



GRASS

A cloud-darkened sky is only featureless to those who don't really look. The careful and discerning eye perceives a thousand folds within the gathering storm. One can take any number of lessons from the sky beyond simple observation and appreciation, comparing the overlapping clouds to a well-made sword. Lessons of a storm's strength born from careful refinement of air and water, or of a land's parched patience rewarded with rain. But those were lessons Yukiko Kuromizu had long since learned, so she put the thought out of her mind in the split second before she slammed back-first into the cold waters of San Pedro Bay.

"Kuso," she whispered beneath the waves, the bubbles from her muttered curse floating upwards. Yukiko imagined she could hear the fire giant's roar beyond the waves. He was probably brandishing that lead pipe still, leaving a trail of burnt wood and dripping molten metal on the docks as he stalked and bellowed about the sons of Muspel. She had assumed it was too heavy to strike with any sort of speed. Her crushed ribs and the aching warmth spreading in her chest were the fruits of that assumption.

Yukiko rolled — or perhaps drifted — to face the blackness below. The blood was flowing freely from her mouth. She heard the sharp rapport of gunfire above and behind her, muffled through the water. Donnie Rhodes battling against her assailant, but that was another thought she needed to put out of her mind.

Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi, the Grass-Cutting Sword, slipped out of her grasp and plunged toward the ocean floor. She did not have the strength to catch it; instead,

she watched it slicing easily through the ocean water. It had been lost at sea before, but they were a very long way from Japan. She imagined it turning along the ocean floor over the course of long months and years, far from Amaterasu-ōmikami's light. She imagined it washing ashore, not in Yokosuka where the waters were cold and the coarse beach crunched beneath your feet, but in Okinawa, where the sand was white and soft. She imagined the Shintō priests wrapping it in silks and lifting it gingerly from the surf. She imagined it being presented to the emperor upon his ascension. Yukiko imagined the sword being privately mentioned to her mother.

"Sansei," the children outside the base called her. Three generations from Japan, though her mother was native to Okinawa. Her father was born in America, nisei, and had worn the naval uniform of his homeland. She didn't know how her parents met, and had never truly asked. Yukiko's father had been a man who didn't care that an unmarried woman had been driven out of her village by her traditionalist family, or even that she carried the child of another man who'd loved her for a week and left forever. He only knew that the too-proud hostess he met at Navy Restaurant Yokosuka was the most wonderful woman he'd ever met, and he wanted to be the light in her life. Yukiko's earliest memories of her father were of a handsome man smiling and kissing her mother, of him bouncing her happily on his knee and promising brothers and sisters.

Her father was in their family home still, sitting on the mantle, lacquered chopsticks within an empty funeral urn to commemorate a man lost at sea. The



pension was little comfort. Yukiko's childhood was a series of silent weekend afternoons and Japanese language lessons on weekday nights, of sorrowful silences at the dinner table. Her mother carried the grief of two lost loves like a sack of rice on her shoulders, and she stooped under the weight.

The children off-base were the worst. They were free to indulge in the customs of America, eating hamburgers and curry while she ate pickled vegetables and slivers of grilled fish. They were free to laugh and giggle with one another, but she was met with chilly silences and laughter that was cruel, not kind. Yukiko's mother never noticed when she came home with bruises or muddled clothes or torn schoolbooks. The older woman went to work, came home, cooked dinner, and ensured her daughter was attending Japanese lessons. Then she would retire to bed, and Yukiko would be left with household chores. When Yukiko's mother smiled, it was for American sailors, and it never reached her eyes.

One day, Yukiko noticed she'd grown taller than her mother. That day, she summoned her courage, and spoke long-hidden feelings aloud.

"Mother, I am sorry." Once she started, she could not stop. "I am sorry I remind you of what you lost. I am sorry I am a failure at school. I am sorry I am too much like my father with too little Japanese in me." That was a phrase from the girls at school, and it must have hurt her mother as much as it hurt Yukiko, for she had never seen the older woman's jaw drop quite so. Even so, she had to finish. "I am sorry," she choked, "That I cannot be a daughter you are proud of."

Silence. After an eternity, her mother spoke. "Yuki-chan," she said, cupping her daughter's face with a gentle hand, but only for a moment. She reached over, flicked on the stove, and moved the kettle on to boil. "Never apologize for what the world does to you. Only apologize for what you fail to give back."

"Mother?" Yukiko had never heard her speak about anything other than base practicalities. "What do you mean?" she asked.

Her mother took a deep breath as the steam began to spout, and poured warm water on a cloth. Yukiko felt the heat of the cloth as her mother gingerly wiped her daughter's face, felt the gentle strength in her hand as she stilled Yukiko's attempt to shy away from cloth and cleanliness. Her mother rubbed water over her hands, then returned the kettle to the stove.

"I mean that our thoughts, our feelings, our actions, disturb the world around us." Something had changed in her mother's voice as the woman gestured around the room. "You know this, right? Shintō? Kids talk about it, you learn it in school, right?"

She did not. Most kids didn't talk to her, and if they did, they didn't talk about Shintō. "Is this about the Buddha?" she asked. She knew about the Buddha, definitely.

"The Budd—" her mother started, and Yukiko shrank back from the sudden note of strength in her mother's voice. Her mother opened her hands and sank to her knees, lowering her voice and steeling her tone. Not with anger, Yukiko realized, but with pride. "No, this isn't about the Buddha. This is about the world, and everything in it, and you and you in it."

The kettle began to whistle. Her mother took it from the stove and poured two cups, whisking in some powder. The scent of matcha filled the air.

"This is the truth, Yuki-chan," her mother began, seating herself next to her but staring at something out the window Yukiko couldn't see. "Everything we do affects everything around us. To live only for one's self is to twist that. You must live for others, and for the world. You must keep your eyes open, observe all around you."

She paused for a moment. "My mother told me this story once: When the son of the Emperor took up the blade Kusanagi, taken by the God Susano-O from the tail of a great serpent, he found himself fighting a great warlord. The warlord's men set an entire field of grass

aflame to entrap him, but the prince did not charge in heedlessly. He stood back and watched the fire crawl along the field, then sliced every blade of grass off before it could catch fire. He swept the blade—" and here her mother stood and made great sweeping gestures so unlike her, much to her daughter's delight, "—to throw the flaming grass back at the warlord. He watched the world and saw it, rather than forcing himself upon it. You understand, right? He saw the kami."

"What is a kami?"

"The kami are in everything and within everything. They are in the air, in the sword, in the fire, in the grass," her mother said. There was strength in her voice. "They float between everything and they are in harmony, unless we disturb them. We cannot rule them, daughter, we can only see them and move between them."

Her mother looked at her, truly looked at her, and stood. Yukiko realized she wasn't taller than her mother after all. "You cannot force the girls at school to be kind to you, you cannot force your father to come home, you cannot force the world into what you want it to be. You can only see it and move within it, until you are where you want to be, not where they should be."

Yukiko thought back to this moment often over the years. She thought back to it when she learned to watch the other children, to learn their cliques and their fears and their anger, and how to avoid it or redirect it. And again when a professor at Kyodai took the same umbrage at her heritage that ignorant schoolchildren had. She thought back to it when she was grown, when she rode across Japan on a domestic motorcycle until she came to an Okinawan beach, and a smiling surfer with a giant board across his shoulders walked along the surface of the water to tell her a story of how he seduced her mother. She thought back to it when that great kami shrank back in surprise from the



fury her mother had given her, and asked her what gift he could give his daughter and a princess of Heaven as her birthright in recompense for a life of neglect. She thought back to it now, dying in some foreign ocean.

"See the world as it is, not as you want it to be. Look upon the kami with your own eyes. Now! Taste your tea and savor it for what it is."

Yukiko sipped her tea and pursed her lips at the taste. It wasn't very good at all. Her mother tapped her hand with something — a small packet of honey from the Naval commissary. Then the older woman smiled with her eyes for the first time in her daughter's memory. "Sometimes the world really needs a bit of adjusting," she admitted. "Sometimes we all do. I love you, Yukiko. And I am proud of you."

Yukiko opened her eyes to the kami within the depths and saw only her own face.

The blood in the water, her blood, shimmered bright gold in the span of her heart's beat. With a gesture she was one with the sea, and it raised her as easily as lifting her own hand. The surface of the water shattered as she rose, a pillar of might, higher than the giant and higher than the docks and higher than everything. Deeper, too, as she felt her sea touch the garbage-scattered ocean floor to find an imperial treasure. Kusanagi leaped upwards, breaking through the waterspout to rest in her hand. She saw the towers of the city of angels in the distance, shining white and brilliant as dragons made of lightning crawled across the sky, rising from the sprawl across the valley extending out to the mountains of The World.

Donnie whirled through the air, the great golden wings on his back beating furiously, the invention of someone named Daedalus. His twin pistols did nothing more than irritate the giant, and Yukiko thought she heard Eric Donner's name in the Greek Scion's shouted curses. Lambasting the other man for not dealing with his own monsters, she imagined.

No matter. Donnie knew, even if he pretended not to: The World was their duty.

The giant had set an entire section of the pier ablaze, a great black cloud crawling up through the sky. In truth, he wasn't all that tall, maybe eight or nine feet, but he carved a swath of fire and destruction. He waved and gestured at Donnie, not seeing the column of water until it slammed into his head.

The fire incited the water to a riot of steam. It rolled, thick and heavy and white, across the cold ocean and the docks. Yukiko whirled Kusanagi above her head and felt the ancient magic respond, snuffing out the smoking embers all around and fanning the steam, flames, and sand from the sea's floor into a column around the giant, thick and heavy. She flicked the sword up, touching a single pure white finger to the sky. The giant hovered a few feet off the docks, a massive shadow within.

Donnie landed beside her. "That's not going to hold him!" he shouted over the boom of distant thunder and the twin roar of giant and whirlwind.

"It doesn't have to!" Yukiko shouted back. "It's just got to exist."

"What?" Donnie asked. "What does that—"

Everything went white, the static setting Yukiko's hair on end, the noise deafening her. The reek of ozone filled the air, and Yukiko let the magic lapse, lest another lightning bolt come screaming down from the sky. The giant was still smoking, but he was lying face down in scattered specks of lightning-forged glass.

Donnie said something, then smacked his ear. Yukiko shook her head. He smiled instead, and the sun, her aunt, broke through the storm clouds.

She was her mother's daughter, and it would be a good day.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

Miss KT, for being on my lap while I worked, and for everyone who loved her on those long weekends.



REQUIRES THE
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INTRODUCTION

What are men?
Mortal gods.
What are gods?
Immortal men.
- Heraclitus

Escaping from Polyphemus's cave. Freeing the valkyrie from her fiery prison. Serving as a loa's steed. Slaying the ahuitzotl. Scribing the Papyrus of Ani. Darkening the river with Orochi's blood.

The Gods performed Deeds of great import and valor, which filtered into the epic folklore of humankind to inform cultures and create religions. Each tale is a memorable event; each carries within it one of the fundamental truths espoused by the cultures in question. Each tale shows the precarious relationship between Gods and mortals. You are the one who walks between mortal and immortal, between human and God. You are of both worlds. You are a Scion.

At the dawn of the legends, Scions are Heroes, humans who fight harder, love better, and live more fully than their fellows. Descendants of the Gods, Heroes are technically demigods, but not yet in the truest sense. They have received the Visitation from their parents, fully awakening them to the World of myth and divinity. The book you hold in your hands is the first step into this new World.

Some Heroes never go further. They touch lives and shape nations, but they age and die as mortals do. Some never want to go further, shedding their mortality in order to become something greater. They're content to remain human. That's their destiny, but it might not be yours. Find the destiny that is your own.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Scion: Hero is the companion book to **Scion: Origin**. This book contains 10 pantheons, powerful groupings of Gods from whom the Heroes may descend. **Scion: Hero** will allow you to make characters who have completely adopted their heritage and stepped fully into the World of myth.

THE PANTHEONS

The 10 pantheons featured in **Hero** are:

- **Æsir** — The Norse Gods of Scandinavia, an uneasy marriage of a separate warlike pantheon and an agricultural pantheon, both waiting for the final battle that will end the World;
- **Devá** — The Hindu and Vedic Gods of India, powerful and ancient beings who stand astride this World and many others;
- **Kami** — The Japanese Gods, concealing deep passions and fierce rivalries beneath calm faces and subtle movements;
- **Manitou** — The Native Gods of the Algonquian people, who have suffered much in the diaspora of their people but never lost their own sense of righteousness;

Scion is a game about gods and humanity, and everything in between. It's a game about mythic Deeds and the reasons why people talk about those mythic Deeds. It's also about modernity — the World today is a very different place than the anything our ancestors could've conceived.

Scion encompasses four core books — **Origin**, **Hero**, **Demigod**, and **God** — defining and expanding the setting and some of the primary pantheons or groups of Gods. They also detail the primary player-character type (Scions) climbing in power and Legend until they're Gods themselves. Despite the size, **Scion: Hero** isn't a complete game. It needs **Scion: Origin** to explain much of the core system, Storypath, that guides you in crafting stories for your Scions.

Hero details the Scions after the Visitation that introduces them to the divine World — they're exceptional humans, blessed with luck and skill or cursed with ill fortune and strange trials in their lives, armed with divine gifts and accompanied by strange beasts and powerful immortals. The book explains how to fully create Heroic Scions, and includes rules and information on the various denizens and Legendary creatures who match and equal them, as well as the foes who oppose them.



- **Netjer**— The Egyptian Gods, eternal yet mutable, watching over a people not truly their own any longer;
- **Òrìshà** — The Yoruban Gods, the African Gods who transformed themselves during the transatlantic slave trade, and also encompassing a sub-pantheon of Voudoun deities called the **Loa**;
- **Shén** — The Chinese Gods, a truly massive group of deities organized into a grand Celestial Bureaucracy;
- **Teōtl** — The Aztec Gods of the Mexica, who sacrifice greatly for their people and receive sacrifice in return;
- **Theoi** — The Greek and Roman Gods, noble lineages existing in one big (some would say *titanic*) family;
- **Tuatha Dé Danann** — The Irish Gods, fierce in their honor and passionate in their art, descendants of ancient divine refugees.

MEDIA

We particularly recommend the following as sources of inspiration for the content and tone of your **Scion: Hero** stories.

Vikings, by Michael Hirst

Vikings is inspired by the sagas of Viking Ragnar Lothbrok, one of the best-known legendary Norse heroes and a notorious raider of England and France. Plenty of characters, Ragnar included, claim descent from the Norse Gods, and the show even allows for some support of this idea. More importantly, many characters accept these claims at face value — and expect Ragnar and others to live up to their heritage. Due to this, it's a valuable example for Storyguides showing the expectations placed on Heroes by their community, and how the sacred and the profane seamlessly interact.

Mage: The Hero Discovered/Defined/Denied, by Matt Wagner

An allegory for the author's experiences in writing comics, *Mage* follows Kevin Matchstick, who discovers that he's the reincarnation of King Arthur. Along the way, he interacts with — and involves himself in — the stories of a dozen other reincarnated Heroes. *Mage's* themes and power levels match up pretty well with **Scion's**, and Kevin's goals provide a great map for Deeds...and failures.

Lucifer by Mike Carey

In a world of demons, faeries, angels, and worse, Lucifer Morningstar, First of the Fallen, runs a piano bar in L.A. The *Lucifer* comic series deals with the problem of free will and

the tyranny of having a divine father, and features appearances from a whole host of Gods (including representatives of the Norse and Japanese pantheons). The tone of the series rarely verges from seriously irreverent, though the power scales off **Hero** and straight into **Demigod** much of the time.

***The Incredible Hercules*, by Greg Pak and Fred Van Lente**

A comic wherein Hercules travels the Marvel universe alongside his sidekick, Amadeus Cho, the seventh smartest person in the world. They get involved in shenanigans throughout the Marvel universe, then moves on to dealing with rest of the Greek pantheon, and later that pantheon's dealings with other gods, and even alien gods. Notable for a very notable touch of the Rashomon Effect, where Hercules realizes that he doesn't actually remember his history, but that it doesn't actually matter —who he is now defines him. Ares comes to the same conclusion, but is a lot sadder and angrier about it.

The Mahabharata

The Mahabharata is a work of epic poetry of the Vedic/Hindu religion, but has some great English prose translations and applies a great deal to Scion. Empires rising and

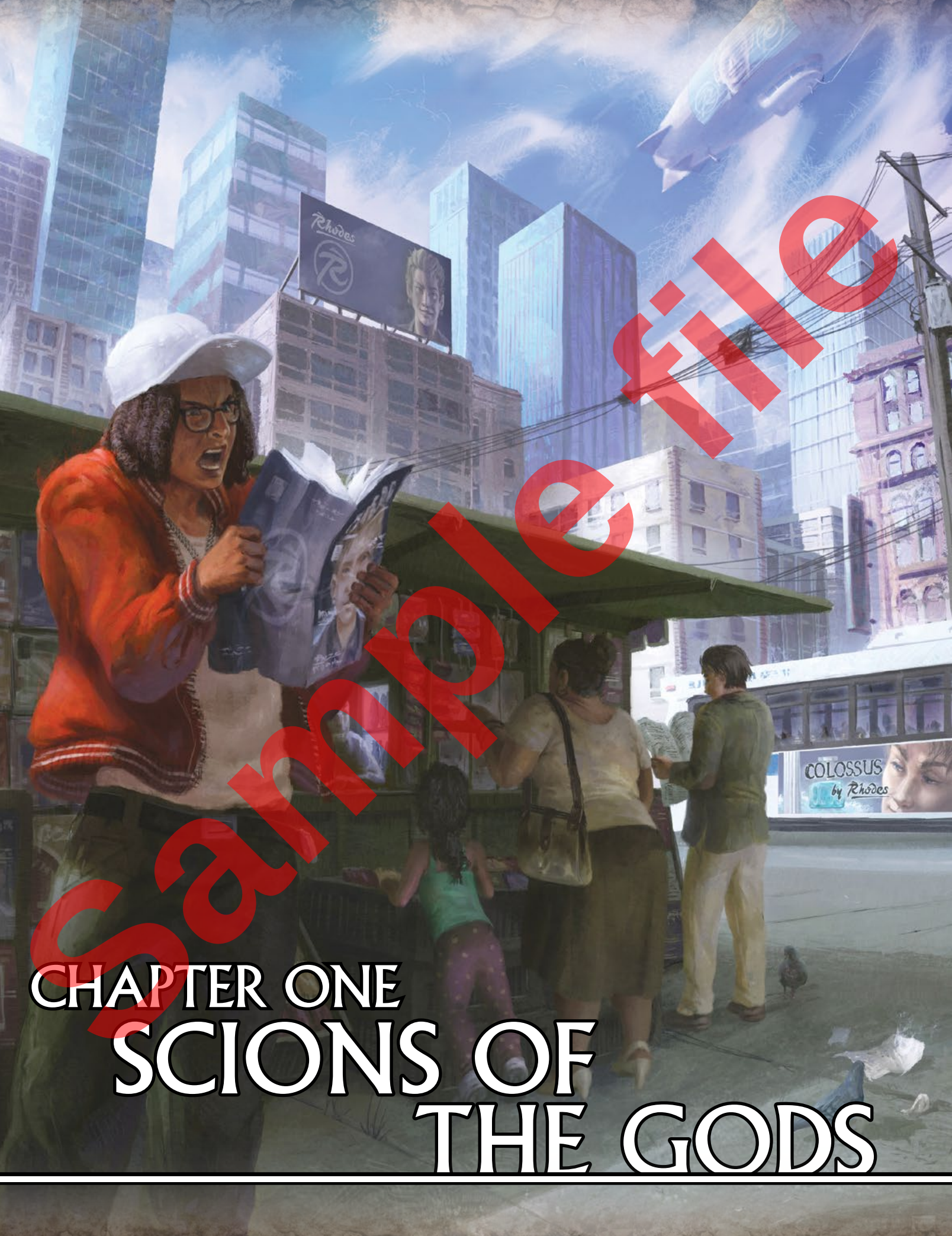
falling, high action, revenge, the children of Gods warring for primacy, relic weaponry that allows demigods to channel divine power, and miracles. It's pretty great.

***Mythender*, by Ryan Macklin**

Mythender is a roleplaying adventure game about stabbing gods in the face and killing Mythic creatures... while trying not to become them, for the power that allows you to slay them is the same power that fuels their Myth. Perhaps not entirely in Scion's milieu — in fact, it's somewhat antithetical — Mythender nonetheless has several powers and traits (like Heart, Past, and Fate) that map fairly well to Scion. The game's adventure structure also makes for a good, if antagonistic, Scion season.

***Godbound*, by Sine Nomine Publishing**

Another RPG in the OSR (Old School Revival or Old School Renaissance) vein, Godbound takes place in a fantasy realm where the gods have perished and heroes have risen with splinters of divinity to take their place. The simplicity of use and the nature of their Gifts can easily be seen as Knacks or Boons in Scion (and vice-versa). Godbound also features an excellent plot-generation system that can function alongside Scion's.



CHAPTER ONE
SCIONS OF
THE GODS