

Breaking Thunder, Broken Thunder

**A One-Round Mid-Rank Adventure for
Heroes of Rokugan: The Nightmare War
Month of the Hantei, 1304 (Early Summer)**

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The search for the source of the nightmare storm begins at history's dawning – and its end.

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This module is written for the Legend of the Five Rings: Fourth Edition, published by Alderac Entertainment.

Credit Where Credit is Due: Significant portions of this module take place within a setting and use characters originally created by Rich Wulf in his *Rokugan 2000* series of web fictions, available at <http://www.kazenoshiro.com/kazenoshiro/Rokugan2000/15r2k/15r2k.html>. Hey Rich, if you're reading this, thanks for the awesome story, and it's still not too late to finish it!

GM's Information

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing this game. The actual playing time should be about three and a half hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, gender, glory and status at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in ***bold italics***. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters. All bulleted information is just that, pure information. Feed it to the players through an NPC when appropriate, as sometimes reading it straight just doesn't sound right.

Players will have Module Tracking Sheets that need to be filled out at the end of the game, which is to keep track of certain circumstances and events for future GM's to create a better roleplaying experience for the player. Important information to be included in the game will be listed at the beginning of the module, and information that needs to be recorded will be listed at the end of the module. Please fill out the GM tracking sheet attached to the end of this module and return it to the Campaign Coordinator. If you need an electronic version of the form, please contact the Campaign Administrator or Campaign Coordinator (e-mail addresses are available on the website).

Rokugan has a complex and rich culture that is different in many ways from modern Western civilization. The Legend of the Five Rings book details these numerous differences, but it is suggested that GMs keep a few specifics in mind.

- Family name preceds personal name for all characters; Akodo Toturi was a member of the Akodo family with the personal name of Toturi.
- Samurai do not commonly concern themselves with money or commerce; exchanges between samurai are treated as gifts, and payments are made to peasants as though humoring the lower orders petty ways.
- An event is not truly considered to have happened without samurai witness; even criminal investigations rely entirely upon eyewitness testimony.

Some events that occur within this module affect the storyline and may need to be reported by the Campaign Administrators. This module has an effective 'active' period which is 3 months after its release, and these events (listed at the end of the module) **MUST** be reported by the GM to the campaign administration before the end of the active period for them to take effect.

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

This adventure contains suggested Glory and Honor awards (and penalties) for dealing with the challenges presented herein. However, at times the players may take extra actions which the GM judges worthy of additional reward or punishment. **Please consult the Honor table on page 91 and the Glory table on page 93** of the Legend of the Five Rings Fourth Edition core sourcebook for more specific guidelines for Honor and Glory gains and losses. Specifically, be mindful of the performing PC's current Honor, Glory, and Infamy when meting out rewards and punishments.

Reminder

This module is intended for entertainment purposes; this means that the goal is to provide an enjoyable playing experience for the players. The events of the module should be challenging, so as to ensure the players have a sense of accomplishment, but the mechanics presented here are, ultimately, guidelines. If adjustments are necessary to adapt to the specific group of players, it is suggested that care should be taken to ensure the player characters do have a reasonable chance of achieving their goals (or at least of achieving an entertaining failure). Remember that the GM has the

final word at the table, and use that power with both discretion and consideration.

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a Mid-Rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank Three.

Although most of the challenges here are role-play oriented and thus not terribly dependent on party strength, a few changes can be made to adjust the adventure difficulty for low-end and high-end parties, as follows:

Low End Party (most/all characters Rank Two): The TN for the Battle roll when fighting against the Shadowlands army is 15, and PCs gain a Void Point instead of a Free Raise for every 5 points by which the TN is exceeded; spending these Void Points does not count against any per-turn limits for Void. (The consequences for failing the roll remain the same.) There is only one ogre.

Pekkle rolls 8k4 for her unarmed strike damage. Reduce all the TNs to redeem Jack by 5.

High End Party (most/all characters Rank Four): The TN for the Battle roll when fighting against the Shadowlands army is 25. The ogres are ogre bushi who wear light armor (Armor TN 30, Reduction 13), have an attack roll of 8k5 and can make club attacks as Simple Actions.

There are two Pekkses.

Adventure Summary and Background

After being brought the home world of the Owl Clan, Kitsuki Ryoushi has turned her attention to studying the nightmare storm. Her research identifies several nexuses in Rokugan's history which seem to act as pivot points for the whole flow of time through Yume-do; she speculates these nexuses – the Days of Thunder – are the most logical places to look for disruptions that could lead to the kind of corruption the Realm is facing. Ryoushi arranges for the PCs to visit two of these moments via Yume-do: the First Day of Thunder, at the Dawn of the Empire, and the Third, in the technological-industrial future of Rokugan's late 20th century. In both places, the PCs meet with Shinsei and experience part of the Days of Thunder, aiding those Rokugans against the

Shadowlands, but ultimately determine that the disruption must lie elsewhere, or *elsewhen*.

GM's Note: Several times in this adventure, the Rokugani unit of distance called the "li" is used. The li is the standard Rokugani unit of long-distance measurement. It is 500 yards, or approximately a third of a mile.

Introduction

In the eight months since Kitsuki Ryoushi arrived at Shiro no Fukurou, the chaos of merging and collapsing Realm shards has become increasingly worse. Iweko VII has grown frustrated with the Owl's seeming lack of progress in resolving the problem of the nightmare storms, and Sezar's recent move into seclusion in the wake of his wife's vision of his death has left the other family daimyo scrambling to pick up the slack. Consequently, tensions in the Clan have never been higher. It is therefore a very welcome relief when Ryoushi announces that she has made a breakthrough in her research, and summons the PCs to aid her with it.

The floor of Shiro no Fukurou given over to Kitsuki Ryoushi's experiments has changed quite a bit since her arrival. The once-empty rooms have since been filled with objects of all shapes and sizes, mostly made of gleaming metal but others of substances many of you have no names for. The kagakusha assigned to Ryoushi's researches bustle between them, taking notes with charcoal styluses or speaking into small boxes carried in their hands as they study the larger contraptions intently. None give you more than a passing glance as you make your ways down the corridor, to the room Ryoushi has labeled her "war room" at the hall's end. It is a large space, originally offered to her as her private rooms, but she has opted for much humbler accommodations in order to use this room as her team's headquarters. A long, low table surrounded by cushions and covered in papers of all sizes dominates the room, and more papers are affixed haphazardly to the walls. When you enter, Ryoushi looks up at you from a position at the far end, where she has been having a conversation with Kobe and his advisor Hikaru. Kobe gestures for you to enter and be seated as Hikaru rises and bows.

"Kobe-dono greets you, samurai," Hikaru says smoothly. "He is pleased to inform you that Kitsuki Ryoushi-san has found a means to finally go on the offensive against the nightmare storm and learn its origins. You have been summoned to aid her in this task." Kobe nods once, then raises an eyebrow at Ryoushi.

"Ah, yes," the so-called "physicist" says. "Yes, that's correct. Well, strictly speaking, it's not the means itself but the resources to actually perform the experiments that's caused the delay. The theory just took a few weeks after I arrived here and got up to speed on the scope of the problem. It's been building the infrastructure to make it happen. We've had to import Crab steel and Lion copper, and we're actually using Shinomen tree resin for the plastics, if you can believe that! If I hadn't brought my extruder..."

Hikaru coughs slightly, and Ryoushi blushes. "Um, yes. Anyway, my team and I have come up with a first step," she goes on. "In my studies of parallel Realms back home, I had noted a series of what might be described as 'inflection points' along the fourth-dimensional superstrings of each discrete polydimensional condensate of the hyperfoam. The inflection points apparently correspond to a natural harmonic of the superstring, with a frequency of close to one thousand years, and they contain staggering amounts of probabilistic potentiality, compressed to the highest density visible on each superstring. In other words, every millennium or so, each polydimensional condensate – what you would call that 'dream' of Ningen-do – experiences a profound moment of possible change and upheaval. After consulting with several historians among the Sezar, I have come to believe these inflection points are the Days of Thunder."

Hikaru looks slightly stunned at the verbiage, but Kobe merely frowns slightly, seeming to consider the statement. After a few moments, Hikaru recovers his on and, after a swift glance at Kobe, murmurs, "Intriguing. But how does this help us deal with the nightmare storm?"

Ryoushi nods, "Of course, of course." She rises quickly and crosses to one corner of the room, where a metal cabinet has been placed. Inside, a set of racks holds a series of what look like metal spears, roughly as long as a man's leg. Each is tipped with a long narrow spike at one end, while the other flares out to the width of a palm. Small buttons adorn the blunt end, along with a green rectangular plate. Ryoushi pulls one of the devices from the cabinet and returns to the table, setting it in the middle for you to examine.

"The high level of compressed potentiality around each inflection point suggests that the highest probability of a disruption like the nightmare storm occurs around those points as well. Working with my team, I've developed a model for how Void kamiton decays should appear in a hyperdimensional locus adjacent to source

of the nightmare storm. Of course, basic subatomic theory tells us that, unlike other mediating particles such as kansenitons, Void kamitons can't be directly observed; however, our models suggest we should see a distinct preference for Void kamiton decay into Air kamitons paired with yumejitons in specific ratios. Naturally, you see where I'm going with this."

Kobe blinks. "Perhaps you could explain it to us anyway," Hikaru says, his tone deliberate.

"Well, this is a polyphasic kamiton particle detector," Ryoushi says, apparently confused by the need to state something so obvious. "With it, we can determine whether the particle decay in a given dream-Realm matches the predicted models and thus how close, in a metaphysical sense, it is to the source of the nightmare storm. Once we take readings in the appropriate hyperdimensional loci, we'll be able to say where and when the storm began." She pats the gleaming device on the table with a parental air. "It will be simple as can be. We just need to send them out with your team to the Days of Thunder."

Although sorting out the meaning from Ryoushi's jargon is not a simple task, the PCs should eventually come to understand that the spear-like device and its fellows can be used to "triangulate," in a sense, the approximate location and time in Yume-do where the nightmare storm first formed. Ryoushi believes that the best odds are to be found at one of the Days of Thunder, when the souls of seven reborn heroes battle the Champion of Jigoku for the fate of Ningen-do. The First Day of Thunder took place at the dawn of the Empire, just a few years after the Kami first fell to Ningen-do from the Heavens, while the Second Day of Thunder (in most Rokugans, anyway) happened in 1128 and led to the founding of the Toturi Dynasty. Ryoushi's history includes a Third Day of Thunder, in 2214, and it is said that several prophets of her time have spoken of a Fourth, sometime after 3122. (Characters who met Sezar Ryobei in the module "Walking Through Shadows" have likely heard a version of that conflict as well.) Her plan is to have the PCs use the ritual developed by Sezar and his wife Yanako for travel between dream-Shards to reach versions of the First and Third Days of Thunder, take suitable readings with her "polyphasic kamiton particle detector," and plan the next research from there.

Once the plan is clear and in the open, Kobe seems to find it satisfactory and commands the PCs, via Hikaru, to ready themselves for departure in the morning. The PCs are free to ask any questions they like, but making sense from Ryoushi's replies is no easy task.

- What will we find in these Realms we will be visiting? *Impossible to say. These Realm shards are broken superstrings floating on the hyperfoam – they do not link to any future or past beyond certain points. They may closely resemble the past or future we know, or they may be completely different.*
- Once we reach these Realms, what do we do there? *As soon as you arrive, press this button here; that will calibrate the detector to the locality. The detector will produce a set of readings; compare those readings to the ranges on this list, and enter the corresponding command for each range. That will link the detector to this communication unit, which will give you necessary directions. There is a three-dimensional locus in each Realm where the readings will be most effective; the comm unit will act as a compass to guide you, and if you have access to a map that shows the necessary locus, there's an installed function called 'knowtheland.wtr' that can place a projected marker on the map to make navigation easier. Once you reach the locus, plant the detector in the ground and push this button. It will take the necessary readings, this light will turn green, and you can remove the detector and use the comm unit to signal our shugenja to retrieve you.*
- Where will we begin? *Cascading probabilities indicate that the later one goes in history, the greater the chance for substantial deviation from expected norms. I recommend beginning with the First Day of Thunder, as odds are much higher that we can predict certain elements of what you will find relative to those odds for the Third Day. Perhaps your readings will indicate strong proximity on your first attempt, precluding the need for a venture of less certain nature.*

Activating the communications unit requires the efforts of a shugenja; if there are none among the PCs, Kobe assigns one from his family, a self-taught ronin named Kobe Bukijin, to accompany the PCs. Bukijin's statistics can be found in the Appendix.

The PCs may make whatever arrangements they wish in the evening before returning to Ryoushi's "war room" the next morning for the Realm-travel ritual. If any are interested in picking up hints about the events in Rokugan overall, they may listen for rumors around the castle. As usual, gossiping PCs should make a **Courtier (Gossip)** / **Awareness** roll, TN 10; a successful roll learns one rumor at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN.

Rumors

- War has broken out on the Plain of Fast Troubles; the ruins of Otosan Uchi have been replaced by a gleaming city of ivory and brass, and an army of gaijin claiming to serve "Jayimah, the Immortal Caliph," now holds the former Imperial Capital and the Hub Villages surrounding it. The Shogun, Matsu Ippei, has led the Imperial Legions against these heretics, but so far they have defended their territory with astonishing viciousness.
- Several smaller spiritual breaches have broken out all across Rokugan, plaguing the lands of every Great Clan to some extent. This has led to an odd mix of responses from the Great Clans toward the Owl, as some anxiously seek out Owl aid and advice while others angrily denounce the Minor Clan as failing its Imperial charge. Disturbingly, some whisper that Iweko himself is starting to come around to the latter perspective.
- Spider Clan Champion Daigotsu Rekai has announced the adoption of an heir, a bushi named Daigotsu Setai, and that she will be seeking to wed Setai to a daughter of one of the other Great Clans. Many are uncertain how to respond to this sudden overture from the Spider, with some believing it a sign that Rekai plans to act more aggressively in Rokugani courts and others suggesting that it might be an attempt at pursuing a course of assimilation. Only the Crab have issued a strong statement on the matter, with Crab Champion Hida Ogai condemning the move in terms almost worth going to war over. Of course, the territory of the Spider lies just across the lands of the Owl from the Crab...
- The Sukune has continued to struggle to shepherd his unusual followers through their interactions with the rest of Rokugan. Four times in the last six months, some misstep between a member of the Sukune family and a samurai outside the Owl has forced the Owl to issue public apologies on their "cousin's" behalf. Two weeks ago, Hanashi unilaterally decided to assign a member of her family to "escort" any Sukune who might be interacting with outside samurai to prevent any further friction; in Sezar's absence due to his seclusion, Hanashi took the action without Sezar's sanction, and this has raised tensions between the remaining family daimyo, especially Hanashi and The Sukune himself.

- Sezaru has not left his rooms in several weeks, and receives very few visitors. Since his wife Yanako foresaw his death, he has apparently been engaged in extended divinations and meditation in hopes of finding some clue as to the nature of the threat against him. The few yumemusha who have been allowed to speak with him say his eyes have become black pools, and he continually repeats the same phrases, as though speaking to himself: “There was a plan, I know there was a plan, but this can’t have been a part of it, could it?” Sezaru Yanako has been doing what she can to care for him, but the strain is apparently getting to her as well; the friendly, quiet intellectual who first appeared in the Owl lands a year ago has slowly become a harsh, short-tempered woman who jealously guards the privacy of herself and her husband.

Part One: A Beginning is a Very Delicate Time

The PCs return to Kitsuki Ryoushi’s war room shortly after dawn the next day. Ryoushi is there, of course, along with several shugenja assistants and Sezaru Yanako, the wife of the Owl Champion. The former Crab waits irritably for the PCs, doing a poor job of hiding her impatience. Ryoushi hands the highest-Status PC the particle detector, and the highest-Status shugenja (or Bukijin, if no PC has that role) the communications unit.

“We are honored that you have joined us,” Yanako says waspishly, smoothing her kimono over her legs where she sits at the edge of the ritual circle. “Your mission is vital to our Clan and its efforts against the nightmare incursions; it must be so, in fact, as I have been required to wait here to lead this ritual rather than tend to my husband and continue my research into the threat against him. Please, take your places at the circle’s edge – whenever you are ready, of course.”

The rite allowing passage to another Ningen-do elsewhere in the infinite Realms of Spirit unfolds as it has the other times the PCs have seen it, and soon the swirling whirlpool of silver appears in the floor in front of them. When the PCs jump in, they feel a heady rush of energy, like the invigorating thrill of a deep breath on a fresh spring day. In an instant, they drop out of the air and land together on a patch of grass in the midst of a massive military camp.

Your senses are assaulted by a rush of noise and color, the sounds, smells and sights of thousands upon

thousands of samurai preparing themselves for a battle march. The tents stretch away in all directions, orderly rows marking an army that literally stretches to the horizon. It would be a sight to take the breath away in any other context, but here, it is mere backdrop to a breathtaking scene.

The camp opens up right where you are standing to form an open air court, just in front of the largest and most elaborate of the tents in the army. A heavy wooden throne, carved with great skill, sits at the far end of the open space, and seated upon it is a strongly-built, commanding man with a short goatee and hair shaved back from each temple, so that only a narrow strip remains, to be pulled back into a traditional topknot. A laurel crown rests on his head, and his green and gold clothes – not kimono, but an older style consisting of vest, tunic and flowing pants – bear a golden chrysanthemum. Power visibly pours from him, a shimmering aura that burns like the sun itself but does not blind. The urge to prostrate yourself before him is almost physical, driven solely by the force of his presence.

On his right, a much more mundane bushi eyes you all with a narrow gaze, his green and gold armor a match for the colors of the figure on the throne. He is unquestionably the most handsome man before you, even if his merely-human charisma cannot compete with the aura of power he stands next to. His hand hovers warily just above the hilt of the sword on his hip.

On the throne’s other side, a tall man in brown and gold armor, an eyepatch covering his left eye, bears a similar aura, although it is not nearly as strong as that of the man on the throne. A well-used tessen hangs from his waist, flanked on the opposite hip by a simple but sturdy blade. He too studies you as though waiting to see how much trouble you intend to give him.

Looking around, you see more men and women with the powerful glow: a shorter bushi in red-gold armor with a scholar’s face and eyes that seem to look right through you; one of the largest men you’ve ever seen, with a tetsubo casually resting on his shoulder and absolutely no sense that he’s worried about you whatsoever; a short woman holding a no-dachi as tall as she is, in purple armor and wearing a troubled expression; a bushi in scarlet red armor who is twin in height and build to the scholarly man, but whose face is hidden behind a scrap of black cloth; and finally a bare-chested man in simple green breeches and glowing yellow eyes. They stand in a semi-circle facing you, flanking the throne and its occupant.

The PCs are face-to-face with the founding Kami of each of the Great Clans except the Crane; they, of course, are instead represented by Kakita. The man on the throne is Hantei-kami, the first Emperor of Rokugan. Despite the intensity of Hantei's aura and the sense of inadequacy it bestows on the mortals who confront him, the PCs are not forced to take any particular actions; humans who recognize their situation (**Lore: History / Intelligence**, TN 15) will probably want to prostrate themselves anyway, just on general principle. Any human PC with an Honor of 2.0 or greater who recognizes who they are facing and does not react appropriately loses half their Honor Ranks immediately, and any PC of whatever sort who does not prostrate themselves also loses half their Glory Ranks.

"We greet you, samurai," Hantei says in a resounding, bone-deep baritone. "Rise and speak your names, that We and Our siblings might know you."

(GM's Note: where We, Us and Our is capitalized, Hantei is using a specific Imperial pronoun equivalent to the so-called "royal We" in English. When it is not capitalized, he is actually speaking in the plural.)

Once the PCs introduce themselves, Hantei offers the same for himself and his associates, beginning with Kakita, his Emerald Champion, and then continuing on to Togashi, Hida, Shinjo, Bayushi, Shiba, Doji, and Akodo before naming himself.

"You are expected, yumemusha," the First Emperor continues. "Our brother," and he gestures to Togashi, watching silently from one side, "gave warning of your arrival and purpose. He is as cryptic as ever, but assures Us that your mission is critical to the Empire's existence and will aid our own efforts as well. As such, you are welcome to Our Empire. Tell Us what assistance the children of Tengoku can give the champions of Yume-do."

The PCs are free to give as much or as little answer as they like; whatever information they share is accepted without question, although a character with Honor 4.0 or higher finds they simply cannot tell an outright lie to Hantei, and characters with less Honor who do so must attempt a **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** roll, TN 40, to have the lie avoid detection.

The PCs can quickly learn that they are in the camp of the main army of the Empire, preparing for an all-out assault on the forces of the Shadowlands to the south. The army is camped on the southern bank of the Seigo River, and will march in a few hours' time. (Most PCs will have never heard of the Seigo River, but a TN 35 **Lore: Crab** or **Lore: Shadowlands / Intelligence** roll,

or a TN 45 **Lore: History / Intelligence** roll, identifies it as the name of the River of the Last Stand before the Kaiu Wall was built on its north shore.) If the PCs activate their particle detector and follow Ryoushi's instructions, the comm unit informs them that the desired locus is south-southeast of their current position roughly 80 li; should the PCs ask for a map, Akodo provides one and the unit then specifies the location as a spot marked on the map simply as "Troll Ruin." **Lore: Shadowlands** or **Lore: History / Intelligence**, TN 30, recognizes that location as the troll city of Voltturnum, the home of Oblivion's Gate. (Shiba watches any use of futuristic technology with extreme interest, although he does not pry with questions.)

Whether the PCs gain the precise location in advance or not, once they determine the direction and distance they need to travel, Hantei nods, as though expecting something similar, and makes a gesture to Akodo. The one-eyed general bows in acknowledgement, and Hantei turns to face the group once more.

"Honored guests, We must now confess We had hoped for news such as this. Allow Us the privilege of honesty with you. The simple truth is that we are losing this war. Our forsaken brother's forces are too large, too powerful, too relentless. Our followers fight with the courage of twenty goblins, but they are each outnumbered by 50. Our general has lost his eye and cannot lead Our troops. We will die honorably, but we will die nonetheless. It is all but certain."

"There is only one chance that remains to us. A human, the Little Teacher, has brought us a single reed of hope. Perhaps you know of him – perhaps you do not. Regardless, he possesses a wisdom unseen even in Heaven itself. He has convinced Us to try his desperate plan."

"Seven followers of Our siblings will accompany the Teacher south, to the very pit that marks where Our fallen brother pierced the earth. There they will strike at him directly. In order to see that they reach the Pit alive, the rest of Our forces will launch an all-out attack, one such as we have not attempted in nearly a decade. If the Seven Thunders fail, no doubt we will all die. But if they succeed, Our people will have at last the chance for peace that We promised them when first We came to this Realm."

Akodo returns, leading eight people into the open court. In front is a small man, barely topping five feet, with a broad straw hat and a brightly-colored bird on his shoulder. Behind him come the Seven Thunders: Hida Atarasi, almost the spitting image of his father Kami, only a hair shorter and less broad; Doji

Konishiko, a tiny girl who glances nervously at her father Kakita before visibly attempting a stance of confidence and readiness; Mirumoto, a bald man with his blades resting on opposite hips, who largely ignores you in favor of exchanging a long, measured look with Kakita; Matsu, a powerfully-built woman, taller than any of her companions save Atarasi, who pointedly looks anywhere except at Kakita as she strides in; Isawa, a ruddy-skinned man of middle height and unassuming features, but possessing an aura of power nearly the equal of the Kami around him; Shosuro, a slim figure with androgynous features and completely black clothing, whose mask and glitteringly sharp eyes both match Bayushi's; and Otaku, roughly Shosuro's height but built more like Matsu, who says nothing but looks around at everything with a quizzical, almost childlike curiosity. The Seven Thunders go to speak briefly with their Kami (or, in Konishiko's case, with her father), while their leader approaches you and smiles, bowing deeply.

"Yumemusha, you are come at last," he says, idly offering a small nut to the bird on his shoulder. "I am Shinsei. Your journey was shorter than you might have expected, but your arrival has been long awaited."

If the PCs wish to introduce themselves, they may do so; Shinsei greets each PC warmly, regardless of who or what they are. He sidesteps any questions or other distractions until everyone has been introduced, at which point the Emperor interrupts.

Hantei rises from his throne, crossing the space and offers Shinsei a deep, respectful bow. "Little Teacher," Hantei rumbles, "were you also aware of the arrival of these samurai?"

Shinsei smiles again, feeding the bird another nut. "Some things are inevitable," the monk replies, "whether one is aware of them or not, beginnings and endings not least among them." He turns to you once more. "I would ask a favor of you, my friends, if you don't mind. When you next meet me on the road, kill me if you must, but first remind me that the longest shadows fall only when the sun stands at your back." He shrugs. "It might be worth something."

Shinsei refuses to explain, answering any questions only with, "The river cannot flow from the sea, and rice rots from the head down, even while the roots are strong." He then bows and steps away, making a slow circuit to speak with his Thunders.

Hantei seems curious about Shinsei's request as well, but is apparently willing to abide by the monk's unwillingness to clarify his unusual statement.

Instead, the First Emperor turns to you and makes his own appeal. "Akodo led Our armies until his eye was taken, then Matsu stepped into his place. Now Matsu marches with Shinsei. For this assault, then, We need new commanders. We will personally lead the main force, and Our son Genji will command the right flank. Our battle plan suggests the left flank will face the least resistance and will, if all goes as We intend, wheel and attack the bulk of the Shadowlands forces from the side while the main force engages them from the front. The battle lines will be very near to where your mission sends you. Will one among you assume command of Our left flank and lead the countercharge when the time comes?"

Part Two: Dawn of Thunder

Although it is phrased as a request, Hantei means it as a command. The only excuse he will accept for refusal is a complete lack of battle training; note that, if Kobe Bukijin is with the group, he possesses Ranks in Battle and will volunteer if no one else does. If no one in the group steps forward, then any PC with at least one Rank in Battle loses their Honor Rank in points of Honor and every PC loses a Rank of Glory. In this instance, Hantei instead gives command of the left flank to Konishiko's youngest brother, Doji Hayaku. Hayaku's statistics are given in the Appendix. The PCs will still need to march alongside Hayaku's forces in order to safely reach Voltturnum.

The PCs have only three hours before the command to march will be given, but may wish to take some of that time to speak with the Kami or the Thunders. Everyone is exceptionally busy, but given the importance Hantei and Shinsei have shown toward the PCs, most will find time for a few words. The exceptions are Otaku, who will listen politely but doesn't speak, Bayushi, who seems more than a little angry about the entire plan and furiously brushes aside any attempts to speak, and Shinsei himself, who demurs politely but firmly should anyone approach him again.

When at last Hantei gives the order to march, the army readies itself to move and Shinsei and his companions prepare to set out.

Matsu strides over to stand next to the Little Teacher, her expression calm, almost bored, as though she were about to begin an uneventful patrol; she offers no goodbyes to anyone, and Akodo cannot seem to bring himself to look at her.

Otaku hands the reins of her steed to one of her Clanmates, and for the first time you hear her murmur quietly, in a voice that is surprisingly musical, as she whispers in her horse's ear. Shaking her head, she turns away and takes a place at Matsu's shoulder.

Hida places his hand on Atarasi's shoulder, and the Crab Thunder takes it and squeezes once, before the two men separate and the Kami gives the Thunder a short but meaningful bow. Atarasi turns and joins Shinsei as well, his place at the shoulder opposite Matsu.

Isawa looks up at Shiba, his face neutral, and says calmly, "I will not insult your honor by reminding you to keep your oath to me."

Shiba bows respectfully and replies, "Nor will I waste your time by telling you once again that which you already know." Isawa nods once and goes to join the others.

Mirumoto and Kakita face one another, Konishiko between them, and in a tight voice the Emerald Champion says, "Protect my daughter, Mirumoto."

The Dragon Thunder answers in the same tone, "Protect my Empire, Kakita." The two men stare at one another for a tense moment before Kakita tilts his head a fraction, and Mirumoto does the same. The Dragon and Crane Thunders join the rest of their companions.

Finally, only Shosuro does not stand with the Thunders. The black-clad scout and the Kami are having an intense, whispered argument, and neither seems to have much care for propriety as the whispers grow louder and more intense. At last Bayushi simply shouts, "I FORBID IT!"

Shosuro nods once, slowly. "I know."

And with that, the Scorpion Thunder turns and stands with the others. Hantei looks between his stricken brother and Shinsei, then nods and gestures for the Thunders to go. The Little Teacher leads his followers away, and the First Emperor mounts his horse. "Signal the drums. We march for the Shadowlands."

The march south takes three days, and the left flank of the Imperial forces sees little skirmishing over that time. Reports from couriers moving between the legions suggest that the other two forces are experiencing heavier resistance, but Fu Leng was apparently unprepared for this kind of counterattack, so the Rokugani army continues to make steady advances. Everyone knows it will not last, however; the Ninth

Kami will rally his troops soon enough, and then the slaughter will begin.

The land over which the Imperial troops marches is mostly low, rolling hills, broken up by several small rivers that are easily forded. Dozens of li south of where the Kaiu Wall will one day stand, the PCs may have trouble reconciling this terrain with the corrupted wasteland it will eventually become. There is also no need for jade for the army beyond the ability to harm some extremely powerful oni – sending a force this size so far south would simply be impossible in later centuries. It is a potent reminder of how much the Empire has lost since it began.

Finally, on the third day, scouts report a troll ruin several li to the south, and fast-riding couriers report that the expected increase in resistance has occurred. The advance has stalled out, and Hantei commands the left flank to begin its sweep west to try to encircle the Shadowlands force.

(The PCs may, if they so desire, ignore this command and head straight to Volturnum at this point. Any PC who makes this choice has their Glory reduced to 1.0 and loses 5 points of Honor for every Rank of Honor above 3.)

The heaviest part of the fighting takes place on a front almost 5 li long, in a wide valley between two rows of hills and another one of the area's nameless rivers running through it. Fu Leng's armies of goblins, oni, undead, and more have caught the Imperial forces with their backs to the river and the higher ground of the hills still ahead of them: hordes of twisted, Tainted horrors pour over those hills like a slow-motion waterfall, and it is clear from the moment the PCs lay eyes on the scene that the Imperial lines will not hold very long. Unable to retreat effectively across the river, they are grain caught beneath the millstone.

This was, however, the basic battle plan, although it is unlikely that this terrain would have been any Rokugani general's choice for where to have this fight. The PC's forces are likewise atop the line of bluffs, and with a clear line of charge into the Shadowlands army's flank. Sheer numbers still make victory a daunting prospect, but it is the best chance Rokugan has.

Before giving the order to charge, the character with the highest Status should make a **Battle (Mass Combat) / Perception** roll against a TN of 20. If that character so desires, they may have another PC make the Battle roll on their behalf. If Hayaku leads the PCs' units, he makes the roll instead. If the roll is failed, the PCs must declare one Raise for no effect on any action they take during the

battle or the action automatically fails; the battle commander may make another Battle roll against the same TN during each Reactions Stage to overcome the penalty. If the roll succeeds there is no effect, but if the roll succeeds by 5 or more, every PC receives one Free Raise they may use at any time during the battle. For every additional multiple of 5, the PCs each receive an additional Free Raise. Characters with the Tactician Advantage gain one additional Free Raise automatically. In addition to the usual uses of Free Raises, these Free Raises may be spent as a Free Action on the PC's turn to add +5 to their Armor TN until their next Action (this bonus is cumulative if multiple Raises are spent at once) or to negate 5 Wounds as they are taken (again, cumulatively if multiple are spent).

The command is given, and with a roar, your samurai rush down the hillside toward the Shadowlands army below. Goblins and lesser oni scream and die as your charge smashes into them, and the pressure on the Emperor's forces is suddenly lessened. They rally and start to push back, and across the battle lines you can see Hantei himself moving like a hurricane through the rows of Shadowlands monsters. The respite is brief, though, and your glimpse of the Emperor is cut off as new hordes of foes crowd in around you.

The PCs must face and defeat two ogres and a number of goblins equal to the number of PCs at the table.

Ogres

Air 1	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 6		Strength 6
Armor TN: 25		Reduction: 10	
Attack: 5k4 (Club, Complex)		Damage: 8k2 (club)	
Initiative: 4k3			
Taint Rank: 3			
Powers/Weaknesses: Fear 2			
<i>Huge</i>			
Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10; 60: +15; 80: Dead			

Mountain Goblins

Air 1	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 1
Reflexes 3		Agility 3	Strength 3
Armor TN: 10 (in Full Attack)		Reduction: 5	
Attack: 6k4 (claws, Complex, in Full Attack) or 8k4 (scrap-forged blade, Complex, in Full Attack)		Damage: 4k2 (claws) or 6k2 (scrap-forged blade)	
Initiative: 4k3			
Taint Rank: 3			
Powers/Weaknesses: Skills: Kenjutsu 3, Stealth 4			

Night Vision: Mountain goblins can see equally well in near-darkness as in normal light

Regeneration: Mountain goblins heal 5 Wounds during the Reactions Stage of each Round, continuing to heal until they are killed. They can reattach a severed limb in two rounds, as long as the limb and the stump are held together continuously during that time.

Scrounged Weapons: The poorly-made blades the goblins carry are mechanically equivalent to parangu, including their frailty; the blades will break if they deal more than 30 Wounds in a single attack.

Swift 2

Wounds: 10: +5; 20: +10; 35: Dead

As your last foe falls, you can see the Emperor's guard again – but it is a terrible sight. Kakita's blade is a ceaseless blur of motion, keeping back the surging goblin tide, but he stands over the fallen body of Hantei. The Emperor struggles to get back to his feet and take up his blade, but an obsidian spear thicker than a man's arm has pierced him through the belly, and the gleaming tip, covered in the blood of Tengoku's favored son, is visible extending from Hantei's back. On the battle's far edge, the banner of Hantei Genji pushes into the fray, battling to reach the Emperor's side, but it seems likely that Kakita and his remaining guardsmen will be overrun long before Genji can arrive – if the Imperial heir is not himself driven back or slain by the Shadowlands horde. Helpless, you can only watch the tragedy unfold.

But suddenly, a low roll of thunder echoes across the land from somewhere to the south. Dark purple and black lightning flashes across the sky, and something seems to fall away from the Shadowlands armies, turning them from frenzied warriors to a confused mob. The Rokugani samurai begin pushing back again, and suddenly the horde is in full retreat. The reversal of direction catches your troops up in it, pushing you back and away from the Emperor, but you see Genji's banner reach the Imperial one, and from a distance it seems as though the Emperor is able to rise to his feet one more time.

The PCs may now make a **Battle / Perception** roll, TN 15. Anyone who makes the roll (or the highest roller if no one meets the TN) realizes that within hours, maybe less, the bulk of the retreating horde will be swarming through the troll ruins to the south. If the PCs want to reach their destination, they need to go now.

Reaching the site takes a little less than an hour at a full-speed march; the PCs encounter scattered goblins and small oni in their path, but the horde is no longer moving in a single direction, so it is possible to quickly outpace the stragglers. By the time the PCs reach the ruins of

Voltturnum, it has been nearly 15 minutes since they last saw a Shadowlands monster. Plumes of dust on the horizon in every direction but southward make it clear that the respite will not last long.

Voltturnum itself is a sprawling city, abandoned for decades and clearly beginning to crumble to ruin. Trees and grass grow through floors and walls, poking up between cobblestones and leaning out of windows. Some of the tall marble and granite buildings have collapsed entirely, shaken down by earthquakes or some less natural disaster. Still, it is eerily intact and quiet, and it is hard not to feel disturbed by the silence and lack of people moving through the broad, well-planned streets. The architecture is grandiose and angular, given to broad marble staircases and tall stone columns that support heavy overhanging upper floors, all of it quite bizarre to the Rokugani eye, even beyond how it is scaled for beings twice the height of a human. The comm unit steers the PCs in among the avenues and straight toward the city's center, where a massive stone arena, easily 100 yards tall and a full li across, occupies a monumental plaza. Archways four yards high lead into the arena, and in the middle of its sandy floor is a gigantic ring, made of a strange stone that seems to have no place in the natural world. It stands upright, casting its shadow over the arena almost all the way to where the PCs stand. The detector directs the PCs right to the standing ring's base before signaling that the proper spot for activation has been reached.

Activation itself is anticlimactic; the detector works as promised, and two minutes later the PCs can signal back with the communications unit and return through the swirling silver portal to the lands of the Owl.

Part Three: The More Things Change

As it has always been before, almost no time has apparently passed between when the PCs left for the other dream-Realm and when they return from it. Ryoushi immediately scoops up the detector and connects a long black cable to it from one of the machines nearby; she studies the glowing screen for several moments before shaking her head. "No indication of proximity. There are probably more clues in the data, but it will take time to pull them out." She retrieves another detector from the cabinet and passes it back to the PCs. "Time to head out to the Third Day of Thunder, then."

Yanako refuses to wait for the PCs to meditate or rest to recover spells or Void; she accepts only enough delay to

have one of the shugenja working in the lab cast Regrow the Wound on any PC with more than two Wound Ranks of damage. (Anything less she deems "minor" and "unworthy of a samurai's notice.")

Once the PCs are ready, she and the other shugenja cast their ritual again, opening a second portal into Yume-do.

This time, the drop from the portal leaves you standing on a hard black road, in the midst of a slow, heavy rain. You are in the midst of a massive city – or at least the remnants of one. Everywhere you turn you see signs of destruction, bloodshed, and corruption. The tall steel and stone buildings are broken shells, rubble and exposed metal beams scattered across every visible surface. Bodies lie in the street, mostly human, but goblin corpses and even the bodies of what seem to be minor oni are visible as well. Fires burn here and there in the distance, unimpressed by the rain, and the black smoke crawls into the sky to mix with the grey clouds above.

The city is a very modern one – many of the buildings were once legitimate skyscrapers, 15 or 20 stories high, and the streets are filled with cars, trucks, and the occasional bus, most as badly damaged as the buildings that surround them. Occasional helicopters and fighter jets swoop over the distant buildings, looking as though they are flying patrols around the one remaining intact skyscraper visible a few kilometers away: a massive building, more than 100 stories tall, made of blue steel and glass. Kanji that probably spell out a corporate name can be seen on the side of the building, but from this distance they are unreadable.

If the PCs examine the area to gain additional information about what might have happened here, a successful TN 20 roll of **Medicine / Intelligence, Investigation (Search) / Perception** or another skill at GM's discretion can determine that something very like a full-scale war happened here, likely within the week, but not within the last couple of days. Examining the bodies indicates that most of the Shadowlands creatures' injuries are bullet wounds, while the humans' wounds are a mix of natural weapons like claws, bites, or tentacles and guns. At least one of the goblins has a semiautomatic handgun (mostly out of rounds) still clutched in one hand. Characters with bullet-based guns can find enough rounds of suitable calibers among the bodies to replenish their supply back up to 20 rounds. (Multiple such characters find enough for 20 each, but probably don't have matching calibers to share with one another.)

The kamiton detector, once calibrated, indicates that the best point for activation is directly toward the blue and

glass skyscraper that still stands over the city. The distance looks to match as well. While the PCs can explore the shattered remains of the city where they are if they want, there is little of interest or value beyond what has already been listed.

If there are any naga among the PCs, they feel a link to the Akasha of this world, but only a very distant one – there is no indication of any naga nearby. The minds of the Akasha here are far too faint to communicate with or distinguish between one another, but there is a sense of discomfort, even pain, laced throughout the naga's group-mind. It is an unsettling sensation, and never goes away while the PCs remain in this Realm. Conversely, nezumi characters are likely surprised to smell faint traces of other ratlings, probably many other ratlings, throughout the city, although they don't run into any during their time here.

Travel through the city is a challenge. Characters who can drive might be interested in borrowing one of the many abandoned vehicles in the street; an **Engineering (Electrical Engineering) / Intelligence** roll, TN 20, by someone who is familiar with modern technology permits one of the cars to be hotwired (this use is considered a Low Skill). Alternatively, an **Investigation (Search) / Perception** roll, TN 35, comes up with a still-working van parked in a fenced-off lot about half a block from where the PCs first arrived; it is a company vehicle, and the keys are still in the ignition. It is large enough to hold all the PCs, but not other large creatures like horses or warcats.

Driving through the city is not easy, due to the massive destruction that has been wreaked upon it. Anyone driving a vehicle through roads still filled with wrecked or abandoned vehicles, burning buildings, rubble from collapsed structures, sinkholes, broken water and gas mains, and more must make three **Driving / Reflexes** rolls, TN 25, to reach the destination skyscraper without incident. Failed rolls result in a wrecked vehicle and 3k1 Wounds to every occupant as a wall collapses, a gas main explodes, or the road suddenly drops into the sewers right where the vehicle is passing. After each such accident, the PCs can attempt another hotwiring or search roll at the same TNs to find replacement vehicle of some type, or they have to walk (see below). If the PCs manage to drive until the third Driving roll but fail and have to walk from there, the TN of the Stamina roll to avoid Fatigue is lowered by 10.

If the PCs have no way to use powered transportation, they have to use their own resources: in other words, they have to walk (or ride, if they brought a steed with them). Unfortunately, walking isn't much easier than driving, although there is much less chance of accidentally

driving off a bridge as it collapses. Straight-line routes are almost impossible to find, meaning the PCs must either walk significant distances out of their way or take rougher shortcuts over piles of rock, through buildings, and down and back up out of ditches and crumbled streets. By the time the PCs make it to the skyscraper, they are pretty worn out, and have to make an **Athletics / Stamina** roll, TN 25, or be Fatigued for the rest of the day. Mounted characters may use **Horsemanship / Stamina** instead if they wish.

On the other hand, walking does allow the PCs a bit more time to look around at the city and learn more about their situation. As the PCs walk, they may make an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 20. Anyone who succeeds spots a broken metal box, about waist high, on the edge of one of the streets, its front door hanging open and the glass window set into the door shattered. However, in a rack set into the front door, where it would have faced out through the window, a single piece of torn paper is still tucked in place. (Modern-era PCs will probably recognize the coin-operated newspaper rack for what it is.) The paper has a picture of a smiling gaijin in a straw hat featured prominently, next to a lengthy newspaper story. (See Player Handout #1 for the story.) These PCs will know Hoshi Jack for who he is, at least to some extent, which will turn out to be important when they meet him.

Later, if the walking PCs make a TN 35 on a **Hunting (Tracking) / Perception** roll, they make another realization. As they clamber across another fissure in the earth that appears at first to be a sinkhole, they recognize it for what it actually is: a footprint the size of a city block. The foot it belonged to was three-toed and clawed, and the creature itself probably taller than most of the buildings in the city, maybe even taller than the one remaining skyscraper still visible. If a PC who realizes this takes some extra effort to get to a higher place for some perspective over the city, they make out that the creature was four-footed and trampled outward from the city's center before returning back there again. Without visiting the city center – a significant undertaking that will add more than a day to the total walking time needed to reach the skyscraper – it is impossible to tell what happened after the colossus turned back to downtown. Taking such a detour means the PCs must have either brought rations with them from Shiro no Fukurou or that they make a **Hunting / Perception** roll, TN 20, to pull some food from the ruined stores and stops, and unfortunately tells nothing of value: the center of the city is a square space about a kilometer on a side filled with a mountain of indeterminate rubble, and the gigantic footprints simply stop when they reach it, as though the creature had simply vanished. Reaching the skyscraper

from the central area takes several more hours of walking and the same Fatigue roll as the day before.

Part Four: Thunder's Twilight

Night has nearly fallen by the time you reach the massive blue-steel building that is your destination. The rain has only increased, but the encroaching darkness is pushed back by more than just the occasional flash of lightning – in this part of the city, the tall lanterns placed along the streets are glowing beacons that promise warmth and safety, and in the buildings around and ahead of you, lights glimmer in windows. On the face of the tall skyscraper that looms above you, the dark kanji you could not read before have bloomed into soft blue words that cast their own shadows even down at street level. The kanji read “Dojicorp,” and they hang next to a similarly-lit image of the Doji family mon that is likely three stories tall by itself.

Flashing blue and red lights are visible all around the Dojicorp building, each perched atop a purple and white car or motorcycle. Most are marked with the Shinjo mon on the doors or the side of the cycle's gas tank, but some of the larger and more impressive-looking bikes are instead marked with the blank-purple circle of the Otaku mon (some characters might require a **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** roll at TN 15 to recognize the Otaku mon, as in many worlds it changed when the Otaku became the Utaku family). Uniformed officers in light armor of modern plastics mill around, all in the Unicorn purple and white, and emergency personnel with injured victims on stretchers move steadily in and out of the Dojicorp doors, loading the hurt and dying into ambulances and racing off with them through the crumbled streets. The PCs will quickly note that most of the Unicorn officers do not carry katana, but a handful have jitte and they are all wearing holstered semiautomatics.

No one impedes the PCs if they desire to enter Dojicorp – the comm unit indicates that they are in the right place, but need to travel upwards more than a hundred meters – as the cops assume the PCs are merely more refugees who have staggered their way out of the ruins toward one of the few remaining parts of the city that is still somewhat functioning. Nezumi draw no special attention whatsoever; naga get surprised or confused looks, but nothing more. If the PCs decide to approach the police officers and ask questions about their situation, though, they are certainly free to do so.

If the PCs begin heading toward the police, one of the officers steps forward to intercept them. She is Otaku Mioki, and she has dark ebony skin that looks distinctly out of place with her Rokugani eyes and nose. She clearly carries the blood of a gaijin, probably Senpet (if any of the PCs are familiar with that nation), somewhere quite recent in her bloodline. Despite that, she carries herself with an air of command, and her eyes are sympathetic as she approaches. “Hi,” she says in a soothing tone. “Welcome to Dojicorp Tower. You’re safe now.”

If the PCs are reasonably honest about their situation, Mioki decides that they are probably suffering from mental illness or trauma from the attack. She makes soothing affirmative noises as the PCs speak while trying to subtly signal one of the groups of paramedics to come help her out. Mioki and the medics attempt to bundle the PCs into nearby ambulances to be taken to the only hospital still mostly working, Phoenix Mercy, but are not in shape to fight the PCs if the PCs resist. Likewise, the medics have too many other patients to chase the PCs down if they run.

If, on the other hand, the PCs are more circumspect, they can make an **Etiquette / Awareness** roll at TN 15 to get Mioki to open up about what happened to the city, which they learn is actually Otosan Uchi.

“You’re not the first I’ve met to wonder how this all fell on us,” Mioki says. “Honestly, even those of us who had info the whole time aren’t sure of the details. Well, I’m sure you saw the oni, even if you didn’t know what it was. It was an oni, Yoritomo no Oni, and I guess that actually means the Son of Storms gave his name to an oni, Fortunes save us all. It was also the Diamond Palace somehow, and Thunders guide me if I have the slightest clue how you turn the Imperial palace into a Jigoku-damned oni. Anyway, you probably heard rumors that the oni were starting to come back, but maybe you didn’t believe them; Fortunes know I didn’t. I figured it was just the Hida polishing their tetsubos like always. Apparently not. Anyway, Akodo Daniri – you know, the guy from that show, Akodo War Machines? The one who was actually just a peasant all along? – Daniri and some other samurai got all their War Machines together and beat the oni down. One of them was actually a guy I know, Shinjo Rakki, he’s the one with the Unicorn War Machine. Lucky son of a bitch. Well, together they killed it, or set it up so Kyuden Hida could finish it off, at least. Most of them, including Rakki, are over at Phoenix Mercy now. Even in a War Machine, I guess taking down an oni with an Emperor’s name isn’t easy.”

If the PCs ask if they are allowed inside Dojicorp Tower, Mioki says that they are, but there's no real reason to go in there now – refugee camps are being set up out in the huburbs, and there are buses every hour or so to take new arrivals out there. “So go in to get out of the rain, sure, but the place is basically empty beyond the foyer. If you're looking for someone who worked here, they're gone. I'll pray for you that you find them out in the camps and not... yeah. I mean, I'm sure you'll find them out there.”

Inside, the elevators are working, as are the stairs; if no one quite gets how elevators work, the PCs are in for a long climb – it's 75 stories up to the proper place, and another **Athletics / Stamina** roll, TN 20, is needed to avoid Fatigue. A character who is already Fatigued who fails this roll has their TN penalty from Fatigue increased to +10. If the PCs do use the elevators, they merely need to do a little creative button pushing to triangulate the right floor.

When you step out onto the 75th floor, you are surprised to hear rainfall again. Ahead, lightning flashes in the sky, and as the rumble of thunder follows behind it, you realize that there is some kind of open-air garden in the middle of the massive steel building. Offices and corridors circle the edge of the garden and story upon story of windows overlook it from the building's perimeter, but here in the center of Dojicorp's massive edifice is a fantastic slice of the natural world.

The only light is from the storm overhead, and likewise the only sounds are the falling rain and the thunder that rolls among the clouds. The communications unit indicates that the central point of the garden is where the detector should be placed for activation; the stone paths that wind through the garden would quickly confuse and seduce an unguided wanderer into losing their purpose and merely enjoying the astonishing beauty all around them, but the communications device keeps you on track. In a few moments you have reached the garden's center – but as you step around the final bush, you are surprised to find two people there: an elderly gaijin wearing the saffron robes of a monk of the Brotherhood, and a small, smiling girl of perhaps 8 years, dressed in a well-made but completely black kimono.

Any PC who saw Hoshi Jack's picture on the newspaper recognizes the monk immediately; otherwise, the PCs are merely struck by the intense impression of wisdom lying behind the monk's eyes. The little girl is almost doll-like in her pale beauty, but all she does during the subsequent conversation is giggle occasionally – should

the situation degrade into violence, the giggles continue throughout the combat.

“...Samurai!” the monk says, clearly very shocked. It takes a moment for him to recover his serenity, during which the young girl at his side looks up at him curiously. “I'm... afraid that I did not hear you approach. Forgive me for disturbing your meditations in the garden.” He eyes you all intently, particularly seeming to take notice of the red auras surrounding you. “I am Hoshi Jack.” He seems to regard the young girl as not worth introducing, instead bowing politely.

After the PCs introduce themselves, Jack gives them one more speculative glance but prepares to leave, unless the PCs choose to pursue a conversation further. If they do, Jack responds courteously, but with an air of a man who has important obligations elsewhere. Some possible questions and Jack's replies:

- Where is this place? *It is the Fantastic Gardens of the Doji, and until recently the domain of a shugenja of uncommon spirituality. I believe that its survival through our recent troubles is an indication of its power as holy ground.*
- Are you Shinsei? *As it turns out, I do carry that burden. I am the one who will guide the Seven Thunders to their confrontation against Jigoku's Champion on the Day of Thunder.*
- When will the Day of Thunder happen? *Tomorrow, at Togashi Mountain.*
- Why are you here now, in Otosan Uchi? *I have come to recover something a friend of mine left behind after his death. I think it is important that it be with me for the coming confrontation.*
- What did you come for? *It is something of value only to me, but for all that, I would prefer not to discuss the matter with any but the Thunders.*
- Where is your crow? *Long lost, I'm afraid. I have called for it, but it has not come. I do not know where it is, although I admit its absence would seem to be an ill omen for the forces of Tengoku.*
- Who is the girl? *The ward of the shugenja who maintained this place before Yoritomo no Oni's attack. Her care has fallen to me now.*

Once the PCs have finished asking their questions, Jack takes the young girl's hand and begins to lead her away. “Come, Pekklee,” he says as he goes.

Any PC who hears the name “Pekklee” may make a **Lore: Shadowlands** or **Lore: Spirit Realm / Intelligence** roll,

TN 30. On a success, the PC recognizes the name as belonging to both a shapeshifting spirit who resides almost exclusively in Yume-do and to a Tainted corruption of those dream-spirits, known commonly as Pekkles no Oni.

Only three things will prevent Jack and the girl from simply leaving the garden so that the PCs can activate their detector and return home. These include a) attacking Jack or the girl; b) accusing one or both of them as being Tainted or otherwise enemies of Rokugan; or c) quoting the original Shinsei's words to Jack: "The longest shadows fall only when the sun stands at your back." (The PCs don't have to quote it exactly if they don't remember it word for word.)

If the PCs attack, move straight to the combat. In either of the other two options, Jack and Pekkles turn back to face the PCs; if accused of being enemies of Rokugan, Pekkles giggles, whereas if the PCs quoted Shinsei, she merely looks confused. Likewise, if accused of being Tainted or evil, Jack turns back, shaking his head with a small smirk, while using the Shinsei quote seems to catch him completely off-guard. "Where did you...? Who...?"

Regardless, Jack shakes his head. *"The furce of this millennial contest is over," he says sadly. "Jigoku's win is predetermined. I will lead the Thunders to their deaths, and then the Last Thunder will rise, only to kneel at last to the power of Jigoku. Ningen-do will fall to an unending darkness, and never again will Thunders rise to challenge it. This is the last Day, my friends." He smiles, seeming relieved to get it off of his chest, while Pekkles giggles and claps her hands joyously.*

An **Investigation (Interrogation) / Perception** roll, TN 40, sees something that looks like genuine sorrow behind Jack's smile; any PC who makes the roll suspects that Jack may be more conflicted about his role than he is letting on – or perhaps more conflicted than even he knows. The TN is reduced by 10 if the PCs quoted Shinsei at Jack first.

Jack was raised outside of Rokugan, and only first set foot on its shores when he was twenty. Almost as soon as he arrived, he was tricked into a portal leading directly to Jigoku and became thoroughly Tainted as a consequence. On almost every level, then, he believes in and continues to work for Jigoku's victory on the Day of Thunder. He believes that it is inevitable, particularly as he plans to counsel the Thunders in such a way as to lead to their deaths. (If asked about the Last Thunder, he knows only that an eighth Champion of the mortal realm is destined to rise after the other seven fall, and that

Thunder will be the one to deliver Ningen-do to Jigoku forever. Who or what this Last Thunder is, he does not know.) And yet, there is still a spark of the pure blood of Shinsei within him, a part that still hopes for redemption and mourns the coming victory of Jigoku.

The PCs have the choice then of whether to try to kill Hoshi Jack or try to redeem him. If they choose redemption, they may do so even in the midst of combat, although attempts to persuade him to turn away from Jigoku are much more difficult should the PCs actually be trying to kill him at the same time. (Increase the TN of any Social Roll made to redeem Jack by +20 if any PC has attacked him in the last Round, with an additional +5 to the TN for every Raise declared against him.) Pekkles, of course, cannot be redeemed, but isn't sophisticated enough to realize that an attempt to redeem Jack is happening until or unless it is complete.

Redeeming Jack requires well-roleplayed persuasion and successful Social rolls, using the same Social Combat rules originally presented in *NMW04: Winds of Change*. The party must try to break down Hoshi Jack's mental resistance with well-made arguments while trying to avoid losing their own ability to speak with any authority. In this instance, the arguments are tracked on the Jack's Social Damage track. (Jack's SD track has 8 boxes.) If Jack is reduced to 0 SD, the attempt to redeem him has been successful.

Making an argument is a Complex Action if done during combat. Once an argument has been made, the PC should roll [**Relevant skill**] / **Awareness** against Jack's **Etiquette / Willpower** pool of 9k5, adding his Taint Rank of 8 to the total of the roll. If successful, the PC rolls **Sincerity / Awareness** versus Jack's **Willpower x5**, or 20. Meeting the TN means the Argument was successful, and additional Arguments are checked off for each increment of 10 above the TN. Possible Skills to use when making the Argument include: Courtier, Etiquette, Intimidation [Low], Lore: Shadowlands, Lore: Theology, and Sincerity (Honesty/Deceit [Low]). Using a Low skill results in an Honor loss for the speaker.

Conversely, if Jack wins the Contested Roll, he discards the argument and Jigoku's hold on his soul strengthens; he instead rolls a **Sincerity / Awareness** roll, adding his Taint Rank to the total, against a TN of the PC's **Willpower x5**. Success inflicts a point against the PC's SD, with an extra point for every multiple of 10 by which Jack beats the TN. PCs have Social Damage boxes equal to their **Earth + Willpower**, and if a character loses enough arguments to fill all of their Argument boxes, any argument they make for the remainder of the scene will be ineffective.

Arguments that focus on mercy for the innocent or the suffering that Jigoku's win will cause gain a Free Raise on the Contested Roll; appeals to spirituality or the role of the Spirit Realms actually increase the TN by 5, as Jack has seen the greater power of Jigoku firsthand. He also cannot be convinced that there is actually hope for a victory on the side of honor and compassion; he is completely certain that Jigoku will prevail, and only arguments for taking the side of righteousness despite knowing that it will fail have any chance of success.

A PC may make an **Investigation (Interrogation) / Perception** roll, TN 35, to recognize that arguing for hope for victory will not work; this is made as a Simple Action, if done during combat. One Raise on this roll suggests that mercy is the best tactic to take, while a second Raise allows the PC to know all the beneficial and negative tactics available. However, openly revealing them to the other PCs puts Jack on guard, negating any beneficial approaches without affecting the approaches that raise the TN.

If the PCs attack Jack or Pekklee, though, combat begins at once. Note that Pekklee is Invulnerable and ridiculously dangerous. Many, perhaps most, tables will have little to no means of actually killing her. Killing her, however, is not the means to end the combat: either redeeming Jack or killing him is. In either case, Pekklee cries out like a child whose favorite toy has been taken away and immediately flees, crashing through the garden and then straight through a wall; the quarter-kilometer fall to the street doesn't seem to bother her noticeably.

Jack activates his Crab Tattoo as a Free Action as the combat begins, and his Soul of the Four Winds, Embrace the Stone, Dance of the Flames, and Ride the Water Dragon kiho are all in action before combat begins. (The effects of the first three kiho are included in his statistics block below; Ride the Water Dragon allows him to heal 3 Wounds each Round during the Reactions Stage.)

Hoshi Jack

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 5	Water 3	Void 7
Honor 1.1	Status 8.0	Glory 9.2		
Armor TN: 34 (Soul of the Four Winds kiho)		Reduction: 12 (Crab Tattoo, Embrace the Stone)		
Attack: unarmed 10k6 (Simple)		Damage: unarmed 4k2		
Initiative: 9k4				
Wounds: 20 (+0), 28 (+3), 36 (+5), 44 (+10), 52 (+15), 60 (+20), 68 (Down, +40), 76 (Dead)				
Shadowlands Taint Rank: 8.0				
Shadowlands Powers: Awe of the Dark One, Unholy Beauty				

School/Rank: Hoshi Tzurai School 5

Techniques: *Swift Fist, Subtle Heart* (spend 1 Void to gain +1k1 to unarmed attack or +1k0 to unarmed damage for 5 Rounds)

Kiho: *Air:* Soul of the Four Winds, Stain Upon the Soul; *Earth:* Earth Needs No Eyes, Embrace the Stone; *Fire:* Dance of the Flames, Unbalance the Mind; *Water:* Freezing the Lifeblood, Ride the Water Dragon; *Void:* Death Touch, Eight Directions Awareness

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 1, Computer 2, Defense 4, Drive 1, Engineering 1, Etiquette 4, Jiu-jitsu (Atemi) 7, Intimidation 6, Investigation (Interrogation, Notice) 4, Lore: Maho 3, Lore: Shadowlands 6, Lore: Spirit Realms 3, Lore: Theology 7, Medicine 2, Meditation 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 6, Spellcraft 2, Stealth 3, Tea Ceremony 4, Temptation 5

Advantages/Disadvantages: Perceived Honor (4 Ranks); Dark Fate (won't trigger for this fight, since it potentially resolves his Dark Fate), Dark Secret (Tainted)

Unique Pekklee no Oni

Air 4	Earth 2	Fire 4	Water 3
Honor 0.0	Status -9.0	Glory 0.0	Strength 8
Armor TN: 25 (no armor)		Reduction: 10 (plus Invulnerable)	
Attack: unarmed strike (Complex) 10k4		Damage: unarmed strike 9k5	
Initiative: 5k4			
Wounds: 20 (+0), 40 (+5), 60 (+10), 80 (Dead)			
Taint Rank 7.0			
Powers: <i>Superior Invulnerability</i> (magic does not bypass Pekklee's invulnerability unless it has the Jade, Crystal, or Obsidian Keyword)			

If the PCs kill Jack, he staggers for a moment, looking surprised, and then drops to his knees. "I... Fortunes bless you, samurai..." before he collapses and breathes no more.

If they redeem him, Jack shakes his head, oblivious as the Pekklee flees the scene. "I... Fortunes bless you, samurai," he murmurs, dropping to his knees. "You are right. I cannot be a part of this. Even as the darkness overwhelms us, we have to stand until it snuffs us out. Thank you for reminding me of that." At that moment, a black-plumed bird – a crow, in fact – swoops out of the rain-filled sky and drops onto Jack's shoulder. He looks up, his grey eyes meeting the inky depths of the crow's, and nods once. "Yes. I... don't have much time. Jigoku will notice my defection soon enough and take actions. Before that happens..." He looks around at the PCs, and selects someone with a katana – by preference, one who

also rolled well during the attempts to persuade him. “Seppuku has gone out of style in the modern era... but I think it’s appropriate here. Will you be my second?” Jack produces a small knife and readies himself to perform the cuts, there on the wet grass. The rain falls down his face, making it impossible to tell if he is weeping. The crow leans its head against Jack’s, rubbing its beak soothingly along his cheek. After a pause for breath, Jack places the knife against his belly and bows his head.

Conclusion

When the PCs activate the detector at last, it is once again a short, swift process, and a few minutes later, the PCs have returned once again to Shiro no Fukurou. Ryoushi downloads the data and reports failure once again; it seems that wherever the nightmare storm was born, it was at neither of the Days of Thunder the PCs visited. “We will gain more data as we analyze the results,” Ryoushi reassures Yanako. “We will have a target soon.”

“How soon?” Yanako demands.

“...A few months?” Ryoushi ventures hesitantly.

Yanako stares back, then rises with a disgusted snort and stalks out of the room.

Nonetheless, the PCs have gained valuable information, both from the kamiton detector and through their own experiences at the Days of Thunder. Ryoushi and her assistants request detailed accounts of the PCs’ ventures at both ends of history, and when all is said and done, Ryoushi assures them, “We have started our hunt for the nightmare storm’s source. It’s just a matter of time now.”

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

At the end of the scenario, any PCs with Shadowlands Taint must make a Raw Earth roll with a TN of 5 + (5 x Taint Rank). If the roll fails, the PC acquires one additional point of Taint.

Experience Points

Surviving the adventure:	2XP
Good roleplaying:	+2XP
Defeating the Shadowlands army:	+2XP
Defeating or Redeeming Hoshi Jack:	+2XP

Total Possible Experience: 8XP

Honor

Redeeming Hoshi Jack earns each PC Honor Points equal to 12 minus their current Honor Rank. This award only applies to PCs who attempted rolls to persuade Jack; bystanders are not included.

Glory

Each PC gains Points of Glory equal to 2 plus the total number of Raises (or Void Points, potentially) each PC gained during the Mass Battle on the First Day of Thunder.

If the PCs actually manage to kill Pekkle, they gain a Rank of Glory.

Other Awards/Penalties

Kobe Family PCs gain +0.1 Status. Sezaru and Hanashi Family PCs gain +0.2 Status if Jack was redeemed.

Module Tracking Sheets

Was Jack killed or redeemed?

GM Reporting

Was Jack killed or redeemed? (Premiere only)

Appendix: NPCs

Kobe Bukijin

Air 2 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 3 Void 2

Honor 4.0

Status 1.0

Glory 2.0

Armor TN: 15 (no armor)

Reduction: 0

Attack: Katana of Fire (Complex) 8k4

Damage: Katana of Fire 8k2+4 (with two Spell Casting Raises)

Initiative: 4k2

Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)

School/Rank: Self-Taught Shugenja 2 (Affinity: Fire; Deficiencies: Earth, Air)

Techniques: *The Kami's Gift* (gain +2k2 on a Spell Casting roll when spending Void)

Spells: *Earth* (4k3): Armor of Earth (ML 1); *Fire* (7k4): Biting Steel (ML 1), Fires of Purity (ML 1), Hungry Blade (ML 3), Katana of Fire (ML 1); *Water* (5k3): Cloak of the Miya (ML 2), Path to Inner Peace (ML 1), Reversal of Fortunes (ML 1)

Skills: Athletics 2*, Battle 2, Calligraphy 1, Hunting 2*, Investigation 2*, Kenjutsu 3*, Meditation 2*, Spellcraft 2*, Staves 1*

Advantages/Disadvantages: Crab Hands, Prodigy (skills with asterisk *); Cursed by the Realm (Yomi), Dark Secret (peasant birth)

Doji Hayaku

Air 3 Earth 5 Fire 2 Water 3 Void 3

Reflexes 5

Agility 4

Honor 4.2

Status 7.2

Glory 3.7

Armor TN: 40 (Heavy

Reduction: 10

Armor

Attack: Katana (Simple) 8k4

Damage: Katana 9k2, heavy pistol 6k3

Initiative: 8k5+10

Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)

School/Rank: Kakita Duelist 1 (Insight Rank 3)

Techniques: *Way of the Crane* (add twice Iaijutsu to initiative, add +1k1+1 to attack and Focus rolls in Center Stance)

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 5, Courtier 2, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu (Focus) 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Shadowlands 1, Sincerity 3, Spears 4, Tea Ceremony 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Paragon of Duty, Strength of Earth

Player Handout #1

THE IKOMA HERALD

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DESCENDANT OF SHINSEI REVEALED!

Worries of new Day of Thunder approaching?

OTOSAN UCHI – Hoshi Jack, the well-known evangelist and television personality, was identified today by the Son of Storms, Yoritomo VII, as the legitimate heir of Shinsei.

Hoshi-san has not released a statement confirming Yoritomo-heika’s words, but neither has he denied them. In the meantime, several temples, including the Order of the Crow, have confirmed Hoshi Jack’s bloodline and role.

Hoshi Jack is best known as the host of the popular religious show, Hour of the Tao, on the Shinsei Channel, and has been the most visible face of the Brotherhood of Shinsei since the show’s premiere seven years ago. Hoshi-san has never admitted being the descendant

of Shinsei on his program, but has a reputation among even his few critics for great wisdom and knowledge of the Tao.

Not everyone received news of the new Shinsei with joy, however. Yoritomo VII himself raised the specter of a new confrontation with Jigoku in the form of a third Day of Thunder, and several commentators have expressed concerns about what cost a new Day of Thunder might take from our beloved Diamond Empire and its people. These concerns are especially high in light of the use of the Fire Dragon against Medinaat-al-Salaam three weeks ago; should war be in the Empire’s future, some say, we might be dangerously weakened when the battle against Jigoku begins.

Although much history was lost in the Shadow Wars, remaining records indicate that Shinsei or his heir has appeared twice before in Rokugan, once at the dawn of the Empire within a few decades of the start of the reign of the Hantei dynasty, and again approximately a millennium later, at the founding of the Toturi dynasty. At that latter event, the Mantis were raised to Great Clan status, setting them on their divine path toward the throne at the end of the Shadow Wars. Each Day of Thunder was a time of great turmoil and conflict, and most historians believed that the third Day of Thunder had already occurred along with the death of Akuma when the Fire Dragon was released against it a century ago.