

Doom of the Owl

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

**By Cory Mills
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The enemies of the Owl gather in force; can the Owl survive their wrath?

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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.

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

Reminder

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

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

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

Low End Party (most/all characters Rank Two): Reduce the Earth of the enemies in the Watchtower encounter to 2. There should be one fewer Shinjo and one fewer Goju Scout in the Hashi Kinpaku encounter. Reduce the TNs for the travel rolls in Part Two by 5. Daigotsu Setai and Utaku Ikari's guards are Rank One.

High End Party (most/all characters Rank Four): Provide one additional enemy of each type in the Watchtower encounter. Use the Ninja Scout statblock in Part Two for the Goju Scouts in the Hashi Kinpaku encounter and use the Shinjo Gunso stats for all of the Unicorn – however, there are only [#PCs-2] of them in total. Give the Ninja Scouts in Part Two the ability to make Simple Action attacks. Daigotsu Setai and Utaku Ikari's guards are Rank 3, giving them Simple Action attacks.

Adventure Summary and Background

The last few months have been difficult for the Owl Clan; the spiritual disturbances plaguing the Realms have caused devastation on an unprecedented scale. The lands of the Unicorn in particular have suffered, and they have sworn vengeance on the Minor Clan whose responsibility it was to safeguard the Empire from this threat. Certain elements of the Phoenix Clan, also displeased with the choices made with the Owl's limited resources, have decided to lend their support to the alliance forming between the Unicorn and Spider – while the Phoenix Clan as a whole are not involved, the presence of a relatively small number of powerful shugenja will prove significant.

Note for the GM: it is recommended that the players have backup characters ready during this module. If a character is killed in the first skirmish in Part One, or if the player chooses to have their PC remain behind in a brave last stand, they will be able to bring another PC into play at Shiro no Fukurou.

Character Notes

Check the PCs' character sheets for the following:

- A Social Position at Kumonosu no Boro (the Watchtower of the Web)
- Lord Moon's Curse

Introduction

A few days after the arrival of Asako Jane (the events of NW10), Sezaru sends out a summons to all

samurai of the Owl Clan. Once gathered in the courtyard of Shiro no Fukurou, he addresses you all. Dressed in clothes intended for travel, he stands on the dais with his wife Yanako and the newest guest from a distant Realm, Asako Jane, both likewise garbed for a long journey. "My yumemusha... Well pleased am I with your loyal and capable service these last few years. Though we have all found ourselves in a place strange to us, you have nonetheless worked tirelessly toward the goal of discovering the nature of the threat facing the Realms and preparing a way for us to fight it, for only then can we restore what has already been lost. The nature of the threat, and its motives, are becoming more clear, but we are sorely lacking in information regarding its methods. I have taken counsel with my wife, and, based on the wisdom gained from her visions, have decided that I must take direct action to learn more. Between my power, her insight, and Asako-san's knowledge, I am confident we can face whatever lies in the Shadows..."

"However, not all of the dangers we face are so ephemeral. It has come to my attention that the Owl are being targeted by more mundane forces; samurai of this world, who fail to understand that our resources, and the protection we can offer from the intrusion of the other Realms, is limited. While I have no doubt that we are still protected by the Emperor while we can perform our duty, I am choosing to leave Kobe in command of the Owl while I am away. He is best suited to leading you in defense of our lands, should our enemies choose to put pressure on our borders." Sezaru makes a graceful gesture to the burly warrior where he stands next to the dais.

Kobe steps forward, his dignity undiminished by the proper bow that acknowledges his superior. His hatamoto, a taller, lean man with a shaved head, drifts in his shadow, almost unnoticed until he speaks for his master in a deep, rolling voice. "I thank you, Sezaru-sama, for the faith you have shown in me. I pledge that it will not be in vain." Kobe's eyes scan the crowd as he raises his head, obviously assessing what he sees. "We will have much work ahead of us, but we can accomplish it together."

The Lord of the Owl nods gravely, gathering Yanako and Jane up with another gesture. "Until we return, then, Kobe-san. Carry the Fortunes." A strange echo on his last words gives more weight than usual to the customary farewell, and as the sound of the blessing fades, a familiar portal opens in front of the trio. Kobe, the other daimyo, and the rest of the Owl, bow deeply as Sezaru and his companions depart.

A flurry of activity ensues over the next several weeks. The other daimyo coordinate with Kobe, and assignments are given to individual Owl based on their skills and abilities. The players should largely be free to determine for themselves what their duties entail. PCs who already have specific positions are sent to their posts (more specifically, it should be noted that any PC who has been assigned to the Tower of Webs will be returning there immediately). Kobe and Sukune PCs are likely involved with straightforward military matters – training ashigaru and setting up defensive fortifications. Hanashi and Seizoku will have courtly duties, though Seizoku family PCs are also frequently assigned to more subtle defenses (traps or counter-intelligence) as appropriate for their skillset. Sezaru family PCs are probably sent to support the others with magical power or scholarly advice, though they may also be expected to get their hands dirty.

The point should be made that the Owl Clan, while tiny in comparison to a Great Clan or even most Minor Clans, are in general far more skilled and capable than their numbers suggest. While the majority of samurai in the Empire are only Rank One, there are essentially no Owl characters who are less than Rank Two. Most of Kobe's plans involve using this disparity in skill and numbers to the advantage of the Owl.

PCs who wish to learn more about the overall situation in the Empire may do so with a standard Gossip roll; PCs from the Hanashi family, or PCs from the Seizoku family with courtly duties, gain a Free Raise on this roll (and, in fact, should be given one piece of information before rolling, as their duties bring them directly into contact with this information).

Rumors

Standard **Courtier (Gossip)** / **Awareness** roll, TN 10; a successful roll learns one rumor at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN. The rumors include:

- While the Owl are a Minor Clan and benefit from Imperial law making it illegal for a Great Clan to declare war on them, it is expected that the borders will be subject to raids and minor attacks that cannot be proven to be anything but bandit activity.
- It is commonly accepted among the Owl that the Spider Clan represent the most likely threat; the existence of the Spider in this Realm is a result of the spiritual disturbances the Owl are intended to combat, and the Spider have made it clear that they see the yumemusha as “unclean outsiders” with no place in this Rokugan. Their refusal to accept the aid of the Owl last year meant that the Owl did not have to spend any resources protecting them, but

the effects of the spiritual turmoil on their lands (or their samurai) is unknown.

- After the lands of the Unicorn were devastated by intrusions from other Realms last year, including the destruction of both Shiro Moto and Utaku Seido, the Children of Shinjo have made their displeasure with the Owl quite clear. Speaking out in court, Unicorn Champion Shinjo Mutsuko has vowed to respond to the “Owl's failure” in a way that will not be forgotten.
- While on the whole, the Phoenix remain neutral toward the Owl, there are whispers that Isawa Kuneido, the Master of Fire, resents the loss of his birthplace Mori Kage Toshi.
- The Owl Clan's alliance with the Crab remains strong, between the marriage of Sezaru to the daughter of the Toritaka family daimyo and the Owl's proven ability to deal with the spiritual disturbances. The Crab have little influence in the courts, but their military might is a comforting presence to the south.
- The Owl Clan's neighbors to the north have refrained from speaking against the new Minor Clan, but they have not been particularly supportive either. Hanashi and Seizoku are both trying to gain more positive relations with the Scorpion.
- The other Minor Clans, bowing to pressure from the Unicorn and Phoenix, have refused the Owl's petition to join the Minor Clan Alliance. Though this reduces the Owl's options for trade, the principle effect is to increase the strength of the Crab alliance as the Owl trade almost exclusively with them.

Part One: the Invasion

About six weeks after Sezaru departs, the PCs will be sent on an assignment much like others they will have had throughout the duration. This one, however, involves working with members of other families at one of the Owl's holdings on the border. Which holding the PCs are sent to depends on whether or not there are any members of the garrison at Komonosu no Boro at the table. If there are, then the other PCs will be sent there; if there are no PCs with that post, then the PCs will be sent to Hashi Kinpaku instead.

Watchtower of the Web

Komonosu no Boro rises into the sky, atop a hill that commands a view of the plain as well as over the dark Shinomen Mori. A small village has begun to grow up around it in the months since its founding, and the

larger sprawl of a samurai manor is still under construction. The elegant design of the latter shows its promise as the diplomatic outpost placed here in hope that the Spider will be willing to negotiate, while the finished tower demonstrates the practical preparation made in case they do not come in peace.

With the danger seeming to be greatest from the west, the bulk of the Kobe and Sukune forces have been deployed along that border. Kobe Tetsuka, the *taisa* in command of the troops in the west, is beginning his personal tour of the theater with *Komonosu no Boro*; he has sent the bulk of his troops ahead to other areas along the Shinomen Forest, and brought a *guntai* of *ashigaru* to help bolster the numbers at the tower. PCs not assigned to the tower have been sent to help Tetsuka coordinate with the local troops and the Hanashi delegation present at the diplomatic outpost (neither Tetsuka nor any of his staff are terribly good at courtly interaction).

Tetsuka does not intend to take over the watchtower, having no reason to supplant Kobe O-Toronu, the *nikutai* currently in command. He is, however, the ranking officer in the area and has been assigned by Kobe himself to make certain the forces in the west are keeping in communication. Tetsuka's first order after his small troop sets up camp just to the south of the village is to send a messenger to the tower requesting a meeting in the morning with some of the tower's staff. It is up to the players if they wish to attempt to interact before the meeting; the GM should allow this, within reason, though if there is no interest, moving ahead to the next morning simplifies things.

There is very little to do in the area apart from training with the local troops – it is worth pointing out that there has been no activity from the Spider the entire time the garrison has been here. There is a small sake house, the House of the Ultimate Warrior, built by an enterprising peasant named Okude to painlessly separate the local soldiers from their pay. It is not terribly impressive, being only a couple of months old, and relying on a somewhat erratic supply route for its wares.

The next day dawns dark and dreary; an unseasonable storm front has moved in, and the sky is deeply overcast. The top of the tower is nearly lost in the clouds, and the air has the oppressive feel of an impending storm. Tetsuka will meet with the tower's first troops in his tent, with the other PCs (if any) and Hanashi Gotoro, the diplomat in residence.

Tetsuka is a lanky bushi in his middle years, lacking the bulk of most Hida but with a height that proclaims his former family quite clearly. He has keen eyes and

speaks slowly, with a faint sardonic twist to his lips a clear indication of his dark amusement at the situation. "Oh, yes, the Spider are a threat... whoever would have thought that?" Sarcasm is not the talent that brought him to Kobe's attention (though he indulges in it rather more often than most samurai), but his experience as a defensive strategist who once commanded a tower on the Kaiu Kabe.

The *taisa* makes his intentions clear from the outset – that he has no intention of taking the tower away from O-Toronu, and that he wants to meet with all of the men under his command. He will encourage them to share a bit about themselves, specifically their previous military experience, and compare stories with PCs not assigned to the tower (if any) or contrast them with his own experiences fighting against the Shadowlands. This should present the PCs an opportunity to roleplay a bit and get a little acquainted before the expected happens:

The meeting is suddenly interrupted by a messenger from the tower. [Should O-Toronu, a PC in the campaign, be present at the table, the messenger comes instead from his second in command to O-Toronu.] A quick exchange outside the tent precedes a panting ashigaru runner ducking through the flap. "O-Toronu-sama's compliments, taisa-sama, and he bid me bring you this message," the runner gasps out, handing a folded note aloft. Tetsuka takes it, scans the page impassively, and lets out a breath. "Wonderful. It seems that the tower's scouts have not returned on schedule. I agree with the nikutai, this does at least warrant a heightened state of al-" The last word is drowned out by the cries of horns, recognizable to the local samurai as the tower's signal. Tetsuka shakes his head and rumbles, again, "Aler-" and again is interrupted by the piercing sound of war-horns, these deeper and further off. The taisa snarls, "Really?" and surges to his feet to head out of the tent.

Presumably the PCs will accompany him, to discover that a massive force is emerging from the forest to the west.

The deep purple of Moto heavy cavalry is darkened by the black armor of mounted Spider troops as the vanguard of what appears to be a full Great Clan legion rides out of the Shinomen at full charge. The massive trees seem to be shifting from side to side to give the horses a straight path out onto the plain. Past the shock troops, another wave of riders both Unicorn and Spider escort a dozen spots of bright orange robes – visible only due to the contrast.

Tetsuka opens his mouth to speak, but whatever he is about to say is drowned out by a thunderous report: a bright flash rises from half of the Phoenix shugenja and energy crackles in the low-lying clouds. A second later, an enormous roar, so loud as to seem the absence of sound, peals out. A column of fire drops from the clouds with the sound, shattering the tower into fragments. The pressure wave nearly knocks you to the ground, and a shimmering light flickers through the clouds, moving east. Your ears ring for a moment, then sound returns to allow you to hear Tetsuka bellowing. “-CKING ALERT, ALL RIGHT?” He spins, finger jabbing out. “You. You. You. You. You. You. Mount up. Head back to the castle. They have to know as soon as possible. We expected a few squads, not a full army; there’s no way they can hide this from the Imperials. Warn Kobe-sama. I’ll gather the survivors and meet up with the rest of my troops, try to slow these bastards down a little.”

If any of the PCs are inclined to argue, he will make it clear that he is giving them an order. If they offer to send a message magically (which they do not yet know they cannot do), he will suggest they do so while on the move – in this situation, redundancy in the communication would be preferred. There is also no time to argue, as the forward elements of the enemy force are pressing in...

A squad of riders clad in bulky armor, both Unicorn and Spider, charge toward you with glad cries. Tetsuka bellows one last time, “GO!” as he charges toward another group closer to the center of his camp and is lost to sight in the swirling melee.

There are a number of Moto Heavy Cavalry equal to half the number of PCs at the table, round up, and a number of Daigotsu Mounted Infantry equal to half the number of PCs, rounded down. The PCs only have to get their opponents to the Crippled (+20) Wound Rank to cause them to fall back, but if the PCs are not retreating, the enemy will begin to receive reinforcements at a rate of one additional enemy each Round (alternating the type). If the PCs are deliberately staying to pursue a body count, the reinforcements should start arriving in pairs or entire squads. The purpose of this fight is to put pressure on the PCs, but if they refuse to retreat, they will eventually be overwhelmed by the numbers of the foe.

Moto Heavy Cavalry

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 2
		Agility 3		
Honor 2.5		Status 1.0		Glory 1.0

Initiative: 3k2 **Attack:** 7k3e (Scimitar, Complex, Mounted)

Armor TN: 20 **Damage:** 8k2 (Scimitar)
Reduction: 5
Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)
School/Rank: Moto Bushi 1
Techniques: *The Way of the Unicorn:* May wield any two-handed weapon with one hand (except for bows). +1k0 to damage while mounted, using a scimitar, or while using a two-handed melee weapon (these bonuses do not stack). Scimitars have the Samurai keyword.
Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Defense 1, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 2, Jujutsu 1, Kenjutsu (Scimitar) 3

Daigotsu Heavy Mounted Infantry

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 2
		Agility 3		
Honor 1.5		Status 1.0		Glory 1.0

Initiative: 3k2 **Attack:** 7k3e-5 (Katana, Complex, Mounted)
Armor TN: 20 **Damage:** 7k2+4 (katana)
Reduction: 5 **Shadowlands Taint Rank:** 1
Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)
School/Rank: Daigotsu Bushi 1
Shadowlands Taint: 2.0
Techniques: *the Way of the Spider:* at the beginning of each Round, may choose to reduce TN penalty from Wound Ranks by 5 or add 5 to damage; TN on any roll made to detect Taint is increased by 10
Skills: Horsemanship 3, Hunting 2, Intimidation 3, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Shadowlands 2

Any attempt to communicate at long distances using magical or mystical abilities will fail. The Akasha functions within line of sight, but any Naga PC will only be able to receive (or send) extremely vague impressions from any Naga not in their view. Spells intended to carry messages across a distance, such as Legacy of Kaze-no-Kami or Echoes of a Breeze, will simply fail when cast. Communing with the spirits of the Air and calling at least one Raise for clarity will identify Phoenix shugenja as responsible. This effect persists through the entire Owl province.

Hashi Kinpaku

If there are no PCs assigned to the Watchtower of the Webs at the table, instead the PCs will be sent to a village on the eastern border of the Owl lands called Hashi Kinpaku. Their mission is to assist the taisa in command of the eastern defenses establish a garrison on the River of Gold.

Hoshi Kinpaku is a moderately-sized trade village on the River of Gold, notable primarily for having one of the few bridges crossing the River of Gold. The Imperial Road that runs from Zakyo Toshi to the Minor Clan Alliance village of Kudo passes through here, and the Imperial Bridge has served the fledgling Owl Clan as its primary point of contact with the rest of the Empire. There is a ferry about a day's ride to the north, which PCs may remember from NW03: Legion of the Lost, and a ford near the White Gold River three days to the south, but this bridge is the best connection to the larger Empire for the Owl province.

The PCs have been sent with Kobe Midori, a former Lion tactician, her command staff of six yumemusha officers, and a squad of fifty ashigaru. Kobe hopes to send more troops later in the summer, but Midori needs to familiarize herself with the territory as well as set up a base of operations and find housing for her troops. The PCs, likely from several other families, are to help her with her military planning or serve as liaisons between her and the locals.

The Owl samurai and their followers will be met by the village headman Oji, who greets them politely. Hoshi Kinpaku has a sizable peasant population, though by no means qualifying as a city. When the Owl Clan were granted their lands, Seppun Hajime, an Emerald Magistrate, was stationed here to provide an Imperial observer. Unfortunately, the murder of a Sparrow samurai in Kudo has attracted his attention and he is out of town. (This murder was arranged by a Goju assassin, though that is entirely outside the scope of this module.) The farmers and merchants of the village are more than willing to cooperate with the Owl, though they don't have any real idea how to give the samurai what they want. There are no samurai in residence, apart from a handful of ronin either passing through or working in town as security for merchant caravans or sake houses or the like.

As Hashi Kinpaku is both on the Imperial Road and the River of Gold, it has a dock for river trade. There is a small shrine to Daikoku, as might be expected in a community dependent on commerce, and a smaller ancestral shrine. Because of its location between Zakyo Toshi and Kudo, the village sees regular visitors from the Scorpion Clan and the Minor Clans. It used to have regular traffic from samurai going to Zakyo Toshi for entertainment purposes, but the destruction of that city a few years ago by invaders from another Realm has stopped that particular mixed blessing.

When the Owl arrive in town, Midori's first task is to find a place to house her troops; the PCs may take lodging at one of the more comfortable inns if they

choose, but the taisa and the ashigaru will eventually find an unoccupied warehouse near the docks and not too far from the bridge. Her intention is to convert it to barracks, and if the PCs seem to be lacking in direction, she will ask them to assist in acquiring labor and materials for that purpose.

Whatever preparations the PCs wish to begin, they will only have the afternoon and evening of the day they arrive and the morning after.

Destroying the Bridge

It is nearly inevitable that PCs thinking to defend their lands will seek to remove one of the few ways to readily access their province. Doing so is fraught with complications, both practical and political. As an Imperial roadway, it is questionably an attack upon the Emperor's property (a fact that does often get overlooked in open war between clans, but nonetheless carries other consequences).

Even physically managing the destruction of the bridge is not as easy a task as might be thought: as part of the Imperial Highway, it was designed to last for centuries. It has been treated to resist the weather, traffic, and even fire; in addition, it is a massive structure, easily a hundred feet wide and more than a quarter mile long, supported by huge stone columns sunk into the river. Only a great deal of concerted effort, as from explosives or siege engines, will be able to do any significant damage in a time frame of less than a few days (and producing enough gunpowder to destroy the bridge would take several days on its own). Magic can prove effective, but requires a spell specifically designed to destroy a structure, like Fiery Wrath; any damage must overcome the bridge's Reduction 20 and 1,000 Wounds. The shugenja must also know such a spell already; the spirit of the bridge is devoted to its duty and attempting to Importune for any spell effect that will cause harm to the bridge will simply fail.

PCs from Realms with advanced technology and sufficient knowledge of Engineering might be able to make use of equipment that contains a great deal of energy in a small space to cause enough destruction to bring down the bridge. Doing so requires sacrificing from their Outfit an energy weapon or advanced vehicle and succeeding at an **Engineering / Intelligence** roll at a TN of 40. Up to three additional weapons can be sacrificed to gain a Free Raise on this roll each. Doing so, however, means that the PC has permanently given up that item and will not recover it with Outfit refresh.

Ultimately, even if the PCs succeed at destroying the bridge, it should be noted that all this will accomplish is to slow the Unicorn down – their advance forces will

still be given transport over the river by the Baraunghar shugenja. From a tactical perspective it makes almost no difference, though it will be more significant in a strategic sense.

The Second Day

The second day dawns overcast and gloomy, as an unseasonable storm front moves in. The enemy's Goju scouts begin their observations early, well before dawn, and the combined Unicorn/Spider cavalry force will begin its march at first light, arriving at the river roughly four hours later at mid-morning.

If a PC is out scouting to the east on the second day, they may spot the scouts with an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll at a TN of 30; they should also make **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** rolls at a TN of 25 to avoid being noticed themselves. If they do not spot the scouts, they will see the forward elements of the Unicorn army closing on the river, giving them only enough time to get back to the village before the attack begins. Failure on the Stealth roll means that the PC is followed by Goju, adding two more Goju Scouts to the advance group.

If the PCs are all in the village, than the first sign they will have of any trouble will be around mid-morning: the advance of the Unicorn cavalry will likely first be dismissed as thunder, but as the massive force comes into sight, the threat will become obvious. Kobe Midori summons the PCs

The taisa draws her troops up in the village square, across from the west side of the bridge. A vast force of purple-clad riders draw up on the opposite side of the river, their precise ranks making their numbers easy to estimate. At least three legions, more than two thousand warriors, ready themselves to charge across the bridge. Another entire legion, lighter-armored and with different banners, spread out behind them; occasional dark forms flicker in and out of view through the army – scouts delivering reports to the officers.

PCs with a background as Unicorn can recognize the three main legions as light cavalry from the Junghar army, with the light-armored legion behind them shugenja from the Baraunghar. Other PCs may have some knowledge of Unicorn military traditions; this can be represented by success on a **Lore: Unicorn or Battle / Intelligence** roll with a TN of 25. (Other Skills can be appropriate at the GM's discretion, like Lore: Heraldry.)

Midori shakes her head in disbelief, as her eyes flicker over the enemy troops. "We expected skirmishes,

raids on our outlying villages, attacks on caravans... Not an invasion." She shakes her head abruptly, and turns to you. *"But an invasion is what we've got. Go back to Shiro no Fukurou. Tell them what's happening. I'll evacuate the locals, and try to delay this, as much as I can."*

As she speaks, a light flashes across the sky from the west. In response, war-horns cry out from the Unicorn forces, and the front ranks start to advance toward the river. Midori snarls, "GO!" and turns away to gather her paltry troop.

If the PCs have destroyed the bridge, the Baraunghar shugenja will provide the advance forces with a route over the river with their magic. Otherwise, the troops ride across the bridge and pour through the village.

As they gather their mounts and head out of town, the PCs will be engaged by a squad under the command of one Gunso. There are a number of Shinjo Advance Riders equal to the number of PCs minus two, plus two Goju Scouts. The enemy will retreat once half of them have gone Down and the gunso is disabled.

Shinjo Advance Riders

Air 3	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 2
		Agility 3	Strength 3	
Honor 4.5		Status 1.0	Glory 1.0	
Initiative: 4k3			Attack: 7k3e (Katana, Complex, Mounted) or 6k3 (daikyu)	
Armor TN: 25			Damage: 7k2 (Katana) or 5k2 (daikyu)	
Reduction: 3 (light armor)				
Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 26 (+15), 30 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Dead)				
School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 1				
Techniques: <i>The Way of the Ki-Rin:</i> Gains +4 when spending Void Point for +1k1 on any School Skill Roll. May not be done in Center Stance.				
Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 2, Horsemanship 4, Jiujutsu 1, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Kyujutsu 3				

Shinjo Gunso

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 3
Reflexes 4		Agility 4		
Honor 5.5		Status 3.0	Glory 3.0	
Initiative: 7k4			Attack:	
Armor TN: 30			Damage:	
Reduction: 3 (light armor)				
Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)				
School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 3				

Techniques: *The Way of the Ki-Rin:* Gains +5 when spending Void Point for +1k1 on any School Skill Roll. May not be done in Center Stance.

Dance of the Blade: When in Full Defense and opponent successfully hits with an attack, may take a Free Action to make a Contested Agility Roll with opponent; success means the attack misses. May be done 3 times per round.

The Four Winds Strike: Simple Action attacks with Samurai weapons. Simple Action attacks with bows while mounted.

Skills: *Athletics* 4, *Battle* 4, *Defense* 4, *Horsemanship* 5, *Jujutsu* 3, *Kenjutsu* (Katana) 5, *Kyujutsu* 5

Goju Scout

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 2
Reflexes 3		Agility 3		
Honor 0.0		Status 1.0		Glory 0

Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** 6k3e (ninja-to, Complex)

Armor TN: 20 (no armor) **Damage:** 5k2 (ninja-to)

Reduction: 4 (0 vs crystal)

Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 26 (+15), 30 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Dead)

School/Rank: Goju Ninja 1

Techniques: *The Cloak of Night:* as a Simple Action, may increase Armor TN by up to 5; this lasts for the entire skirmish and increases the TN of all rolls except Athletics, Defense, and Stealth by the same amount

Skills: *Athletics* 3, *Defense* 2, *Kenjutsu* 3 (Ninja-to), *Ninjutsu* 3, *Sincerity* (Deceit) 2, *Stealth* 4

Any attempt to communicate at long distances using magical or mystical abilities will fail. The Akasha functions within line of sight, but any Naga PC will only be able to receive (or send) extremely vague impressions from any Naga not in their view. Spells intended to carry messages across a distance, such as Legacy of Kaze-no-Kami or Echoes of a Breeze, will simply fail when cast. Communing with the spirits of the Air and calling at least one Raise for clarity will identify Phoenix shugenja as responsible. This effect persists through the entire Owl province.

Part Two: Retreat to Shiro no Fukurou

Both Komonosu no Boro and Hashi Kinpaku are about sixty miles from Shiro no Fukurou; this would normally take about two days of travel across the country roads in the Owl province. Given the nature of the emergency, the PCs likely want to make better time than that.

Traveling as fast as possible would allow the PCs to arrive at the castle just before midnight. This requires the entire party to succeed at a **Horsemanship** or **Athletics (Running)** / **Stamina** roll (depending on whether or not they are mounted) with a TN of 35; this option results in the PCs being Fatigued automatically, while any PC who was not mounted is at +10 as if they had gone two days without rest. Additionally, the mount of any PC who does not roll at least a 40 on this roll will collapse and die as soon as they arrive at the castle. Failure on this roll from any of the PCs means that the group suffers the same penalties, but does not arrive at the castle until dawn of the next day. Even attempting this does allow the group to avoid the ninja in the province, though any PC with Lord Moon's Curse will still have to contend with the influence of the full moon. Obviously, PCs doing this will not recover any Wounds, Void Points, or spell slots lost during the first encounter.

The middle of the road option is for the PCs to press forward as much as possible without killing their steeds. This requires a **Horsemanship** or **Athletics / Stamina** roll (TN 20) on the first day or be Fatigued. When the sun sets, the PCs may attempt to push on through – doing so (without some means of ignoring the darkness) requires rolling **Horsemanship / Perception** at TN 25 or lame their horse, increasing the TN of further Horsemanship rolls by 5. The second day (or pressing on through the night) requires another Stamina-based roll at TN 20 with the same Skill; failure on this roll also results in the PC becoming Fatigued, or gaining an additional +5 penalty if they were already Fatigued. Regardless of success or failure on these rolls, this option gets the PCs to the castle by mid-morning of the next day.

The easiest option for travel does not require a roll of any kind, though it does result in the PCs not arriving at the castle until sunset of the next day. Stopping at night means they have to deal with the scouts, but if they take the time to rest they may potentially recover their Void or spells. However, they will lose a half of a Rank of Glory for taking their time during the emergency.

The Moon

Though the sky is still overcast, the full moon will rise above the clouds and throw its influence across those cursed by Lord Moon. Anyone with the "Lord Moon's Curse" Disadvantage gains a free Void Point when the sun sets, as per that Disadvantage's effects. However, they must also make a raw **Willpower** roll at the TN appropriate for their ranks in the Disadvantage (15 for 3 points, 20 for 5, 25 for 7). Failure on this roll results in them being overwhelmed by the influence of the Lying

Darkness. The GM takes control of the character, and a half-dozen Ninja Scouts appear to support them as they attack the other PCs – the Shadow is willing to use the temporary control they have over the cursed character to throw them away trying to kill other PCs. The other PCs may attempt to break the Shadow’s control by trying to “talk them down” with an appropriate Social Skill Roll at a TN of 30; Free Raises should be rewarded by the GM for good roleplaying. Success allows the cursed character to make a **Willpower** roll for their Disadvantage, with a Free Raise for every other PC involved in talking them around. If the PCs capture them without killing them, they will recover with the sunrise, though explaining themselves will require more than a simple roll...

The Ninja Scouts will attack from hiding, gaining their Free Raise against any target that cannot beat their Stealth roll with **Investigation (Notice) / Perception**. They will disappear as soon as the cursed PC is killed or dropped.

Ninja Scouts

Unless the PCs press on through the night, they will likely stop for at least a bit at night to rest. There are enemy scouts in the province, hunting for groups like them, and they will attack if the PCs let their guard down. Should the PCs not set watches, they will be attacked in their sleep; even if the ninja do not slay any of the PCs, it is worth it to them to injure the yumemusha as much as possible. The purpose of these harrying attacks is not necessarily to kill any PCs, but to impress upon them the danger and pressure the clan is now under.

Ninja Scout

Air 3	Earth 2	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 2
Reflexes 4				
Honor 0.0		Status 2.0	Glory 0	
Initiative: 6k4		Attack: 8k3e (ninja-to, Complex); 9k4 (blowgun, Complex)		
Armor	TN: 25 (no armor)	Damage: 6k2 (ninja-to); 1k1 plus poison (blowgun)		
Reduction: 4 (0 vs crystal)				
Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 26 (+15), 30 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Dead)				
School/Rank: Goju Ninja 2				
Techniques: <i>The Cloak of Night:</i> as a Simple Action, may increase Armor TN by up to 10; this lasts for the skirmish and increases TN of all rolls except Athletics, Defense, and Stealth by the same amount				
<i>Melting Into Shadow:</i> +2k0 on Stealth; +10 to TN of rolls to detect; Free Raise when attacking an unaware opponent				

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 3, Kenjutsu 5 (Ninja-to), Ninjutsu 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Stealth 5

Poison: The ninja scouts are using blowgun darts with a powerful soporific; when struck, the target must make a raw **Stamina** roll. Failure at TN 10 means they are Stunned, failure at TN 20 means they are Fatigued.

Shiro no Fukurou

On their return to the Owl Clan castle, the PCs will find that they are not the only harbingers of disaster; messages have come from across the province of attackers to both the east and west. The Unicorn and Spider have sent at least eight legions between them, and there are indications they have support from Phoenix shugenja (although there are no Shiba troops in the field, allowing the Phoenix a certain amount of political flexibility).

At the castle, yumemusha from across the Owl lands are reporting in and being sent off to either the north or south. The PCs will find Kobe Hikaru, the family daimyo’s hatamoto, organizing the retreat from the province. (If a PC was killed before this, their player may bring in a replacement character at this point.)

The main hall of the castle has been occupied by a dozen tables displaying maps of the Owl province, and copious notes have been pinned in place on all of them. Kobe Hikaru, Kobe’s hatamoto, strides amid the swirl of information, a tense, bald figure snapping out orders. He pauses when you enter and nods abruptly. “Another group? Good. You have a choice to make.” He gestures you closer to the largest map.

The PCs can see markers indicating the presence of Unicorn and Spider troops spreading through the eastern and western Owl lands. There are also markers for groups of Owl clan samurai, most of them shown moving away from the castle.

“We have, as you can see, been taken completely by surprise. The Spider and Unicorn have a stronger alliance than believed, and they appear to have worked each other up into a frenzy. This will be extremely costly for them, in the long run, though in the meantime, we have to survive. I have been ordered to oversee the withdrawal from this province and to ensure that as many yumemusha live through the current conflict as possible. To that end, I have been sending out small groups likely to avoid notice.”

Hikaru gestures to the Scorpion lands on the map. “Kobe-sama and Hanashi-sama have traveled to the north, to attempt to convince the Scorpion to ally themselves with us or at least give us sanctuary from the Unicorn and Spider. There are significantly fewer

*troops between here and there, though the diplomatic difficulties to be encountered at the *ahem* ruins of Zakyo Toshi should not be underestimated.” His finger comes down on the Crab lands, to the south. “The Crab are our strongest allies, and will undoubtedly give us a place to recover, but there are more enemy forces in the field to the south – no doubt seeking to cut us off from such reinforcements. Sukune-sama and Seizoku-sama have gone to Maemikake, to coordinate our response and ensure a refuge for our people.” His hand tilts, as if balancing two options. “I leave it to you to decide which direction to go.”*

The PCs have to decide whether to head north to join Kobe and Hanashi with the Scorpion or south to join Sukune and Seizoku. Hikaru will encourage them to travel together, to the point of issuing a direct order if necessary. If the group seems particularly lacking in combat ability, they should be guided toward the social encounters in the north; conversely, if they are more combat-oriented, the fact that there are more enemies in the south should be played up.

Many players may wish to go to where their character’s daimyo is, but basing the decision on that alone will be argued against by Hikaru: “You wish to join your lord, which is admirable. But where do you think your skills will be most useful to the Owl? I speak for Kobe-sama, who currently speaks for Sezaru, the lord of us all. You must choose based on what is best for the clan, not your sense of loyalty. I, too, would much rather be at my lord’s side.”

Similarly, splitting the party is to be discouraged. “Traveling alone through our lands is going to be very dangerous. Small groups provide for speed and security.”

When the PCs have decided where to go, Hikaru will send them off with a grave nod. *“I have seen firsthand what a small group of samurai, thrown together seemingly at the whim of fate, can accomplish. Take whatever you need, but ride quickly. Lord Sezaru will have need of us when he returns.”*

The PCs can acquire any gear they feel they need (within reason; the Owl is not a terribly wealthy clan, after all). Remounts can be obtained, as the animals will not be of any use during the expected siege of the castle. The PCs may even be able to justify resting for a few hours; eight hours of sleep will allow them to recover from basic Fatigue. Much more than that, however, will be frowned on.

Part Three: the Cost of War or the Price of Peace

To the South

Knowing that the Owl have a strong alliance with the Crab, the Unicorn and Spider forces are more concerned about yumemusha heading south to get military assistance than they are about the Scorpion. As the main forces of the enemy alliance are moving in from the east and west, however, it is far easier for a small group of fast-traveling samurai to pass through the few patrols that have been set up at this early stage of the invasion.

There is less need for a hard pace on this journey; Sukune and Seizoku were in the south when the attack started and are assumed to have made it to the Crab lands already.

As the PCs head south, they will see signs of the military action in the province. Columns of smoke rise into the sky to the east and west from burning villages. Dust from the Unicorn and Spider cavalry rises as well, giving the PCs plenty of warning where the enemy are.

On the third day heading south, the PCs come upon a village near the border of the Owl lands that is currently under assault. An enemy supply caravan has attacked what it saw as an easy target; another group of yumemusha were present, however, and are fighting a losing battle, trying to buy the peasants time to flee south.

You come over a hill and see a small battle in progress a short distance away. A party of a dozen riders charge into a hastily-constructed wooden palisade, striking at the faintly glowing figures defending it. Between you and the village, four wagons have pulled up to provide another small party flying both Unicorn and Spider banners with cover. It is obvious that two of the mounted figures are issuing commands to the attackers, and they only have a pair of guards each...

It is easily possible for the PCs to attack the commanders from the rear without being spotted, focused as they are on the fight. The PCs may make **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** rolls to identify the leaders: TN 15 allows them to recognize Utaku Ikari, the Utaku family daimyo, while 20 informs them that her companion is her betrothed, Daigotsu Setai (Daigotsu Rekai’s protégé and declared heir as Spider Champion). Killing or capturing either leader would be a great benefit for the Owl, while even driving them off

would allow the clan a bit of respite on the southern border.

The two commanders have a pair of guards each, and will notice the approach of the PCs when they get within 30' (melee range) unless they do something to attract attention otherwise, such as casting spells or opening fire with ranged attacks.

The Spider and Unicorn will fight more as two separate groups than as a single unit. One of the Daigotsu will use their Aura of Blood ability to increase their allies' damage. If the Utaku have the opportunity, they will break away to give their daimyo an opportunity to charge with her lance to do major damage to the most dangerous of the PCs. It is best for this to be broadcast fairly clearly, to give the PCs a chance to disrupt the charge.

The guards will fight to the death, loyal samurai that they are. If either Setai or Ikari is dropped to Down, the other will try to grab them and retreat, with the guards covering their departure. If one of them is killed, the other will try to kill the PC that did so before retreating themselves. (It is worth note that the two are not in love, being in a political arranged marriage, but they have come to respect each other.)

Daigotsu Setai

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4	Void 3
Reflexes 4				
Honor 0.0	Status 7.0		Glory 6.5	

Initiative: 8k4+5 **Attack:** 10k5e-5 (Katana, Simple)

Armor TN: 35 **Damage:** 10k2m (katana)

Reduction: 10 (heavy armor, 0 against jade or crystal)
Shadowlands Taint: 3.0

Wounds: 20 (+0), 28 (+3), 36 (+5), 44 (+10), 52 (+15), 60 (+20), 68 (Down, +40), 76 (Dead)

School/Rank: Daigotsu Bushi 4

Techniques: *the Way of the Spider:* at the beginning of each Round, may choose to reduce TN penalty from Wound Ranks by 7 or add that to damage; TN on any roll made to detect Taint is increased by 10

Aura of Blood: may spend a Void Point as a Simple Action to give self and all allies within 30' +2k0 damage for 7 Rounds; does not stack – additional uses reset duration

Ashura's Wing: Simple Action melee attacks

Devouring Wrath: regain 5 Wounds when hit an opponent; may grant up to 20 extra Wounds, but extra Wounds are lost at end of skirmish

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 5, Defense 3, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu (Focus) 6, Intimidation 5,

Investigation 3, Jiu-jutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Shadowlands 6, Sincerity 2, Stealth 3
Advantages: Leadership, Strength of the Earth

Shadowlands Powers: Above the Elements (+10TN to spells targeting him), Chosen of Fu Leng (immune to mind control or emotional manipulation), Unholy Strength (+3k0 to all Strength-based rolls, including damage)

Daigotsu Guard

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 2
		Agility 3	Strength 4	
Honor 0.0		Status 4.0		Glory 4.5

Initiative: 4k2 **Attack:** 8k3e-5 (Tetsubo, Complex)

Armor TN: 25 **Damage:** 8k3 (Tetsubo)

Reduction: 5 (heavy armor)

Shadowlands Taint: 2.0

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

School/Rank: Daigotsu Bushi 2

Techniques: *the Way of the Spider:* at the beginning of each Round, may choose to reduce TN penalty from Wound Ranks by 5 or add that to damage; TN on any roll made to detect Taint is increased by 10

Aura of Blood: may spend a Void Point as a Simple Action to give self and all allies within 30' +2k0 damage for 5 Rounds; does not stack – additional uses reset duration

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 3, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 5, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 3, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3, Jiu-jutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Shadowlands 4

Utaku Ikari

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3	Void 3
Reflexes 5		Agility 5		
Honor 7.3		Status 8.0		Glory 7.2

Initiative: 9k5 **Attack:** 10k6e (Katana, Simple) or 10k5e (Lance)

Armor TN: 42 **Damage:** 7k2m (Katana) or 6k4 (Lance)

Reduction: 8 (Unicorn Riding Armor)

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

School/Rank: Utaku Battle Maiden 4

Techniques: *Riding In Harmony:* +7 to one attack roll per Round. While mounted, may instead choose to apply this bonus to one damage roll. +7 to Horsemanship rolls.

The Void of War: During Stage 1 of any Combat Round, may add 5 to either Initiative Score or Armor TN. This bonus lasts until use this Technique again or the skirmish ends.

Sensing the Breeze: Simple Action attacks while mounted

Wind Never Stops: While mounted, may overrun the enemy by spending a Void Point. May take a Simple Action to charge the enemy and attack him at the end of movement. (Both the movement and attack take the same Simple Action. If mounted, this Action uses the movement rate of the steed.) If this attack succeeds, gain +2k1 to all damage rolls this Turn.

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 5, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 1, Horsemanship 8, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Kyujutsu 4, Sincerity 3, Spears (Lance) 6

Advantages: Luck I, Quick

Utaku Guard

Air 3 Earth 2 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 2

Stamina 3

Agility 4

Honor 6.8

Status 4.0

Glory 3.0

Initiative: 5k3

Attack: 9k4e (Katana, Complex)

Armor TN: 25

Damage: 7k2 (Katana)

Reduction: 3 (light armor)

Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 26 (+15), 30 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Dead)

School/Rank: Utaku Battle Maiden 2

Techniques: *Riding In Harmony:* Gain a bonus equal to Honor Rank to one attack roll per Round. While mounted, may instead choose to apply this bonus to one damage roll. Gain a bonus equal to Honor Rank to the total of all Horsemanship rolls.

The Void of War: During Stage 1 of any Combat Round, may add 5 to either Initiative Score or Armor TN. This bonus lasts until use this Technique again or the skirmish ends.

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 3, Defense 3, Horsemanship 6, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Sincerity 3, Spears 4

Once the leaders are defeated or driven off, the group attacking the village will retreat. The PCs can meet the yumemusha defenders – another group heading south, much like them. They will thank the PCs gratefully, and organize the evacuation of the village. (The actual identities of the Owl NPCs is largely irrelevant; the GM can use other PCs in the campaign if they wish, or come up with whatever details are necessary.)

The PCs can reach Maemikake from the southern border of the Owl lands in two days.

To the North

If the PCs head north to the Scorpion, it takes a little over two days to arrive at the ruins of Zakyo Toshi. The former pleasure city, destroyed by an invasion of

barbarians from another Realm a few years ago, is being rebuilt by the Scorpion as a garrison on their southern border.

When the ruins of the city once known as Zakyo Toshi come into view, you see a small camp outside its walls flying the banner of the Owl. Both Kobe and Hanashi's heraldry are proudly displayed at the largest tent, and yumemusha guards can be seen on duty. Scorpion bushi in full armor patrol the area, and one stands outside the large tent carrying a standard. A larger military encampment lies within the walls, with enough room for a full legion of troops.

Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence (TN 30) will allow the PC to recognize the banner as belonging to Bayushi Zinshi, the taisei recently chosen to command the garrison here. He is a cousin of the Scorpion Clan Champion, and a proven veteran of several skirmishes against the Lion and Unicorn.

The guards at the tent bow and allow you to pass. Inside, Kobe and Hanashi sit, seemingly at ease, around a small table, sharing tea with a Scorpion bushi. Clad in armor with his kabuto on the ground next to him, he holds the cup in a firm hand that shows no sign of raising it to his lips. Carefully neutral expressions from all three turn toward you.

Hanashi gestures you closer. "Welcome, welcome, my fellow yumemusha. We are pleased that you have arrived safely, in such troubled times. Kobe-san and I have been having a pleasant conversation with this worthy samurai, Bayushi Zinshi, the highest-ranking of the Scorpion present here to greet us when we arrived yesterday. Perhaps you could share your experiences with him, that he may understand our plight better."

Zinshi set his cup down carefully and rises. "I should not wish to intrude on your greetings for your clanmates, Hanashi-san." Her face grows cold at the honorific, but he swiftly bows to each of the Owl daimyo and sweeps out of the tent, his face blank.

The daimyo are fairly glad to see the PCs. Hanashi and Kobe have been getting a run-around by Zinshi since their arrival. Zakyo Toshi has become a military outpost, and the Scorpion are refusing entry to the Scorpion lands. Hanashi does not know why the Scorpion are doing so, but suspects Zinshi has sent word to Bayushi Oniji, the Scorpion Clan Champion, and is stalling to give time for the Champion to arrive.

Hanashi knows that there is little love lost between the Scorpion and either the Unicorn or Spider, and is not certain why Zinshi is being obstructionist. In fact, Zinshi has been replaced by a powerful minion of the Shadow, who has taken his form and appearance to sow chaos and prevent the Owl from getting any assistance.

The two daimyo are accompanied by a dozen Owl clan guards; capable warriors, but not equipped with the skills necessary to investigate the delicate situation the Owl refugees are now in. (Hanashi is particularly frustrated by this, having sent her usual associates to other courts because she did not anticipate this stumbling block.) The PCs, therefore, are naturally going to be tasked with finding out what has caused the Scorpion's intransigence.

There are a number of ways the PCs can go about this, though ultimately they come down to making either a **Courtier (Gossip)** / **Awareness** or **Investigation** / **Awareness** roll. Ultimately, what they discover depends as much on what questions they ask as it does on how well they roll.

Information on the general situation in town:

- 10: Zakyo Toshi was attacked and utterly destroyed two years ago by a group of Yodotai invaders from other Realm. This was one of the first signs of the spiritual instabilities that have plagued the Empire since, and are the mandate of the Owl. Rather than rebuilding the pleasure city like it was, the militant Scorpion leadership have decided to replace it with a fortified garrison on their southern borders, to keep a better watch toward the Spider and Crab – as well as the Owl.
- 20: The guards are highly suspicious of the Owl yumemusha who have arrived suddenly. They do not seem likely to attack without provocation, but there is a sense that they may be seeking that provocation. Word that more Owl refugees are likely to head this direction has made the Scorpion unhappy, even anxious.
- 30: The guards think the Owl have been Shadow-tainted. There are whispers among the Scorpion rank and file that the Minor Clan has been in contact with the Lying Darkness, perhaps even since they arrived in this Realm. As the Scorpion have a long and tumultuous history with the Shadow, they are not disposed to ignore the danger. All of the guards in contact with the Owl have been issued crystal shards in order to protect themselves and carefully test those they deem suspicious.

Information about Bayushi Zinshi:

- 15: The garrison commander is more known as a tactician than a swordsman, and has proven his ability as a leader in several skirmishes under the command of his cousin Bayushi Oniji. His familial connections may be at least partially responsible for his appointment, but he does have a reputation for getting results in the field that gives his men confidence he is a good fit for the position.
- 25: Zinshi was the one who personally assigned crystal to the guard rank and file, which is how the rumors of the Owl being Shadow-touched started. He himself has been silent on the possibility, noting only that “the Scorpion do not know what they are dealing with” and that “he trusts his men to act appropriately”.
- 35: Zinshi's last post was on Oniji's command staff, where he served as a strategist. He earned his reputation as one of the Scorpion Champion's most trusted military commanders, willing to work independently in the field without orders for extended periods and bringing back results that always served the clan's best interests. Quite a few of his engagements were against the Spider, and he is known to have survived four assassination attempts by Goju ninja.

Information about Bayushi Oniji:

- 15: Bayushi Oniji is a powerful military leader who rules his clan with an iron fist. He has put down three attempted rebellions, one led by the Yogo family daimyo, taken arms against the Lion, Crab, Unicorn, and Spider, and fought twenty-three lethal duels. His strength of will is only matched by his temper; Oniji is called the “Iron Flame” by his enemies because he never forgets a slight and never fails to burn those who cross him.
- 25: The Scorpion military is utterly loyal to Oniji, who has led them in many victories over the years. The Scorpion have been actively aggressive over the last several generations, and many of the other clans seek redress for past wrongs; Oniji's prowess has allowed the clan to maintain their holdings without actually expanding any further than his ancestors.
- 35: Oniji is known to be very emotional about his family. Though they are expected to earn their way, his close kin enjoy high positions, and not just in the clan; one of his sons is the commander of the 6th Imperial Legion, and his daughter Isako is the Scorpion representative to the Imperial Court. Conversely, he does not handle betrayal well: another of his sons, as well as one of his brothers, was executed for treason. (Those who know the Scorpion may recognize signs about the tale that indicate both were condemned to Traitor's Grove.)

The PCs have a limited amount of time to investigate; word spreads the day after they arrive that the Scorpion Champion is almost there, and will be likely to expect a meeting with the Owl the next day. They will be unable to bring action against Zinshi, but warning the daimyo that something is happening is still helpful.

Hanashi sends messages back and forth to Oniji's camp on his arrival, arranging the meeting. She will summon the PCs after the final message to request that they act as assistants and guards during the meeting. ***"There is something strange at work here. The Scorpion are more suspicious than they should be. I want you to keep your eyes open, and be ready for anything."***

Hanashi does not suggest the PCs wear armor to the meeting, though if a PC requests it, she will grudgingly grant permission (this is legal and possible as they will be serving as guards, though she would prefer to give a better impression). Kobe does not wear armor himself, though he does sling a massive no-dachi across his back, despite a cold glare from Hanashi when he does.

The Meeting

The Scorpion Clan Champion has decided to meet the Owl samurai on the riverbank between the city walls and the refugee camp. In clear view of both, by limiting the numbers of people present and making it almost impossible to sneak up on the meeting, Oniji is evidently attempting to make as equitable a security arrangement as possible with the Minor Clan.

When Bayushi Oniji arrives, he is clad in full armor of alternating red and black plates and a snarling mempo with teeth that curve nearly to his temple. As he approaches, however, he doffs the grotesque iron helmet to reveal a simple silk mask that does little to hide his surprisingly plain features. He is flanked by a pair of guards that never seem to leave an arm's-length, with another pair following several steps behind. Finally, Bayushi Zinshi walks at the rear of the group, dressed in a plain black kimono and a feline mask.

Hanashi and Kobe move forward to offer bows of respect to the Scorpion Clan Champion, and he returns them stiffly. Hanashi begins smoothly, "Bayushi Oniji-sama, we are grateful for your hospitality and honored by your willingness to meet with us under such conditions." She is cut off by the Champion before she can

"Hospitality?! You are not welcome guests, if guests you in fact are, Hanashi-san. The Spider and

Unicorn have declared that you have tricked the Son of Heaven, that you do not belong anywhere in this Realm. I am not sure I agree with that, but that doesn't mean I think you belong on my land!" His attention is focused on Hanashi, who quickly attempts conciliation for your presence...

Two of Oniji's men have been replaced by Ninja Shapeshifters. As the daimyo speaks with the Champion, and most of the group's attention is on her, they begin to move slightly apart, putting themselves into position for when hostilities commence. PCs who are paying attention to the guards may roll **Battle** or **Investigation / Perception** (TN 30) to notice this; if no one succeeds at this roll, they will mark a PC target to attack and duplicate during the fight. Once they are in position, or if a PC tries to speak out about their movement, they will begin their mission of causing chaos and giving their superior the opening she ordered:

Suddenly, one of the flanking guards calls out, "My lord! Treachery!" Oniji snarls, "A trap? I shall not be slain so easily!" Clapping his helm onto his head, his blade flashes from his saya, and his men ready themselves likewise. The guard who sounded the "warning" ducks his head and smiles so only you can see...

There are two loyal yojimbo, two Ninja Shapeshifters, Bayushi Oniji, and "Bayushi Zinshi"/the Shadow Corruptor. Oniji will spend the first Round in Full Defense, assessing the threat; his loyal yojimbo should probably Guard him and/or attack any particularly bellicose PCs. The Ninja Shapeshifters charge into their chosen targets – if no one noticed their maneuvering, then they gain +20 to their Initiative on the first Round and a Free Raise on their attack.

Bayushi Yojimbo

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3
Honor 2.0	Status 4.0	Glory 5.0	
Initiative: 9k5	Attack: 9k4 (Katana, Simple)		
Armor TN: 30	Damage: 7k2 (Katana)		
Reduction: 3			
Wounds: 20 (+10), 40 (+20), 60 (Dead)			
School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 4			
Techniques: <i>The Way of the Scorpion:</i> +1k1 to Initiative Rolls. +5 to Armor TN against any opponent with lower Initiative.			
<i>Pincers and Tail:</i> May make the Feint Maneuver for one Raise instead of two.			
<i>Strike at the Tail:</i> Choose a target within 30' at the start of the Turn: the target is Fatigued if hit this Turn. They roll Earth (TN 25) during the Reactions Stage to			

recover. If this roll fails, the effects of this Technique end during the next Reactions Stage (the second Reactions Stage after he was struck).

Strike From Above, Strike From Below: Simple Action melee attacks

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 4, Courtier (Manipulation) 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Sincerity 4, Stealth 6

The Ninja Shapeshifters use the same stats as the Bayushi Yojimbo, with the following extra abilities:

- *Partial Invulnerability:* takes half damage (rounded down) from non-crystal weapons or non-Void spells or other magical effects not designed to target minions of the Nothing.
- *Mental Resistance:* immune to Fear and spells that create illusions or influence the mind
- *Uncanny Speed:* Swift 1
- *Shapeshifting:* may take the form of a target with a Simple Action; requires a Complex Action and success on an **Investigation / Perception** roll (Contested with the Shapeshifter's **Sincerity / Awareness**) to penetrate the illusion. This does duplicate the appearance of equipment, though the Shapeshifter's stats remain the same – they will still use the attack and damage for a katana even if their target has another weapon, for instance.

In the Reactions Stage of the first Round of combat, the enemy leader will make her presence known:

A column of shadow suddenly pours up from the ground where Zinshi stands, replacing him with a slender, vaguely feminine shape. A monotonous voice drones menacingly, "We do not seek your death, Lord of the Iron Flame... we seek YOU!" Moving with the power and grace of a tiger, the dark form flings whirling blades of darkness into the Scorpion Champion's yojimbo. The shuriken pass through their armor like paper, and the men scream in pain and sudden terror – for all of a second. As they collapse, a dark cloud emerges from the rents in their body. Their cries break off in horrible gurgles, then they rise again, their features sloughing off to leave blank eggshell faces under their helms. Raising their blades, they turn toward their liege.

Kobe's first instinct is to defend Hanashi; backing away from the fray, she whispers something in Kobe's ear.

Anyone attempting to attack the thing that was Bayushi Zinshi will have a hard time – its form shifts and twists away from their attacks (represented by its high Armor TN and immunity to non-damaging spells).

Shadow Corruptor

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 4
Reflexes 7		Agility 6	
Honor 0.0	Status -10.0	Glory 0.0	
Armor TN: 70		Reduction: 6 (0 vs crystal)	

Powers/Weaknesses: *Body of Shadow:* Takes half damage from (rounded down) from non-crystal weapons and non-Void spells or other magical effects not specifically intended to target minions of the Nothing. Immune to non-damaging non-Void spells.

Formless Defense: +30 Armor TN (already figured) while able to make a Free Move Action; cannot be Grappled by any non-Shadow enemy – her form is too amorphous to be held by such attacks, and slips easily away from most blows.

Uncanny Speed: Swift 3

Skills: Athletics 6, Defense 5, Jiu-jutsu 4, Ninjutsu (Shuriken) 7, Stealth 6

Wounds: 60: Dead

During Reactions of the second Round:

Kobe charges forward to clutch desperately at the Scorpion Champion's armor. With a surge of his powerful arms and a twist of his hips, he hurls the Bayushi lord a dozen feet... but leaves his back turned to the shadowy creature. A pair of shuriken pierce his broad shoulders, and inky darkness begins to pour from his wounds. Yet his teeth bare in fury, and a hoarse roar emerges from his throat. "NO!" He spins, lashing out with his massive sword – the creature avoids the blow, its inky form shifting around the blade. The black smoke rising from his wounds gathers around his arms, and he tackles the half-formed shadow to the ground. Raising his sword again with one hand, he pins the foul creature to the ground. Panting, he rasps out, "You. Shall. Not. Have. Us... Him. Or. Me." Lifting his head, fighting the corruption spilling out and over him like a cloak, he snarls, "Kill. This. Thing."

Pinned by Kobe, the Shadow Corruptor cannot move far enough to avoid blows; at this point, the PCs simply have to deal 60 Wounds to it. Its Armor TN drops to 15 before Raises; it does retain its Reduction and takes only half damage from non-crystal weapons. When killed, the Shadow Corruptor dissolves into nothingness, leaving a shattered crystal shuriken

After the battle, Kobe remains kneeling where the enemy fell, panting. The darkness swirls around him as he peels his hand away from his long sword, moving it instead to his wakizashi. [Turning to the Kobe PC with the highest Honor, if none have had an opportunity to strike him as particularly

honorable through roleplay, a bushi by preference if another family is necessary.] *He looks at you and nods.*

Conclusion

Crab Lands

The PCs discover when they arrive at Maemikake that Seizoku has been given quarters as a guest of the Toritaka governor of the small city. There, he is coordinating the evacuation and housing of the Owl's vassals, and starting up lines of communication with the Scorpion. He reports that Kobe has fallen, defending the Scorpion Clan Champion from a Goju assassin, and that the Scorpion have therefore offered sanctuary for the Owl. Sukune is working with the Crab military to determine what kind of action the Great Clan can undertake to clear the Owl's lands.

Scorpion Lands

Bayushi Oniji is unhappy to be in the debt of a Minor Clan, but altogether too conscious of the public obligation he now has. The Scorpion offer sanctuary for the Owl, turning the defenses that have been built at Zakyo Toshi over to the Minor Clan. It is reported that the Crab are taking in the peasants from the Owl lands, and preparing to clear the lands. Hanashi is established at Kyuden Bayushi as a liaison between the Scorpion and Owl; in the continued absence of Sezar, and with the importance of the new political alliance with the Scorpion, she is the logical choice to lead the clan.

Owl Lands

The Owl lands are destroyed; no stone remains atop another of Shiro no Fukurou. The castle fell five days after the invasion began, Kobe Hikaru having resorted to several diversions to convince the Spider and Unicorn that most of the Owl Clan samurai were still there. However, less than twenty yumemusha actually held the walls when the siege began; the majority of the Owl were able to escape the fall of their lands. Without lands or support of their own, however, they are now dependent on the Crab and Scorpion.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

Experience Points

Surviving the adventure:	2XP
Good roleplaying:	+2XP
Returning to Shiro no Fukurou:	+2XP
Defeating Utaku or Daigotsu	
-OR-	
Destroying the Shadow Corruptor:	+2XP

Total Possible Experience: 8XP

Glory

Driving Daigotsu Setai and Utaku Ikari away gains the PCs .5 Glory; Killing Daigotsu Setai or Utaku Ikari gains the PCs a full Rank of Glory; Capturing Daigotsu Setai or Utaku Ikari gains the PC .5 Glory and a 4-point Sworn Enemy for that character.

Killing the Shadow Corruptor gains the PCs a full Rank of Glory

Other Awards/Penalties

PCs who kill or drive off Daigotsu Setai and Utaku Ikari gain .5 Status; PCs who capture either or both Daigotsu Setai and/or Utaku Ikari gain one full Rank of Status; this does not stack with the previous reward, but replaces it if the PCs capture one and drive off or kill the other

PCs who help kill the Shadow Corruptor gain .5 Status; they may also take a crystal shard from the Corruptor's remains. This is just a piece of crystal that can be fashioned into an arrowhead or pendant for use against or to detect minions of the Nothing.

A PC who serves as Kobe's second may be given his no-dachi, at the GM's discretion. This should be reserved for an honorable Kobe or bushi PC without a "special" weapon of their own. Mechanically, it is a 3k3 weapon that is treated as crystal against minions of the Nothing (not against Shadowlands creatures or otherwise Invulnerable targets).