess. The ever-opportunistic Soratami are mulling over their next move, one that may have serious consequences in the entire war.

There has been a definite shift in the Kami War, thanks to, among other things, the meddling of our friend Toshi. Though the conflict has raged for decades, there are definitely signs that events are accelerating. For one thing, Hidetsugu and his fellow oni-worshippers are starting to make their influence known beyond the confines of [Shinka Keep](#) and Takenuma Swamp. Ogres are pretty big and mean to begin with, but when powered by the darkest of kami, they're even more of a force to be

reckoned with. They could flatten all of Kamigawa if they wanted, but who knows how Hidetsugu will shift the tide of the war?



Art by Carl Critchlow (left) and Kev Walker (right)

There will be, of course, more bloodshed, tragedy, and all the other things that make a **Magic** storyline so great. Questions will be answered, but many important ones will remain unsolved for the time being. Which will be answered? What do Toshi and Michiko have to do with the war at large? And is the figure we think is behind everything really the one ultimately responsible? Only time, and the novels, will tell. But when Toshi (and you) discover what's been going on behind the scenes, you'll see that the reasons for the kami rage are more complicated than they might first appear.

The first thing you'll notice about *Betrayers of Kamigawa* are ninja. Masters of stealth and subterfuge, these mercenaries have, like everyone else, found a niche in the Kami War. They still do assassinations, theft, and such. But, like the rest of the mortal world, they find that their talents would be best put to use ensuring their own survival. So they're as much a part of the Kami War as any other human – hopefully their special skills will give them an edge over the kami, just as they do in actual card combat.

Then there's the uncertainty presented from a source you might not have considered: mortals. After all, it's long been established in **Magic** that when a mortal dies, he or she generally becomes a spirit. But spirits on Kamigawa mean kami. So what happens to the spirits of the thousands of casualties of war? Do they become kami? If so, whom will they serve: their new brethren, or those they loved in life? The loyalties of such new kami wouldn't be as strongly tied to O-Kagachi, the mightiest of kami, so perhaps there's hope in that direction yet.



Art by Kev Walker

But speaking of O-Kagachi, I can tell you that he'll be making an appearance in the material world of Kamigawa, and needless to say, he will *not* be happy. Though he will not appear as his own card (he's just too immense and all-encompassing to be a **Magic** card), the effects of his wrath on the world will be significant indeed.

There are a lot of interesting theories surrounding the nature of this kami to end all kami; perhaps they'll be answered soon.

But there are plenty of other indications in this set that events are spiraling out of control in the kami's favor. The kami that represent and run deep in the souls of various races are manifesting. Like other kami, they are not shy about turning against their former worshippers. Worse yet, the kami that inhabit entire land masses are rising up and attacking those who walk or swim among them. It seems that nowhere is safe.

Probably the most significant plot-related point in *Betrayers* is that you'll finally find out the exact reason why O-Kagachi and the rest of the kami are so riled up. In fact, that reason will be a neat, splashy card all on its own! It'll explain quite a bit about some of the mysteries that surround **Daimyo Konda** and **Eiganjo Castle**. But again, very important questions will remain unanswered, and not even the Soratami know all the answers.

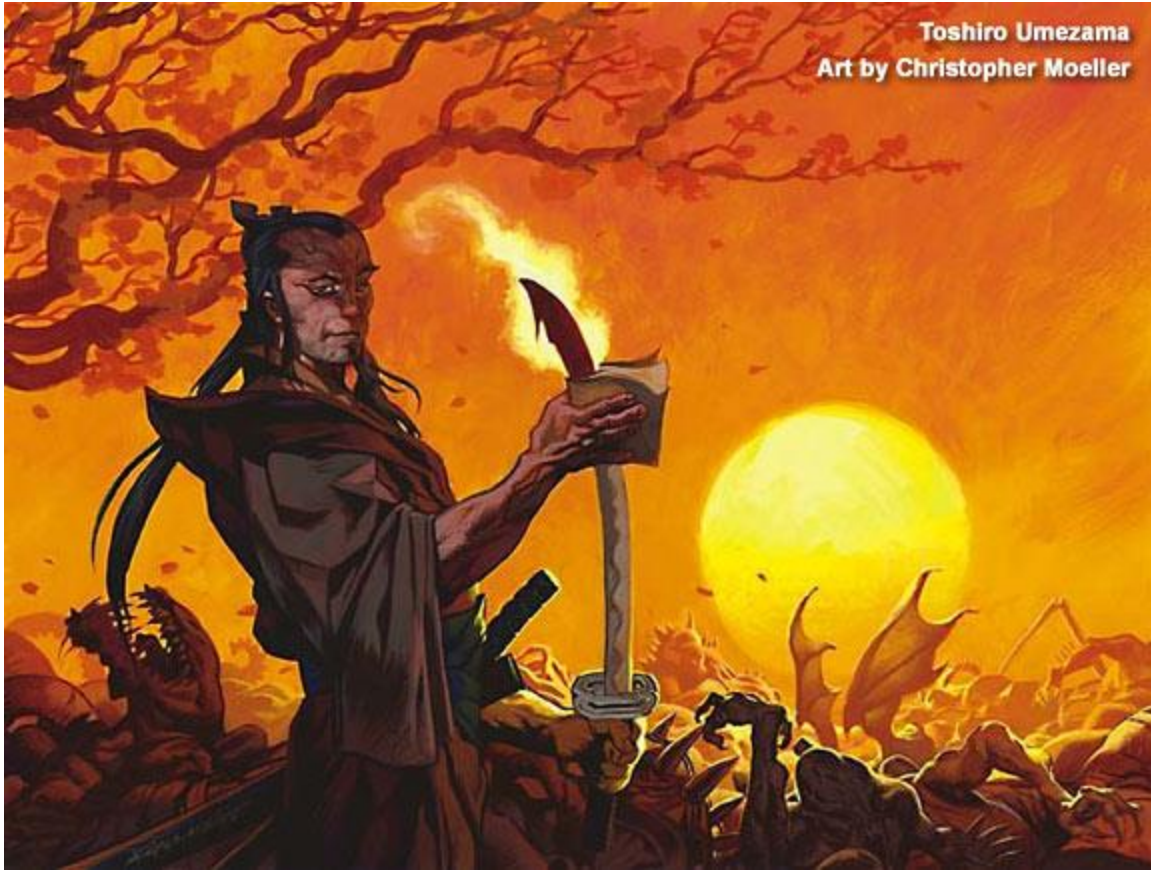
So now it's time for the preview card... Or, at least, it would normally be. But those tricky guys at **magicthegathering.com** have decided to try something a little different: giving this set's marquee storyline card to Single-Card Strategies author **Adrian Sullivan** on Wednesday! Yup, I'm

afraid that means you all will have to wait just a little longer to find out what he does. On the other hand, he's sure to explore Toshi's mechanical possibilities in more depth than I ever could.

Here's what I *can* tell you: the "kanji magic" that Toshi displays in the *Champions of Kamigawa* novel is definitely reflected in his card powers. He's no slouch in combat, and under the right conditions his kanji magic kicks in, vaguely mimicking an ability that players knew and loved when it was printed as... Well, I'll let Adrian tell you that. And as I said before, he's the first **Magic** protagonist to be represented by a mono-black card. In the meantime, here's his art to whet your appetite.



Art by Adam Rex



After so many years of conflict, the Kami War is finally heating up. There's a growing certainty that it will end, soon. But not even the kami are certain who'll emerge victorious, or if there'll be much of Kamigawa standing when the dust settles. But one thing's for sure: if there's a way to survive, or prosper, Toshi Umezawa will find it. The only question that remains, then, is who else he'll leave alive when he's done...