Hello, my name is Kitabasaki Chikafusu!
Welcome to my Kitabasaki Dragonland!

The Beginner's Guide to Kitabasaki Dragonland
a park by Coaster Ed

The park itself has two themes. I never fully committed to either one of them so there's a weird kind of power struggle going on between them. The first theme idea was to make a park themed around a Chinese dragon festival. The second idea was to build a Japanese garden and add attractions into it. Since both themes incorporate a lot of the same cultural traditions and both provide the context for the expression of Buddhist and Taoist spiritual concepts, I thought I could fit them together. It's actually become an essential part of the park--this dual nature. There's a quiet sense of unease; that elements which don't really fit together have been fit together. There's an inherent imbalance. But rather than settle those contradictions, it's more truthful I think to let them exist. I didn't want to polarize the experience into a carefully crafted and all-inclusive theme. That would be like a traditional European garden with rows of neatly trimmed flowers and topiaries. This was to have the spirit of the Japanese garden; carefully arranged, to be sure, but not to look cultivated--to look natural. Life is contradiction; life is both balance and imbalance. And this weird imbalance has become the essence of what is Kitabasaki Dragonland.

The main attractions --

1] Year of the Dragon - This was to be a traditional hypercoaster with a loop in it somewhere that would be tucked into the cliffs and have a tunnel on one of the camel hump stretches which is themed to look like a Chinese dragon. As I built the coaster, however, it turned into something much different. It's hard to do much with an out and back layout. I can't go all the way with that concept because I think it's ridiculously simple and uninteresting. So I started adding some twists and turns until eventually it became a crazy twisted hypercoaster with one out and back portion on it. It probably would have looked better if I just had the one dragon tunnel. I thought I could make them kind of intertwine a bit, but it ended up looking too messy so I eventually deleted all of the arms and legs and just left the tunnel portions. The loop is still there, and grew into two loops. Because the loop now goes around the track, there was no way to hide it into the cliffs like I wanted to. You've seen that before in Cajamarca 1532 anyway.

The other key idea for the ride was that the lift hill would climb out of the top of the cliff. I did this mainly because I hate huge lifthills. That's reason number two why I don't build hyper coasters. Lifthills are boring, there's no way around that. So if I were going to have a hypercoaster, I wanted one without the huge ugly lifthill. Solution? Put half of it inside the cliff and boosters on the other half. The lifthill needed something else though, so I put a little tunnel on it. And in playing around with making the tunnel a little more interesting, I unexpectedly turned it into a Chinese finger trap which the ride has to accelerate to escape! Now theme and ride are working together. Not to mention the finger trap is a perfect example of Taoist wisdom. Force applied against the trap only makes it worse. When you struggle against life, you make life a struggle. But when you release the force, the trap is removed easily. This is also a weird example of a key concept becoming apparent to me only after I built it. Sometimes life is very mysterious and coincidental in that way. The park sort of came to life in a way and started dictating to me what should come next. I call that complete unity of theme, because if I'd ever forced anything in there which didn't belong, it never would have come together in such a way as to suggest to me new theming ideas like that which completely fit the underlying theme without me even realizing it.

Although the ride station is attached to the cliff face, there's no traditional ride station building there. The entire Kitabasaki Castle functions as the entrance to the ride, with the queue line stretching around the winding end portion. The setting for the ride is also essential. It's on the lowest portion of the map surrounded by cliffs. The entire layout is visible either from the queue area buildings, the balconies of the castle, the top of Koshinji Temple, or the top of windy peak (which is essentially one big viewing platform). I wanted the whole park to work as an experience for the guests so I really thought a lot about what things would look like in 3D. I built this park with the intention of one day enjoying it in RCTgl. And if you have that program, I recommend looking at this park that way too even though the program is far from finished.

2] Totomo Dragonboat Race - This isn't really a racing coaster or a dueling coaster but it is kindof both. The main concept of this ride is the cycle of life. The two tracks are named for the two balancing forces of Yin and Yang. The two are opposite forces, but they work together. Each relies on the other. The ride itself is supposed to be a traditional Dragonboat race. The guests board a boat and grab a paddle and the ride starts out with a race in Kamakura Harbor. Once the boats pass through the main gate they have to each pass through the other two gates before racing to the bridge.

But that's only the beginning. From there things go off the tracks a bit and it turns into a Liquid Coaster adventure through the surrounding landscape which

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is supposed to illuminate for the riders the journey of life. The rides start off from the same place and ascend upwards through the years of childhood, as encultured ambition carries them along pretty much the same path. But each of them turns off that path at different places. From there they go on very different journeys, sometimes crossing paths, but then eventually returning to the same place. But as different as their journeys may be, if you look past the surface you see that they are basically the same journey. The twists are a little different, the experiences are different, but both follow the ebb and flow of life

through its ups and downs. The cycle of life is also paralleled (as it is in traditional Japanese gardens) by the cycle of water. Water flows down from the mountains in rocky streams, collecting into rivers, and then flowing out into the ocean. The waterfalls are turbulent periods where a person passes into maturity, leaving the formative rocky mountain streams of youth and entering the slow meandering river of middle age.

The rides are connected together, but not in the traditional dueling way. There is no aggression involved, only peace and enlightenment. As one boat plows down another waterfall, one of the turbulent transition stages of life, the other crosses a bridge over the rivers mouth marking a transition of a different kind, to a later more mature stage of the life cycle. Bridges and waterfalls are symbolically significant and watching how the two interact throughout the ride is supposed to further illuminate the idea that our journeys are very different, but also the same. We all experience the same kinds of transitions, though we experience them at different times. You have to watch both boats simultaneously to understand the whole picture. This why the boats are named Yin and Yang -- two equally important parts of the whole.

I knew the park was going to need a Dragonboat ride, to celebrate the Dragonboat festival, and it would also bring the necessary balance to the rollercoaster Year of the Dragon. Balance is everything. Balance is a key concept in the Taoist understanding of life. And so I arranged them in opposite corners of the map. I decided that the ride would start off very simply with a race and then have the ride unexpectedly turn into something else. This is because ceremony isn't merely empty ritual; it's supposed to remind us what is really important. It's also personally significant because the race stages mirrors "Sandstorm Rally" in concept, starting off where I've gone before, and then turns it into something else. Something much more significant. And since this whole park is an idealized combination of Japanese garden and theme park, my own kind of personal nirvana, I wanted each of the rides to be an experience for the riders with underlying meaning hidden in the form which would hopefully be apparent to the more perceptive riders. It's just a fun ride for most people, but for those willing to look deeper, it's

something more. An expression of life itself, intended to leave them in a state of contemplation as they disembark.

3] Battle at Koshinji Temple - Once I built Year of the Dragon and the entry walkways, I knew there was going to be a castle in the middle and the boat ride in the opposite corner. So that left a prominent place on the cliff on the bottom edge of the map. I didn't want to fill it in with more trees, I didn't want any undisciplined filler on the map for fear I would ruin the spirit of it, and almost immediately the idea came to me to put in a ghost train darkride there. I'd already named the steps leading down from Windy Peak 'Monastery Steps' with some vague idea that they reminded me of some remote Buddhist monastery which would make you walk up 1000 steps every day to appreciate the long journey of life and how each step brings you a little closer to the impossible goal.

This is a new kind of 'chase ride' concept I had where there would be two cars interacting together in a more complex way than simply a train. In some places the front car pulls away and in other places the rear car catches up. I originally had planned to have the front car facing backwards as well, but I decided not to do that on this ride because the rooftop jump didn't make much sense going backwards. It also would have complicated the hacking quite a bit and I ran out of time to try it out. The basic concept of the ride is a swordfight at this remote monastery. The building itself is modeled after an actual monastery, with the tiered steps going up the front and the flat meditation platform on the top. There's a traditional rock garden at the back end of the ride which is the setting for a chase scene. There are a lot of scenery touches throughout the park which were inspired by the swordfighting game 'Bushido Blade'. The Cherry Blossom Grove, Bamboo Thicket, and Windy Peak are all inspired by locations in that game. Another thing I like about that game is how all the locations connect together so a single fight can continue across all of them. So in the ride, I used that concept to have the fight carry on throughout different parts of the temple grounds. There's a big jump onto a rooftop where the trains accelerate first so they have enough speed to jump the gap. And then they land on the rooftop. I like the idea of fighting on the top of a rooftop. I also like the idea of a swordfight out on a rickety scaffold overlooking the Year of the Dragon coaster. There's a sign hidden on the back part of the building just before the front train slows down at the breaks where the attacker calls out and taunts the defender.

So a simple way to fill up a cliffside turned into a fairly unique and interesting premier attraction of its own. Once I knew what I wanted to do, it took me some time to figure out

the logistics. I needed two rides of course so that the trains would interact together (or seem to) and the actual track couldn't have a station building or there would be an error trapper. So after merging in two other tracks (which had to be steel coasters to take advantage of the boosters on the invisible track jump) I eventually worked out the timing precisely (I had to launch each of the cars individually so they would be spaced out correctly). The cars you see were my first successful test-run and I had planned to go back and finesse them a bit, but I also ran out of time even for that. Unfortunately, because the ride technically never returns to its own station, there are not any ride stats to go off of.

4] Black Powder - The fireworks flat ride was always a key feature in my plan for the park. Naturally there would be fireworks to celebrate the dragon festival, and I wanted to celebrate the invention of black powder as a key contribution of Chinese culture. This is more sculpture than ride in its current form, though there was going to be more to it. Explosions wouldn't work because they only happen once and then they're done. I wanted an effect that would renew itself. So the plan was to use invisible track to create some explosion effects circling the ride. Another idea I simply ran out of time for, and the one I really regret because this ride is unfinished without it. There also needs to be smoke effects which I didn't have time to add either.

The ride itself was a compromise because I could never get my initial idea for a custom vertical drop ride working properly. This version is actually pretty boring. It couldn't go too fast at the top or it would become insanely intense at the bottom. The ride stats you see are the real ride stats, I didn't cheat them. I did like how the stations stretch out into the park and that kick started a theming idea for a colorful Dragon festival celebration surrounding the fireworks.

I've been playing around with the idea of constructing a building from the ground up using blocks in LL since Blood Island, and I finally got a chance to do it here. I'm quite happy with the results. The little opening with the dragon in it evolved in steps. I left some openings in the wall because I wanted more depth. I'd already been playing around with different ride modes trying to get some spinning gears on top of the chairlift ride (never successfully) so I knew I could make an invisible ride here and have it move around a little bit. Animated scenery is another big idea I've been developing for awhile that I finally had the resources to pull off thanks to darkfire's new codex trainer. So I was going to put something in that little cave and a baby dragon seemed like the most natural idea. And then the whole thing really came together. Black powder storage house + baby red dragon living in a hole inside it = large fireworks explosion ride. The updated version of the park explains this concept better. Because I was in such a rush I wasn't able to add my usual finishing touches like the custom messages which explain parts of the park.

5] Transport Rides - Because I decided to make this an actual park, and not just a theming concept like my last RCT parks have been, I actually had to think about things like path layout and transportation rides again. There were two main problems with the path layout. The first was in the bottom corner, and the second was the dead end where the dragonboat ride is.

The peninsulas in the bottom right interlock together like a giant yin-yang sign and dead end with special ceremony sites: the temple and Tai-Chi training ground on the East side and the Tea House housing regular tea ceremonies on the West side. Both spots provide a great view of the river and surrounding landscape and I didn't want to mess that up by connecting the two of them. My solution was a boat ride that would connect the two. This turned into my first real challenge with the codex trainer: How to place a boat hire station inside of a cliff-face. The answer is that it is possible, though you have to be very careful that each end of the ride is still in open water or you'll get an error message. The boat hire stations are functional, but I wanted the ride layout on a track so it would actually connect the two peninsulas. One of my favorite subtle touches in the whole park is that first land bridge the boat ride cuts through. Once I made that, I knew the park was going to be a success no matter what else I did (or didn't) put on there.

I left the whole top corner open for the Totomo Dragonboat race ride, which I knew was going to take up a lot of space. And then when I built it, it took up even more space than I expected. I had a heck of a time trying to fit walkways in there. But then I realized how much of a pain it would be to get all the way over there. I liked how you enter the area over the same bridge that marks the finish line of the race portion and I liked the entrance


area how it was so I didn't really want to put another bridge in there and mess up the whole flow of the map. So instead I decided to work in a chairlift ride. And my crazy idea that you can build an entire LL park from the ground up using ride pieces as theming (not just sculptures but actual theming) that I started with Blood Island led to some of my favorite innovations on this ride. I was never able to put spinning gears on top like I wanted to, but I was able to adorn the lift track with a custom chain and gear houses which are dressed in clinging shrubbery. The 1/4 tile stacking really makes a huge difference here because you can place things precisely where they look the best, not just approximate.

Because I constructed Dragonland as my ideal theme park, I didn't want to clutter it up with food stalls and shops (I hate overpriced crappy theme park food and I never buy anything at a theme park and don't see the point). I decided I would instead follow the model of the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii and populate the park with a variety of special shows as featured attractions. If you explore the park you'll find the spots for each of the shows, which highlight important cultural elements. If I were visiting a theme park that also happened to be a Japanese garden, these are the kinds of things I would want to see there. Here's a list:
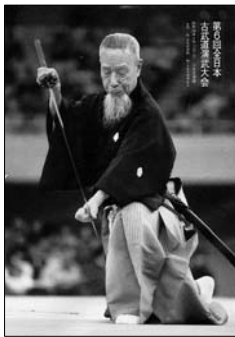
1] Tai Chi lessons at the temple overlook spot on the East peninsula.
2] Tea Ceremonies at the Tea House located on the West peninsula.
3] Iaido Swordfighting competitions in the bamboo thicket. (lessons also available)
4] Taiko Drum shows at the Totomo Palace front platform.
5] Guided meditation on the roof of Koshinji Temple.
6] Dragon parades in the Imperial Dragon Festival area next to Black Powder.

If the park looks bare and uninteresting at first, this is probably why. There needed to be some open space to allow for these attractions and because I consider all those empty spaces (the shows that would be there) as key attractions too, I didn't see any need to fill in more of the map with random buildings. You should be able to lose yourself in the park's walkways and trees without having to look at ugly buildings everywhere. All of these shows would be like a special surprise you only discover as you wander through the park. Like you saw in Erwindale Forest, I'm attracted to natural landscapes so my theme parks have gradually become less and less like theme parks and more like botanical gardens. The addition of special shows continues that trend and takes it one step further.

The theme --

Dragonland is first and foremost a celebration of East Asian culture. I never decided to make it a Japanese theme or a Chinese theme, nor did I choose to favor one or the other. Some of the concepts for the Dragonboat race theme came from Korean culture as well. I just wanted impressions of ideas from the whole collective culture. So I decided to make ancestor shrines, to celebrate early Japanese spirituality, but then I named them after Chinese zodiac signs. The castle and the gates are definitely Japanese, but the monastery was inspired by a Chinese monastery. The dragon festival concept comes from Chinese culture and all the dragon sculptures are definitely in the Chinese style. Part of the reason for this mixing of cultures is that Taoism works its way into basically

everything I make and that started out in China but can be found extensively in all East Asian cultures. The Japanese garden is a Zen Buddhist tradition, which is a combination of Taoism and Buddhism which also reached Japan through China.

One of the primary concepts in traditional Japanese art is 'yugen' which means something like the beauty of old and broken things. The way objects slowly decay and become reclaimed by the earth. A rusty old bicycle sitting in a forgotten alley with vines crawling all over it would be a good example. Or a rock wall covered in moss with a few loose stones that have tumbled out. It's why you'll find an old rusty gate on the path in front of a tea house or a rotting wooden wheel seemingly cast aside in a visible area. Those are not mistakes, they are carefully placed there to engender the spirit of yugen. That's a concept I try to utilize in all of my parks. I did it a little bit here with the shaky scaffold section and the ancient cable lift system which has been reclaimed by crawling vines. I didn't really get to show it off enough in this park because I placed most of the trees and bushes in a rush, but you can still find it if you're looking for it. If things look random, they probably aren't. They're placed quite specifically to look that way. People often accuse me of making messy looking parks though they don't look messy to me. They look alive. And I mean alive here in the unrestrained sense of a wild animal free to do as it pleases. The overly cultivated look seems dead to me. I like my parks untamed.

Key hacks and features --

I shy away from directing people too much to notice hacks because I think it's more fun if people discover them on their own. There are so many cool little details on this map though which I'm afraid nobody will notice if I don't point them out, so I figured I would at least try to include a partial list.

Ride supports - I use single-rail suspended track a lot to make sculptures or architecture on this map. It's probably my signature style actually. The main hassle with using ride pieces in your theming has always been finding ways to remove the supports. I made this extra challenging for myself by trying to actually use the supports themselves as theming. You can see this particularly on the harbor and castle gates, the buildings around the Year of the Dragon queue, and the crane at the Kamakura docks. The codex trainer offers a simple solution to this problem, though it still takes a bit of effort. You can construct any coaster piece underground and then use the trainer to raise it above ground and the supports will be gone. This was possible

without the trainer; the difference is that you can now do it without removing the supports for everything else too. And if you look at the buildings, I manipulated the supports a lot, not just the tracks, to get the look I wanted.

Another old style trick is using chairlifts to remove supports. This works really well for anything over the water because you can simply hide the chairlifts underwater. Thanks to the codex trainer, you can now hide the chairlift track underground too without losing the ability to manipulate the land.

Bushes on the water - As far as I know this has never been done in RCT before. The game wouldn't allow you to place bushes on the water. There's a trick to this though. You still can't raise the water if there are bushes on the square, so building bushes and stacking them won't work. Instead, you have to slant the land so you can put half a square of water there. Then you can place bushes on the other half of the square, and use the codex trainer to sink the land which will convert the other half of the square to water. This could probably also be done with the cloning feature, though I haven't tried that yet with 1/4 tile objects so I can't say for sure.

Hacked paths – The path hack was one of the first things I did when I started using the codex and it became part of the look for the park. Unfortunately that meant devoting a fair amount of time to one more aspect of the parkmaking which is normally as easy as clicking the mouse a few times. This did have a few fortunate side effects, however. When you raise a path and then delete it, the connection remains – which means staff members and peeps don't detect the edge of the path. They can wander off into the wilderness where the path used to be. Now you can have panda bears in a forest without having to put lame blocks of path in there. It seems like a little thing, but the important thing (for me) is that it's something new. It also means they can appear to jump up or down cliffs – which is why I added the little gag about Kitabasaki Chikafusu's 'special powers'. I had also planned to put in a Buddhist monk with the ability to levitate, which is a different but related hack. Maybe you can figure that one out on your own.

¼ tile stacking – This is bread and butter for the codex trainer, and it turns an obscure hack, previously only used by code hackers like Adix and WME, into something anyone can do. It's as easy as stacking in RCT2--maybe even easier because you don't have to worry about that damned perspective shift. And it's so incredibly powerful. Look at the Black Powder storehouse, the Cherry Blossom Grove, the trees which are no longer buried by flowers. Very few people would notice this if I didn't point it out to them, but at least 30% of the trees on this map have been raised a couple of levels to make them more visible. You can create clumps of connecting vines which don't look like they're

held together by "the force". You can place golf stations ¼ space below the path so it doesn't mess it up like the tents in the bazaar area. You can lower fences halfway into the ground around the edge of buildings. You can raise objects ¼ tile off the path so they don't glitch into it. Most of the sculptures on this map would be impossible without the ability to raise objects by ¼ tile increments. Oh the Beast could do it, but you'd have to spend a month with it to get everything in the right place through trial and error. Now all you need are a good pair of eyes.

Land manipulation – Place an object on the ground, stack it, and then edit the ground underneath it. Impossible? Not anymore. And this is probably the most subtle hack in the world, the kind of thing you could easily spend hours using without anyone ever noticing – but it really does matter. And if you use it for yourself you'll see why. I can't tell you which tiles were edited in this way, but it was a lot of them. Here's one small example: look at the steps at the entrance of the Koshinji Temple ride. See how the raft rides have land on the side of them? Remember how you could only build certain objects on flat surfaces before? Problem solved. And I bet you can already think of even more ways to use this to accomplish things you've always wanted to do but couldn't.

Queue lines hacked through golf station buildings – I did this on my updated version of Aquatica (which no one has seen yet--it's not done) so I knew it was possible. I also knew it was probably the single hardest hack I'd ever done, especially when you divide the amount of effort expended by the actual visual impact in the finished park. You probably would pass over this like it was nothing but try it yourself. It's fucking hard. I somehow managed to do it for a whole queue line in this park before darkfire released his codex trainer. Now you can probably just build the queue line then lower the ride station buildings onto it ¼ tile at a time. This stands as a lasting reminder of the Beast trainer in all its (outdated) glory. I love you Beast, you served me well, but your time has come.

Jumping frogs and koi – Look for jumping water spouts in some of the small ponds around Year of the Dragon.

Tall juniper bushes – My grandparent's house when I was growing up had these huge juniper bushes in the backyard. Well actually, they were probably about the same scale as the ones in the game, but because I was so small they seemed much, much bigger. The ones in the game have always felt wrong to me because of this, too short, so I took advantage of the codex's stacking abilities to finally make tall juniper bushes and I featured them heavily in this park.

Hacked coaster tracks – Notice how there are flume drops on the liquid coaster which actually splash? That's not a merge; it's a special codex only hack where you lower one track onto another so that it covers it up without merging with it. The same thing (done in reverse) is how I added the chain lift onto the chairlift track.

Invisible rides with no station buildings – As far as I know this is another feature which is unique to the codex trainer. Replace station buildings with path and then delete them. The ride still works. Now you can place animated scenery anywhere on the map without having to worry about hiding the station buildings. Just hope that things don't break down.

There's very little that RCT2 can do now which LL can't, aside from custom scenery of course--which makes it all the more frustrating to lose a H2H match not because LL doesn't measure up to RCT2, but because not enough people actually have the means to look at LL parks anymore.

Dedication --

This park is dedicated to darkfire, for all his hard working programming the codex trainer which is going to change RCT forever. A lot of the ideas on this map came to me as I was learning how to use it. This should be bigger than the Beast trainer. It's really incredible. I hope more people are trying this out.