

Surviving the Taint

**A One-Round Mid-Rank Adventure for Heroes of Rokugan:
The Nightmare War**

by Kevin Elmore

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Sezaru sends you to a different Rokugan with technological advances and strange gaijin influences. How long can you keep from getting voted out?

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

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 precedes 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 3.

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 2): If all the courtiers are lower-Rank or the PCs have no courtiers among them, reduce the TNs within Fort Hiruma by 5. In the Badlands, treat the PCs as leaving two weeks later than they actually do – if they leave in weeks 5 or 6, they still have to deal with Mind Your Step and Star-Struck, but Betty-Anne-Mae-Sue-Sue doesn't give them bad advice and the Shadowlands monsters they may encounter have already suffered sufficient Wounds to fill their +5 Wound Rank.

High End Party (most/all characters Rank 4): If the higher-rank PCs are courtiers, increase the DCs within Fort Hiruma by 5. For the combat, use the stats for high-end parties.

Adventure Summary and Background

Be sure to read the players' handouts before giving them out.

Almost a year ago, Sezaru's wife, Sezaru Yanako, had a vision that seemed to suggest Sezaru would soon die. Since that time, he has remained in seclusion, attempting to divine the nature of the threat against him, completely without success. Finally, though, Yanako had a second vision, one that seemed to suggest a samurai from this Rokugan reality is important to saving the various realms and Sezaru's life, though she is uncertain how. She only knows her name is Asako Jane. Sezaru at last leaves his seclusion, eager to see the matter resolved. He recruits the PCs to travel to this realm in his stead and to return with Jane.

Asako Jane's realm started off similar to the typical Rokugan, but a rather liberal Emperor opened up relations with some advanced gaijin. He fell in love with their culture and incorporated it into Rokugan's culture. Though there was friction at first, a century of integration has transformed Rokugan into a mesh of old-school samurai with the "Western" genre. The

Iweko name was retired and replaced with Hatfield, though all other family names remain the same.

Another aspect of this cultural transformation is that magic and technology have created leisure time across all the social classes. The accessibility of books has made them immensely popular. Each generation of stories has whetted the appetite for something more daring and dangerous. This led to the reality game series that are documented throughout the empire. The population—especially peasants—loves to read about samurai being tested.

Asako Jane is on her way to a production of *Surviving the Taint*, a reality show in Fort Hiruma. Since the technological advances have stymied Fu Leng, the Badlands (Shadowlands) have been turned into a source of entertainment safely behind the Kaiu Wall. Asako Jane vowed that she would participate, even choosing seppuku over breaking her word. Fortunately, the game allows contestants to bring teammates along, though they must share the same fate as the contestant.

The contestants at Hiruma Castle conspire to vote Asako Jane out of the castle. By herself, Jane is unable to fend them off, but with help from her team, she may be able to win *Surviving the Taint*. Otherwise, they must travel back to the Kaiu Wall before they can return to Sezaru with Jane in tow.

GM Preparation

Before beginning the module, check each character sheet for any skills listed on **GM Aid #1**. Conveniently, these are skills that Asako Jane won't have, so she'll have to rely on their competence to succeed at the challenges.

Try to familiarize yourself with the new clan names. Only the great clans are listed. If a player asks about a minor clan, feel free to make up an animal or say that it wasn't important enough to change. Due to the cultural change, Gaijin Name is no longer a penalty for PCs whose name could be found in a western (e.g., Hida Bob would be fine, but Moto Ramesh would still have the penalty).

Due to reality shows becoming prevalent, play up the lack of privacy of this world. Artists and journalists can be found everywhere drawing scenes and writing about events in the hopes that something interesting happens. Nezumi in particular love to be reporters since they aren't big on personal space anyway. Basically, if something happened that would cause people to pull out camera phones, have a nezumi show up.

Character Notes

Check the PCs' character sheets for the following:

- Ranks within skills that could be tested in a tournament; see **GM Aid #1**.
- Spiritual disadvantages, such as Haunted, Cursed by the Realm, or Momoku.
- Gajin Name with a western name.

Introduction

Before beginning, be sure the players have read **Player Handout #1** so they can react appropriately to this encounter.

Given permission to wander the Empire, our heroes pass through Roadrunner lands in order to find Asako Jane and bring her to Sezaru. All they have to do is get her permission and then say his name three times. Our talented heroes track her to Mizen Mura.

A loud shot greets our heroes as they enter the town. At one end of main street, a man clutches his chest as red spreads out across his yellow haori. At the other end stands a man in powder blue holding a smoking pistol. He holsters his pistol and bows to the Emerald Marshal.

He swaggers up to a woman dressed in yellow and red and says, "I'm mightily sorry it had to come to this, Asako Jane-san, but at least now I reckon my honor's been redeemed. Sayanora." He and the Emerald Marshal walk away, leaving the woman visibly flustered.

Based on what Sezaru told them, the PCs know the following:

- The PCs were sent to this Rokugan shard to find Asako Jane and convince her that Sezaru needs her for some unknown reason. Emperor Hatfield IV has agreed to allow her to leave his realm if she agrees.
- Each PC has the means to return to Sezaru by saying his name three times. The PC can take one other person, but that person has to be willing.
- This realm is obviously more advanced than the typical Rokugan, though PCs from technologically advanced realms may find the technology quaint.

As the eta clear the street, Asako Jane is approachable. She spent most of her Asako training in the libraries

rather than in court, so she is polite but a little rustic. She imparts the following:

- Jane has dreamed of Sezaru, so she believes the PCs' story. She'll be ready to travel to their realm as soon as she finishes a matter of honor.
- Jane had been goaded into entering one of the most popular reality series, *Surviving the Taint*. It was not one of her proudest moments, and she should have seen it coming from Kitsuki Po. Since she swore on her honor, she must follow through with it. To fail in this endeavor would mean seppuku to cleanse her family's honor.
- Po was a childhood friend of Jane's, but they have drifted apart. He is a little belligerent toward her for some reason (she does not elaborate on this, but astute PCs may notice her discomfort).
- *Surviving the Taint* is a reality series where teams stay in Fort Hiruma for several weeks. After a series of competitions and politicking, the teams vote on which team is expelled from Fort Hiruma to brave the Badlands back to the Kaiu Wall.
- Jane does not see anything wrong with the Empire making a game out of the Badlands. She knows that back in her grandparents' day, the Armadillo had a hard time fighting the Badlands creatures, but efficient jade-mining and fully automatic guns have made it laughably easy to defend the wall. With one of the greatest threats to the Empire nullified, people have turned to reality serials, which are becoming more and more outrageous (examples include *Who Wants to be Enlightened*, *So You Think You Can Meditate*, and *Iron Crane Chef*).
- Jane was on her way by stagecoach to the Shinsei Corral with her partner, Shiba Rick. Though she is an expert loremaster, she lacks many of the other tournament skills. Rick is the ideal complement to her ability. Unfortunately, they ran into his nemesis, Kakita Tamashi, and an Emerald Marshal to sanction the duel between them. Unless she finds another teammate, she will have to face *Surviving the Taint* alone.
- The PCs can join her team. Though teams are expected to be only two people, there is no rule forbidding larger teams. After she completes *Surviving the Taint*, for better or for worse, she'll agree to accompany the PCs back to Sezaru.

- The many episodes of *Surviving the Taint* vary in their outcomes, but they've always been about the teams engaging in a competition to win an extra vote. Teams then vote to expel another team from the fort. Half of the competition is based on lore, while the other half is based on other traditional events, such as etiquette, iajutsu, and poetry.

Encounter: The Shinsei Corral

The group arrives in Armadillo lands. Unlike Crab lands in most Rokugan realities, the Armadillo enjoy a period of prosperity and peace. There are no heavily armored patrols scrutinizing any visitor. Up until they arrive at the Kaiu Wall, the Armadillo lands could be confused with the Lion (or Bobcat).

The wall stands more majestically than what PCs may expect. Jade inlays are woven liberally through the wall, and the ramparts are armed with cannons and Gatling guns. Crab veterans may be taken aback by the lackadaisical nature of these samurai. As the group arrives at the wall, read the following.

The heroes travel in style through Armadillo lands and are welcomed warmly by the samurai. Last century, the Armadillo went by a different name, and they grimly fought the Badlands. The influx of jade and the fully automatic guns have taught the savages not to mess with the empire.

A loud whistle greets our heroes as they enter the town of Shinsei's Corral, at the base of the wall. The train that will take our heroes to Fort Hiruma hisses steadily. The stagecoach driver pulls up to the Last Stop Inn and begins unloading the luggage. Asako Jane and her entourage are immediately approached by a peasant carrying a camera, but a well-dressed dandy named Doji Clyde shoos him away and sets up his own camera.

The PCs spend the night here before embarking by rail to Fort Hiruma. People here are already aware of Asako Jane and her team, including several "facts" about the PCs that are greatly exaggerated. Doji Clyde is famous for aggressively getting the scoop on all samurai participating in *Surviving the Taint*. Clyde always chases away Oni, the peasant reporter, leaving him for scraps. Since Oni is not a samurai, he often gets ignored by the celebrities that come through town. Any PC who offers Oni an exclusive story earns Honor for exhibiting compassion.

Kuni Retsu, a Kaiu-trained blacksmith who also doubles as the mayor—greet Asako Jane and the PCs. His hospitality is sincere, though those samurai hoping for upscale accommodations find it lacking. Retsu chases away the reporters if the PCs look uncomfortable with their presence. Retsu is a hulking man who is very friendly and gregarious. He treats each of his guests like celebrities—in part because they are but also because most contestants of *Surviving the Taint* don't make it back. He gladly regales anyone who asks about how he personally maintains the train and rides out once every two months to ensure the rails are still in place. The jade inlay keeps the tracks anchored and immune to the shifting Badlands. Before the night is out, Retsu asks Jane and each PC for something personal. If they return, they can reclaim their keepsake. If not, Retsu plans to add the item to his ever-growing Shrine of Fallen Contestants.

At first, the players should experience the rest of the town as happy-go-lucky Armadillo samurai and thrill-seeking others. As the evening goes by, though, try to play up the town's grotesquerie, things laughing at zombies and treating the deaths of so many samurai in the Badlands as something to read about in a zeni dreadful or bet on in the gambling hall. By Imperial decree, only those associated with the game show at Fort Hiruma are allowed to get near the train. Describe the various buildings that have sprung up as a result of this industry:

- **The Shrine of Fallen Contestants** – A phonograph runs nonstop, reciting death haiku that were left by previous contestants. Various keepsakes are arranged somehow both reverently and tackily, never to be reclaimed by those who left them. Praying at the shrine and making a TN 25 **Meditation/Void** check grants a free Void point to be spent in the game itself.
- **The Shrine of Daikoku** – This shrine has the usual gambling hall where the pious can "donate" money. There is also a betting hall with odds for each of the contestants:

Asako Jane/Shiba Rick, 5:1 (drops to 60:1 upon news of his death)

Kuni Earl, 121:1

Kitsuki Po/Mirumoto Ogawa, 7:1

Kakita Etsu/Asahina Kinoshita, 4:1

Matsu Shineko/Ide Red, 11:1

Soshi Cheryl/Bayushi Daryl/Bayushi Carol, 2:1

Yoritomo Caleb/Hida Paul, 31:1

There are also odds for how many of the losing teams will make it back to the Wall without at least one death in their party:

Zero Teams, 250:1
 One Team, 14:1
 Two Teams, 3:1
 Three Teams, 9:1
 Four Teams, 20:1
 Five Teams, 60:1

If anyone asks the gamblers in the hall why it's so unlikely that no team will survive the Badlands, they all point to Kuni Earl's phenomenal track record in returning safely from Fort Hiruma. "He's got some kinda trick, that's for sure. Only way he don't make it back across the Badlands if he somehow finally manages to win the whole shebang."

- **Wild Hida's Badland Safari** – This studio contains a couple of box cameras and several painted wooden replicas of Badlands monsters. Normally, having a picture taken costs 7 zeni, but contestants can get their pictures taken for free. The proprietor, Hida Pete winks jovially and loudly exclaims that he hopes the PCs don't meet whatever it was they took their picture with.
- **Last Moments** – Thanks to the phonograph, death haiku can now be preserved in the original voice. Contestants are urged to leave their death haiku here before embarking into the Badlands. There is no penalty for refusing, but the people of the Shinsei Corral really look forward to hearing them. Anyone who asks to listen the death haiku of the current contestants need to make a **Courtier / Awareness** check of TN 20. Success allows the PC to receive +5 to all attempts to gather rumors on them. Give out **Player's Handout #3**.
- **One-Eye's Shooting Gallery** – This noisy entertainment hall is run by the nezumi, One-Eye, who glumly tells anyone who asks that he lost his eye to a scope mounted on a rifle with a very powerful kick. In truth, his eyepatch covers a perfectly functional eye and sometimes even switches sides. One-Eye keeps three zombies in a room where entertainment seekers can pay 3 zeni to fire six rounds at the ambulatory zombies. One-Eye jumps around in the gallery to lure the zombies to him, but the zombies are tethered by chain so that the participants are never truly in danger, though One-Eye plays up the hazards. One-Eye proudly proclaims that he never uses samurai zombies. Only peasants and goblins.
- **Kaui Zed's Tour of the Wall** – Retsu's cousin, Zed, maintains the armaments on the wall. Anyone interested in touring the wall is led up and down the ramparts. Gatling guns are mounted all along the wall, and the very

large kill zone shows why the Badlands creatures do not assault the wall very often. Tourists are offered the opportunity to fire off a few rounds, though the Jade-tipped bullets are not used.

The other contestants are staying the night in the village as well, but Asako Jane and Kuni Retsu explain that it is bad luck for teams to meet each other before the train ride. Any attempts to contact the contestants directly are met with hostility and dismissal. Any PC who makes contact with a contestant gets one rank of Unluck for every two contestants reached this way. This Unluck only applies to within Fort Hiruma. It goes away when they win or are voted out.

PCs can choose to make **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** rolls to learn more about the contestants. Refer to the GM Aid. PCs who ask about the contestants automatically get the first description of them. Because of the hectic betting in the Shrine to Daikoku, the PC can add 10 to their roll if they ask the gamblers.

Be as portentous as you like, but the night passes uneventfully in the Shinsei Corral. In the morning, Asako Jane is ready to head to Fort Hiruma.

Last Train to Nowhere

The tracks pass through the Kaiu Wall and through the Badlands straight to a tunnel 300 feet north of Fort Hiruma. The train stops in a large cavern directly under the castle where it is turned around for its return trip.

Chug-chug-chug goes the locomotive as it crosses the bleak Badlands. Stretching over the train is the one telegraph line connecting Fort Hiruma to the rest of the Empire. Despite the speed they travel, our heroes find no refreshing breeze to cool them. Shortly after leaving the station at the Shinsei Corral, the connection to Sezar disappears. It looks like our heroes aren't going to return to Sezar until they get north of the Kaiu Wall.

The tracks lead to a huge tunnel sealed with iron doors. As the train slows down, the doors open outward, allowing the train to complete its journey underneath Fort Hiruma. The train finally stops at its destination: A large stone chamber with a podium on one side. Otomo Archibald, the master of ceremonies for Surviving the Taint, smiles and waves at the heroes. Bright flashes of light fill the room as a dozen reporters—all of them nezumi—take photographs and

jot in their notebooks the highlights of the heroes' arrival.

Sure enough, the PCs can no longer return to Sezar by saying his name. The portal to Jigoku (often called Tarnation) jealously anchors everyone in the Badlands.

Otomo Archibald is dressed in the best clothes a dandy can find. His pencil-thin mustache looks pleasing on him but can be off-putting to traditional Rokugani PCs. He welcomes them warmly and shows them to their quarters. Since *Surviving the Taint* usually has teams of two, their quarters will be a little crowded. There is one room for all the males and one room for all the females. Nonhumans have to share with the humans. That evening is the opening ceremony.

Unlike the rest of the Badlands, shugenja suffer no ill effects here. Enough kami is shipped in by the train that Fort Hiruma is no longer a dead zone.

The large courtyard in the middle of Fort Hiruma opens to a putrid yellow sky, but the air is still crisp and clean for our heroes, who share a stage with Otomo Archibald. A dozen nezumi scamper around the courtyard, hurriedly transcribing whatever is said or sketching a contestant's face. A couple of nezumi plant box cameras around the courtyard to get some great photographs.

Archibald smiles a broad grin and looks directly at one of the nezumi. He bellows, "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Surviving the Taint. For the next six weeks, you can buy the latest bu novel and learn the fates of our contestants. As usual, when a team is voted out of the castle, they must walk back to the Kaiu Wall and hope they can survive the taint. One of our reporters follows the team so you get all the sordid details of their trip back. "So without further ado, let's meet our contestants..."

The rules for the game are found in Player Handout #2.

At this point, the nezumi swarm on the stage and ask many probing questions. Some of the questions may even be dishonorable, such as, "Do you plan to cheat on your wife while you're here?" The nezumi reporters have little regard for personal space or comfort zones, and they should be portrayed throughout the entire six weeks as paparazzi, since the PCs are now celebrities in this Rokugan. Every so often, a nezumi rushes to the telegraph machine and beeps off an exciting update.

Let the players review Player's Handout #2 and then let them determine the actions for this week.

The Competition

The mechanics for the competition are loose and subject to your interpretation. Think of every reality show you watched or tried to avoid and try to apply those aspects to this competition. Each week consists of four stages: Prepare, compete, mingle, and vote. If necessary, use **GM Aid #2** to keep track of player actions.

Prepare

During the week, the team can perform four actions. No single PC can do more than two actions. This does not increase if the team is larger; Otomo Archibald feels insulted that Asako Jane violates convention by bringing in a large team. He and the reporters hound the PCs and back them into uncomfortable interviews and trivial contests so that they gain no undue advantage over the other teams. Multiple PCs can engage in the same action; this would result in a cooperative roll, but it counts as an action against the PC. They may attempt any or all of the following actions:

- Sway someone: The PC can target one member of an opposing team and convince them to vote for someone specific that week. Each NPC has a skill that's required to convince them, including the TN. Success convinces the team captain to vote for whomever the PC chooses for that week only. If a PC wants to convince an NPC to vote a certain way on a subsequent week, he must make another roll.
- Gather rumors: The PC can attempt to learn about one of the competitors. The TN is listed with each NPC, but the PCs do not get the same bonus they had at the Shinsei Corral. The PCs gain +10 to the roll for each additional action they spend on the same NPC (could even be in the same week). Alternatively, a **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll of TN 20 alerts the PC as to which contest is scheduled for this week.
- Train for an event: The PC can train for a specific event in the hopes that it will be featured during the competition. Each train action allows the PC to add 10 to his skill total if that skill comes up in competition. This bonus applies even if the event is later than this week. A PC doesn't have to actually know what the upcoming event is; he can blindly train and hope to get an advantage.

Compete

Each team sends one member to compete. Because Otomo Archibald chose the events intentionally to disadvantage Asako Jane, a PC will always be the better option. The PC makes the listed skill check for the week and compares it to that week's TN. All teams compete except for the shugenja-only contest. The winning team gains at least one extra vote. See GM Aid #1 for details on the competition.

Mingle

After the competition, competitors have one hour to mingle before voting. During this time, the PCs have one chance only to sway a team. Cooperative rules can be used here. The TN to sway someone is 10 higher due to the small window of time. Alternatively, the PCs could instead learn how a specific team is going to vote with a **Courtier/Awareness** roll of TN 15.

Vote

Each team captain votes to boot someone out of Fort Hiruma. The winner of the competition has an additional vote. The team that receives the most votes is booted. If this team is Asako Jane, jump directly to the Badlands portion of the module. In the case of a tie, there is an iajutsu tournament with the loser sent to the Badlands. A karmic strike means that both teams are booted. If two NPC teams are tied, eyeball who the winner would be based on their stats.

Week 1

When all of the actions are accounted for, the teams are brought together to the courtyard for the shugenja tournament (no substitution).

After our heroes gather on the stage again, Otomo Archibald addresses the reporters, "Ladies and Gentlemen, you've heard what our contestants have to say about themselves. You've even heard some sly remarks about some of them. Which one will win this week's competition and get the extra vote? Oh, did I say extra vote? I mean the DECIDING vote!"

An excited murmur comes from the gathered reporters. Smiling broadly, Archibald continues, "But that's not the only surprise, folks. For the first time ever in Surviving the Taint, our contest is for shugenja only."

More murmurs erupt from the nezumi. The Coyote siblings appear pleasantly surprised. Asahina Kinoshita nods solemnly. Kuni Earl shrugs. The other teams do not appear happy with this news. Asako Jane glances nervously at our heroes.

Thanks to the machinations of Kitsuki Po, the first competition is restricted to shugenja. This means that Kuni Earl, Soshi Cheryl, and Asahina Kinoshita can compete, while the other three teams cannot. Asako Jane's team cannot compete if there is no shugenja among the PCs.

Po's plan was to have Asahina Kinoshita win in order to cinch the vote against Jane. The competition does not go entirely as planned, and either a PC or Kuni Earl wins. Whoever wins gets to decide who is booted from the castle. If Kuni Earl wins, he votes for Kakita Etsu (and Asahina Kinoshita) unless the PCs persuade him otherwise. This upset stalls Po's plans, but he and his plants have a few more weeks to get rid of Jane.

Side Plots

There are other stories interwoven with the competition. Use any of these to break up the monotony of holding court, especially if there are PCs who are not good with persuading people or learning about votes. None of these take up the PCs' actions for the competition.

Remember, Remember

This plot centers on Kuni Earl and his true motivation for playing *Surviving the Taint* 13 times. The first time he entered, it was with his wife, Kuni Sue, as his partner. They were voted out of the castle, and they trekked through the Badlands with their nezumi reporter. They encountered a band of Lost, led by an expert sharpshooter, Bayushi Nichiro. Knowing the value of a Kuni traitor, Nichiro murdered the nezumi and took Sue hostage. He promised Earl that he'd get Sue back for a few tiny favors.

The first favor is to plant dynamite underneath Fort Hiruma to blow it sky-high. To do this, Kuni Earl used all his remaining influence to get booked on *Surviving the Taint* a second time. He smuggled a dozen sticks of dynamite into the castle and planted them. Though he had no more favors to cash in, the readers were enthralled with a contestant returning, so he kept

getting invited back. Each time, he brought more dynamite, hid it under the castle, got booted out, and walked back to the Kaiu Wall with no problems; Bayushi Nichiro ensures that Earl makes it back unmolested.

Unless the PCs are particularly intrusive, they likely will not know that Earl's luggage contains a dozen sticks of dynamite. Sense Earth or Fire could locate the gunpowder. Somebody with a keen sense of smell might notice something acerbic coming from him. Otherwise, the only evidence of his traitorous plot is if someone catches him planting the dynamite.

Sometime between week 1 and week 2, have the PCs roll **Investigation (Notice)** / **Perception** with a TN of 25. Those who make it notice Kuni Earl with a satchel over his shoulder heading into the servants' area down below. Since contestants are forbidden from the servants' area, it is obvious that Earl is up to something. Those who simply follow lose him after a few twists and turns. Those who follow him with a **Stealth (Sneaking)** / **Agility** roll of TN 15 can stay close enough to him to see him cast Embrace of Kenro-ji-jin and pass through an earthen wall. If Earl is alerted to anyone following him, he aborts his plan and returns to try again later.

Servants who are questioned report that each time Earl arrives for *Surviving the Taint*, he always comes to the servants' area. They do not ask his business, and he doesn't give it. He seems to vanish and then come back a few hours later to head back. Compiling all of the servants' information shows the likely spot where Earl vanished. Though the wall is seamless, it registers as hollow when rapped. There is a 1-inch wall separating the servants' area from a hidden room.

Inside the room are over 100 sticks of dynamite. For now, it looks like the room is being used to store the dynamite, but anyone with knowledge of gaijin pepper knows that if these sticks were placed strategically throughout the lower level of Fort Hiruma, the blast could level it.

PCs could get Earl to open up with a **Courtier (Manipulation)** / **Awareness** roll of TN 30. If the PC has Lost Love or True Love, the TN drops to 20 as he feels a kinship to the PC. Once he opens up, he is consumed by shame for his deeds. The PCs can convince him to give himself up. If he does, the PCs can convince Yoritomo Caleb to vote for whomever they want for no action. Unscrupulous PCs could instead blackmail Earl to vote how the PCs want.

If Earl cannot be swayed, he flees into the ground. If he cannot be stopped, he returns to ignite the dynamite and himself. The explosion collapses a quarter of the castle, but the contest participants are unharmed. Several Hiruma guards were killed, and players may worry that the Badlands may invade (it won't). Possibly to the PCs' horror, the game is much too important to stop now.

Note that if Earl is arrested or is otherwise removed, the game only lasts for 5 weeks instead of 6. Cut out a week as you see fit.

Love Triangle

This plot revolves around one nezumi's adoration of another nezumi, who has an unnatural obsession with one of the human servants.

Chitter-Chuck is one of the reporters that document what happens. He frequently sends the telegraphs with breaking stories. He gets a little eager sometimes, but he's fairly mellow for a nezumi. At some point, a PC catches him staring wistfully at another nezumi, Razor Claw. She's one of the brave reporters that travel with the exiled contestant. Depending on how unforgiving the Badlands have been, she either returns in 2 weeks or in 3 days.

Unfortunately for Chitter-Chuck, Razor Claw does not return his affections. Her attraction is of an unnatural sort. Anyone paying attention to her catches her peering discreetly at a servant named Shu. Rather than the lofty wistful look that Chitter-Chuck gives, her glances are more intense and predatory.

PCs who choose to intervene could attempt any sort of resolution: Convince Chitter-Chuck to give up, convince Razor Claw to return his love, or even force Shu to give in to her (ew). Each attempt requires the applicable social skill roll at TN 25.

If PCs fail to change Razor Claw's mind, then she panics and chooses to run away with Shu. Unfortunately this means kidnapping him and taking him into the Badlands. She figures she'd rather have a tainted lover than no lover at all. There's no reason this shouldn't bite the PCs if they get voted out of the castle later.

You Look Familiar

This plot is a distraction for a PC who has nothing to do in the contest. If all of the players are engaged already, then feel free to skip this at your discretion.

A reporter named Gray Muzzle mistakes one of the human or nezumi PCs as Lou. This Lou might be part of the PC's clan, or Lou might be a different clan. Either way, Gray Muzzle is excited to talk to "Lou" about being in all these wacky adventures. Gray Muzzle clings to the PC and documents every single move or word. This does not impact the PC's ability to perform the courtier actions, though how that samurai reacts could gain or lose Honor.

Gray Muzzle is just as oblivious about comfort zones as the rest of the nezumi, so he asks all sorts of awkward questions of Lou:

- What happened to the geisha that pledged her undying love of Lou?
- Did Lou ever get revenge on Seppun Fujiko after losing at *Undercover Guard*?
- How does Lou feel about Lou's sister being revealed as a maho-tsukai?
- As the winner of the pepper-eating contest on *Mustang Culinary Challenge*, how does Lou feel about this pepper that Gray Muzzle has been carrying around?
- Does Lou feel good about lying about who Lou is?

Gray Muzzle may offend, but he rolls with whatever reaction the PC has: He apologizes if the PC is offended, and he's effervescent if the PC plays along.

Click-Pop-Snap's Amazing Camera

This plot involves a brilliant photographer and his enchanted camera picking up more about a PC than he bargained. This only works for a PC who has a fitting spiritual disadvantage, such as Haunted, Cursed by the Realms, Taint (1.0 or higher), Elemental Imbalance, or some other spiritual imbalance. If no PCs qualify, then skip this plot.

The best photographer at Fort Hiruma is Click-Pop-Snap. He is a young, eager nezumi who has a natural talent for capturing the best with his camera. Nezumi couriers constantly run his photographs to the Empire for publication in the latest bu novels. Unbeknownst to him, the spirit in his camera has awakened as a nemuranai.

For the most part, people who have their pictures taken by Click-Pop-Snap have their best features showcased. Attractive people seem to glow more, jovial people have the perfect smiles, etc. Those people with dark spiritual connections show up in the photographs with that darkness emphasized. The ghost haunting the PC is clearly visible, a hungry spirit appears in a doorway beckoning for the subject to approach, or the subject shows up as a void. The pictures are disturbing enough that the PC who is captured this way is considered to have Disturbing Countenance.

The PC can lose this flaw by appeasing the dark spirits around him. This requires a **Meditation / Void** roll of TN 15 while a shugenja prays. If there is no PC shugenja, the afflicted PC can try to recruit one of the NPCs, but a favor may be owed in the form of voting a certain way.

Information Exchange

This plot has Otomo Archibald seeking more information about the Hooter clan. Archibald is not supposed to be mingling too much with the contestants, so he focuses only on PCs with poor courtier skills. That way, if it ever comes out that he's been talking with them, he can simply deny it.

Archibald is intrigued about the samurai from another realm. He grills the PCs about where they're from, what else can Sezar do, any plans to be a permanent fixture here.

This is purely a roleplaying encounter that can stretch through the entire season if the PCs are willing to keep talking with Archibald. Being an Otomo, Archibald knows the value of exchanging favors. He never comes out and tells the PC what the competition is this week, but he couches it in some elaborate story during their conversation. If the PC makes a **Courtier/Intelligence** roll of TN 15, he can pick up on what Archibald is telling him.

Week 2

From here on out until the final week, the contests are run mostly the same. Otomo Archibald is a showman, and he speaks for the benefit of all the nezumi reporters so they can run their stories to the Empire for the benefit of those who are hooked on reading about *Surviving the Taint*.

After another week of politicking, our heroes gather in the meeting hall for a second time. Otomo Archibald steps onto the stage with sweeping gestures. The nezumi reporters all lean in to hear him speak.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I know you're eager to learn the fate of [1st week's loser]. They are still out in the Badlands, but since their reporter hasn't returned, that means they're not dead yet. Stay tuned for details!"

"Today, our remaining teams will show us who is the better [if no substitution] dancer. Teams, send us your candidate."

This contest is a straight-up **Perform (Dancing) / Agility** roll for the PC. If the PC beats TN 27, he wins. Otherwise, Bayushi Carol is the best dancer (or a random team if this team was eliminated). Whoever wins has his vote count double. As usual, the PCs have one chance after the contest to sway one person to change his vote.

Unless manipulated by the PCs, the remaining teams vote in the following way:

- Asako Jane and PC: As the PCs decide.
- Kuni Earl: Randomly choose his vote.
- Kitsuki Po and Mirumoto Ogawa: Asako Jane
- Kakita Etsu and Asahina Kinoshita: Asako Jane
- Matsu Shineko and Ide Red: Asako Jane
- Soshi Cheryl, Bayushi Daryl, and Bayushi Carol: Whoever is leading. If PCs blackmail them and don't keep up the pressure, then Asako Jane.
- Yoritomo Caleb and Hida Paul: Randomly choose their vote. If PCs blackmail them and don't keep up the pressure, then Asako Jane.

Week 3

This week gives the winner two extra votes, which at this stage is practically single-handedly choosing who walks.

The crowd hushes as Otomo Archibald takes the stage. Decorative spurs jangle as he paces back and forth for what feels like forever. Finally he whispers, "And now it is time to learn the fate of [1st week's losers]. It's been 2 weeks since they were voted out of this castle. And now they're..."

Everyone leans in, hanging on Archibald's trailing sentence. "Just fine," he explodes. "Kuni Retsu tested

them himself for taint, and they passed. Keep an eye out for the next zen dread, I climbed the Mounds of Lunacy. But for now, we have another competition."

Asako Jane's face looks hopeful. Archibald continues, "This week, we will see who is the best [if no substitution] wrestler!" Jane's look of hope sags into despair. "But that's not all! This week's winner's vote will count for triple instead of double." At that, the nezumi all chitter excitedly as they scribble frantically in their notebooks.

This contest is a straight-up **Juijutsu (Wrestling) / Strength** roll for the PC. If the PC beats TN 34, he wins. Otherwise, Hida Paul is the best wrestler (or a random team if this team was eliminated). Whoever wins has his vote count triple. As usual, the PCs have one chance after the contest to sway one person to change his vote.

Unless manipulated by the PCs, the remaining teams vote in the same way as week 2. Remember that anyone whose vote was manipulated last week still needs pressure put on him unless the PCs get a permanent vote.

Week 4

If there are only two teams, skip to the final week.

There is nothing this week that impacts the competition.

A hush falls over the crowd as Otomo Archibald enters the meeting hall. His suit and hat of all white belie the somber air about him. He silently steps on the stage and announces, "Ladies and gentlemen, we've received word that [2nd week's loser] and [3rd week's loser] did not make it to the Kaiu Wall. The nezumi informed us that both teams met their demise by a blood tumbleweed. Watch your steps, folks..."

Archibald's face suddenly transforms from somber to manic as he adds, "...which is exactly the advice we're giving to this week's loser. It's dangerous out there. And now you're wondering what this week's contest is." Asako Jane looks hopeful. "This week's contest is [if no substitution] yodeling!" Jane's face flushes red with anger.

This contest is a straight-up **Perform (Singing) / Awareness** roll for the PC. If the PC beats TN 40, he wins. Otherwise, Asahina Kinoshita is the best yodeler (or a random team if this team was eliminated).

Whoever wins has his vote count double. As usual, the PCs have one chance after the contest to sway one person to change his vote.

This week, Yoritomo Caleb receives bribes from Kitsuki Po to vote for Asako Jane. Even if Po got voted off, a note with sufficient money was left for Caleb. Unless manipulated by the PCs, the remaining teams vote in the following way. Remember that anyone whose vote was manipulated last week still needs pressure put on him unless the PCs get a permanent vote.

- Asako Jane and PC: As the PCs decide.
- Kuni Earl: Randomly choose his vote.
- Kitsuki Po and Mirumoto Ogawa: Asako Jane
- Kakita Etsu and Asahina Kinoshita: Asako Jane
- Matsu Shineko and Ide Red: Asako Jane
- Soshi Cheryl, Bayushi Daryl, and Bayushi Carol: Whoever is leading. If PCs blackmail them and don't keep up the pressure, then Asako Jane.
- Yoritomo Caleb and Hida Paul: Asako Jane.

Week 5

If there are only two teams, skip to the final week. This week's kumari competition takes place in a shallow pool of water. If it's not kumari, feel free to insert some other environmental obstacle.

In the fifth week of Surviving the Taint, Asako Jane looks like she has hardly slept. She's spent many fitful nights poring over her scrolls, and she frantically fans herself to stay awake. As our heroes gather in the courtyard, Jane confides, "I-I-I don't understand it. Surviving the Taint always has lore challenges. It is a long-held tradition for samurai to prove their education. Half the contests have always been about lore. I've felt so useless up to now. Today has to be about lore."

Her fan pauses briefly, and she slowly swivels her head toward the stage as Otomo Archibald stands before the crowd. He says, "There has been a long tradition of knowledge among the samurai. For ages, we have exchanged knowledge to better ourselves. And today, we shall test that knowledge. It's what you've all been waiting for. Proof that we knowledgeable samurai know for a fact that the best contest is [if no substitution] Kumari!"

In the corner, a fan snaps in half.

This contest is a straight-up **Games (Kumari) / Reflexes** roll for the PC. If the PC beats TN 49, he wins. Otherwise, Bayushi Daryl is the best kumari player (or a random team if this team was eliminated). Whoever wins has his vote count double. As usual, the PCs have one chance after the contest to sway one person to change his vote.

Unless manipulated by the PCs, the remaining teams vote in the same way as week 4. Remember that anyone whose vote was manipulated last week still needs pressure put on him unless the PCs get a permanent vote.

Week 6

This is the final week. It is not necessarily the sixth week if two teams are eliminated at once or Kuni Earl is arrested for treason. As befitting the tradition of the new culture, the contest is about gunslinging.

When our heroes meet with Asako Jane in the courtyard, her manic, disheveled look is replaced with tranquility. With even certainty in her voice, she confides, "I reckon I failed you, samurai, and I am so humbly sorry. You have done me great honor by competing in my stead, but I must do this contest myself, regardless of what it is. If I cannot do just this one task, I must commit seppuku."

She forces a smile as Otomo Archibald enters. A large patch of ground is cleared as he speaks, "A samurai keeps his soul on his belt. The katana represents the purity of his ancestors, but the gun represents the strength of our focus as we turn to the future. This week's contest is iajutsu at 20 paces. Remember, your goal is to shoot the gun out of the hand. Choose your champions."

It should be apparent that Jane is not fit to duel. She still wants to duel, but she relents if someone insists on taking her place. Such an insistence requires a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll of TN 25, or she commits seppuku after the duel to cleanse her shame, and the PCs have to return without her.

Though the expectation is to duel with guns, the contestants respect the old ways enough to relent to a sword duel, though whoever defaults to the katana gets

some discreet titters from onlookers. If Kakita Etsu is in the final round, he insists on a katana anyway.

To duel with guns, follow the exact same rules but on striking, replace the Iajutsu skill with the Firearms skill. The strike must call two raises for a Called Shot where the duelist shoots the gun out of the other person's hand. If there is a kharmic strike, both teams are declared winners.

If the PC wins this duel, go straight to the Conclusion and read the appropriate ending. If the PC loses, then the other team wins, and the PCs are kicked out of the castle. Continue on to the Badlands portion.

The Badlands

The PCs end up here with Asako Jane if they are unable to win *Surviving the Taint*. Since the Badlands are more aggressive at the beginning of the season, how difficult the trek back to the Kaiu Wall is depends on when they get kicked out of Fort Hiruma.

- If the PCs make it to week 5 or 6, run only these encounters: Mind Your Step and Star-Struck
- If the PCs make it to week 3 or 4, run only these counters: Mind Your Step, Star-Struck, Rolling, and Higher Ground
- If the PCs get kicked out on week 1 or 2, run all of the Badlands encounters.

As a reminder, PCs can gain a pip of Taint for any of the following unless they succeed at an Earth roll:

- Spending 1 day in the Badlands without jade (TN 10)
- Injured (TN 10)
- Exposed to Tainted blood/ichor (TN 10)
- Clawed/bitten by a Tainted creature (TN 15)
- Eating/drinking Tainted food/water (TN 20)

Shortly after our heroes are voted out of the castle, they are shown to the west gate. The landscape beyond looks pale and sickly, and a wolf howls in the distance. The Hiruma guards show no emotion as they open the gates for our heroes. A spry nezumi named Betty-Anne-Mae-Sue-Sue bounds after them. Per the agreement, she guides our heroes through the Badlands and writes of their thrilling tales of action.

Otomo Archibald somberly stands by the gate, handing each of our heroes a bag with enough food to last 2 weeks. He gravely says, "You know the rules, Asako Jane. You get back to the safety of the Kaiu

Wall as quickly as you can. Don't try to be a hero out there."

[If Kitsuki Po did not get voted off] In the shadows, Kitsuki Po watches the heroes leave. As he twirls his mustache, a wicked grin crosses his face.

Following the Tracks

The PCs might get the idea to follow the railroad tracks back. Unfortunately for them, the Badlands have other plans. The tunnel is 300 feet from Fort Hiruma, and the Badlands hide the track amid fog. The Badlands even defy physics so that circling the castle still does not result in intersecting the tracks. Once outside, the PCs must blaze a trail back to Armadillo lands.

Betty-Anne-Mae-Sue-Sue

Team Asako Jane is not alone. The nezumi reporter, Betty-Anne-Mae-Sue-Sue, accompanies them on their trek. She acts as a guide through the Badlands, but her primary purpose is to turn their journey into an exciting bu novel. As such, her advice is not always in the best interest of the PCs. With previous teams, she's been able to escape as they get killed, and she sees this as no different.

At the start, and after each encounter, PCs can attempt a **Hunting (Survival) / Awareness** check of TN 30. A PC with ranks in Lore: Shadowlands and Hunting that add up to four or more makes this check without rolling. Success reveals that Betty-Anne-Mae-Sue-Sue has been withholding information on how to bypass some obstacles. Any obstacle influenced by Betty-Anne-Mae-Sue-Sue has two TNs listed. The higher number assumes they're listening to Betty-Anne-Mae-Sue-Sue's advice.

Betty-Anne-Mae-Sue-Sue does not fight if the PCs confront her. She explains that she's just doing her job and promises not to do it again. She is, of course, lying and will absolutely lure them into the worst part of an encounter. If the PCs drive her off, she leaves them alone and watches them from afar.

The Fate of Asako Jane

Though Jane is a courtier who really has no business walking through the Badlands, she's protected by the Fortunes. In each of the Badland challenges, Jane survives, though she may be battered. She most assuredly will return Tainted. Unless the entire party dies, Jane will survive to the end, so do not roll her skills. The PCs have enough on their plate to worry about, but never assuage their fears about Jane.

Mind Your Step (Day 1)

This region of the Badlands consists of shrubs and sickly trees. Aside from that, it looks like a typical desert. Unfortunately, this desert is rife with quicksand. When they first enter the area, have them make **Hunting (Survival) / Perception** rolls of TN 20/30. If they all make it, they avoid suddenly falling in as they approach the area. Otherwise, one of the failed PCs slips into the quicksand.

Once they know the hazard before them, they can navigate the treacherous terrain with another **Hunting (Survival) / Perception** roll of TN 10/18. Everyone who fails slips into quicksand along the way.

Someone who falls in must be rescued by the other PCs or drown. There is plenty of deadfall to use to help fish a PC out. A PC who isn't being helped out (possibly because everyone fell in) can get himself out with an **Athletics (Swimming) / Strength** roll of TN 30. The PC can attempt the Athletics check three times. On the third failed roll, he is sucked into the muck and forever lost.

Those PCs who fell into the quicksand must make an Earth roll of TN 15 or receive 1 pip of Taint.

Star-Struck (Day 1)

The PCs stumble onto a Hiruma training exercise and a fan of *Surviving the Taint*. They also are witness to a potential ambush and must decide whether or not to intervene.

Despite the growing fog, our heroes press on through the Badlands. Though the sun is not visible, everyone knows that night is coming soon. In the faltering twilight, our heroes come across three bedrolls in a shallow depression. From the fog comes the click of a gun, and our heroes face down three barrels from

different directions. The owner of one of the barrels—a lanky scout wearing the Armadillo mon—says, "I reckon you have some explaining to do before I fill you full of hot jade."

Hiruma Abner is in charge and is training two other Hiruma scouts: Hiruma Takeshi and Hiruma Sally. He is suspicious of anyone this far into the Badlands, but Hiruma Takeshi recognizes the PCs right away. Takeshi is a huge fan of *Surviving the Taint*, and he buys all of the books. He even carries with him the latest bu novels. To vouch for the PCs, he shows Abner the book, which chronicle last week's events and has drawings of Asako Jane and the PCs along with exaggerated stories about them.

Since it's not published yet, Takeshi naturally does not have the current copy of *Surviving the Taint*. Meeting the latest contestants to get voted out excites him, and he expresses hope that he can return to Armadillo lands and tell his friends all about it before the next edition is printed. Asako Jane does not share his enthusiasm and glowers at him. Betty-Anne-Mae-Sue-Sue also bristles at the thought of someone spoiling her stories.

Hiruma Sally is a history buff and tries to cover up Takeshi's rudeness by asking Jane questions about past events, especially about Fort Hiruma before it became the site of a reality series. Sally is also intrigued by the old mon worn by the PCs and asks questions about their clans and their traditional animals, especially the Crab.

After a brief conversation, Asako Jane urges them to push on. The rules of the game are that her team must survive the Badlands without receiving any help. Hiruma Abner concurs, as he has strict orders not to interfere with contestants. Hiruma Takeshi is crestfallen that he cannot spend more time with the celebrities.

When the PCs put significant distance between them and the Hiruma scouts, the fog parts just enough for the PCs to see two ogres and several goblins walking right toward the scouts. Eager for a story, Betty-Anne-Mae-Sue-Sue excitedly urges the PCs to save the Hiruma scouts. Asako Jane would like to save them, but she's not a combatant so she defers to the PCs' judgment.

If the PCs do not intervene, they can hear the sounds of combat.

Hunkering down in the fog, our heroes wait for the inevitable conflict between man and monster. Shots ring out, signaling the end of a couple of goblins. The others rush into the camp, swinging sharp knives and heavy clubs. A deep guttural voice demands, "I smell

more humans. Where are they, little man?" The question is punctuated by a sharp crack of bone.

Abner's strained voice calls out, "Sally, run. Make sure Asako-san is safe." The sound of running can be heard, but it is heading in the opposite direction of Asako Jane. Abner and Takeshi fall with wet thuds, and the creatures charge off into the fog, leaving only the muted fog to keep our heroes company.

PCs can return to the Hiruma camp to find Abner and Takeshi slaughtered mercilessly. PCs can recover four fingers of jade from them. Sally has led the creatures away from everyone, and none of them return.

On the other hand, the PCs can choose to join the fight. If they do, then one ogre and four goblins engage the scouts. The PCs face their own ogre plus two goblins for each PC. The scouts finish off their foes by the end of round 3 and move to flank the PCs' opposition in round 4. After the combat, Abner orders the camp to be relocated and to check their possessions. They each "accidentally" drop a finger of jade. If a PC tries to return the jade, Abner expresses mock bemusement and explains that the PCs must have dropped them in the fight.

See **Appendix #3** for monster stats. When half of the goblins are taken out, the remaining goblins go into a frenzy and adopt the Full Attack stance.

This is the last encounter for PCs who made it to week 5 or 6. Skip ahead to the Conclusion.

Rolling (Day 2)

A dust storm kicks up, hiding the true threat within this desert: Blood tumbleweeds.

As our heroes march through the Badlands, they find themselves in a very desolate area. Nothing to be seen but tumbleweeds blowing by. A sudden gust of wind kicks up clouds of red dust, threatening to choke our heroes.

Though it's not lethal, the dust is noisome and obscures vision. The dust swirls around the PCs for 3 rounds before the tumbleweeds strike.

Higher Ground (Day 3)

The PCs must climb rocky hills, but the toxic lichen makes the task more difficult.

Though the day is warming up, there is no warmth to be found as our heroes continue north toward Armadillo lands. Asako Jane hasn't been in the best of moods since leaving Fort Hiruma, but her mood turns even sourer when she sees the rocky cliffs looming above them. Bright purple lichen blankets the cliff. A rock slips loose and tumbles down, each bounce releasing a cloud of spores as it strikes the lichen.

There are steep hills that are less treacherous, but they have more lichen. PCs can each choose to climb a hill or climb a cliff. Each one has its own hazards.

PCs who climb the hill are not at risk of falling, but they must make two **Athletics (Climbing)/Reflexes** checks at TN 25/40. Each failure releases spores that cling to the PC and gets in his throat. Resisting the spores requires an Earth roll of TN 20. Failure results in 1 pip of Taint. If a PC fails both Athletics checks, he also suffers -1 Stamina until he gets out of the Badlands. (If this loss reduces the PC's Earth Ring, do not recalculate their Wounds, which are unaffected by the lichen.)

PCs who climb the cliff must make an **Athletics (Climbing) / Strength** check at TN 20/30. Failing results in a fall that does 2k2 damage. The PC may attempt the climb again. If a rope is lowered, PCs get +10 to the skill roll. Regardless, each attempt requires an **Athletics (Climbing) / Reflexes** check at TN 15. Failing this roll means that spores are released as above. A PC who releases multiple spores cannot lose more than 1 Stamina.

After the PCs climb the cliffs, they find a wide valley heading nearly straight northeast. The hills are too jagged to traverse quickly and safely.

This is the last encounter for PCs who made it to week 3 or 4. Skip ahead to the Conclusion.

High Noon (Day 4)

Caught in a thunderstorm, the PCs face a land pirate and a flash flood.

Though not as wide and accommodating as Beiden's Pass, the valley allows our heroes to move quickly. Dark clouds strangle the noon sun and unleash walls of water on our heroes. The oily rain clings sickeningly to their skin and makes the cliff sides glisten eerily. One has to wonder if our heroes are not walking down the gullet of a gigantic oni. From behind the torrential curtain, a dark form looms.

An ironclad stagecoach lumbers into view, pulled by skeletal horses. Two undead creatures sit on top with a cannon between them. The stagecoach stops, and the door is flung open by a man wearing the green kimono of a Skeeter. His yellow eyes glow ominously in the rain.

The rain covers the sound of the stagecoach, but PCs who make an **Investigation (Notice)** / **Perception** check of TN 20 can see the creatures before they see him. Those PCs get one round of actions to prepare.

Yoritomo Hanzu was a renegade Skeeter 30 years ago. He took to the new boating technology well and used his pirate ship to raid Crane ships and gaijin for the Skeeter coffers. Discovered by the Crane armada, Hanzu fled south to the Badlands. A storm shipwrecked him, and he became Lost. He built up his "land ship" and enacted raids on any camp in the Badlands. Samurai passing through are fair game to him as well.

Hanzu chortles as he fights and mocks the PCs. He uses his katana against anyone who closes with him, but he prefers firing his scattergun. The onikage pulling the stagecoach break free and blindly attack any PC. It takes both nuppeppo to load and fire the cannon; dropping one means the cannon fires once every other round.

Five rounds after the combat start, everyone hears a rumbling coming from the northeast. Any PC who makes a **Hunting (Survival)** / **Intelligence** check of TN 20 recognizes it as the sound of a flash flood. The flood hits on the sixth round, taking Hanzu's stagecoach and all enemies with it.

PCs can attempt to climb up the slippery cliffs to avoid the flood with an **Athletics (Climbing)** / **Agility** roll of TN 30. Those who fail the climb must make an **Athletics (Swimming)** / **Strength** roll of TN 30 to avoid getting bashed around. Those who fail the swim take damage equal to how much they missed the TN. Reduction applies to this damage. Anyone without Great Destiny or Dark Fate who is killed or knocked out by this damage is whisked away in the flood and never found. Being caught in the flood requires an Earth roll of TN 15 or gain a pip of Taint.

When the flood subsides, there is no trace of Hanzu. The rains stop shortly after, and the PCs can continue marching to the wall.

Conclusion

If Asako Jane wins *Surviving the Taint*:

Weeks after our heroes started their harrowing ordeal in Fort Hiruma, they ride back to the Shinsei Corral. Even from the safety of the train, the Badlands looks ominous and uninviting. Thanks to the skills of our heroes, they don't have to endure that journey. Confetti is thrown from the top of the Kaiu Wall as the train returns. Kuni Retsu beams as he greets Asako Jane and her retinue. Truly she has proven herself as deserving this victory!

If Asako Jane is kicked out of the castle but arrives at the Kaiu Wall alive:

For three days, our heroes trudged through the horrors of the Badlands. Though Asako Jane survived the ordeal, her spirit is shattered. Her mouth hardly twitches into a smile as the Kaiu Wall looms before them. Soldiers of the Armadillo rush out to escort our heroes to the gate. A Hida guard shakes his head grimly when Jane winces in pain at the touch of his jade finger. Asako Jane has survived the taint, but at what cost?

There is no real reason to hang around in Armadillo lands once they return, so they can say Sezar's name three times to return. When they do, read the following:

A sickening sensation envelopes our heroes as they say Sezar's name three times. When the wave of nausea passes, our heroes stand before Sezar mere moments after they were sent across the dimensions. Sezar does not seem surprised by this, and he greets the newcomer warmly, "Good day, Asako-san. I thank you for the help you can provide us. All of existence may well depend on it." Behind him, Sezar Yanako smiles with genuine warmth, perhaps the first indication you have seen in months of a good humor from her. "Indeed, you are most welcome," she murmurs. "I trust we will soon become fast friends."

Returning without Asako Jane is a failure. PCs who return without her lose 0.5 Glory. If the nature of Jane not returning was handled honorably by the PC, then he

loses no Honor. In this instance, Sezarú seems stricken, but quickly shakes the experience off.

“We will find what we need another way, samurai. I am no longer interested in hiding from my death. We move onward regardless.” Behind him, Yanako barely suppresses a snarl of frustration, and her glare seems to burn into your skin.

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.

If a PC has a Crafting cert, they may make a Crafting roll at this time.

Experience Points

Surviving the adventure:	2XP
Good roleplaying:	+2XP
Returning to Sezarú:	+2XP
Returning with Asako Jane:	+2XP

Total Possible Experience: 8XP

Honor

The PCs do not gain Honor for bringing Asako Jane, but keep an eye on the reasons for their actions (blackmailing contestants, aiding the Hiruma, returning without Asako Jane).

Glory

PCs who return without Asako Jane lose 0.5 Glory. Otherwise, they gain 0.2 Glory.

Other Awards/Penalties

PCs who return with Asako Jane gain +0.1 Status.

Module Tracking Sheets

If a PC wins the final tournament with a firearm, he gains a Horiuchi Emissary .45 six-shooter and the ability to learn the Firearm skill if he doesn't already have it. (This is standard pistol firearm as described in the Emerald Stars section of Imperial Histories 2; it holds 6 rounds before needing to be reloaded. The gun comes with a speedloader, allowing it to be fully reloaded as a Simple Action, and a total of 24 rounds.)

GM Reporting

Did Asako Jane make it to Sezarú?
Did Asako Jane avoid going through the Badlands?

GM must report this information BEFORE June 1 for it to have an effect.

Appendix #1: Surviving the Taint Rumors

Otomo Archibald

Otomo Archibald enjoys the sense of power but does not want to be in so high of a position that bureaucracy paralyzes him. Hosting a reality serial allows him to be grandiose while not having any real responsibility. He owes part of his success to Kitsuki Po, and Po called in those favors to ensure that Archibald rigs *Surviving the Taint* against Asako Jane.

Rumors

TN 20: Archibald not only is the Master of Ceremonies, he chose the events several weeks ago.

TN 60: Before hosting *Surviving the Taint*, Archibald has hosted several other reality serials. It is his ideal job. There's speculation that he couldn't have made it this far without the help of Kitsuki Po.

How to Sway

Though Archibald is morally ambiguous, he still follows the code of bushido. As such, he cannot interfere with the competition more than he already has. He is interested in the role of the Hooter clan in this realm, and he'll gladly talk with one of the PCs about the Hooters. In return, he drops hints about this week's competition, but his hints are subtle enough that it requires a **Courtier / Intelligence** check of TN 15.

Asako Jane/Shiba Rick

Jane has been manipulated into a situation where she could die. Her rival, Kitsuki Po, challenged her to compete in *Surviving the Taint*. She teamed up with Shiba Rick, who covers the areas outside of Jane's expertise. Unfortunately, Po's plan involved killing off Rick by ensuring that he meets with his rival, Kakita Tamashi.

Rumors

Free: As one of the Imperial Chancellor's nieces, there's been a lot of pressure for Jane to succeed. Audiences are eager to read about her winning *Surviving the Taint*. She is a cinch to win the lore challenges, which has traditionally been the majority of *Surviving the Taint*. Her partner and former *Iron Crane*

Chef winner, Shiba Rick, can pick up the slack with his vast courtly skills.

TN 15: As news spread about the death of Shiba Rick, many people speculate that Jane will not last in *Surviving the Taint*, and the adjusted odds placed for her at the Shrine of Daikoku agree. Since she is the niece of the Imperial Chancellor, she could not back down when her childhood rival, Kitsuki Po, challenged her to sign up.

TN 40: Shiba Rick was generally careful, but he made a grievous error in offending Kakita Tamashi. Tamashi was supposed to be in the Skeeter Isles, but he was summoned back to Roadrunner lands by a Chupacabra courtier. A few people are wondering if Tamashi's and Rick's paths were crossed intentionally.

How to Sway

Jane votes for whomever the PCs decide. In the case of a tie, she chooses randomly.

Kuni Earl

See the Side Plots to learn more about Kuni Earl.

Rumors

Free: Earl holds the record for most times appearing on *Surviving the Taint*: This is his 13th appearance. At this point, nobody expects him to win; they just want to read how long he lasts before he fumbles yet again. He's the only contestant competing solo.

TN 20: While some previous contestants have been voted out of the castle and survived the trek back to the Kaiu Wall, Earl is the only one to do so multiple times. When he first made his trek, he returned bloodied and haggard, and he lost his partner and the nezumi reporter assigned to him. Subsequent trips were easier on him. In fact, they were so easy that the nezumi reporter assigned to him has to stretch the truth to make his stories more exciting.

TN 50: The first time Earl competed in *Surviving the Taint*, his wife, Kuni Sue, was his partner. They made a poor showing and were voted out of the castle early. Only Earl knows what happened to Kuni Sue and the nezumi that traveled with him, but the darkness that clouds his eyes when he drinks shows that he's not over it.

How to Sway

Earl has no interest in the contest. He just wants to see his wife again. If he could vote for himself, he would, but he doesn't want to look suspicious. PCs can convince Kuni Earl to vote for someone with a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** check at TN 15.

Kitsuki Po/Mirumoto Ogawa

Kitsuki Po was a corrupt Emerald Marshal who gained a lot of wealth by busting smuggling operations that competed with his own opium smuggling ring. Mirumoto Ogawa served as his faithful deputy but was unaware of Po's illicit activities. Asako Jane uncovered his criminal organization and because she felt a love for him despite their rivalry, she told him to step down as Emerald Marshal and give up his smuggling trade. Po did not live up to her hopes of him being a better person, and he bitterly resented her threat. He's been plotting her demise ever since. Fancying himself a genius, he concocted an elaborate ploy to dispatch of her by calling in a favor with Otomo Archibald to invite some contestants loyal to Po and to rig the events so Jane can't win.

Ogawa has had suspicions that Po was a bad person, but nobody testified to his criminal background. He found evidence but refused to believe it. When he came to terms with the evidence, it had disappeared. Even though he's not a deputy anymore, he still serves Po as a matter of tradition, but a nugget of doubt still lurks in his mind.

Rumors

Free: Po is a former Emerald Marshal who was credited with breaking up an opium-smuggling cartel traveling through Mustang, Chupacabra, and Quetzalcoatl lands. He stepped down to pursue his own studies and decided eventually to enter the competition circuit. He's the champion of High House of Light's So You Think You Can Meditate. Ogawa served as Po's deputy to the end, and now he attends as his yojimbo.

TN 25: Rumors abound that Po's success with the smuggling cartel stems from his own involvement with the illegal opium trade and that he was eliminating the competition. Asako Jane—who always opposed him in the classic Chupacabra/Quetzalcoatl rivalries—had a long talk with him, and he suddenly stepped down as Emerald Marshal. Their childhood rivalry turned bitter ever since.

TN 60: Mirumoto Ogawa is usually very tight-lipped about his years as Po's yoriki, but he dropped his face enough to confide to a friend that he saw paperwork in

a warehouse signed by Po which exonerated some obviously guilty smugglers. Ogawa walked away as a matter of honor, but began to doubt Po and returned to the warehouse. The papers had disappeared, and he investigated the matter no farther. It apparently still bothers him enough to confide in a friend.

How to Sway

Po will never vote for anyone but Jane. Since he is the team captain, he cannot be moved by Ogawa either. If a PC learns of Ogawa's doubt and brings it up to him, he could aid the PC by talking with other contestants and lower the TN to sway them by 10. Doing so requires a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** or **Lore (Bushido) / Awareness** check of TN 40. This does not count as an action, but it can only be attempted once.

Kakita Etsu/Asahina Kinoshita

Kakita Etsu is the typical haughty Crane duelist. Her great-grandparents did not approve of incorporating so much gaijin technology into Rokugani culture, but they ended up being in the minority. Etsu comes from a line of intolerant Roadrunner samurai. She can shoot her gun, but she much prefers the intimacy of holding a katana. She is friends with Kitsuki Po, who is traditional enough for her taste, and she's never seen any wrong-doing on his part.

Asahina Kinoshita spent much of his time cloistered in Asahina lands, and he spent a lot of time with the lower classes. An eta named Aiko moved Kinoshita with her reverence for the dead. He had no idea that Aiko was reincarnated from a shugenja, but he knew that he loved her soul. Naturally, their love could not be made public, so Kinoshita has been hiding this relationship. When Kitsuki Po discovered their relationship, he decided blackmail would be ideal.

Rumors

Free: Staunch traditionalists, Etsu and Kinoshita stick to the old ways, such as giving themselves Rokugani names at gempukku. Though they wear the Roadrunner mon, images of cranes adorn their kimono. As befits her station, Etsu carries a gun, but she's made it clear in the past that she prefers dueling with her katana.

TN 25: Despite the progress of Rokugan in the past century, Etsu's family still clings to xenophobia. Anyone spending enough time with her can see a slight sneer when she calls someone by what she still considers a gaijin name. As such, don't expect her to buddy up with anyone who follows Emperor Hatfield's

lead. She is friendly with Kitsuki Po, even though he's not nearly as much of a traditionalist as her.

TN 35: For the most part, Asahina Kinoshita is the dutiful pacifistic shugenja, but he's been spending an awful lot of time with an eta named Aiko. It'd be very dishonorable to speculate what it could mean for a samurai to mingle with an unescorted female eta, but it does make one wonder.

How to Sway

Etsu values her friendship with Po, and the PCs cannot supply testimony to prove his wrongdoings. Swaying Etsu alone would require a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** check of TN 60. PCs can threaten to expose Kinoshita's relationship with Aiko with an Intimidation (Control)/Awareness TN of 15. He has enough pull with Etsu to convince her to vote against Po's interests.

Matsu Shineko/Ide Red

Though twins, Shineko and Red were separated early due to an unusual arrangement. They both were born into the Mustang clan, but Shineko's aunt wanted to adopt her into the Bobcat. Though Shineko did not inherit her aunt's fiery temper, she became a skilled warrior.

Red's decadent appetites could put Ikoma to shame. He drinks, eats, and carouses in a manner far beneath his station. He causes severe embarrassments for his family. Shineko covers his indiscretions, but it bothers her to do so. Under the guise of friendship, Kitsuki Po helped sweep some of the family's shame under the rug, and she feels obligated to favor him.

Rumors

Free: These twins could not be any further apart. Matsu Shineko is a petite woman who seems to control her Matsu training admirably, while Ide Red is a large, boisterous merrymaker. Red is fond of regaling others with his exploits.

TN 30: Since Ide Red has a bit of infamy and no shame, he cannot be swayed by blackmail. He is fine besmirching his family's name rather than give into threats. Such a bold stance could result in Red the Ronin. Matsu Shineko is good friends with Kitsuki Po and is unlikely to vote against him. Red is generally affable and is willing to be friends with just about anyone.

TN 55: The reason that Ide Red's indiscretion has not resulted in roninhood or seppuku is because, with Kitsuki Po's help, Matsu Shineko covers all his messes for him. As a result, she resents his carefree attitude

since she has to maintain her own honor as well as her brother's.

How to Sway

Ide Red doesn't care who gets voted out; he's just here for the party. Shineko votes how Po wants unless someone can convince her with a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll of TN 40. Alternatively, if the PC promises to fix Red's indiscretions in the future with a **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** roll of TN 20, she can switch her vote. Alternatively, Ide Red will follow any female PC with Dangerous Beauty or who can make a **Temptation (Seduction) / Awareness** roll of TN 25.

Soshi Cheryl/Bayushi Daryl/Bayushi Carol

Though they are not triplets, these siblings are close enough in age that it's hard to tell who is the oldest. Their parents chose to diversify their training so they could work together and be useful to the Coyote clan. Cheryl went to train as a Soshi shugenja, Carol trained as a Bayushi courtier, and Daryl trained to be a Bayushi bushi.

They tended to be antagonistic in court, and Daryl's expert dueling skills allowed him to humiliate those who thought they could stand up to Carol. Cheryl subtly used her magic to give Daryl a boost. They were feared by many courts up until a year ago when Daryl was killed by bandits while traveling with a Skeeter contingent. Carol and Cheryl convinced the Skeeter to keep quiet about Daryl's death, but they weren't taking any chances. They had the Skeeter samurai killed off.

In the meantime, the two sisters have been grooming a Shosuro actor to take Daryl's place. He is a competent duelist, but he's not at Daryl's level yet, so they have been keeping a low profile until Daryl can become an expert.

Rumors

Free: Easily one of the teams most favored to win, this group of siblings bucks the tradition of two-person teams at *Surviving the Taint*. Since they comprise of a shugenja, a bushi, and a courtier, they are expected to win each challenge.

TN 20: For the past year, Bayushi Daryl had been less eager to enter duels than before. He and his sister, Bayushi Carol, used to goad other samurai into duels. Whether with gun or with sword, Daryl won each of them handily. Now Carol seems mellower and less

prone to slinging insults. Some have speculated that Daryl may be losing his touch.

TN 70: Three Skeeter samurai reported that they witnessed Bayushi Daryl killed by bandits last year. The Skeeter who said this quickly thereafter recanted. One of them fell off a cliff in the Skeeter Isles, another one died of fugu poisoning, and the final one is now lost at sea. It all sounds suspicious, but no one dares to call them out on it.

How to Sway

The Coyote siblings have no real interest in the contest except just to win. By talking with the other contestants, they can determine which way the wind is blowing and vote with the majority (unless the majority is pointing at them). PCs can convince them to vote for someone specific with a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll of TN 40. Any mention of Daryl's supposed death can sway them with an **Intimidation / Awareness** roll of TN 15, but if the PCs do not keep the pressure on, their vote switches to Asako Jane.

Yoritomo Caleb/Hida Paul

With the Badlands mostly contained, the Armadillo clan decided to wage war against the Bobcat clan 6 years ago. The Skeeter clan saw an opportunity and committed several samurai as well. It was in this war that Hida Paul met Yoritomo Caleb. Not only did they respect each other's battle prowess, but they also fell in love with each other. The family-centric culture of Rokugan frowned enough upon their relationship that it was kept secret, even though the two belonged to the clans that would care the least about it.

Two years later, Caleb married Daisy as a matter of convenience, but he had no attraction for his wife whatsoever. In order to avoid the shame of being childless, Caleb tried to impregnate his wife, but he could not function. Paul offered to step in and was able to impregnate her twice, giving Caleb plenty of clout within the Skeeter clan. Caleb and Daisy treat their children like their own, but they kept Paul's involvement secret to avoid any scandal.

Rumors

Free: These two samurai became best friends when the Skeeter and Armadillo fought against the Bobcat 6

years ago. Caleb often requested assignments on the Kaiu Wall to serve with Paul, and Hida Paul frequently traveled to the Skeeter Isles as well. Though they lack many courtly skills, they are expected to excel in the physical challenges.

TN 25: Salacious rumors surround these two and how much time they spend together. There are some speculations that their friendship is on the romantic side. This is not a big deal for Hida Paul, who has remained a bachelor and is not currently courting. This can be a mild inconvenience for Yoritomo Caleb and his family, though the Skeeter tend to worry less about extramarital affairs than other clans.

TN 40: Not that the word of peasant servants means anything, but there have been some talk that Yoritomo Caleb does not find his wife, Daisy, attractive—despite lavishly decorating their home at a level of wealth above his station. He reportedly has not lain with her in the 4 years they've been married. His two children, however, bear a striking resemblance to Hida Paul.

How to Sway

Prior to Week 4, this team generally has no strong inclination. They favor physical might, so they can be swayed with a **Courtier (Manipulation)/Strength** roll of TN 25. Large PCs get +5 to the roll.

As of Week 4, Kitsuki Po has learned of Caleb's greed and has bought his vote. PCs can no longer simply use **Courtier**. A bribe requires 10 koku and a **Temptation (Bribery) / Awareness** roll of TN 40. PCs receive +1 to the roll for each additional koku offered. A new bribe is required each week. Character must have cash in hand to bribe Caleb – promised riches, no matter the size, do not interest him.

Unlike other teams with dark secrets, blackmail is the worst option. Caleb barely cares about his family's honor, but an **Intimidation (Control) / Awareness** check of TN 50 can secure his vote. If this is not maintained weekly, Caleb votes for Asako Jane.

If the PCs publicly uncover Kuni Earl's plot and save the castle from the imminent destruction, then they can dictate Caleb/Paul's vote permanently, even if they offend him with blackmail.

Appendix #2: Fort Hiruma NPCs

For most NPCs, only the rings, honor, and dueling stats are offered here. Just like the competition events, these NPCs are fluid to fit in where necessary. In general, if you need to roll a skill not on the list, assume 0, 2, or 5 skill ranks depending on how fitting it is that the NPC would possess the skill.

Otomo Archibald

Rank 4, Otomo courtier, Honor 5.9

Earth 3 Water 2 Perception 4 Air 3 Awareness 5 Fire 3
Void 4

Etiquette 6, Investigation 4, Courtier 8, Sincerity 5

Asako Jane

Rank 3, Asoko loremaster, Honor 7.4

Earth 3 Willpower 4 Water 2 Perception 3 Air 2
Awareness 3 Fire 2 Intelligence 4 Void 4

Medicine 6, any Lore 5

Kuni Earl

Rank 2, Earth shugenja, Honor 2.2

Earth 4 Water 3 Air 2 Fire 2 Void 3

Iajutsu 1, Firearms 3, Investigation 2

Dark Secret, Lost Love, Antisocial

Kitsuki Po

Rank 3, Kitsuki investigator, Honor 3.0

Earth 3 Water 2 Perception 4 Air 3 Fire 3 Intelligence 5
Void 4

Iajutsu 2, Firearms 1

Driven (to destroy Asako Jane), Soft-hearted

Mirumoto Ogawa

Rank 4, Mirumoto bushi, Honor 8.6

Earth 4 Water 3 Strength 4 Air 3 Reflexes 4 Fire 3
Agility 4 Void 2

Iajutsu 5, Firearms 6

Idealistic

Kakita Etsu

Rank 2, Kakita duelist, Honor 6.8

Earth 2 Water 3 Air 4 Fire 2 Agility 4 Void 3

Iajutsu 6, Firearms 1

Idealistic

Asahina Kinoshita

Rank 1, Asahina shugenja, Honor 5.5

Earth 2 Willpower 3 Water 3 Air 4 Fire 2 Intelligence 3
Void 3

Iajutsu 0, Firearms 0

Dark Secret, True Love

Matsu Shineko

Rank 2, Matsu bushi, Honor 5.2

Earth 3 Water 2 Strength 4 Air 3 Fire 2 Agility 4 Void
3

Iajutsu 4, Firearms 3

Ide Red

Rank 2, Ide emissary, Honor 3.8

Earth 3 Stamina 4 Water 3 Air 2 Awareness 4 Fire 2
Void 2

Iajutsu 1, Firearms 3

Lechery

Soshi Cheryl

Rank 2, Soshi shugenja, Honor 1.7

Earth 2 Willpower 3 Water 3 Air 5 Fire 2 Intelligence 4
Void 2

Iajutsu 1, Firearms 0

Bayushi Daryl

Rank 1, Shosuro actor, Honor 0.9

Earth 2 Water 2 Perception 3 Air 3 Awareness 4 Fire 3
Void 3

Iajutsu 3, Firearms 2

Dark Secret

Bayushi Carol

Rank 2, Bayushi courtier, Honor 3.3

Earth 2 Willpower 3 Water 2 Perception 3 Air 3
Awareness 4 Fire 2 Void 2

Iajutsu 0, Firearms 0

Dangerous Beauty, Benten's Blessing

Yoritomo Caleb

Rank 2, Yoritomo bushi, Honor 4.0

Earth 3 Stamina 4 Water 3 Strength 4 Air 2 Fire 2
Agility 4 Void 3

Iajutsu 2, Firearms 6

Large, Dark Secret, True Love, Greedy

Hida Paul

Rank 2, Hida bushi, Honor 5.2

Earth 4 Water 2 Strength 5 Air 2 Fire 3 Void 3

Iajutsu 0, Firearms 2

Large, True Love

Appendix #3: Badlands NPCs

Hiruma Abner, Takeshi, Sally

Air 2 Earth 3 Fire 2 Water 3 Void 2
 Reflexes 3 Honor 3.0 Agility 3 Status 1.0 Glory 1.4
Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** Katana 8k3 (Complex)
Armor TN: 25 **Damage:** 6k2 (Katana)
Reduction: 3
Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)
School/Rank: Hiruma Scout 1
Techniques: *Torch's Flame Flickers:* Gain +1k0 to attack rolls in the Attack stance. Provisions last longer in the Badlands.
Skills: Athletics 4, Hunting 4, Kenjutsu 5, Investigation 3, Stealth 4
Advantages/Disadvantages: Takeshi has Fascination (bu novel stars)

Goblins (2 per PC)

Air 1 Earth 2 Fire 1 Water 1
 Reflexes 2 Agility 2 Strength 2
Initiative: 3k2 **Attack:** Sharp Stick 4k2 (Simple)
Armor TN: 15 **Damage:** 4k2 (Sharp stick)
Reduction: 3
Wounds: 9 (+5), 18 (Dead)
Taint Rank: 2
Skills: Stealth 2
Special Abilities: *Swift 2*

Ogre

Air 1 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 2
 Reflexes 3 Stamina 6 Strength 6
Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** Club 5k4 (Complex)
Armor TN: 25 **Damage:** 8k2 (Club)
Reduction: 10
Wounds: 20 (+5), 40 (+10), 60 (+15), 80 (Dead)
Taint Rank: 3
Special Abilities: *Fear 2*
Huge
 At higher ranks, the ogre's attack goes up to 9k4.

Blood Tumbleweed (1 per PC)

Air 0 Earth 2 Fire 1 Water 3
 Reflexes 3 Agility 3
Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** Barbed vines 5k3 (Complex)
Armor TN: 20 **Damage:** 5k2 (Barbed vines)
Reduction: 5 (0 to jade, crystal, or fire)
Wounds: 32 (Dead)
Taint Rank: 3
Skills: Stealth 3
Special Abilities: *Swift 1*

Poison barbs: Blood tumbleweeds carry a painful poison that infects wounds and causes them to swiftly become inflamed and agonizingly painful. Any normal living creature wounded by a blood tumbleweed must roll Stamina at TN 20 or suffer an additional 2k1 Wounds. In addition, regardless of the results of the stamina roll, if the wound is not promptly cleansed and then purified with jade, it will rapidly become infected—the effects set in after 10 minutes. The infection imposes a +10 TN penalty to all rolls the victim makes, including the roll to resist Taint for being injured by the blood tumbleweed, and lasts for 2 weeks or until cured with magic (treatment with a **Medicine** / **Intelligence** roll at TN 25 will reduce the TN penalty to +5). Multiple wounds will not intensify the infection, although the extra damage can happen any number of times.

Nuppeppo Cannon Loaders

Air 1 Earth 1 Fire 0 Water 1
 Stamina 3 Agility 2 Strength 2
Initiative: 2k1 **Attack:** Bludgeon (2k2, Simple); Cannon (8k3, Complex and see below)
Armor TN: 10 **Damage:** 3k2 (Bludgeon), 6k4 (Cannon)
Reduction: 15 (5 against jade, crystal, and fire)
Wounds: 24 (Dead)
Taint Rank: 4
Special Abilities: *Fear 3*
Undead

Abominable Stench: Any time a nuppeppo is struck with a bladed or a piercing weapon, it erupts with foul, putrescent stench. All living persons within

20 feet must make a Stamina roll (TN 20) to avoid being nauseated. All such targets are considered Fatigued until the nuppeppo is destroyed or they move at least 20 feet away.

Cannon: Loading the cannon for firing is a Complex Action, separate from firing it, which requires its own Complex Action. With two nuppeppo, the cannon can fire once each Round; when one of them is destroyed, however, the cannon can only be fired once every two turns, as the remaining nuppeppo must reload it and fire it separately.

At higher ranks, nuppeppo have 60 Wounds.

Onikage (1 for every 2 PCs)

Air 0	Earth 4	Fire 1	Water 4
Reflexes 3		Agility 3	Strength 6

Initiative: 3k3 **Attack:** Clawed Hooves 4k3 (Complex)
Armor TN: 20 **Damage:** 6k3 (Hooves)
Reduction: 10 (5 against jade or crystal)
Wounds: 40 (Dead)
Taint Rank: 6
Special Abilities: *Huge*
Swift 1
Undead

Yoritomo Hanzu, Badlands Pirate

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 4	Void 2
Reflexes 4	Willpower 5	Agility 4		

Honor 0 Status -10 Glory 0
Initiative: 7k4 **Attack:** Scattergun, 10k4+6 (Complex) or Katana 10k5e+6 (Simple)
Armor TN: 30 **Damage:** 5k4 (Scattergun) or 6k2m (Katana)
Reduction: 3 (Light Armor)
Wounds: 23 (+0), 34 (+0), 45 (+2), 56 (+7), 67 (+12), 78 (+17), 89 (Down, +37), 100 (Dead)
School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 3
Techniques: *The Way of the Mantis:* Suffer no penalties for fighting with a Small or Medium weapon in your off hand. +1k0 to all attacks.
Voice of the Storm: Every time you hit an opponent in melee, his Armor TN is reduced by 5 against your attacks for 2 rounds. This penalty can be stacked as high as 15.
Strike of the Mantis: Attacks are Simple Actions with weapons with the Samurai or Peasant keyword.

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 3, Firearms 6, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Knives (Kami) 6, Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapons) 4, Investigation 2

Advantages/Disadvantages: Strength of the Earth, Small, Wrath of the Kami (Air)

Taint Rank: 6

Special Abilities: *Lost:* Cannot spend Void points, add Taint to all physical rolls, can no longer call upon the Taint.

Blessing of the Dark One: Wounds at each Wound Rank are increased by 3.

Unearthly Regeneration: Each round heal 6 Wounds.

Disrupt the Chi: As a Simple Action, target an opponent within sight. Make a Contested Willpower Roll against the target. Add Taint Rank to Hanzu's total while the target adds Honor to his total. If Hanzu succeeds, the target must use his lowest Trait for all Skill and Trait rolls for the next 10 Rounds.

Scattergun: Hanzu's favored firearm has a range of 50 ft. Unless the target is within melee range, Hanzu cannot add his Perception to the damage of the weapon, nor declare Raises for any special maneuver (including Increased Damage). If the target is within melee range, Hanzu suffers the usual penalties for firing a ranged weapon at a target so close, but adds his Perception to the scattergun's DR (increasing it to 9k4) and he is allowed to declare Raises for the Called Shot, Increased Damage and Knockdown Maneuvers with the scattergun – the gun is considered to have a Strength of 5 for resolving a Knockdown.

At higher ranks, Hanzu has the following ability:

Above the Elements: Normal elemental spells (except Air) targeting Hanzu suffer a +10 TN penalty. Maho spells receive a free raise to target him.

GM Aid #1: The Competition

As you review each PC, make a note of the number of ranks are in each of the following skills. Simply note for future use which skills are fairly high. These could be used as competitions to let the PCs who invested these points swoop in and save the day for Asako Jane. If possible, place emphasis on characters who are not courtiers. The courtiers will be busy enough making friends, while the others can participate in the competitions. Since the final competition is iajutsu, try to stay away from kenjutsu and firearms competitions.

Skill	Ranks	Skill	Ranks	Skill	Ranks
Acting	_____	Calligraphy	_____	Perform (_____)	_____
Artisan (_____)	_____	Etiquette	_____	Perform (_____)	_____
Artisan (_____)	_____	Games (_____)	_____	Perform (_____)	_____
Artisan (_____)	_____	Games (_____)	_____	Perform (_____)	_____
Artisan (_____)	_____	Games (_____)	_____	Tea Ceremony	_____
Artisan (_____)	_____	Jiujutsu	_____	Weapons (_____)	_____
Athletics	_____	Kyujutsu	_____	Weapons (_____)	_____

The below table lists the competitions for each week. Only the first and last weeks are set in stone. Everything else should be replaced by one of the skills above where a PC has a good chance of competing. For each team that is still in the race, the score to beat is listed, along with the winner. If you substitute a skill where the listed winner is highly unlikely (for example, swapping out wrestling for painting), randomly determine which team won based on the likelihood they would have that skill. If no one else is still left who could reasonably meet that number, then the person just got really lucky. Play that up with a colorful description that would please the nezumi reporters ("Hida Paul looks brutish in front of the audience, but astonishingly, his rendition of noh is incredibly moving, and all viewers could not help but shed an empathetic tear.").

Week 1 (Always): Spellcraft/Choose a Ring, Kuni Earl 37

Week 2 (Possible Substitution): Perform (Dancing)/Agility, Bayushi Carol 27

Week 3 (Possible Substitution): Jiujutsu (Wrestling)/Strength, Hida Paul 34

Week 4 (Possible Substitution): Perform (Singing)/Awareness, Asahina Kinoshita 40

Week 5 (Possible Substitution): Games (Kumari)/Reflexes, Bayushi Daryl 49

Final Week (Always): Iajutsu duel, use the remaining contestant's stats. Everyone but Etsu prefers a gunslinging duel but will mockingly relent if a PC insists on katana.

In the case of a tie in the first five weeks, the tiebreaker is resolved with a duel. The default is to duel with pistols, but if the PC insists on traditional iajutsu, they agree. To duel with guns, follow the exact same rules but replace the Iajutsu skill with the Firearms skill for all rolls. The strike must call two raises for a Called Shot where the duelist shoots the gun out of the other person's hand. If there is a kharmic strike, both participants lose, and the third highest score wins. If there is a kharmic strike in the final competition, both teams are declared winners.

GM's Aid #2: Worksheet

Week 1	1. Prepare No contestant can take more than 2 actions <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> </table>	Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____			Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____	3. Sway TN to sway increased by 10 Additional vote? _____
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Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____															
Action: _____	Action: _____															
Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____															
Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____															
	2. Compete Event: <u>Shugenja</u> Winner: _____ (deciding vote)	4. Vote Remaining teams vote Asako Jane: _____ Kuni Earl: _____ Kitsuki Po: _____ Kakita Etsu: _____ Matsu Shineko: _____ Soshi Cheryl: _____ Yoritomo Caleb: _____														

Week 2	1. Prepare No contestant can take more than 2 actions <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> </table>	Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____			Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____	3. Sway TN to sway increased by 10 Additional vote? _____
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Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____															
	2. Compete Event: <u>Perform (Dancing)</u> Winner: _____ (2 votes)	4. Vote Remaining teams vote Asako Jane: _____ Kuni Earl: _____ Kitsuki Po: _____ Kakita Etsu: _____ Matsu Shineko: _____ Soshi Cheryl: _____ Yoritomo Caleb: _____														

Week 3	1. Prepare No contestant can take more than 2 actions <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> </table>	Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____			Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____	3. Sway TN to sway increased by 10 Additional vote? _____
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	2. Compete Event: <u>Jiu-jutsu (Wrestling)</u> Winner: _____ (2 votes)	4. Vote Remaining teams vote Asako Jane: _____ Kuni Earl: _____ Kitsuki Po: _____ Kakita Etsu: _____ Matsu Shineko: _____ Soshi Cheryl: _____ Yoritomo Caleb: _____														

GM's Aid #2 (continued)

Week 4	1. Prepare No contestant can take more than 2 actions <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"> </td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> </table>	Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____			Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____	3. Sway TN to sway increased by 10 Additional vote? _____
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Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____															
	2. Compete Event: <u>Perform (Singing)</u> Winner: _____ (2 votes)	4. Vote Remaining teams vote Asako Jane: _____ Kuni Earl: _____ Kitsuki Po: _____ Kakita Etsu: _____ Matsu Shineko: _____ Soshi Cheryl: _____ Yoritomo Caleb: _____														

Week 5	1. Prepare No contestant can take more than 2 actions <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"> </td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> </table>	Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____			Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____	3. Sway TN to sway increased by 10 Additional vote? _____
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Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____															
	2. Compete Event: <u>Games (Kumari)</u> Winner: _____ (2 votes)	4. Vote Remaining teams vote Asako Jane: _____ Kuni Earl: _____ Kitsuki Po: _____ Kakita Etsu: _____ Matsu Shineko: _____ Soshi Cheryl: _____ Yoritomo Caleb: _____														

Week 6	1. Prepare No contestant can take more than 2 actions <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> <td style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"> </td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Action: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Instigator: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Supporters: _____</td> </tr> </table>	Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____			Action: _____	Action: _____	Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____	Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____	3. Sway TN to sway increased by 10 Additional vote? _____
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Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____															
Action: _____	Action: _____															
Instigator: _____	Instigator: _____															
Supporters: _____	Supporters: _____															
	2. Compete Event: <u>Iajutsu</u> Winner: _____ (2 votes)	4. Vote Remaining teams vote Asako Jane: _____ Kuni Earl: _____ Kitsuki Po: _____ Kakita Etsu: _____ Matsu Shineko: _____ Soshi Cheryl: _____ Yoritomo Caleb: _____														

Players' Handout #1: Letter to Emperor Hatfield the Fourth

Honorable Hatfield-heika:

Unable to come myself, I have sent some of my trusted samurai to your realm to deliver this letter. As I've explained in your dreams, these samurai need to bring to me one of your vassals named Asako Jane. Her role is vital in stopping this destructive force that threatens all of our realms.

Please respect the differences these samurai bring and ensure their safety. They have traveled great distances and are not familiar with your customs. I tried to explain to them how relations with an advanced gaijin tribe a century ago has shaped your empire with steam engines, telegraphs, and shooters.

These samurai may not be accustomed to how these advances have created so much idle time that your culture focused more on entertainment to avoid constant warfare born out of boredom. I've seen these books your people call bu novels and zeni dreadfuls. I am certain my samurai may find foreign the emphasis on publishing "realism series" about samurai engaging in exciting and even dangerous trials and tribulations, so please forgive them if they do not fully understand.

Please be patient with them as they mostly know your old clan names. They may not be aware of your realm's evolution:

Crab = Armadillo

Crane = Roadrunner

Dragon = Chupacabra

Lion = Bobcat

Mantis = Skeeter

Phoenix = Quetzalcoatl

Scorpion = Coyote

Unicorn = Mustang

In deference to your honored ancestor's edicts, you may refer to the bearers of this letter as members of the Hooter clan.

I humbly thank you for your participation in this unusual request. May the Heavens continue to favor your line.

- Sezarü

Player's Handout #2: *Surviving the Taint*

Brought to you by Yasuki Taka's Fine Wares.

Seven teams enter Fort Hiruma, but only one team can ride the train back to the Kaiu Wall. All of the others have to hoof it back through the Badlands. For the next six weeks, the teams bicker and conspire with each other to vote someone out of the castle. If someone can't make friends, then you get to see how well you can survive the Taint.

Each week, one member of each team enters the competition: It could be history, law, etiquette, dueling, wrestling, ikebana, or something else! The winning team's vote is stronger than all the others, so these samurai really want to win! What will this season's events be? Buy the next installment of *Surviving the Taint* and find out!

Let's meet this season's teams:

Asako Jane and Shiba Rick – She is the Imperial Chancellor's niece, and he won Iron Crane Chef. Her knowledge and his courtly skills are sure to provide a challenge for the competition.

Kuni Earl – Everyone's odd duck returns once again. Who needs a team? Is the 13th time a charm, or will he be walking through the Badlands again?

Kitsuki Po and Mirumoto Ogawa – Despite having broken up an opium-smuggling cartel, Kitsuki Po has entered the contest circuit, becoming the champion of High House of Light's *So You Think You Can Meditate*. His former yoriki, Mirumoto Ogawa, continues at Po's side.

Kakita Etsu and Asahina Kinoshita – Champions of the old way, Etsu and Kinoshita adorn their Roadrunner mon with images of cranes. Etsu is a great duelist, but she only duels with a katana. Hope there's no gunplay this season!

Matsu Shineko and Ide Red – Could these twins look any more different? Matsu Shineko is small in stature but big in heart. Ide Red is a beast and knows how to have a good time.

Soshi Cheryl, Bayushi Daryl, and Bayushi Carol – Teams are traditionally two people, but these Coyote just don't care. Attacking with a three-pronged approach of shugenja, bushi, and courtier, this team is certain to pose a threat to all the other teams!

Yoritomo Caleb and Hida Paul – The Skeeter and the Armadillo clans are often good friends, and these two samurai exemplify that friendship. They may not be darlings of the court, but you can expect these two beefy samurai to bowl down the competition.

Player's Handout #3: Death Haiku

Asahina Kinoshita
*Our spirits connect
The wheel spans several miles
Rice and millet same*

Asako Jane
*Prideful flight peril
Help from unlikely sources
Put my soul to rest*

Bayushi Carol
*Amaterasu
Crowning glory over all
Forever within sea*

Bayushi Daryl
*Flowers grow in shade
Aspires to become the tree
Potential vanished*

Hida Paul
*Father guards his cubs
Duty trumps inconvenience
Never forgotten*

Ide Red
*When sake runs out
Dance on the funeral pyre
Yee-haw, what a ride*

Kakita Etsu
*Blossoms alight here
Blackness does not dull my steel
Old foundations stand*

Kitsuki Po
*Honor is restored
Justice will be served this year
My life diminishes*

Kuni Earl:
*I will see you soon
This unending punishment
All will end in fire*

Matsu Shineko
*Two rivers diverge
Fate cannot tame the raging
Envy is ugly*

Mirumoto Ogawa
*Nothing as it seems
Injustice grows in darkness
How many are blind?*

Soshi Cheryl
*Blossoms on the wind
Land atop a child's plaything
Both lost unto void*

Yoritomo Caleb
*Gratitude abounds
Family greatest triumph
Love conquers shadows*