

New Beginnings

**A One-Round Introductory Adventure for Heroes of
Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido**

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The Test of the Topaz Champion is to be held for the first time in more than a decade. This promises to be an historic event...

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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 preceds personal name for all characters; Akodo Toturi was a member of the Akodo family with the personal name of Toturi.

- Samurai do not commonly concern themselves with money or commerce; exchanges between samurai are treated as gifts, and payments are made to peasants as though humoring the lower orders petty ways.
- An event is not truly considered to have happened without samurai witness; even criminal investigations rely entirely upon eyewitness testimony.

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

Reminder

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

Future mods will include guidelines for altering some mechanics to be a better fit for a given group of players. As this is an introductory adventure, however, no such adjustments should be necessary.

Adventure Summary and Background

The vast majority of samurai in Rokugan regard the Topaz Championship as the most prestigious gempukku ceremony in the Empire. The ceremony is open to any who wish to attend, but the Great Clans tend to be very selective in determining who represents them at the Championship. To permit just anyone to enter the contest would risk embarrassment, and no Great Clan would risk such a thing in front of their Crane hosts. Minor Clan samurai and ronin candidates require a Great Clan sponsor to be admitted to the competition. The Topaz Championship has been held in the Kakita town of Tsuma for centuries, at one of the largest dojo for the Kakita Dueling Academy. This year will be the first Topaz Championship since 1126, due to the Crab Clan's invasion of the Crane lands leading up to the Clan War. The Crane have not been in a position to host the event since, though saying that outright would be a breach of etiquette.

Rather than contenders, the PCs are present as guides, guards, assistants, or sensei for their Clan's aspirants. The PCs will have passed their own gempukku already and are ineligible to take part themselves, but are here to serve their Clan's interests as ordered by their individual lords.

Upon arriving in Tsuma, the PCs will have a day to prepare for the competition, explore the city, and meet the major and minor NPCs who are present. The contest will be derailed before it begins, and the PCs will be drawn into another Realm and forced through a series of trials to escape.

This module has been specifically designed to introduce players to the mechanics and setting of the Legend of the Five Rings role-playing game, and to introduce the basic setting of the campaign. Experienced GMs and players should feel free to focus more on the role-play aspect of the challenges presented.

Introduction: Arrival in Tsuma

It is spring of the year 1137 of the Imperial Calendar, the ninth year of the reign of Toturi I, Lord of the Seven Hills and Master of the Chrysanthemum. A fresh spring breeze carries the scent of cherry

blossoms to you from a nearby orchard. To the south, just visible on the horizon, is the splendid tower of Shiro Sano Kakita, the ancient seat of the Kakita family. Ahead of you is the village of Tsuma, a modest-sized city located next to a minor river, and home to one of the major dojos for the Kakita Dueling Academy. Here, the best and brightest young samurai of their generation have competed for the title of Topaz Champion, to bring glory and honor to their Clan. This is the first year the test has been held in over a decade, and though fate denied you the opportunity to take part, you have been sent by your Clan to assist those who can.

Tsuma is a modest city of about 1,200 people – essentially a very large village. Located in the peaceful Crane lands, it has neither walls nor a military garrison. There are no formal embassies maintained by other clans, since most only have business within the city once per year. The largest structure in the village is the Kakita Dueling Academy, a sizable compound of buildings and gardens, linked under a shared roof and protected by a high stone wall... the only fortification in Tsuma.

The PCs arrive in Tsuma by land, as do most of the other attendees – the road is crowded with samurai, both mounted and on foot, as well as noblewomen in palanquins. Crane magistrates patrol the roads carefully, and the PCs are stopped at least once to show their travel papers.

The PCs and their charges are directed to the House of the Tranquil Lotus, as they will be staying there free of charge, and to the Kakita Academy, as several smaller dojo have been set aside should the characters wish to spend any time giving their charges last minute lessons.

Status of the PCs

The Test of the Topaz Champion is a prestigious gempukku ceremony, and the PCs are present to assist and guide their Clan's contestant. Any Imperial PCs are present as a favor to the Crane Clan, while Minor Clan samurai are here in support of the Mantis Clan candidates (the exception being Fox Clan samurai, who are here to strengthen their ties with the Crane). Any ronin will have been hired by Yoritomo Denkyu to help bolster the Mantis Clan's numbers. While in years past, the contest has drawn dozens of prospective samurai, this year there are only nine contenders: one from each of the Great Clans, and a lone ronin who has managed to arrange a sponsor from the Imperial Legion.

The contenders are young samurai who have not yet passed their gempukku; as such, they are not full adults,

though they have been trusted with their swords for the competition. They will be expected to listen to advice from their betters (including the PCs), and to do their utmost to bring honor to their Clan. The PCs are free to decide for themselves how much or little assistance they wish to provide their young charges. However, samurai from all across the Empire are present to witness the tournament, and they will be judging the participants based off their actions. These actions, ultimately, will also reflect upon their instructors.

Players may wish to provide their charges with instruction or at least a few “pointers” on various aspects of the test. This is encouraged, but the mechanics are something best left to the discretion of the GM. Granting a competitor an extra Void Point to spend on a specific Skill might be appropriate to represent a session of training or a lecture on the subject from a PC.

What's in Tsuma?

Some characters will have little interest in the city beyond the contest. Others, however, may wish to explore. The following locations within the city may be of interest to the PCs:

The House of the Tranquil Lotus: A newly-constructed tea house and inn, the House of the Tranquil Lotus offers free room and board to all contestants in the Topaz Championship, and the PCs will be staying here along with all of the NPC contestants (this does include the Crane contestant and his escort). The house is extremely busy in the evenings, and sees a wide range of patrons. Food and drink here are of excellent quality. The PCs have taken the last available rooms, as the city is full of guests. The inn was built on the same ground as a temple to the Fortunes that was destroyed during the Clan War, and there is a small shrine in the garden. Both shrine and garden are maintained by an old monk who calls himself Megumi.

Poisoned Water Sake House: Down the street from the Tranquil Lotus, this tastelessly named business is a small brewery and sake house. It is frequented mainly by ronin during the off-season, but grows crowded and popular during the Topaz Championship. The house sake made here is sold in small, black clay bottles and is famed for its potency. The Crab and Mantis contestants spend much of their time here, even on the first evening when the other visitors are still finding their feet. The sake house is actually a Scorpion holding, though that fact is kept quite discreet.

Medinaat-al-Salaam: This unusual shop is a small building tucked away in a quiet corner of Tsuma. It is a Unicorn holding, operated by merchant vassals of the Ide family. The shop's name, almost unpronounceable to the average Rokugani, is that of a city in the distant north, beyond Rokugan's borders. Its Unicorn vassals sell a number of strange gaijin wares, although nothing that would violate the Imperial decree restricting such goods.

Part One: Arrival of the Imperial Party

On the evening that the PCs arrive in Tsuma, word arrives via runners that the Imperial barge has been sighted coming upstream. All of the local samurai and contestants gather by the river to greet the Son of Heaven.

The first sign of the Imperial barge is the reflection of the setting sun glinting off a crystal staff atop the mast. The Imperial chrysanthemum mon waves in the light breeze as the river vessel ponderously glides into view. A hundred oars stir the water about its golden deck, and the emerald sail furls as the barge's crew maneuvers it to dock. A stoic party of Crane samurai wait on the wharf, their servants scurrying about to secure the Emperor's conveyance and the plank that will carry the Son of Heaven from the barge to the shore. Foremost among the waiting Crane is Kakita Kaiten, Master of the Kakita Academy, Kakita family daimyo, regent for the Crane Champion Doji Kurohito, and the host of this event. He stands proudly, unbowed by the weight of his many titles. Next to him is Daidoji Rekai, heir of the Daidoji daimyo and heroine of the War Against the Shadow. Her long white hair tumbles freely down her back, but it is the only concession to femininity she seems to permit herself; otherwise, she is every inch the ready warrior. The two stand still at the heart of the bustling preparations, waiting patiently for all to be in readiness.

At last, the Imperial Guard forms up on the deck of the barge, and the Emperor's banner is brought forward. As the standard bearer steps onto the dock, the Emperor comes into sight with the Empress at his side. The assembled samurai kneel and prostrate themselves as the Son of Heaven approaches.

Presumably, the PCs will not choose to single themselves out for negative attention from the Seppun

Guardsmen by choosing to remain standing. Toturi approaches Kaiten first and exchanges a few quiet words before bidding his subjects to rise.

The Emperor is a tall, lean man in immaculate clothing made of the finest silks, and the faint glow of a returned spirit is visible around him in the fading light of day. Most samurai are careful to maintain a stern and serious expression while in public, but today Toturi I seems to have a difficulty keeping a joyous smile off his face as he steps onto a raised platform to address the gathered samurai. In his right hand, the Emperor holds a silk fan; he lifts it to focus the crowd's attention like a general signaling to his troops, and it is easy to see a lifetime of battlefield training has not left him.

“People of Rokugan! We are honored to be present at this momentous event, and We are proud that so many of Our samurai are here to witness the rebirth of a proud tradition! And while it gives Us great hope for the future of the Empire to see such promising samurai, from each of the Great Clans, come together to compete for honor and glory in peace... We have this day received more news of great importance to Rokugan's destiny!” He glances down at the Empress, and again a bright smile lights his face. “This very day, Our Empress Kaede, the Oracle of the Void, has informed Us that she is with child, and will be delivered of a son before winter!”

The news causes a stir through the crowd: while news of this nature is not normally discussed in public, the birth of an Imperial heir is obviously very important. Toturi and Kaede do have one child already: a year-old daughter, who has evidently been left in Otosan Uchi. The birth of a son will strengthen the new dynasty, as a more traditional heir is important to the Empire.

Toturi raises his fan again and the murmurs die down. “For this reason, We declare today a celebration! Let all rejoice in the birth of Our child, and give thanks to the Fortunes for the bright days ahead! Tomorrow, we will all continue looking to the future by witnessing the next generation's coming of age!” Roars of approval greet the Emperor's words as he steps down.

The Imperial procession makes its way to the Kakita Academy, where the high-ranking guests will stay for the tournament. While the Emperor's presence attracts the most attention, other luminaries of the Empire still stand out. The Empress, Toturi Kaede, is a lovely woman with a slightly abstracted air. Her eyes are dark and mysterious, and even in the midst of a crowd, the Oracle of Void gives a sense of distance.

The Emerald Champion Kakita Toshiken walks just behind the Emperor and Empress, clad in the green armor of his position. He watches the crowd as he speaks with Toku, the Captain of the Imperial Guard. The two make an interesting pair: Toshiken is tall and his stern face is conventionally handsome, while Toku is slightly under average height and somewhat homely, but with a ready smile. The Miya family daimyo, Miya Yumi, walks with Kakita Kaiten; as the Imperial Herald, she will be overseeing the tournament.

Perceptive PCs (those who succeed at an **Etiquette / Awareness** Roll with a TN of 15) will note that the Seppun guardsmen are in a high state of alert; the Emperor brought twenty miharu with him, but their reaction to the announcement is obviously one of concern for the safety of their charges. Two of the miharu are, like the Emperor, surrounded by a faint glowing aura that marks them as returned spirits. Any PC who rolls more than 30 on the roll will note that one of the two Seppun spirits in particular seems to have taken the matter entirely to heart; his already serious focus on the Emperor deepens into a mask of extreme, almost fanatical intensity. A roll of **Courtier / Intelligence** (TN 20) will allow them to recall that relatively few Seppun returned to Ningen-do through Oblivion's Gate, as there was some serious concern about their place in an Empire with a new dynasty.

As the crowd begins to disperse, word begins to spread rapidly that the Imperial Treasury is taking on the costs for all celebration tonight. A festive mood grips the city; musicians and storytellers from the nearby artisan Academy arrive to practice their arts for appreciative audiences, sake and shochu flow freely, and even the commoners move with a sense of joy.

The celebration provides a perfect opportunity for clever players to learn a bit more about the tournament and contestants. The festivities present a good excuse to mingle, gather rumors and information, or at the least have a good time. Additionally, this will give the PCs a good chance to speak with their charges. (Information on the contestants can be found in Appendix #1.)

Party at the Inn

The House of the Tranquil Lotus is one of the main centers of activity in town. Lanterns have been lit in both the courtyard and the garden. Musicians fill the night air with beautiful song, and a group of storytellers have claimed the courtyard for an impromptu contest. Six of the contestants have decided to stay at the inn, and are receiving as much attention as they allow from the crowd.

- Matsu Sachiko and Bayushi Shichiro are listening to the tales being told in the courtyard together, talking and sharing a bottle of sake. Sachiko will eventually step forward to tell a story of her own, with only a little encouragement from the Scorpion. Neither are getting drunk, as both are very focused on the tournament. Shichiro has no hidden agenda, though in Scorpion tradition he has already completed his gempukku secretly and is here to observe the contest and guests.
- Doji Arata is wandering the garden and listening to the music. He is very worried about the coming contest, but does his best to hide his apprehension. A few people try to approach him, but he is not all that interested in company and it will require some significant reason for him to open up (like one of the PC guides expressing an interest).
- Isawa Ume is meditating in the shrine and doing her best to ignore the festivities. She has been a little unnerved by the presence of her personal hero (the Empress), though it was not entirely unexpected, and she has sought some solitude to try to refocus.
- Mirumoto Ukira is in the common room, speaking with some of the local samurai. He's trying to get whatever details he can about the Test. He's not interested in an "unfair" advantage, but he does want to know as much as he can before he begins.
- The ronin Kohuri is in the inn's small reading room, anxiously pouring over legal documents in hopes of cramming a few more facts in before the tournament begins the next day. He will politely refuse any company unless the intruder has some legal training or expertise, in which case he will eagerly request any assistance they might be able to offer.

Party at the Sake House

The other three contestants (Hida Takumi, Yoritomo Ayano, and Moto Katsu) are at the Poisoned Water sake house, taking advantage of the essentially unlimited alcohol. The noise here is no less than at the Tranquil Lotus, but gentle song and cheerful conversation has been replaced with raucous revelry and decidedly unsamurai-like abandon. As at the Inn, the centers of attention are the contestants, each of whom has acquired a retinue of sorts from among the various attendees.

- Hida Takumi and Yoritomo Ayano are enjoying themselves immensely in separate

sections of the sake house's common room. Drunken samurai from their respective Clans have surrounded the two young bushi, and are encouraging them to drink more, boast more, and generally cut loose more with each passing hour.

- Moto Katsu, by contrast, is becoming quietly but determinedly drunk in one corner. Without a large Unicorn presence at the tournament, Katsu's isolation is wearing on him tonight, and the small bevy of local beauties surrounding him, caught by Katsu's striking and exotic appearance, seem in general to be having little luck in distracting the Moto from his homesick melancholy.

Wise or appearance-conscious PCs may wish to cut short these alcoholic overindulgences, for fear of a loss of Glory for themselves and their charges or out of concern for the youths' performance in the contests tomorrow. All three obey any such commands readily enough, although Takumi looks briefly mutinous before sighing heavily and setting down his drink. Amid catcalls and complaints from the surrounding samurai (or the lovelorn peasant girls around Katsu), the contestants retire, rather unsteadily, back to the Tranquil Lotus to sleep off the evening's entertainment.

On the other hand, PCs who allow the drinking to continue until their charge passes out (a little before midnight in the cases of Ayano and Katsu, much closer to dawn in the case of Takumi) will lose 1 point of Glory. If they drink until they pass out themselves (GM discretion, but **Raw Earth** rolls, beginning at a TN 5 and going up by +5 TN with every roll, for every hour of drinking might be appropriate), they lose an additional point of Glory.

Rumors in Tsuma

If any PC wants to find out about the scheduled events of the tournament, either on Ukira's behalf or to satisfy their own curiosity, doing so is no great challenge. A simple **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness roll**, TN 10, learns the full schedule of events, as well as the judges assigned to each one. The events and their judges are as follows:

- Day One: Sumai (judged by Daidoji Rekai), Heraldry (judged by Miya Yumi), Athletics (judged by Toku), Horsemanship (judged by Daidoji Rekai), and Law/Etiquette/Bushido (judged by Miya Yumi).
- Day Two: Weapons (judged by Toturi I), Poetry (judged by Toturi Kaede), Go (judged

by Toturi I), Courtier (judged by Miya Yumi), Hunting (judged by Daidoji Rekai)

- Day Three: Iaijutsu (judged by Kakita Kaiten)
- Raises on this roll will allow them to also learn the names and Schools of the various contestants, and some of the events that they are expected to do well at (e.g., Takumi in the sumai, Ukira in the iaijutsu, Katsu in the horsemanship).

In addition, as is often the case when samurai gather, rumors are swirling throughout the celebrating crowds about various events within the Empire as a whole. These can be learned with a **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll, TN 10; a successful roll learns one rumor at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN. The rumors include:

- Tensions are increasing throughout the Empire in the wake of the spirits' return through Oblivion's Gate. Neither quite fitting into the current Celestial Order nor entirely beholden to the Toturi Dynasty, there are reports throughout the Empire of spirits attempting to forge ahead with plans and goals first created centuries ago, without regard for the later changes in circumstance.
- The Lion are said to be preparing a military strike against the Crane sometime during the coming summer; though a number of targets are mentioned, the most commonly cited is Toshi Ranbo wo Shien Shite Reigisaho, Violence Behind Courtliness City, still held by the Crane despite several Lion attempts to retake it (the last, somewhat over a decade ago, resulted in the death of the former Lion Champion, Akodo Arasou).
- Recent military actions on the Kaiu Wall have been extremely successful, especially given the heavy toll that the War Against the Shadow took on Crab manpower. Much of the success is attributed to a returned spirit and Crab general, known as the "Stone Crab."
- Kakita Kaiten, the daimyo of the Kakita and de facto head of the Crane Clan (as he is regent for the actual Champion, four-year-old Doji Kurohito), has recently come into possession of a powerful artifact, a nemuranai called the "Dragon's Claw Katana." The sword, rumored to be forged from one of the claws of the Dragon of Void itself, was a gift to Kaiten from his vassal, Daidoji Kedamono, who received it directly from the Dragon of Void.

- Mantis traders have been experiencing greater difficulty finding friendly ports outside Crane lands, as both the Scorpion and the Phoenix see the Mantis as deadly enemies. The Mantis Champion, Yoritomo Aramasu, was once Bayushi Aramasu until he betrayed his Clan and swore fealty to the Mantis; it is said he no longer risks leaving the Mantis islands for fear of Scorpion assassins.
- The Mantis are also trying to keep their alliance of Minor Clans, usually called Yoritomo's Alliance, together, now that the Wasp and Centipede Clans have joined the Mantis to become the Tsuruchi and Moshi families. Just before the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the Fox Clan withdrew from Yoritomo's Alliance, and the remaining Minor Clan members are said to be considering whether the Alliance is truly worthwhile for them as well.

Reverence for the Ancestors

At some point in the evening, both the House of the Tranquil Lotus and the Poisoned Water Sake House are visited by a pair of noteworthy guests: Doji Meihu, a spirit returned from Yomi during the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, and Kitsu Shisou, one of the Lion Clan's mysterious sodan-senzo. Meihu appears to be in his early forties, with Crane-dyed white hair in a severe topknot and the hard stance of a battle-forged warrior, surrounded by the soft glow of a returned spirit; Shisou is almost as tall but more slim, with a loose mane of golden hair and, shockingly, red eyes the color of dying embers. Shisou has been traveling with Meihu for some time, as the returned spirit was one of Yomi's generals, a leader of the Blessed Guard that protects Heaven itself from assaults on it from Jigoku or Toshigoku. Meihu's knowledge of the Spirit Realms is thus substantial and unique, and Shisou has been trying to learn what he can from Meihu's memories.

Meihu is attending the Topaz Championship because he was one of the very first winners of the tournament, held during the 4th century; though his title is literally centuries behind him, he still feels a sense of connection to the young samurai undergoing the ceremony. He introduces himself and Shisou to each contestant (and to their mentors, the PCs), offering wishes for good fortune and brief tips ("It seems as though they always ask about the Fox Clan mon during the heraldry contest, so watch that!") as he does so. Only with Hida Takumi does his attitude change; though still polite, Meihu's warm smile becomes a reserved mask, and the only blessing he offers the

young Crab is, “May honor guide your path.” (A roll of **Lore: History / Intelligence**, TN 25, or **Lore: Crane / Intelligence**, TN 15, allows a PC to remember that Meihu was a general during the Crab-Crane War, the first large-scale conflict in the Empire’s history, prompted by the departure of the Yasuki family from the Crane to the Crab.)

Shisou, on the other hand, is more interested in the mentors of the contestants (i.e., the PCs); as a sensei at the Kitsu Tombs, he appreciates the role teachers can have in a student’s life, and congratulates the PCs on undertaking the responsibility. “It is, in its own way, a reflection in our living word of the guidance we receive from our ancestors – almost a holy act,” he explains solemnly. “It deserves appropriate respect.”

A Sudden Departure

Though the partying continues late into the evening, eventually most of the revelers retreat to their beds, so that by shortly before midnight, only the lights and noise of coming from within the Poisoned Water Sake House break the night’s hush that descends over the town.

PCs out in the streets of Tsuma – possibly escorting or carrying incapacitated students back to the inn from the sake house – or looking out of their windows at that time are witness to an unexpected event:

The night’s stillness is shattered by shouts from within the walls of the Kakita Academy, and with a soft boom, the heavy gates swing wide. As soon as they open, five mounted figures gallop through and into the streets, riding hard for the road north out of town. The expression of Kakita Toshiken, Emerald Champion, is fixed and determined as he guides his steed along the dusty streets of Tsuma, and the faces of the four Seppun guardsmen that ride with him are no less so.

The gates close behind the riders immediately; no one within the Academy will explain why Toshiken left under such unusual circumstances (and in fact, no one the PCs have access to knows why anyway).

Part Two: Opening Ceremonies

The following morning, the PCs and their charges travel to the grounds of the Kakita Academy, where the tournament itself is to take place. Most of the events are scheduled to occur in one of two places: the large

practice field to the south of the main dojo, currently surrounded by temporary seating for hundreds of onlookers, and the main hall of the Academy itself, a slightly more intimate setting where only select guests and visitors will be watching. The practice field will hold the martial contests, including the sumai, weapons, horse riding, and athletics tests, while the more “courtly” events, such as the courtier competition, the law debate, and so on, will occur in the Academy’s main hall.

The opening ceremony, however, occurs outside, where a large dais has been erected at one end of the practice field. The Emperor, Empress Kaede, Kakita Kaiten, Miya Yumi, and Toku have seated themselves under the shade of a large silk canopy to await the official beginning of the tournament, as all around them peasants and samurai alike file into their seats. A squad of Seppun miharu surrounds the Imperial dais, keeping the bustling crowd from getting too close to the Son of Heaven and his guests. In the center of the practice field, in varying states of ease, the nine contestants for this year’s tournament have lined up to face the dais and wait for the first event.

The attention of many in the crowd is drawn to Kakita Kaiten, daimyo of the Kakita family, who is sitting at Toturi’s right hand. He wears a bright emerald sash, marked by the golden Imperial chrysanthemum, and despite his presence immediately next to the Emperor, a katana rests on his hip. The position he occupies would normally be taken by the Emerald Champion, Kakita Toshiken; though some PCs might already be aware that Toshiken has left, most in the crowd are whispering in surprise as they realize Kaiten is apparently acting in his cousin’s stead as the Emperor’s bodyguard and champion.

At last, the time arrives for the tournament to begin:

At some unseen signal, Miya Yumi rises from her place on the Imperial dais, striding forward to address the crowd. In a shout that somehow cuts through all the noise around her, she cries, “People of Rokugan! Let all fall silent and attend the words of His Imperial Majesty, the Son of Heaven and Master of the Chrysanthemum, Toturi, First of that Name!” She smiles in approval at the sudden and reverent hush that falls over the crowd.

Toturi nods at her as he rises from his seat and steps up to the dais’ edge. On one side, Kakita Kaiten trails a step behind, watchful and alert; on the other, Kaede stands next to her husband, smiling warmly at the viewing stands. “My people!” Toturi begins, raising his fan once more. “This day is one of new

beginnings! Just as these young samurai are about to begin their lives as adults, so too is Rokugan lifting its eyes toward a new era of peace! We have rebuilt much in the months and years since the Lying Darkness fell, and now at last we begin to reap the rewards of this great effort! As we look –”

Abruptly, the Emperor’s speech is interrupted by several shouts from the crowd. At the far end of the gathering, a mud-spattered horseman is trying to force his way through the throng, weapon drawn and armor battered from use. The Seppun miharu around the Emperor draw together, readying themselves against this apparent threat. With a shout, the horseman raises his katana and levels it at the Emperor.

Have the PCs make an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 15. Those who succeed recognize the mud-covered warrior as the Emerald Champion, Kakita Toshiken. If they make a TN 20, they realize that Toshiken’s blade is not pointed at the Emperor, but toward one of the guards standing closest to him. (Track how many of the characters both recognize the Champion, and how many realize his true objective.)

The movement is subtle, and so careless as to seem unimportant at first: one of the Seppun guards, surrounded by the soft glow of a returned spirit, shifts slightly closer to Toturi and Kaiten on the dais to be within arm’s reach. He strikes the Crane lord in the chest with one hand while the other snatches the katana at Kaiten’s hip from its saya. Kaiten lets out a strangled cry as he falls, and Toturi spins towards them, the fragile silk fan lifting automatically as the guardsman strikes with the stolen blade; the fan is sliced nearly in half, but the splintering wood has just strength enough to shift the katana clear of the Emperor’s body.

Instead, blood sprays over Kaede and her nearby guards as the blade slices through her throat.

A dozen swords bury themselves in the body of the Seppun assassin, and he dies without a sound - but even as he falls, there is a rush of wind and light around the dais, a swirling roar that rapidly engulfs the viewing stands and spreads over the crowd. Those at the edges begin to scream and run, while those closer are swept up in the maelstrom, their voices lost in the cacophony. At the heart of the storm, in the lone space of calm, Kaede’s lips move soundlessly for a moment before she slumps to the ground, her eyes staring and empty, her blood-covered hands resting over her womb.

The wind and noise sweeps over you, a howling fury filled with dizzying lights and shouting voices, and everything goes black.

Worlds Beyond Worlds

Have the PCs make **Void Ring** rolls. They regain consciousness in order of their rolls, from highest to lowest. They have lost all of their Void Points, but are otherwise unharmed, and seemingly carry all of their typical equipment - even items they would not have had with them at the ceremony (weapons, armor, spell satchel and scrolls, etc.).

You find yourselves in a large room, with wooden floors covered by woven tatami mats, and various quotes from the Tao and ancient, revered sensei lining the walls. The space is broken up by white-paper shoji screens, and a set of sliding doors in the far wall seems to lead outside. It looks like nothing so much as a well-kept dojo, but everything feels oddly unreal, and the kanji on the various plaques around the room seem to shift and change when you are not looking at them.

The PCs are free to talk amongst themselves for as long as they wish, and introductions may well be in order, but as soon as they get ready to leave, the door at the end of the room opens to admit Kitsu Shisou. (As the door closes behind him, the PCs can see what looks like a hazy mountain vista in a spring day.)

“I am glad to find you, samurai,” Shisou says unsteadily. He looks shaken and weary, much older somehow than his appearance from just the previous night, but his bright red eyes are now slitted like a cat’s, and he walks with a strangely feline grace. “I fear I will need your help, as will we all.”

After a steadying breath, he continues. “You may have already realized this, samurai-sans, but we are not now in Ningen-do, the Realm of Mortals. I am not sure where we are; I can... sense... that it is a spirit Realm, but it is not one I know or have ever heard of. It reminds me of Yume-do, to a certain extent, but also feels rather like Meido, and there is something else, too, that I have never felt at all...” He shakes his head, trying to refocus. “Regardless, it would seem that the Empress’ death opened a passage to this Realm, and it is shaping itself to the minds of those trapped within it.”

He gestures at the dojo. “You are here, I think, because you are the teachers and guides of the contestants, and that focus carried you to this place...”

or perhaps this place came into being for you. Regardless, I have already found others, including Toku-sama, who is even now seeking the Emperor; I plan to continue searching for more who are trapped within the Realm, as well as for a portal back to Ningen-do. I would suggest that you begin searching for the tournament contestants – as their sensei, you will have the greatest chance to find them.”

If the PCs have any questions about the Realm that they are in or the task of finding the tournament contestants, Shisou will answer to the best of his ability. Some possible pieces of information:

- *How will we find the contestants?* “This realm seems rather malleable, and responds in particular to a meditative focus. If you meditate on the contestants, you should find yourselves drawn to them.”
- *Where are the contestants?* “I do not know... but if they were, as I suspect, concentrating most on the upcoming tournament, they will likely have found themselves in areas of the Realm that somehow correspond to the tournament, or at least some facet of it.”
- *What do you know about this Realm?* “Very little at this point. It seems tied somehow to the Void itself, possibly because of the Empress’ death; I suspect that calling upon the Void here would be a... potent... experience. Meditation is key to travel, as it is in many Realms. Beyond that, I cannot say.”
- *Who else is here?* “Many of the samurai and peasants in the audience were swept up in the Realm passage, just as we were. The Emperor for certain, as well as the rest of his entourage on the main dais; as I said, I have already encountered Toku-sama, but Kakita-sama and Miya-sama are undoubtedly somewhere within this Realm as well.”
- *How do we leave?* “Through the doors there, of course, though you will not likely find yourselves outside them once you pass through. In every space within this Realm, you should find a passage that will allow you to travel to another one. Doing so, however, will require focus.”
- *How will we return to Ningen-do?* “There is almost certainly a passage back to the mortal realm somewhere nearby, the same passage that brought us here to begin with. I will be searching for it as much as for any other victims I might be able to find; hopefully, it will soon stabilize and allow us to return as soon as we are gathered together once more. Gather those you can find as quickly as you

can; passages between realms are notoriously short-lived, and I do not know what might become of you should you be trapped here.”

Once the PCs are prepared to leave, Shisou bows deeply to them, raising a hand in blessing before opening the doors once more and disappearing through them. The doors slide immediately closed behind him of their own accord, and the room goes still once more. Shisou’s voice lingers in the air for a moment. *“The Fortunes and your ancestors watch over you even in this place, samurai.”* The PCs each regain one Void Point. (It is worth note that the various NPCs encountered will not have the benefit of this blessing, and will not have any Void remaining, save perhaps what they may have received from training...)

Lost in the Void

Opening the doors, and in fact any passage between the various “subrealms” of this Realm, requires either a **Void Ring** or **Meditation / Void** roll, TN 10 (player’s option; if they do not have the Skill, they do not suffer Unskilled penalties). If either roll meets or exceeds a TN 15, the PC regains one Void Point during the passage. Failure means the PC travels to the next area along with the rest of the group, but is Stunned (the PC may make a new **Void Ring** or **Meditation / Void** roll each round during the Reactions Stage to recover from the stunning; this cannot result in the recovery of a Void Point, however). The passage between subrealms is a dizzying, timeless experience, where everything is wrapped in a gray fog and the only sense of motion is an intense vertigo; the PCs will have no sense of how long each traverse takes, which should serve to increase their sense of urgency.

While in the Realm, several mechanical differences apply. It is suggested that you let the players discover these through trial and error, but once they begin to explore the Realm’s connection with the Void (ie, spend their own), give them a detailed explanation.

- Wounds suffered in the Realm are temporary, and are always recovered entirely once the group moves on to the next subrealm; this does not apply to Wounds taken before the PC arrived in the Realm (which is why Miya Yumi is in such a bad state). Characters who are “killed” by Wounds taken in this Spirit Realm are merely knocked unconscious; they travel with the rest of the group to the next subrealm, where they will revive, and they must make **Void Ring** or **Meditation/Void** rolls (with no Wound Penalties) during the

transition as normal, with the usual consequences for success or failure.

- Spent Void Points have double the usual effect – for example, they add +2k2 to rolls, grant 2 ranks in a skill if the character is untrained, add +20 to the character's Armor TN for a round, or reduce Wounds taken from a successful attack by 20. However, the TN for the Touch of the Void Disadvantage is increased by +10, and the PC must roll twice whenever he/she spends Void to avoid being stunned.
- Finally, while Void magic is extremely easy in this Realm (all Void spells receive two Free Raises), all other magic is significantly more difficult here. The TN of all non-Void spells is raised by +10, but a PC may ignore this penalty for one "subrealm" (that is, for one test area) by spending one Void Point the first time he/she casts in that subrealm. Instead of the penalty, the shugenja then gains a Free Raise on all Spell Casting rolls until they travel to the next challenge scene.

Part Three: Trials of Spirit

The PCs must pass through a series of "testing" areas, portions of the mysterious Spirit Realm in which they are trapped that have been reshaped by the minds of the inhabitants to resemble various stages of the Topaz Tournament. In each area, they will find one of the competitors (or, in one case, Miya Yumi, the Imperial Herald and Mistress of Ceremonies for the entire event), but will also face challenges that are similar to the ones the competitors would have faced had the tournament gone on as planned.

In every case, the obstacles include "opponents" that have been created by the Realm itself to challenge the PCs. These are not living beings, nor are they precisely spirits – they represent a "molding" of the Realm's own substance into the form and appearance of suitable opponents for the trials contained in each area. This is important because they have no characteristics not associated directly with the trial that created them. They lack independent thought (though, in some cases, such as the Courtier challenge, they may appear to think for themselves), and cannot be affected in any way that is not directly connected with the test – so, for instance, if a PC attempts to kill the duelist spirit in the iaijutsu challenge with an arrow, the arrow will simply fail to affect the spirit in any way, and the duelist will not even notice anything has occurred.

While all the PCs must attempt every trial in order to pass through that area, they need not succeed in order pass. If someone does succeed, they may gain a Touch of Destiny at the mod's conclusion; if multiple characters succeed, the character who did so by the largest amount (or with the most Raises, as appropriate) will gain the Touch of Destiny. A character cannot gain the Touch of Destiny multiple times, but can prevent others from gaining it if they "win" a challenge after already having won a previous one. At the same time, it will be necessary to attempt each challenge in order to rescue the competitors trapped in the various subrealms; again, victory won't always be a requirement – the specific challenges will list what is needed to rescue the trapped character – but it will always be necessary for someone to attempt the trial. If all of the PCs fail a given challenge, any NPCs they have so far rescued may undertake the attempt as well, but the PCs should always have the first chance to succeed. (Experienced tables may forgo rolling through the contests for each character, as the purpose is to help introduce players to the mechanics; this may result in reducing chances for Touch of Destiny, but is at the GM's discretion.)

A Note on "Cheating"

Because this is not technically a tournament, many players will not feel that they should be bound by any "rules" as they attempt to make their way through the various Realms – in a life and death situation, who cares whether you can actually out-ride a mindless spirit? To a great extent, this is exactly the case, and it is important not to punish the players for creative attempts to rescue their charges and return to Ningen-do swiftly and safely. At the same time, however, the Realm's own metaphysical laws will not permit gross violations of the "terms" of the challenges; attempts to circumvent them will essentially be ignored. As a general rule, try to reward creativity that enhances a character's odds of successfully accomplishing the trial in front of them (such as, for instance, using the spell Ebbing Strength to increase the odds of an ally overcoming the sumai challenge), and simply have the Realm shrug off gambits that try to avoid the challenges entirely.

The First Challenge: Sumai

The directionless void beyond the dojo doors suddenly shifts, though it is impossible to identify an exact moment of transition. Replacing the gray mist is now a loud, colorful throng of people, all seated on rising stands around the pit in which you find yourselves. The pit has oil-slick walls, twice the height of a man,

and only one visible exit, directly opposite you, across perhaps twenty-five feet of churned mud.

Directly in front of the door – which you now recognize as a barred metal cage door – two figures are striving with one another in a brutal wrestling match, encouraged by the bloodthirsty shouts of the crowd. Even in the dim light cast by the paper lanterns around the pit’s edge you can recognize one of the wrestlers as Hida Takumi. The other is a twisted version of a humanoid form, green-skinned and tusked, a full head taller than the young Crab bushi.

Even as you take this in, the wrestling match comes to a sudden end, as the ogre hurls Takumi into the nearest wall, where he crumples bonelessly to the ground. The ogre turns to the rest of you and smiles, its tusks gleaming wetly in the lamplight. “Come, then, samurai!” it calls to you in flawless Rokugani. “Test your strength against mine, if you dare!”

The ogre rolls 3k2 for initiative, 3k2 for the initial grapple attack, 5k4 for the contested grapple roll, and has an Armor TN 15 (it is not wearing any armor). Winning requires succeeding in two consecutive Contested grapple checks, not counting the initial attack roll; the ogre takes no damage from any source, but will only hold or pin the PCs as well. (Normal ogres are Huge and cannot be Grappled; obviously this is a special case. In fact, the image of the ogre was pulled from Takumi’s mind.)

Takumi is unconscious, but otherwise unharmed – if rescued, he will revive when the group reaches the next subrealm, as will any other characters who wrestle the ogre and lose. Unlike the other challenges, only one character needs to challenge the ogre; as long as the ogre is defeated, all the characters pass (the winner receives the Touch of Destiny for this challenge). If no PC is able to defeat the creature, they move on to the next Realm without Takumi.

The Second Challenge: Heraldry

The gray mist dissolves once more, shifting into what looks like a small court chamber, with painted silk screens on all sides and polished wooden floors beneath your stockinged feet. Seated before you are several figures, dressed in fine court kimono, in cuts and styles that span the Empire; each kneels patiently on a fine-woven tatami mat, waiting. In front of them, a tall man in emerald green, with stern features and a carefully tied topknot, leans on a cane, glaring at you as though seeing a stain on his finest rug.

On the ground at his side, the crumpled form of Miya Yumi, the Imperial Herald, lies slumped on the floor, unconscious and badly hurt; her face and neck are already coloring the blue and yellow of deep bruises, and her left arm lies awkwardly, clearly broken.

The tall man sniffs, then gestures at Yumi with his cane. “This one has had no answers since she arrived; she just lies there, ignoring her studies. Perhaps you will be more worthy of my time.” His tone suggests that he does not think this likely.

The sensei points at one of the PCs at random. *“You! Tell me this man’s Clan, family, school, and personal name!” the tall man snaps, as the first kneeling figure behind him rises and looks at you expectantly.*

Though many samurai emphasize the traditional colors of their Clans in formal court settings, these samurai have only their School, family and Clan mon to identify them. **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence**, TN 5 for Great Clan (10 for Minor Clan), 15 for family, 20 for School, and 30 for personal name. The PC gains a Free Raise if individual is member of the same Clan as the PC, or two Free Raises if the individual is of the same family as the PC. Each piece of information is one “point” – the PC must earn four “points” in order to pass this test. Each PC is questioned on two of the following, at random:

- Doji Minawe, Crane Clan, Asahina Shugenja School
- Kitsune Asesho, Fox Clan, Kitsune Shugenja School
- Agasha Ademo, Dragon Clan, Agasha (Dragon) Shugenja School
- Matsu Areki, Lion Clan, Matsu Berserker School
- Agasha Tasiketsu, Phoenix Clan, Agasha (Phoenix) Shugenja School
- Hida Bihemi, Crab Clan, Kuni Shugenja School
- Iuchi Anshiko, Unicorn Clan, Ide Emissary School
- Seppun Giu, Imperial, Seppun Guardsman School
- Moshi Honkite, Mantis Clan, Moshi Shugenja School
- Bayushi Mareki, Scorpion Clan, Bayushi Bushi School
- Kakita Reshon, Crane Clan, Doji Courtier School
- Usagi Moriteki, Hare Clan, Usagi Bushi School

Characters who wish to examine or heal Yumi may do so without interference from the sensei, unless he chooses them to answer the heraldry questions. Yumi is unconscious and in the Crippled Wound Level, having taken 42 Wounds; she is in no danger of dying, but will not awaken unless healed to at least the Grazed Wound Level (requiring her to be healed of at least 15 Wounds). The Medicine Skill and magic such as Path to Inner Peace both work normally (allowing for the Realm's usual disruption of magic). Even if awakened, Yumi will remain Stunned as long as she is in the other Realm; she will travel with the PCs as they make their way through the sub-realms, but she is in no condition to give orders or take command due to lingering effects of being so close to the death of the Oracle of Void. (This may also be a good point to describe Takumi's wounds as having healed during the passage, should he be accompanying the PCs – Yumi's wounds will not be restored, as they were caused during the transit to this Realm.)

Successfully getting 4 points on the heraldry challenge earns a grudging, "Very well. You may go. Take this lazy thing with you," from the sensei spirit, indicating Yumi. If the PC fails, the sensei spirit says sharply, "Enough! Out of my sight!" – if none of the PCs have succeeded, they are cast out of the subrealm without a chance to bring Yumi along. The PC who earned the most points will gain the Touch of Destiny for this trial.

The Third Challenge: Athletics

The now-familiar gray mist begins to dissolve once more, but this time, it does not go away entirely – or rather, once it does, it seems to be replaced by thin wisps of a more ordinary fog. Sudden heat envelopes you, the warmth of late summer in the southernmost reaches of Rokugan, and there is the tang of salt and the cry of a seagull in the air.

PCs who have visited the Mantis isles will recognize this place as being similar to the coastal areas of the Islands of Spice and Silk.

You are standing on the edge of a cliff, a sheer rock wall rising up to one side of you and a precarious drop-off spilling away on the other, with a roaring river tumbling through the gorge far below. A narrow trail hugs the ledge between wall and chasm, curving gently rightward as it goes along. Some distance ahead, you can see that the trail reaches a fallen log that bridges the chasm, opening out onto a broader shelf edged by broad-leafed trees on the far side. Before it reaches the bridge, however, you can see that

the trail is broken by a rockfall, which will require a careful scramble to cross.

Though the view is beautiful, rich forest and majestic river before you and Lord Sun sparkling on the ocean just visible in the distance, the idyllic moment is shattered by a terrified scream. On the other side of the gorge, several hundred feet away, a young woman is dangling from one of the tree branches, nothing beneath her but air and the river rocks far below. Peering toward her, you make out the features of Yoritomo Ayano, but you can see something else as well: her grip is slipping.

There are five stages to this challenge, as follows: first, an **Athletics (Running) / Strength** roll to sprint to the rockfall; next, an **Athletics (Climb) / Agility** roll to climb the rockfall; then an **Athletics (Running) / Strength** roll to reach the log bridge; then an **Athletics / Reflexes** roll to cross the bridge without slipping; and finally an **Athletics (Running) / Stamina** roll to reach the tree where Ayano hangs. The base TN for all of these rolls is 15, but every missed roll adds +5 TN to the remaining rolls; characters may declare Raises to reduce the TNs for the remaining rolls by -5 per Raise (to a minimum TN of 5). Characters receive one Free Raise on the Athletics (Running) rolls for every Rank by which their Water Ring exceeds 2. If at least one character succeeds on the last Athletics (Running) roll, they reach Ayano before she falls and can pull her to safety. If no one succeeds on the last roll, Ayano plummets to her presumed doom; her despairing cry is cut off as she vanishes into the river. If a character fails the Athletics/Agility roll to cross the log bridge, they do not fall, but slip and catch themselves on the log, requiring a slower, more careful crossing.

Once they reach Ayano's tree, whether she is still hanging from it or not, they can see what she was trying to reach: a house, on tall bamboo stilts, perched on the cliff edge overlooking the sea, surrounded by the strange, broad-leafed trees of the Mantis isles and largely hidden from view save for those in the nearby clearing. Ayano slipped while climbing up to it, but the PCs should have no trouble reaching it once there is no immediate pressure on them. Opening the sliding wooden door of the house leads to the next subrealm. If Ayano was rescued, the PC who beat their TN for the final Athletics (Running) roll by the largest amount will receive the Touch of Destiny for this encounter, and Ayano will accompany the group to the next subrealm.

The Fourth Challenge: Horsemanship

At first, you begin to believe that the mysterious Realm has returned you to Ningen-do, for the scene that appears before you is that of the horse-racing course in the practice fields outside the Kakita Academy in Tsuma. Long rows of empty stands await the crowds expected to gather for the event, and large targets stand at various points around the track. Almost at once, though, you recognize the faint sense of unreality in the air, and the subtle shifts in details that identify the Spirit Realm that holds you trapped.

Nearby, a row of horses are tethered to a long wooden bar, and quivers full of arrows lean against racks of unstrung bows. For a moment, there is nothing else to see, but then a shape slowly forms in the air above the far side of the track, a long, serpentine form with sharp claws on short legs and a body that seems to be composed of nothing by the starry night sky. It moves sinuously through the air, swirling down to release something on the ground at the far end of the track, then up again, approaching you as though swimming or burrowing through the gentle breeze blowing across the field.

It curves around to settle itself on the track directly before you, and two of the largest and brightest stars within it turn toward you like eyes. “You are here to race,” it booms out in a hollow voice, “just as Ume was.” The star-filled head turns to regard the shape that it dropped at the far end of the field, then turns back to you once again. “She is mine, now and forever, but I will race you, as I did her, for that is the way of this place.”

The dragon lifts a claw toward the horses. “Mount and shoot, samurai, if you wish to leave here.”

As with the Athletics challenge, there are five stages to this test as well. They are: a **Horsemanship / Agility** roll, TN 10, to reach the first target; a **Kyujutsu / Reflexes** roll, TN 5, to hit the first target; a **Horsemanship / Agility** roll, TN 10, to reach the second target; a **Kyujutsu / Reflexes** roll, TN 15, to hit the second target; and finally a **Horsemanship / Agility** roll, TN 10, to reach the finish line. The dragon rolls 5k3 on all of its rolls, and will declare Raises only once the PCs begin to do so. The riders and dragon receive 1 point for each successful roll and +1 point for each successful Raise. The dragon does not shoot, exactly, but instead exhales a single, tiny shooting star that burns into the target if it hits.

Any PC who defeats the dragon earns one Void Point (and the PC with the highest number of points also receives the Touch of Destiny as usual); but even if all the PCs fail, the dragon still permits them to leave with

Ume (she is unconscious, the result of a bad fall when she tried to race – her phobia overcame her and the horse bucked and threw her when she lost control). The dragon itself becomes a star-filled archway through which the PCs pass to reach the next subrealm. The PCs need not roll **Void Ring** or **Meditation / Void** to pass through, and automatically receive a Void Point.

The Fifth Challenge: Law, Etiquette and Bushido

The gray mists coalesce into the dirty streets of a peasant village, ramshackle huts lining a rutted track barely worth calling a road. Some distance away, a crowd of heimin gathers around the largest house in the village, the only one with a tile roof or a stone foundation. Several of the peasants in the crowd shout angrily, pointing at something within the walls of the dwelling.

Assuming the PCs approach, the crowd parts for them, peasants bowing and kneeling out of respect for samurai in their midst. Once through the crowd, they can see for themselves what is occurring:

The large house, which actually has walls around its small grounds, is clearly a samurai’s dwelling, though not a wealthy one. On the wooden walk surrounding the house, an imposing woman wearing the mon and sash of an Emerald Magistrate stands over the kneeling form of Kohuri, the ronin contestant. Flanking Kohuri are a pair of dangerous-looking budoka, peasant guards likely acting as the magistrate’s yoriki assistants. They stare down at the kneeling ronin with identical pitiless expressions.

The magistrate is addressing the nearby peasants, clearly making an official proclamation. “...and so, by the authority vested in me by the Son of Heaven, Emperor Toturi I, I condemn this man for his many crimes. He will die at dawn tomorrow, whether as a samurai should or as would a dog in the streets, as he chooses.”

If the PCs intervene, the magistrate turns to regard them haughtily. She identifies herself as Miya Saibankan, Emerald Magistrate, but if the PCs ask what Kohuri has done, she is vague: “being seen in suspicious places, doing suspicious things... you know, the sorts of things you can always rely on *ronin* to be doing.” She all but spits the word.

The PCs may make any response to this they deem appropriate, but if they suggest that merely loitering isn’t really a reason for a man to die, Saibankan replies,

“You presume to know more of the law than I? Very well, samurai, show me you know what it means to be more than just some ronin dog.” She then asks each PC one of the following questions:

- *What is the proper response when offered a gift?* (Etiquette) Courtesy demands two refusals, to allow the giver to demonstrate his or her sincerity. Accepting earlier implies that you do not believe the giver is sincere, while refusing a third time means that you are genuinely refusing the gift (and can be somewhat insulting).
- *What is the role of the kami in Rokugan’s legal system? What of physical evidence?* (Lore: Law) None. Only the testimony of samurai is valid in a legal trial. The Kitsuki family are a partial exception to this, but even they acknowledge the proper role of testimony in the larger Empire.
- *How many samurai are sworn in fealty directly to the Emperor?* (Lore: Bushido) Only the Emerald and Jade Champions, Champions of the Clans and the heads of the Imperial families offer their oaths of fealty directly to the Emperor. The daimyo of the other families are sworn to their Champions, and the lesser daimyo to the greater, and finally the rank-and-file samurai to the various daimyo of the Empire.
- *How does one display proper respect for one’s peers and superiors, both in word and deed?* (Etiquette) By bowing – slight bows to peers, deeper bows to superiors, kneeling or prostrating oneself before extremely important samurai like Clan Champions or the Emperor – and through the use of honorifics such as “-san” (used with close friends or allies) or “-sama” (used to show respect to strangers or those of greater station)
- *How does the social structure of the Empire relate to the Celestial Heavens?* (Lore: Bushido) The roles of the various Fortunes, Elemental Dragons and kami, in service to Lord Sun and Lady Moon, in the Heavens, are mirrored in the relationship between the Great Clans, their samurai, and the Emperor. Just as all the various Heavenly beings ultimately serve the Sun and Moon, so too do all the samurai of Rokugan ultimately serve the Emperor, the Heavens’ chosen representative on earth.
- *Who is the supreme legal arbiter in the Empire?* (Lore: Law) The Emperor is the ultimate source of all laws and legal authority

within the Empire, but the Emerald Champion is the highest-ranking magistrate in Rokugan, acting in the Emperor’s stead to perform all law enforcement duties. He is assisted in this by his deputies, the Emerald Magistrates, each of whom carries Imperial sanction in their duties.

If the player does not know the answer to the question, they may roll the listed Skill (**Etiquette**, **Lore: Law** or **Lore: Bushido**) / **Intelligence** at a TN of 10, to properly interpret the Imperial’s inquiry. They must then roll the same Skill / **Awareness** at a TN of 20 to present a proper answer in the face of the magistrate’s aggression. (If the player knew the answer without having to make the Intelligence roll, they still have to make the Awareness roll, but their lack of hesitation gives the PC a Free Raise.) The PC that beats the TN on their Awareness roll by the greatest amount receives the Touch of Destiny for this subrealm.

As long as at least one PC answers their question correctly, Saibankan nods once and says, “Very well. Your scholarship matches my own. I will heed your call for mercy. If you escort this ronin from my village, he may go free.” If none do, though, the yoriki drag Kohuri off and the PCs are sent to the next challenge.

The Sixth Challenge: Weapons

The next area looks very much like the room in which you initially awakened, a large dojo with weapon racks on the walls and white paper screens on all sides. One set of screens has been opened wide, allowing passage to the outside, where a broad valley opens below the mountainside on which the dojo rests. Through the opening, a horde of black-clad warriors pours through, and each one has no face at all, only smooth skin where eyes, nose and mouth should be. They advance in unsettling silence, but their readied weapons and martial stance speak volumes.

Standing in front of the onslaught is Mirumoto Ukira, face set in a determination as he readies his swords.

There is one attacker for each PC and rescued character they have brought with them (including Miya Yumi, as appropriate). Yumi is no condition to fight, but all the other students can be assumed to handle their opponents as long as the PCs handle the rest. The PCs have one round of preparation before the attackers arrive.

Any PC “killed” is only unconscious, and will awaken in the next subrealm. If all PCs are “killed,” they and

the other rescued students move along, but Ukira does not.

The attacking spirits have the following traits:

Attack 5k3, Damage 4k2
Init 3k3 Armor TN 20 Reduction 5
Wounds 5: +5, 10: +10, 15: +15, 20: Dead
All Rings at 2 except Void, which they lack.

The attackers begin in the Attack Stance, but they will switch to the Full Attack stance on the second round of combat if their initial attacks are unsuccessful.

The Touch of Destiny for this encounter should go to the PC that performs the best in the combat – defeats multiple enemies, does the most damage to their target, etc.

The Seventh Challenge: Poetry

The formless gray takes on form once more, this time becoming a serene garden, with graveled paths winding among brilliant flower beds and luxuriant bushes, carefully sculpted trees and chuckling streams. Tall hedges line the borders of the garden, but a warm sun shines down, banishing the shadows.

In the center of the garden, Doji Arata stares in frustration at a small shrine, where a richly decorated daisho rests on a stand, and in front of it is a simple ink and brush set. A smiling young woman, hair dyed in the Crane white, stands next to him, watching his expression with patient curiosity.

“I do not understand your reluctance, Doji-san,” the young woman says. “Your task is simple: a poem on the meaning of duty, using the sword as your metaphor. Why is this so difficult? Why will you not proceed?”

Arata does not respond, but his knuckles tighten and turn white as he grips the ink brush in his hand. He remains so fixed on the tableau of sword and ink set that he does not seem to notice your arrival, even when the young woman turns her smile on you. “Ah, new students!” she calls out delightedly. “The Kakita Academy is always pleased to accept those who seek the beauty in life. Come, join us! Our task today is to compose a poem on the meaning of duty, one of the most important aspects of a samurai’s existence, using the sword of a samurai as the metaphor for the poem. Doji Aroshi, the father of Doji Arata-san here, has generously allowed us to use his personal daisho set to serve as our inspiration. Will you not join us?”

The PCs must supply their own poems, but in order to free Doji Arata from his challenge, they must persuade Arata to write his poem. Arata’s problem is that he is being asked to use his talent against itself, writing a poem about why he should sacrifice his dreams of studying poetry in order to pursue a duelist’s life. This is primarily a roleplaying challenge – it will be up to the PCs to persuade him to make the attempt. Presented with the stark contrast between what he wants and what is expected of him, Arata will share his dilemma quite easily, but getting him to actually make a choice will be more difficult.

The most successful tactics will be those that try to chart a path allowing him to study both or combine the two talents together in some fashion, but direct appeals to his duty and obligation will work as well. Alternatively, the PCs may try to persuade Arata to turn his back on his duty and write a poem about that instead. Arata is aware that he is not in the Mortal Realm, though he does not truly understand where he is, but he is unconcerned with returning to Ningen-do until he finds a way to reconcile his desires with his duty. When the time comes, a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll, TN 20, can force him to make a decision; GMs should be generous with Free Raises for well-roleplayed and/or eloquent persuasion, or simply allow such to be successful without rolling. If the PCs fail to convince him, however, he insists that they leave him behind until he works it out on his own. The PCs will be escorted away by the smiling sensei and sent to the next challenge without him.

The PCs’ own poems are created via an **Artisan: Poetry / Awareness** roll, TN 15; if the player actually writes a haiku at the table (the traditional format, consisting of three lines, the first containing exactly five syllables, the second containing exactly seven syllables, and the third containing exactly five or more), they should receive at least one Free Raise for writing the poem and possibly additional Free Raises for a particularly well-written one. As long as each PC makes an attempt, they are allowed to leave, though the young sensei’s smile will get rather strained as she looks for encouragement or praise to offer on particularly poor specimens. The PC who rolls the highest on their poem receives the Touch of Destiny.

The Eighth Challenge: Games

When the gray mists clear this time, they reveal a large room, several dozen feet wide and twice as long, with a high ceiling almost lost in the shadows of

crisscrossing beams. At one end, the floors are polished wood, gleaming and well maintained, with several low tables around which frowning samurai sit staring seriously at go boards or shogi sets, stroking their chins or eyeing their opponents thoughtfully. A little further along, the floor somehow shifts to a polished tile, and samurai dressed in the ornate and overdecorated finery of the highest courts attempt to keep a heavy leather ball from touching the floor without using their hands, while next to them other samurai examine a finely crafted statue, looking for ways to make sneering comments about it despite its nearly-flawless nature. Beyond them, at the farthest end of the room, the floor is bare dirt, pipe-smoke swirls thick in the air, and hard-faced peasants toss dice and shift wooden pieces around hand-carved game boards to the shouts of onlookers and the pervasive exchange of money won and lost.

As you take all this in, an older woman in simple robes, made of fine materials, makes her way through the crowds moving from table to table and bows low to you. “Greetings, great samurai,” she says, smiling. “You have come to play, and play you shall. We have all the games you could desire, from the most elevated to the most... visceral. You have but to play, and should you win, you will be granted a prize. The prize you seek, I think, would be to move on from here, yes? But there is something else you can win as well... look there!” She points across the room, to a thickly-barred wooden cage, where Matsu Sachiko sits, looking resigned. “She too is a prize, and one you would claim, I think? Win and she joins you; win again and you can all leave! Are you ready to play?”

The spirit here is not one of the usual Realm constructs, but something else, a true inhabitant of the Realm seeking to strengthen itself at the cost of the PCs. It has reinforced the “edges” of this subrealm, meaning that the PCs cannot simply leave. However, the Realm remains quite permeable; all that is required to exit is the expenditure of a Void Point (one suffices for the entire group, though a separate one is required for Sachiko). It is Void for which the PCs would be playing; winning a game grants the victor a Void Point, which they may then spend on leaving or freeing Sachiko if they wish. Any Void the PCs have already acquired may also be spent this way, at any time.

The spirit is hoping to draw out the Void within the Realm for itself, using the PCs as a mechanism – each game “crystallizes” a Void Point from the Realm, and if the PCs lose, the Void Point goes to the spirit instead. A Contested Roll of **Investigation (Interrogation) / Perception** against the spirit’s **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** of 6k3 reveals that the spirit is hiding

something about the games, and if a PC tries to learn what it is the spirit is trying to conceal, they may roll **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** or **Intimidation / Awareness** against the spirit’s **Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower** of 6k2 to find it out – on a success, the spirit reveals its secrets: “This Realm contains vast untapped potential, and the games bring it to the fore! Leaving merely requires calling on the Void, but you can do so far more easily if you just play! Will you not sit and play, for both our sakes?” The spirit is essentially invulnerable to attacks from the PCs, but if they grow sufficiently belligerent, they will be ejected and sent on to the next subrealm, most probably without Sachiko.

A number of games are available for the PCs to try out: go, shogi, kemari, sadane, Fortunes and Winds, and even a backgammon-like game called sugoroku. To play, a PC need only take a seat at the appropriate table and make a contested roll against their spirit opponent. While each game has its own separate skill, an unskilled player can also play them by substituting other skills as well – doing so, however, does not remove the unskilled penalties, meaning that the PC’s dice will still not reroll 10s, they cannot call Raises and they cannot gain the benefits of any Free Raises. The games, their associated Traits, and the possible skill substitutions are as follows:

- Go (Intelligence); Battle
- Shogi (Intelligence); Battle
- Kemari (Agility); Athletics
- Sadane (Awareness); Intimidate or Courtier
- Fortunes and Winds (Awareness); Sleight of Hand
- Sugoroku (Awareness); Sleight of Hand

The opposing spirits always roll 5k3.

If the PCs all fail to win their games, the hostess will return, smiling demurely once more. “You have not managed to turn the Fortunes in your favor? Alas, that is most unfortunate. Still, you have done me a great service, samurai, and I will not forget your... contributions.” She smiles more broadly, revealing the points of her teeth, just before the gray mists swirl again.

If a PC defeats their opponent, the spirit hostess will congratulate them in a strangely satisfied manner. “Ah, clearly the Fortunes favor you, samurai! I wish you well in your journeys. Perhaps one day we can be of further assistance to one another...” The PC that defeats their opponent by the widest margin gains the Touch of Destiny for this challenge.

The Ninth Challenge: Courtier

Even as the gray mists clear, you can hear the soft murmur of conversation and the whispered swish of fine silks around you. The scene resolves into the great hall of a samurai lord, where the daimyo is clearly having court. Courtiers swathed in heavy finery cluster in small groups, speaking quietly to one another behind delicately painted silk fans, while servants move noiseless among them, offering tea or delivering messages as unobtrusively as possible. All the samurai you see are wearing masks, and many of their kimono are in patterns of deep scarlet and black, easily identifying this as a Scorpion court.

“Ah, more guests!” booms out a voice from the far end of the hall, and masked faces all around turn toward you. Rising from his cushion atop a small dais, a smiling man in a rich red kimono, decorated in black and gold patterns of scorpions and frogs, bows to you and beckons you forward. “I am Bayushi Miyeshi, lord of this castle – be welcome in my court.” He gestures to one side, and you realize that Bayushi Shichiro is kneeling next to the dais, watching you approach with eyes both wary and hopeful. “I believe you know my other guest, Shichiro-san? He has been awaiting your arrival, so that he may complete the task I have set for him. As my guests, I would ask entertainment of you: would you, perhaps, favor my court with a debate of learned philosophy against young Shichiro-san?”

The PCs may demur if they wish, but Shichiro will begin to look slightly panicked, making small hand movements and facial expressions in an attempt to subtly persuade the PCs to go along with Miyeshi's request. Assuming they agree, Miyeshi smiles, clapping his hands once; the rest of the assembled courtiers move away from the center of the room, turning the cleared space into an arena of sorts. Shichiro rises from his place next to the dais and goes to stand along one side of the room, while Miyeshi gestures for the PCs to stand at the other.

“My thanks, good friends,” Miyeshi says, returning to his seat and kneeling once again on the fine cushions. “If you will allow me, then, I will set the topic for debate. What is the most suitable reward for a liar?”

The PCs may nominate a single individual to debate Shichiro, they may argue as a group, or they may take turns, however they wish to proceed. Shichiro will argue to the best of his ability, taking whichever position is counter to the PCs' – if the PCs argue that

lying should result in punishment or censure in some way, Shichiro will defend lying in the cause of duty, to protect the honor of one's lord or family, or as a means to shield another from disgrace (expressing the tenet of bushido known as *jin*, or compassion); if the PCs defend lying in some fashion, Shichiro will attack the practice (without any seeming sense of irony, despite being a Scorpion) on the grounds that lying places a barrier between thought and deed, a barrier that weakens a warrior and prevents him or her from performing his or her duty to the best of his or her ability. Once both sides have presented their arguments, a Contested **Courtier / Awareness** roll will determine the winner (award one to three Free Raises for well-presented and well-spoken arguments).

Unfortunately, Shichiro is trying to win the debate, believing that if he does so, he and the PCs will be freed to proceed. This is not the case. The challenge is a test for Shichiro, and the clue is in the question posed by Miyeshi: “What is the most suitable reward for a liar?” The question is a reference to a story from the Tao, about the first contest fought among the kami to determine who would be Emperor. While they watch one of the duels, Shinsei catches the kami Bayushi telling a lie and strikes him across the mouth. “Why did you strike me, teacher?” Bayushi asks. “Because pain in the liar's only reward,” Shinsei replies. “Your face told me one thing and your eyes told me another. I had to reward one of the two, so I chose to reward your lying face.” Bayushi smiles in pained understanding, puts on a mask for the first time, and then loses his duel on purpose. Through the choice of topic, Miyeshi is telling Shichiro to lose – but Shichiro will not realize this unless one of the PCs manages to tell him.

Remembering the story requires a **Lore: History, Lore: Shintao** or **Lore: Bushido / Intelligence** roll, TN 20 – Scorpion characters receive a Free Raise on this roll. If a PC who remembers the story makes some reference to it, Shichiro's eyes will widen in understanding, and although he will continue to defend his chosen position, he will keep low dice when the roll is made, deliberately losing if at all possible. If a PC wishes to reference the event more subtly, they may make a separate **Courtier / Awareness** roll, TN 15; this grants Shichiro an extra rolled (but not kept) die on his Courtier roll, allowing him to choose even lower dice, with each successful raises granting an additional die.

Alternatively, a successful **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** roll, TN 30, allows a PC to pick up on a hidden subtext within Miyeshi's statement, indicating that Miyeshi wants Shichiro to try to lose, though it won't be clear why unless the PC also recognized the story hint. In this case, direct statements

to Shichiro won't work, but a PC can use the same Courtier / Awareness roll listed above to convey the message more discreetly, producing the same effect as when referencing the story.

On the other hand, if the PCs simply out-argue Shichiro, Miyeshi will look slightly disappointed, but will also send Shichiro off with the PCs. Only if Shichiro wins will Miyeshi shake his head, watching gravely as Shichiro's attitude shifts from triumph to confusion. "You still have much to learn, Bayushi-san, and you must stay with us until you have learned it," Miyeshi says, and the PCs are transported away without the young Scorpion.

If Shichiro realizes the true nature of the challenge (certainly with the PCs' help), Miyeshi will thank the group for the "fine entertainment provided by the spirited discourse". He will wish the PCs and their charges farewell, with a final, meaningful glance to Shichiro. "You have given us much to think on, samurai... I hope that this exchange has been reciprocal." The PC with the highest Courtier Roll, or the one that rolled for speaking, gains Touch of Destiny for this encounter.

The Tenth Challenge: Hunting

As the next scene comes into view, you again recognize the lands around Tsuma, though once more the flickering, insubstantial nature of your surroundings reminds you that this is not truly the Realm of Mortals. You are standing alongside a small stream running through a forest whose trees are just now budding with the first blossoms of spring. Ahead of you, Moto Katsu is pacing back and forth in front of an old man seated at the base of a tree, cheerfully eating plums while Katsu fumes and stomps around angrily. The seated man looks to be Megumi, the monk tending the shrine outside the Inn of the Tranquil Lotus, but he shows no discomfort or confusion about his present circumstances. The same cannot be said for Katsu.

Megumi smiles and greets the PCs by name as they approach; Katsu bows deeply to his superiors, but cannot hide his frustration. If asked, Katsu points angrily at the monk. "He seems to know what I am supposed to do, but he will not say what it is! He only keeps babbling about keys and eggs and doors, none of which are here! Speak plain, old man! We need to return home!"

Megumi merely smiles and shrugs. If the PCs ask him what they are supposed to do, or to repeat what he told

Katsu, he does so cheerfully: "All passages are doors, and we must all pass through them to reach what will follow. To every door there is a key, and the key is the world – like an egg, we are born from the world, set free from it, and so we move on."

By now, it is likely the PCs will be prepared for the hunting challenge, and realize that they need to find a some kind of egg in order to move on. If they do not, a **Lore: Shintao / Intelligence** roll, TN 15, will translate Megumi's koan enough to understand that finding an egg is key to leaving the realm. If this is pointed out, Katsu will suggest that the area looks like where the annual tsu fish egg hunt was scheduled to occur. Tsu fish eggs are a delicacy of the Crane lands, known for both their taste and their rarity; tsu fish themselves are equally well-known for their unique ability to spend long periods out of water, spawning on sandy beaches alongside fresh water streams in the Crane lands.

Finding the eggs requires three successful **Hunting (Survival or Tracking) / Perception** rolls, TN 15, from three separate PCs – two Raises may be called to "count" one character's roll as double. This allows the PCs to locate the tsu fish spawning grounds, some half mile up the stream. The fish are fat, bloated things, about 18 inches long and as thick around as a man's forearm, with spiny fins tipped with wicked barbs that the fish use to pull themselves over the beach sands. A series of small pits have been dug in the sands by the fish, and each pit contains a small pile of glistening, slimy-looking eggs, each about the size of a frog's eye. Next to each pit, exhausted females are stretched out on the sands, while aggressive-looking males scrape themselves over the sand in a steady patrol, keeping a watchful eye out for predators.

In order to reach the eggs, the PCs must either sneak past the sentry fish (two **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** rolls, TN 20, one each way), make a quick dash for the eggs (two **Athletics (Running) / Strength** rolls, TN 20, also one each way) or fight through the fish, which viciously attack any intruder. Failing either the Stealth or Athletics rolls leaves the character one Move action from the edge, but also subjects the character to an immediate swarm attack (see below).

There are about three dozen fish in all; they swarm toward the hunters with surprising speed and aggression once they detected the intruders. Because of the sheer number of fish, they do not need to make attack rolls to hit the characters – anyone trying to reach the fish eggs is automatically hit each round on initiative count zero; the tsu fish swarm initially deals 13k1 damage (which becomes 10k2; see the Ten Dice Rule on page 77 of the 4th Edition Core Rulebook) to its victims. However,

the PCs may fight back – swarm’s Armor TN is 10, but there is no need to roll damage; any successful attack reduces the swarm’s damage dice by -1k0, and Raises increase the damage lost by -1k0 per Raise. Shugenja who cast damaging spells must be able to call Raises for extra targets in order to gain reduce the damage beyond -1k0, but area effect spells that inflict damage reduce the swarm’s damage by -1k0 per Mastery Level if the spell is cast successfully, and by an additional -1k0 for every 5 points by which the Spell Casting roll exceeds the TN. For the purposes of adjudicating non-damaging effects, the swarm is considered to have all Rings at 1, but cannot spend Void; if the effect would somehow make it substantially more difficult or impossible for a given tsu fish to attack, treat it as a damaging effect. Moving through the swarm to reach the eggs and then getting back out of the spawning area requires two Simple Move Actions in each direction, while collecting the eggs requires one Complex Action. Characters in the Defense stance may add their Air + Defense to their Reduction instead of to their Armor TN against the swarm’s damage if they choose.

Once the PCs have an egg, a door fades into existence on the sand just beyond the spawning grounds, and the characters may pass through it to reach the final challenge. The PC most directly contributory to the retrieval of the egg (or the one that most impresses Megumi) gains Touch of Destiny for this subrealm; this is entirely at the GM’s discretion.

If the PCs fail to locate the spawning grounds, they will meet again at the plum tree near Megumi – but Moto Katsu will be lost in the woods. The monk will provide the PCs with an egg to allow them to continue their journey, but there will be no sign of the young Unicorn.

The Final Challenge: Iaijutsu

For a moment, it is as though you did not leave the tsu fish spawning grounds, for you find yourselves once again standing within a forest, looking across a broad stream. A rough forest trail cuts through the underbrush beneath your feet, leading to a sturdy-looking wooden bridge over the murmuring waters. Standing in the middle of the bridge, his face shaded by a broad-brimmed straw hat, is an unarmored samurai, standing easily with one hand on the hilt of his katana.

He bows, his face still in shadow, and calls out to you in a deep voice. “At last you have come, brave samurai. Your journey is almost finished. You have but to cross the bridge, and the path to your world will be open.” He tilts his head slightly to one side before

continuing, “However, I will not allow you to pass without testing yourselves against me. My test is simple, the ultimate worth of a samurai: defeat me in a duel, and know yourself worthy. I await you here.” He bows once more, then settles easily into a dueling stance, patient and ready.

A PC must duel and defeat the spirit before the group can pass. The spirit has Iaijutsu 3, Awareness 2, Reflexes 3 and Void 3, though it cannot spend any Void Points. The TN to assess its stance is 15, and it has a base Armor TN of 20. It will not take damage, nor will its strikes deal any, as the spirit’s blade seems to pass through the character’s body; however, if all PCs fail to defeat it, any PC “struck” by the spirit’s katana gains the Bad Fortune (Lingering Misfortune) Disadvantage. Defeating the spirit grants the character Touch of Destiny. (A kharmic strike does not count as having defeated the spirit, though it will earn some measure of respect – if no other PC defeats it, a character who achieves a kharmic strike gains both the Touch of Destiny and the Bad Fortune results.) Once the spirit has been defeated, or all the PCs have tried and failed to defeat it, the spirit steps aside and allows the PCs to pass. As they step off of the bridge on the far side, they leave the subrealm.

Home At Last

When the gray mist dissolves this time, the PCs do not find themselves within a challenge area – instead, they are in a dark and forbidding tomb, surrounded by small niches in the walls, each holding an urn that contains the interred ashes of some long-forgotten samurai. The room is lit by flickering torches along the walls, and in the dim light, the PCs can make out carefully carved personal chops or mon in the stone over each niche. There is a broad archway ahead, and it flickers with an unsteady, silver-gray light.

The PCs, along with whichever contestants they have managed to rescue, are not alone: Toku, the Captain of the Imperial Guard, stands next to his Emperor, looking stricken, while Toturi holds the body of his wife, Kaede. Toturi’s face is stone, but slow tears roll down his cheeks nonetheless, seemingly unnoticed. Kitsu Shisou waits anxiously for the PCs to arrive, looking relieved when they finally do so; he asks worried questions about any contestants who have not arrived, but regretfully shakes his head, saying, “We cannot save them; we have waited longer than we should already. We must go now, before the passage between the Realms closes.” Behind him, Kakita Kaiten stares numbly at Kaede’s body, his hand grasping convulsively at the hilt of a katana he no longer has.

Two of Toturi's Seppun guardsmen are here as well; one is the other returned spirit, his kimono still covered in the blood of both the Empress and the traitorous cousin he helped to slay.

Turning toward the Emperor, Shisou bows deeply, saying, "My lord, we must go now. All who can be saved have been." Toturi does not look at him, but nods once, slowly, turning toward the archway and passing through it without a word. Toku and Kaiten follow afterward, leaving Shisou to escort the PCs and their charges back to Ningen-do.

Conclusion

The tournament grounds are in a shambles, the stands empty and torn, the ground churned up by hundreds of running feet. The sun stands directly above; if it is still the same day, the PCs were gone for just a few hours. There are shouts as nearby Crane guards spot the returning samurai, but all pause and stare in shock at the dead Empress lying in her husband's arms.

Aftermath

The Empress is dead, and plans begin for a massive funeral to be held at the capitol in her honor. Shugenja around the Empire begin looking for Kaede's successor as Oracle of the Void, but no reports surface anywhere, leaving worried whispers about what Kaede's death might mean for the Celestial Heavens.

Most of the guests that were drawn through the passage to the other Realm were located by Kitsune Shisou, but not all. Ninety-four samurai are unaccounted-for after the event, presumed lost in the mysterious new Realm. Daidoji Rekai is one of the missing samurai.

In recognition of Toku's service in rescuing Toturi and helping him recover Kaede's body from the strange Spirit Realm, Toturi awards him with his own family name, and the Monkey Clan fills with new Toku samurai.

To cleanse the dishonor of his failure to protect the Emperor's family and of allowing his own weapon to be used in the killing, Kakita Kaiten commits seppuku, in a ceremony attended by Toturi himself. Daidoji Uji, daimyo of the Daidoji family, acts as Kaiten's second for the ritual, and Uji joins with Kaiten's father, the returned spirit Kakita Yoshi, to lead the Crane Clan until the young Doji Kurohito reaches his majority. Kakita Yoshi steps down as Imperial Advisor, ostensibly to devote his attention to his Clan's political

needs. This leaves the posts of both Imperial Advisor and Imperial Chancellor (unfilled since the seppuku of Takuan) empty.

Of Kaiten's blade, the Dragon Claw Katana, there is no trace – most believe it is lost forever in the vastness of the Spirit Realms.

Across the Empire, rumors begin to spread that Toturi has lost the Mandate of Heaven, as Kaede's death must surely be a sign of Heaven's disfavor; these rumors are quiet, spoken only in hushed whispers in darkened tea house corners... at least for now.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

Experience Points

Surviving the adventure:	1XP
Good roleplaying:	+1XP
Escape the other Realm:	+1XP
Rescue at least one NPC other than Ume:	+1XP

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Honor

Any PC who rescued any NPC (ie, the PC was the character that passed the Test) gains a point of Honor.

Any PC who rescued their Clan's contestant gains an additional point of Honor.

If the PCs successfully rescued Miya Yumi, they gain 2 points of Honor unless their Honor was 3.9 or less, in which case they gain 3 points of Honor.

Glory

The PCs gain 2 points of Glory for recovering any of the contestants from the other Realm (including Isawa Ume).

If the PCs rescue Miya Yumi, they gain an additional 5 points of Glory.

Other Awards/Penalties

If the PCs rescued Miya Yumi, they gain a Favor from the Imperial Herald.

Each PC who “won” at least one contest receives a Touch of Destiny – a one-use Great Destiny, effectively. Mark this on the Mod Cert. This does not “stack” with Great Destiny or Dark Fate; if the character already has one of those, they do not gain anything.

If all of the PCs fail to beat the iaijutsu spirit, each of them gains the Bad Fortune (Lingering Misfortune) Disadvantage. Mark this on the Mod Cert; like Touch of Destiny, this is a one-time effect that will be marked off the sheet once used.

Module Tracking Sheets

Touch of Destiny – this is gained by passing at least one contest, and no character may have more than one. It functions as a one-use Great Destiny.

Allies, enemies, or Favors may be gained over the course of the module at the discretion of the GM; mark these on the sheet. For this mod, simply saving a contestant is not enough to gain an Ally, but a PC who goes significantly out of their way to help an NPC with their goals should be taken into consideration.

GM Reporting

Was Miya Yumi rescued?

Were any contestants lost? Which ones?

How many of the PCs recognized Kakita Toshiken just before the assassination, and how many realized his target?

GM must report this information BEFORE (Expiration date) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPC Contestants

Hida Takumi

The son of a Hida gunso and a Kaiu engineer, Takumi is rather more clever than he appears. He has the typical Hida build, and even at sixteen, he towers over most Rokugani. He has a broken nose that never healed straight from a training “incident”, and is trying valiantly to grow moustaches, giving him a slightly scruffy air. He is a voracious reader and has a piercing intellect. He gained some notoriety among his Clan by bringing back the head of an ogre at his gempukku, having led it into a trap. This early success, combined with his natural ability, has made him slightly more confident than is perhaps warranted.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 2	Void 2
		Intelligence 3	Strength 3	
Honor 3.5		Status 1.0	Glory 1.0	

Initiative: 3k2 **Attack:** 4k2 (tetsubo)
Armor TN: 25 (heavy armor) **Damage:** 8k3 (tetsubo)

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 1

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 1, Defense 1, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 1, Intimidation 1, Jiujutsu 1, Kenjutsu 1, Lore: Shadowlands 1, Traps 1.
Advantages/Disadvantages: Large, Sage/Overconfident

Doji Arata

Doji Aroschi was a skilled duelist who died in a karmic strike with a Lion general during the Clan War. His son, Arata, has a significant amount of talent with the blade, and bears a burden of expectation from his family as a result. However, Arata wishes to be a poet far more than a duelist. He is not afraid of combat, he simply enjoys writing more (and has a great deal of talent for it). The two different paths before him leave him torn: his soul yearns to hold a pen, but his honor demands he follow the dictates of his Clan. He is a handsome youth with white-dyed hair and a nearly-perpetual worried expression.

Air 3	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 3
		Agility 3		
Honor 6.5		Status 0.5	Glory 1.0	

Initiative: 4k3+4 **Attack:** 5k3 (katana)
Armor TN: 25 (light armor) **Damage:** 5k32(katana)

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 1

Skills: Artisan: Poetry 2, Etiquette 1, Horsemanship 1, Iaijutsu (Focus) 2, Kenjutsu 2, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: Bushido 1, Meditation 1, Sincerity 1, Tea Ceremony 1.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Great Potential (Artisan: Poetry) / Gullible

Mirumoto Ukira

Ukira has been a noted prodigy of the Mirumoto dojo since he was a child. His undeniable talent with the sword is refreshing for the Dragon, who suffered great losses during the War Against the Shadow. He is a serious young man who takes quiet pride in his ability but is concerned that he will not be able to live up to his sensei's hopes. Ukira was originally fated to win the Topaz Championship, however, the actions of a returned spirit will thwart that destiny. At 14, Ukira is one of the younger contestants, and he is not all that tall for his age, which makes his serious demeanor somewhat unsettling.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 3
Reflexes 3	Stamina 3	Agility 3		
Honor 4.5		Status 0.5	Glory 1.0	

Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** 6k3 (katana)
Armor TN: 27 (light armor and daisho) **Damage:** 5k32(katana)

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 1

Skills: Athletics 1, Defense 1, Etiquette 1, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 2, Lore: Bushido 1, Lore: Heraldry 1, Lore: Shugenja 1, Meditation 1, Theology 1,
Advantages/Disadvantages: Prodigy / Idealistic

Matsu Sachiko

Matsu Sachiko is the first student trained by the Akodo after the return of their name. She is highly controlled, unlike many other Matsu samurai. She is very honorable, and like most Lion, has a great respect for tradition – her sensei was a returned spirit who instilled in her the values of Rokugan's history. Sachiko is a tall young woman who wears her hair in a maiden's foptail. She is, unfortunately, plagued by minor mishaps, a fact she attributes to some form of karmic balance she must address at some point in her life.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 2
		Agility 3		
Honor 7.5		Status 0.5	Glory 0.5	

Initiative: 3k2 **Attack:** 5k3 (katana)
Armor TN: 20 (light armor) **Damage:** 6k2(katana)

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 1

Skills: Battle (Mass Combat) 2, Defense 1, Games: Go 1, Horsemanship 1, Kenjutsu 2, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: History 2, Perform: Storytelling 1, Sincerity 1.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Balance, Virtuous / Unlucky I.

Yoritomo Ayano

The daughter of a Mantis marine that fought alongside Yoritomo on the Day of Thunder, Ayano has a proud heritage for a member of the newest Great Clan. She does have a fondness for the finer things in life (music, sake, games of chance), but usually manages to temper this with some restraint; unfortunately, her impulse control is somewhat lacking when it comes to finding a fight. She is a very athletic young woman, pretty in a tomboyish sort of way, and years on the sea have given her a very strident voice.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 2
Reflexes 3		Agility 3	Strength 3	
Honor 4.5		Status 0.5	Glory 0.5	

Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** 5k3 (kama)
Armor TN: 25 (light armor) **Damage:** 3k2(kama)

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 1

Skills: Athletics 2, Commerce 1, Defense 1, Etiquette 1, Games: Fortunes and Winds 1, Jiu-jutsu (Improvised Weapons) 2, Kenjutsu 1, Knives (Kama) 2, Perform: Singing 1, Sailing 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Daredevil / Brash.

Isawa Ume

Ume has had a strong connection with the Void for all of her life, and this was recognized early. She was taken to be trained as an ishiken at a young age, and despite an accident while traveling that left her with a strong aversion for horses, she has become a valued member of the Phoenix as they continue to rebuild after the last decade of devastation. She has significant potential as a shugenja, but is currently a better scholar and is very aware of it. Ume is reserved and quiet, and prefers study or communion with the spirits to socializing. She does, however, have an almost worshipful attitude toward Toturi Kaede – the Empress is her personal heroine.

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

Honor 4.5 Status 0.5 Glory 0.5

Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** spells
Armor TN: 18 (Defense Stance) **Damage:** by spell

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Void)

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Defense 1, Investigation 1, Lore: Heraldry 1, Lore: History 1, Lore: Theology 2, Medicine 1, Meditation 2, Spellcraft 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Great Destiny, Ishiken-do / Phobia (horses)

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Sense Void, Touch the Emptiness, Reach through the Emptiness, Ebbing Strength, Path to Inner Peace, Elemental Ward, By the Light of the Moon.

Bayushi Shichiro

The Scorpion Clan has a tradition of “secret gempukku”: having their young samurai go through the ceremony in private and then using the public event as a means of furthering other goals. Shichiro has a mission to observe and report back on the guests and contenders of this tournament, a mission given to him because he is a very subtle and blends in well with the background. He is quite average in appearance, and seldom does anything to attract attention to himself. He knows his orders, and will obey them to the letter: the Scorpion did not send him to get blackmail (yet), just to identify prospects and try to gain allies at the event for future use. His mask is a plain black scarf, worn around the lower half of his face, though he does have a somewhat nicer one with embroidery for special occasions.

Air 3	Earth 2	Fire 3	Water 2	Void 3
Honor 4.5		Status 0.5	Glory 0.5	

Initiative: 5k4 **Attack:** 5k3 (katana)
Armor TN: 25 (light armor) **Damage:** 5k2 (katana)

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 1

Skills: Courtier (Manipulation) 2, Defense 1, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 2, Sincerity 2, Stealth 1.

Advantage: Bland

Moto Katsu

Though many have recently returned to the Empire, not all Moto were born in the Burning Sands. Katsu was born in Rokugan to parents who were both members of the White Guard that fought alongside Otaku Kamoko and Moto Gaheris to destroy the Dark Moto. His entire life has been spent in the Empire, giving him a somewhat better understanding of Rokugani culture than most Moto, but he is not above taking advantage of other samurai's expectations. However, he is generally more comfortable in the wilderness than in social settings and tends to be something of a loner. Katsu is a dark, handsome young man of about average height, with a stocky build and the bowed legs of a practiced horseman.

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

Honor 4.5 Status 0.5 Glory 0.5
Initiative: 3k2 **Attack:** 5k3 (no-dachi)
Armor TN: 20 (light armor) **Damage:** 7k3 (no-dachi)

School/Rank: Moto Bushi 1
Skills: Athletics 1, Defense 1, Etiquette 1, Games: Shogi 1, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 1, Kenjutsu (Scimitar, No-dachi) 2.
Advantages/Disadvantages: Paragon (Courage) / Antisocial I

Kohuri

The sole ronin competitor, Kohuri managed to secure sponsorship from Seppun Nakao, the commander of the First Imperial Legion, due to his parentage. Kohuri's parents were both ronin that fought for the Emperor during the Clan War, and distinguished themselves admirably. Kohuri himself wishes nothing more than to join the Imperial Legion, and has worked hard to get

into the tournament as a means of achieving that goal. He is a little older than the other contestants, and spends a fair amount of effort on his personal appearance in order to avoid the "dirty ronin" stereotype. Tall and thin, he is not a good-looking young man, but he is dedicated to his goal of serving the Toturi dynasty, and that is obvious in all his actions.

Air 2 Earth 2 Fire 2 Water 2 Void 2
Reflexes 3 Agility 3
Honor 2.5 Status 0 Glory 0.5
Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** 5k3 (katana)
Armor TN: 25 (light armor) **Damage:** 7k3 (katana)

School: none (True Ronin)
Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 1, Games: Go 1, Hunting 1, Iaijutsu 1, Investigation 1, Jiu-jutsu 1, Kenjutsu 2, Meditation 1, Spears 1.
Advantages/Disadvantages: Strength of the Earth, Wary / Driven (serve Toturi), Social Disadvantage: Ronin.

Appendix #2: Important Non-Contestant NPCs

Emperor Toturi I: The Emperor pale samurai with classically handsome features and a lean physique. He keeps his hair in a proper samurai topknot, and dresses as befits a symbol of the Empire. Since taking the throne, he has devoted himself to restoring the Empire; first from the devastation of the Clan War, and then from the chaos of the War Against the Shadow. These cares and worries have weighed on him, but finally, the Empire is returning to its former prosperity. Toturi is one of the best generals in the history of Rokugan, and keeps himself in good physical condition, but despite his undeniable charisma and intimidating intellect, he is not a particularly political thinker.

Empress Toturi Kaede: Former Master of the Void, now Oracle of the Void, Kaede wed the Emperor as part of a gambit to help save the Empire. This dual devotion to the good of Rokugan and the Dragon of the Void has been difficult for her, but now it appears that she has been able to serve the Empire well with her power. She is a small, dark woman with a somewhat abstracted air. The powers of an Oracle are vast, but not without limitations: actions of spirits, as they stand outside of destiny, are very difficult for her to fathom.

Kakita Toshiken: Once a bitter, angry young man, Toshiken has matured into a thoughtful and judicious samurai since making peace with his legendary father, Kakita Toshimoko. One of the greatest duelists in the Empire, he remains somewhat uncomfortable with still being one of the few Emerald Champions in the history of Rokugan to be appointed instead of passing the Test. However, his devotion to the Emperor is unquestionable, and he is dedicated to being the best Emerald Champion he can possibly be. Having recently joined the Kakita family, with the blessing of his uncle Kakita Yoshi, he continues to make up his personal political lacks with his strong ties to the Crane.

Kakita Kaiten: The son of Imperial Advisor Kakita Yoshi, Kaiten became Kakita daimyo when his father died during the War Against the Shadow, and retained that position even after Yoshi returned through Oblivion's Gate. Kaiten served with distinction during the war, and no one questioned his retaining the leadership of the family, nor when he was chosen to serve as regent for the fallen Crane Champion Doji Kuwanan's son. Despite a bit of tension with his cousin Toshiken, Kaiten maintains strong contacts with the Imperial bureaucracy, and was instrumental in the return of the Topaz Championship. He is a serious and dedicated leader, a master swordsman, and is known as one of the greatest heroes of the Crane Clan.

Miya Yumi: Miya Yumi is the Miya family daimyo and the Imperial Herald, but despite her high station, remains a cheerful and easy-going young woman. Having spent the Clan War gathering proof of her cousin's treachery, she is no stranger to hardship and has something of a soft spot for adventurous young samurai, as she was one herself not too long ago.

Toku: The Captain of the Imperial Guard was born a peasant, but granted both samurai status and a Minor Clan by the Emperor as a reward for his devotion and honor. He is a pleasant and humble man, and utterly devoted to the Toturi dynasty. There is nothing that Toku would not do for the Emperor, because he knows that the Emperor would never ask anything dishonorable.

Doji Meihu: A returned spirit who has offered his sword to the Crane Regent, Meihu chose to remain in Ningen-do in order to serve the Clan in this unexpected second life (and perhaps to rectify some of his unfinished business). Kaiten is slightly uncertain what exactly to do with Meihu, as the Crane are not currently in serious need of a general of his distinction, but for now Meihu has been tasked with assisting Daidoji Uji in rebuilding the Crane military. Meihu is a highly honorable samurai, with a great deal of practical experience as a commander, and while he treats his enemies with respect, he never forgets that the Crane Clan has many enemies.

Kitsu Shisou: There are few sodan-senzo in the Empire, and Shisou is the current sensei of his family's most prestigious School. He takes great pride in being a teacher, and is constantly looking for more information on the lore of the Spirit Realms to pass on to his students. While he is generally polite and pleasant, when discussing the things he knows about, he does have a habit of speaking in an almost lecturing tone - a habit developed simply from his duties. Shisou's distinctive appearance is a result of his Kitsu ancestry, and he takes nearly as much pride in it as he does in his abilities.

Appendix #3: List of Contests

This is a list of the contests that the characters will experience in the other Realm, to track the rescues and to help determine who will gain the Touch of Destiny perk for any given trial.

Sumai:

Heraldry:

Athletics:

Horsemanship:

Law/Etiquette/Bushido:

Weapons:

Go:

Poetry:

Courtier:

Hunting:

Iaijutsu: