

# **Undefended Border**

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

**by Adam Thomas-Brashier**

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The maps of the Empire are the final word of the Emperor on the limits of his rule. It falls to you to make certain that his law is defined and carried out to the furthest extent possible.

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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 both discretion and consideration.

### **Adjusting for Party Strength**

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

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

**High End Party** (most/all characters Rank Two):

- Raise the TNs on some of the Skill rolls (in particular the Hunting rolls) by +5, at the GM's discretion
- The raiders have suffered 10 Wounds each, enough to fill their +0 Wound Level.

## Adventure Summary and Background

One of the greatest tragedies of the War Against the Shadow, not in terms of lives lost but in terms of damage done to Rokugan's culture and way of life, was the Lying Darkness' assault on the written histories and knowledge of the Empire. All across the Empire, agents of the Shadow burned libraries and defaced scrolls, attempting to not only destroy Rokugan's present, but all sense of its past as well.

As part of the rebuilding process, scholars and archivists in every Clan have been working to recover or reacquire the lost knowledge, but in one area, the work has been lacking: cartography. The maps of the Empire have long been notoriously unreliable and inaccurate, so while many of the local Clan libraries have been working to replace their own stores of geographical information, the official Imperial maps are viewed quietly by many as better off lost. Emperor Toturi I, though, knows quite well the value of accurate and up-to-date maps, and has taken the opportunity provided by the missing information to order new maps made, focusing in particular on the Empire's borders, to assist in the defense of Rokugan from gaijin invaders, should it ever be necessary.

The PCs have been recruited to participate in this effort, acting as escorts for one Imperial cartographer, Miya Gokinju, as he works his way across the northern border between the Phoenix and Dragon lands. (Ronin characters have been hired by Gokinju's daimyo, over Gokinju's objections.) This is territory long claimed by the Phoenix, but the losses they suffered during the Clan War and War Against the Shadow have depleted their resources so much that, for the last several years,

the lands between the Shrine of the Ki-Rin in the Phoenix lands and the Dragon city of Tetsu Kama Mura have been largely left to their own devices, the small villages and hamlets scattered along the foothills of the Great Wall of the North Mountains forced to take care of themselves.

The challenges that the PCs will face during their trek are many, including both a variety of physical obstacles and the threat of border raids across the mountains from the Yobanjin tribes on the far side. The PCs are required only to act as escorts for Gokinju, but their duties as samurai will likely force them to act on behalf of the peasants who are suffering during these raids as well. Finally, the PCs will encounter one of the most recently founded ronin otokodate (brotherhoods), the Band of the Ox, and must help decide what role this group will take in the future of Rokugan.

## Introduction

Pale Oak Castle and the city that surrounds it are two of the few locations in the lands of the Phoenix that see a large number of visitors from other Clans. The pale oak from which the castle takes its name is one of the holiest relics in the Empire, and thousands of pilgrims journey to the city every year in hopes of receiving the healing blessing that the oak is rumored to be able to provide. Pale Oak Castle itself has hosted events as prestigious as the Emperor's own Winter Court before, and thus accommodations in the nearby city of range from the most basic, aimed at the hordes of peasant pilgrims that visit the city each year, to upscale inns and tea houses that would not look out of place in a Crane city.

The House of Eight Leaves is somewhere in the middle, respectable but not ostentatious, with a mix of low-ranking samurai and well-to-do merchants mingling in its common room over tea and spiced noodles, while a young woman plays a quiet samisen in one corner. The peaceful aura that seems to permeate the Phoenix lands is strong here, and it is hard to imagine even a raised voice might ever disturb the murmur of conversation around the room.

The PCs have been sent to meet with Miya Gokinju, Imperial Cartographer, at the House of Eight Leaves. While a number of shrines and villages dot the Phoenix lands to the west, Pale Oak Castle is last major city in the lands of the Phoenix as a traveler heads west toward the Dragon provinces, and it is Gokinju's assignment to travel across those mostly-empty spaces and provide the Emperor with new maps of them.

Gokinju has already acquired a table and ordered tea in anticipation of the PCs arrival, and he rises and approaches them as they enter. *“Honored samurai,”* he begins, bowing courteously, *“I am pleased that you have arrived at last. Please, join me for tea, and afterward, we shall discuss the business of your presence here.”*

Gokinju is slightly shorter than average, with a lithe build and well-tanned skin. He wears his hair in the traditional topknot, but has shaved most of the rest of his head, giving him a severe, almost monastic appearance. Despite his heritage as a member of the Imperial families, Gokinju does not act as one entitled to privilege; he is, in fact, extremely self-reliant, and believes strongly that he has no need of the PCs’ assistance on the journey. Courtesy will not permit him to display this belief openly, however, and he is unfailingly polite as he serves the tea. While Gokinju is skilled and resourceful in the field, often improvising on the fly when encountering new obstacles, he is extremely traditional in social settings, feeling that a samurai’s behavior must match his context. Gokinju easily shifts between the two attitudes as the situation demands.

In accordance with protocol, Gokinju will not move directly to a discussion of the business at hand, asking instead polite questions about the PCs’ interests and past deeds. (Feel free to use this time to allow the players to roleplay with one another and introduce their characters as appropriate.) Gokinju uses the conversation to assess each PC, looking for clues as to whether the character will be useful or a hindrance as the mission proceeds. From Gokinju’s perspective, “useful” translates to skilled in battle, athletic, or familiar with the ways of the wilderness; while mapping, he has little use for pampered courtiers or scholarly shugenja with no experience in dealing with the rough ways of the outdoors. While he respects such individuals within their own particular areas of expertise, he is all too aware of the difference between a daimyo’s court and the Northern Wall Mountains; moreover, he thinks of overspecialized samurai as failures in a sense, not fully capable of advancing their lords’ interests wherever needed. (In point of fact, he feels the same way about bushi with no courtly grace or learning, but from a pragmatic standpoint, he also realizes they will be more helpful where he is about to go.) Gokinju is particularly prejudiced against ronin, seeing them as lacking any purpose to their existence in the absence of a lord; even one skilled in the wilderness earns short shrift from him, and cannot gain his respect later in the mod, no matter what their actions.

Once the tea is finished and the conversation done, Gokinju nods sharply, taking on an attitude of pure business. *“Very well, samurai-sans, let us move to the discussion of our purpose. I have been commanded by the Emperor, Toturi I, to undertake a mapping expedition across the northern border of the Empire, between the Shrine of the Ki-Rin and Tetsu Kama Mura. The Lying Darkness destroyed most of the records relating to the area during its vicious assault on our libraries four years ago; it is my task to see that work undone, inasmuch as it relates to the villages, features and potential dangers of the Great Wall of the North.”*

*“Your task will be to assist me in this undertaking. The territory has been largely abandoned by the Phoenix since the Clan War a decade ago, and we have few reports as to the state of affairs within the lands we are about to cross. There may be any number of potential dangers, but with the blessings of the Fortunes and our own skill, we shall overcome them. I will not permit this task to fail. Making maps may well seem like a trite business, but we are to act as the Emperor’s own eyes, the guides to his hand, and the messengers of his voice. This is vital work, and I expect all of you to rise to the occasion as the honorable samurai I know you to be.”* He directs this last more specifically to any characters about which he has suspicions as to their usefulness on the journey, though he is careful not to overemphasize the point and risk offense.

With a nod, Gokinju continues, “I have made arrangements for suitable equipment and supplies, including necessary clothing should we need to ascend the mountains and risk their weather. If you have questions, please ask them now; otherwise, I expect you all to be ready to depart with the dawn tomorrow. We have a long way to go.”

Some of the questions the group might ask, and the answers Gokinju provides, are:

- **What do we already know about this territory?** “Little enough. The Dragon Heart Plain, which we will be crossing the northern edge of, is claimed by the Phoenix, but they have never had an extensive settlement presence there. Since the Clan War, they have had almost no presence at all, and the records detailing the area were almost completely destroyed by the Lying Darkness. We begin our work on a blank canvas.”
- **Why have the Phoenix not settled the plain?** “There are rumors of hauntings and other mysterious events since the destruction of Shiro Chuda during the first part of the fifth

century. I do not know whether such rumors hold any grip on fact, but I do not think we need to concern ourselves, as the castle ruins are in the furthest southern portion of the plain, while we will be on its northern border.”

- **How long will the journey take?** “I expect we will be no more than six days in the field, and thus have planned for eight. If you have similar preparations to make, I suggest you do likewise.”

## Part One: The Troubles of the Wild

The expedition starts out the following morning, just as Lord Sun first creeps over the horizon. In addition to the PCs and Gokinju, a pair of peasant porters, Jin and Gorisho, and two pack mules are a part of the convoy; these latter additions are primarily responsible for carrying the mapmaking equipment Gokinju uses to make his charts, though the mules are also supporting thick panniers filled with food and supplies. Jin is a wiry-looking fellow with an exceptionally long set of mustaches, while Goshiro is a large but quiet figure, prone to solitary contemplation over a pipe in the evenings. Both men have worked for Gokinju before and know their duties well. Together, the group makes its way out of the western gates of Pale Oak City in the still-chill morning air, the slowly brightening dawn casting long shadows ahead of them as they travel.

The first day’s journey is nothing to comment on; this portion of the Phoenix lands is both well-maintained and well-patrolled by Shiba and Asako guardsmen, who politely and efficiently check the group’s travel papers and send them on their way, with deep bows to acknowledge Gokinju’s Imperial status. Peasant workers traveling to or from small farming villages scramble off the road, prostrating themselves in the dust as the samurai pass by, while wealthy merchants step aside and bow deeply, yielding the road with slightly more dignity.

*Shortly before sunset, the road reaches the sharp line of bluffs that mark the edge of the Phoenix highlands; almost a thousand feet below is the vastness of the Dragon Heart Plain, a broad valley stretching dozens of miles toward the Dragon Mountains on the far side. The view is simply breathtaking, as Lord Sun’s light catches the grasses of the plain and washes everything in a rich golden glow, as if the plain were instead an ocean made of sunlight.*

A large village with a comfortable-looking inn can be found here, as the site is a frequent stopover for pilgrims visiting the nearby Shrine to Jurojin and the more-distant Shrine to the Ki-Rin, both of which are accessible only by clambering up poorly maintained trails through the surrounding rocky cliffs. Gokinju suggests stopping at the inn, as it will be the last remaining piece of civilized comfort the group receives in some time.

### Ryokou ni Joukai Mura

The village is called Ryokou ni Joukai Mura, and it is well used to having samurai visitors. The inn in which the group stays is called The First Step, and caters to a wide variety of patrons, from peasant pilgrims to traveling samurai to itinerant monks. Ryokou ni Joukai Mura’s proximity to two of the largest shrines in the Phoenix lands means that there are far more monks in the city than one would ordinarily expect, as well as a surprising number of smaller shrines to nearly every conceivable Fortune or kami. Most of these are little more than closet-sized structures surrounding a simple statue and offering platform, with a single monk to tend them, but the offerings that overflow around each one and the incense that curls up from the braziers at each statue’s feet speak to the sincerity of the devotions given by passersby.

Within the First Step, the PCs find a common room full of peasants, monks and samurai, mingling together and speaking among themselves. The village is clearly a busy and prosperous place, and finding a table is not easy. One space, near the back, however, is occupied by a single figure, a richly-dressed samurai in brown and gold, wearing an Otomo mon and surrounded by the soft glow that marks a returned spirit. On seeing the group enter, the man rises and gestures for Gokinju’s party to join him. He is somewhat tall and moves with the practiced grace of a courtier, but his features are unremarkable, and were he not trying to draw attention to himself, it might be all too easy to overlook him.

“It is an honor to see you here, cousin,” the man says, bowing to Gokinju as to an equal. His voice is smooth and mellifluous, a sharp contrast to his forgettable features. “The duties of the Imperial Cartographers ever take you to unexpected locations, but I still had not thought to find you here, on the edge of the world, or so it seems.”

Gokinju bows in return, seating himself. “Nor I you, Mitsuhide-san. My work by its nature takes me to the far corners of the Emperor’s realm, but what has drawn you so far from Otosan Uchi?”

“Preparations, I fear, for Her Majesty’s funeral,” Mitsuhide answers, and his eyes turn toward the PCs with a speculative expression. “I am searching for samurai to assist with the occasion, in hopes of bringing something positive from such a tragic loss, and of honoring her memory as she deserves.” Gokinju takes the hint and introduces the PCs; if any of them impressed him during the meeting at the House of Eight Leaves as being effective courtiers, he offers a small amount of additional information, drawn from the conversation the previous night. (Under no circumstances will he put forward a ronin for consideration in this way.) Mitsuhide nods, but does not pursue the question at this time, instead ordering tea for the group and moving to small talk with Gokinju.

Characters wishing to know more about Otomo Mitsuhide may roll **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence**, TN 30. If successful, they recall that he is a returned spirit from the era of Hantei Yugo-zohime attempting to make something of his second life as he did very little with his first. As he tells it, the only remarkable thing he managed to accomplish in his first life was taking a bullet from a gaijin rifle during the Battle of White Stag that might have otherwise killed Otomo Muhaki, who became the Hantei heir. Sadly, even that he only did through sheer chance, as he never even saw the gunman. If any PC asks him about his history, he will also tell the story readily enough, with a certain amount of self-deprecating humor.

Regardless of whether the PCs participate in Gokinju’s and Mitsuhide’s conversation, they may wish to seek out rumors of events in the Empire. (Gokinju and Mitsuhide are discussing little else, in fact, though they do so with a courtier’s careful discretion.) Characters seeking rumors should roll **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness**, TN 10; they hear one of the following rumors, chosen at random, plus one additional rumor for every 5 points by which they exceed the TN:

- Tensions between the Phoenix and Dragon Clans remain high, thanks in large part to the defection of the vast majority of the Agasha family from the Dragon to the Phoenix some five years ago. Although the Phoenix consider the matter closed, many worry that the Dragon do not, and that the remaining Dragon Agasha, while small in number, are extremely vocal in their desire for some sort of retaliation against their former Clanmates and, to a lesser extent, the Clan that took them in.
- In the wake of Toturi Kaede’s death during the mysterious events of this year’s Topaz Championship, Toturi I has declared his late wife to be a new Fortune, the Fortune of Noble

Sacrifice. Plans are made in several sites around the Empire, especially in locations important to Kaede’s life, to build shrines to the new Fortune.

- Shiba ports along the southeastern coasts of the Phoenix provinces have begun turning Mantis trading vessels away, as the bad blood from the short-lived Mantis-Phoenix war four years ago remains. These vessels are most often sailing south to Crane ports instead, placing strains on the traditional good relations between the Phoenix and the Crane.
- Increased bandit activity has been reported in several locations around the Empire, and Imperial Magistrates and local Clan militaries alike have had to step up their enforcement to deal with the threats. As harvests have been generally good for the last few years, no one is quite sure what is driving this move toward additional banditry.
- (This rumor can only be heard by a PC who achieves at least a TN 30.) Some commoners and even a few samurai have begun wondering whether Toturi’s proclamation of the new Fortune can be taken at face value, because he may no longer carry the Mandate of Heaven. Kaede’s death is a remarkable display of tragedy for a young dynasty, and some few Rokugani wonder if it is not a manifestation of Heaven’s displeasure. No one who speaks of this claims to think so themselves, or to know anyone who does, but the rumor spreads, even so...

PCs who are not participating in conversation with Gokinju and Mitsuhide but are nevertheless in the inn may make an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 25, to recognize a young woman, who looks like nothing more than a simple farmgirl, watching Gokinju with a certain amount of intensity. Even as the PC sees her, though, she rises and slips out of the door, leaving the PC to wonder if she or she actually saw anything for certain. If the PC attempts to follow the woman outside, she is gone by the time they seek her out. Although the PCs have no way of knowing this, the woman is an informant for the Band of the Ox otokodate on Dragon Heart Plain, and has gone to warn them of an Imperial Cartographer’s arrival in their territory.

## The Expedition Begins

The next morning, the group departs Ryokou ni Joukai Mura just as early as they left Pale Oak City the previous day. This time, however, their route is a

harrowing descent down the bluffs toward Dragon Heart Plain.

*The majestic view of the evening before takes on a new and more dangerous aspect as you confront the idea of climbing down those daunting bluffs. Shadowed by the rising sun behind them, the path looks to be narrow, crumbling, and wrapped in darkness, a thousand-foot descent of winding switchbacks and treacherous footing.*

The road was once a well-used path, but it's clear that several years' worth of neglect have taken their toll. Fallen trees and small rockslides block the route, and the path had crumbled away entirely in places, forcing the group to scramble across the steeply sloped face of the bluff itself. Each PC must make an **Athletics / Agility** roll, TN 15. Failure means they fall down the slope at least once during the descent, taking 1k1 Wounds. (Anyone who fails this roll earns a sharp frown from Gokinju; if he had already decided they were not capable of handling themselves in the wilderness, this cements his opinion and costs the PC 1 point of Glory.) Mounted characters must do the same, but they roll **Horsemanship / Agility** instead; a failed roll costs both horse and rider 1k1 Wounds. If a character leads their horse, the horse should be assumed to make any necessary Agility rolls (unless it carries heavy barding or the like); only the PC is likely to be in danger of slipping.

Most importantly, however, the scrambles present a serious challenge to the mules. Normally surefooted animals well at home in the mountains, their heavily-packed panniers force them to also make **Athletics / Agility** rolls, at the same TN 15, to avoid slipping on the slope. They roll 2k2 for this roll, and are considered Unskilled. A character with the Animal Handling Skill can guide them, however. If a character with Animal Handling makes an **Animal Handling / Awareness** roll, TN 10, they may grant one of the mules a Rank in the Athletics Skill, just as if the mule had spent a Void Point. Each successful Raise on the Animal Handling roll grants the mule an additional Rank in the skill. A separate roll must be made for each mule. If the mule fails the roll, however, it takes 1k1 Wounds as well, and it loses part of the contents of its pannier down the hillside. (Mules have innate Reduction 3.)

Gokinju estimated that the mapping would take roughly six days' worth of travel, and has accordingly brought enough food to feed the entire group for eight days. This food is divided evenly between the mules. If one of the mules slips, that mule loses two days' worth of food. Thus, if one of the mules slips, it is only a minor

matter, as Gokinju believes that only the reserve he brought has been lost; if both mules slip, though, he warns that the group must be ready to feed itself from the land as they go.

Should the worst befall and a mule manage to take more than 32 Wounds, it has broken a leg. If it cannot be healed by magic, the animal must be put down, and the supplies it carried distributed among the rest of the group as much as possible. This still means that two days' worth of food is lost, but it also means that the rest of the group will be encumbered by the extra weight; for the next two days' worth of travel, all characters wearing ashigaru armor or no armor are considered to be wearing light armor for the purposes of making Agility- or Reflexes-based rolls, while characters in light or heavy armor are considered to be in heavy armor for the purposes of Agility- or Reflexes-based rolls.

Once the group reaches Dragon Heart Plain, not long before noon, their travel becomes much easier and faster. It is clear, however, that the party has left the well-tended and protected lands of the Phoenix behind, no matter who claims to control this territory. Gokinju dons a well-made set of light armor, finely lacquered in the green and gold of those in Imperial service, armor that he continues to wear throughout the rest of the expedition. Gokinju turns their route north, following the line of the bluffs as they march toward the Great Wall of the North Mountains on the distant horizon. By nightfall, the mountains loom across the northern skyline, a majestic sight in the fading light of day.

Once camp is made, Gokinju begins making his notes and sketching his maps, based on the days' travel. This is a nightly routine he continues throughout the journey; for the most part, his Precise Memory allows him to collate his observations mentally without having to stop along the way. If any PC wishes to aid him in his mapping activities, Gokinju will listen to their input only if he has not developed a poor opinion of their wilderness skills so far (either through his initial assessment or if they failed a roll on their way down the bluffs); otherwise, he brusquely replies, "This mandate is mine, samurai-san, as is the specialized training necessary to accomplish it. I thank you for your offer, but I assure you, it is unnecessary." Characters aiding Gokinju must make a TN 35 **Hunting (Trailblazing) / Perception** roll in order to add any pertinent information to his notes, but successfully doing so earns Gokinju's admiration and thanks, in the form of a point of Glory. This roll may be attempted every night, but the character can only earn this Glory once.

Once he has completed his notes, Gokinju spends the last hour before nightfall training with his katana, running through a variety of kata designed to emphasize movement and defense. If any PC asks to join him or spar against him, he is entirely willing, and it is clear that he is more than merely competent with a blade.

While the PCs may wish to set watches, nothing untoward occurs on the first evening, and the group can move on at first light on the second day. If some portion of the group's food was lost on the way down the bluffs, even if it was merely the extra days' reserve, Gokinju suggests a hunting party split off from the main group; while most of the party can proceed along their current path, two or three samurai can diverge for hunting purposes, and then regroup, particularly if any in the group are mounted. Hunting to replace a lost day's worth of food is a **Hunting (Survival) / Perception** roll, TN 20; hunting characters may use the Cooperative Skill rules on page 81 of the L5R 4E Core Rulebook, giving the character with the highest Survival skill a bonus to the total of his or her roll equal to the total Survival Ranks of all the other members of the group. A successful hunting trip earns Gokinju's respect for all those who went on it.

## The Hadazamui River

Late in the afternoon, the expedition reaches the foothills of the Great Wall of the North, and Gokinju turns the route westward. The group's pace slows as it encounters rougher terrain (which allows any hunters on foot to catch up to the main party), and Gokinju pauses briefly to sketch a few notes on the specifics of the hills and valleys through which the party passes. Even though it is the late end of spring, the cool wind blowing down from the mountain passes above reminds everyone how far north, and how far up, they have traveled.

*Just as sunset approaches and Gokinju mentions searching for a suitable campsite, you crest a small line of hills and find yourselves looking down upon a small but fast-moving river making its way out of the mountains toward the broad plains beneath. The swift current and unknown depth seem to make crossing treacherous, and after only a few moments' worth of study, Gokinju announces, "It would seem that the Fortunes have determined our campsite for the night. Let us make camp here and determine our approach in the morning."*

If the group still needs to replace lost food, he suggests that they might be able to fish in the river to replace some of the scattered supplies. (Fishing uses the same

rules as hunting, but the TN is only 15. Success again earns Gokinju's respect.)

On the following morning, Gokinju announces that he believes that the river is called Hadazamui River, but he can find no other references to it in his research, including where it might be easily crossed. There are, then, three alternatives: crossing here, which will probably mean swimming through the swift current; attempting to head downstream toward the plain; or turning upstream, into the mountains. The plain might mean the river would become broader and thus shallower and less deep; the mountains might allow the group to find the river's source and simply go around it. Either way, there is time lost, but a suitable crossing point is information that would be vital to include on Gokinju's map. Swimming here is likely to be fastest, but might also be more dangerous, to both lives and supplies. Gokinju listens to the PCs' recommendations, and ultimately decides to take the direction they choose.

The Hadazamui is only about thirty feet wide, but is surprisingly deep (more than ten feet in the middle, with a rapid drop off on each side), and quite cold, thanks to the snowmelt that feeds it. If the group decides to swim across the river where they are, the PCs must make two TN 20 **Athletics (Swimming) / Strength** rolls. Each time one of these rolls is failed, the PC must make an **Athletics (Swimming) / Stamina** roll to resist the bone-numbing chill. The TN begins at 5, but increases by +5 every time another **Athletics (Swimming) / Strength** roll is failed. Failing the Stamina roll means the PC has slipped beneath the water and must begin holding his or her breath. A character may hold his or her breath for a number of rounds equal to their Stamina and may reattempt the **Athletics (Swimming) / Strength** roll each round until they succeed or begin drowning once their Stamina runs out. Drowning characters take 2k2 Wounds (which ignore Reduction) each round, and can take no actions until rescued.

The PCs may use various creative methods to cross the river without needing to swim or to give themselves an advantage while swimming (using guide ropes, magic, etc.); generally, these methods should either allow the character to bypass the challenge entirely or give one or more Free Raises to the Swimming rolls, as seems appropriate. If such methods are particularly effective, they earn Gokinju's respect, but failing one or more Swimming rolls will remove any respect the PC has so far earned.

As before, the mules must also be dealt with, but although they have no Athletics, they do have both Strength 4 and Stamina 4, so they will likely have little



trouble crossing the river. If a PC wishes to help them cross, an **Animal Handling / Awareness** roll, TN 10, can be used to grant the mule a temporary Rank of Athletics, as before. Should a mule fail an **Athletics / Strength** roll, however, they will lose an additional days' worth of food from their packs for every such failed roll.

If the PCs instead decide to head downstream, they follow the river for about five miles as it cuts its way through the foothills toward the plain. Once they reach Dragon Heart Plain once more, the river does indeed widen and slow, and after only another half-mile or so, the PCs may make **Hunting (Trailblazing)/Perception** rolls, TN 15, to recognize a good spot to ford the river. (If none of the PCs make the roll, Gokinju will do so.) Fording the river is unpleasant due to the chill, but ultimately safe for all involved, and Gokinju is pleased to have located a potentially vital fording point for the river. The detour, however, costs an additional day; the PCs return to the point of the river opposite where they camped the night before at about sunset once again, and Gokinju suggests fishing once more, to make up the lost supplies.

Although the PCs have no way of knowing this, the best route across the river is found upstream, heading into the mountains themselves. The territory is rugged and steep, but within an hour of leaving the campsite, the PCs encounter an old but sturdy-looking bridge that crosses the river as it passes through a narrow gorge. The river is perhaps thirty feet below the bridge, and the bridge is clearly not strong enough to hold more than one or two people at a time, but as long as they pass single file, they can be across the river and back to their travel route in less than two hours. Gokinju is ecstatic to learn of the bridge's existence, and congratulates the group on their wisdom in choosing the northern route (all the PCs gain 1 Glory). It is unclear who built the bridge or why, as there are no nearby villages or roads to justify it; if asked, Gokinju speculates that it was a remnant of an abandoned road that has otherwise been lost to history. (In truth, the bridge is part of a carefully-hidden set of paths leading to the village of Yobanjin Mura, deep in the mountains, a long-held secret of the Phoenix Clan. They will not be pleased by the bridge's discovery.)

## The Dangerous Valley

Once the group returns to its route among the foothills, another half-day's journey brings them to what Gokinju calls the Dragon's Tooth, a sharp southward spur of the Great Wall of the North Mountains. It divides the northernmost part of Dragon Heart Plain into two,

roughly even sections. The line of higher peaks runs about twenty miles south into the plain, but is only about seven miles wide at its thickest point. "We go through," Gokinju announces as he explains this. "The peaks of the Tooth are clearly within the bounds of the Empire, and our border maps must include them."

Accordingly, the party begins the climb. Although the mountains are part of the towering Great Northern range, they are much lower here, reaching only two to three thousand feet above the nearby plain (as opposed to the highest peaks of the Great Wall of the North, which scrape the sky at over eight thousand feet above the plain, and over seventeen thousand feet above sea level). The going is steep but steady, as there seem to be a number of easily-located passes between the peaks, and the addition of thick clothing is all that the group needs as they travel. The view is breathtaking, as snow-capped peaks rise up all around and the sun-drenched plain spreads out behind the party as they climb.

Unfortunately, the area looks safer than it is. As the party crosses through the highest pass and begins their descent to the far side of the Tooth, each PC may make either an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 25, or a **Hunting (Trailblazing) / Perception** roll, TN 20, to recognize the danger signs of an impending rockslide. (Only characters who have the Hunting skill may roll at the lower TN.) As the party makes their way through the pass, a precariously-balanced set of rocks high up on the southern slope cracks and begins to crumble, sending a spray of pebbles down the mountainside, followed by several larger boulders, all headed directly toward the PCs and their companions.

Each of the PCs must make a series of either **Athletic s/ Reflexes** rolls or **Defense / Reflexes** rolls, at a TN of 15. If at least one PC made the roll to spot the rockslide before it began, the characters must make two such rolls; if no one did, however, they must make three such, and one of the porters, Gorisho, is crushed by a rock as he runs to get clear of the slide zone. For each successful roll, the PC takes 1k1 Wounds; for each failed roll, he or she takes 3k3 Wounds. Gokinju suffers 12 Wounds if a PC spotted the rockslide, or 18 Wounds if no one did. Successfully spotting the rockslide earns Gokinju's respect if the PC had not already done so.

Once the group gets clear of the falling rocks, it is clear that the pass remains usable, though Gokinju comments dryly that he "will need to make a note of local conditions" on his map. If Gorisho was killed, Gokinju offers a brief prayer on his behalf, but seems impatient if the PCs wish to offer a more extensive memorial.

“We need to push on, samurai-sans,” he says sharply. “Let those who have moved on to their judgment before Emma-O worry for their lives, and let us worry for ours.”

## Part Two: The Empty Bowl Filled

The descent through the passes of the Dragon’s Tooth takes the remainder of the day, and the party makes camp on the plain beneath the looming bulk of the mountains. The following morning (the fifth day of the journey if the PCs used the ford to cross the Hadazamui, the fourth day otherwise), Gokinju leads the group west once more, following the foothills of the Great Wall of the North as he has done since the journey began.

One change immediately strikes the PCs as they travel across the farther side of the Dragon Heart Plain: there are a number of scattered villages and tiny hamlets throughout the area, while there had been none closer to the Phoenix heartlands. Characters who make a **Lore: History / Intelligence** or **Lore: Phoenix Clan / Intelligence** roll, TN 20, remember that the Phoenix have long had a policy against settling the western and southern portions of Dragon Heart Plain, thanks in part to the rumors of ghosts and other mysterious happenings near the ruins of Shiro Chuda at the southern end of the plain. Closer to the Dragon Clan’s holdings, however, small groups of peasants have drawn a living over the centuries from the fertile volcanic soil of the plain. Gokinju makes a note of the villages he sees in the distance as the party passes them, but makes no effort to seek any of them out.

Not long after noon, a dust cloud appears on the southern horizon, one that any bushi recognizes immediately as the kind produced by a group of horsemen traveling quickly. Gokinju calls a halt, waiting for the approaching band to arrive, but he settles his hand on his blade and signals for any bushi in the party to ready themselves for combat if needed.

After a few moments, the party can make out details on the approaching figures: a mixed party of bushi in ashigaru armor, half a dozen in all, with no mon or other insignia. Though all carry daisho and yumi, and several have yari as well, they do not have their weapons readied as they close with the PCs and draw rein. A couple are spirits, and a couple are samurai-ko (one is both), and all handle their horses with consummate skill.

Their leader, a short, broad-shouldered woman with a sharp nose, bows deeply from her saddle. “Honored Miya-sama,” she says, “we are pleased to welcome you to the unclaimed lands of Dragon Heart Plain.”

Gokinju’s eyes narrow, and he does not remove his hand from his blade. In a flat tone, he answers, “These lands are not unclaimed, samurai.” The lack of an honorific is pointed. “They belong to the Phoenix, as recognized by the decree of Hantei Kusada in the year 403. Tell me your name, that I may know whose history I am correcting, and how you knew to find me here.”

The woman’s mouth tightens, but her reply remains polite. “I am Chalisa, Miya-sama, samurai of the Band of the Ox brotherhood. These are my brothers,” she adds, waving her hand at the other ronin. “We were informed of your arrival in these lands by one of our friends in Ryokou ni Joukai Mura.”

“The Band of the Ox?” Gokinju replies, frowning. “I have never heard of this otokodate.”

“We follow the hero of the Clan War, Morito,” Chalisa replies proudly. It is clear from Gokinju’s expression, however, that he is less impressed with this news. Chalisa continues, “The Band of the Ox has undertaken the protection of the peasants of Dragon Heart Plain, in the absence of anyone else to do so. Sadly, Dragon Heart Plain is an empty bowl; in the name of peace and order, the Band of the Ox strives to fill it.” With a note of challenge in her voice, she adds, “We would be pleased to escort you and your entourage to Shiro Morito for the purposes of your cartography.”

“No doubt you would,” Gokinju says flatly, “but the eyes of the Emperor will not fall on the baseless claims of ronin rabble. Your castle, if it is truly more than a mud hut suitable only for pigs to rut in, is an affront to the Empire and an abomination in the eyes of the Celestial Order.”

Chalisa goes quite still at this. “I have no illusions about what you think of me, Miya-sama, but if you think I am no samurai, but only a peasant to take such words toward my lord, you are mistaken.” Her hand falls to the hilt of her katana, and the rest of the ronin with her tense. “I will hear your apology for these words, or you will face my steel for this insult.”

The moment stretches out, and the PCs have an opportunity to intervene if they wish. Chalisa does not truly desire a duel with Gokinju – she knows all too well that even if she were to win, it would do her brotherhood no favors among the samurai of the Great

Clans – but Gokinju is anxious for the chance to humble what he sees an upstart ronin. Any attempt to avert the impending duel must focus on him.

It will be essentially impossible to persuade Gokinju to acknowledge Shiro Morito or any claims of the otokodate to the area. Convincing him to withdraw his insult, however, is far more feasible. Doing requires a well-roleplayed appeal, most likely by pointing out that these ronin are performing a worthwhile service to the Empire and are actually in service to a lord (albeit one who is also still a ronin), and making a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll, TN 30. Characters who have earned Gokinju's respect, through a successful hunting roll, clever means of crossing the Hadazamui River, spotting the rockslide, or similar, gain a Free Raise on this roll. Characters that Gokinju has decided are useless, however, by failing an earlier Swimming roll, falling down the bluffs, or simply failing to impress him at the House of Eight Leaves, must declare a Raise (with no effect) in order to make the roll at all. Ronin characters must also declare a Raise with no effect to make the roll.

If the roll succeeds, Gokinju studies Chalisa for a moment, then says slowly, "I admit I would not have expected a mere ronin to respond as a true samurai should. I will not visit your castle, Chalisa-san, but if it has samurai such as you defending it, perhaps – *perhaps* – it is worthy of the name after all." Chalisa smiles, bowing in acknowledgement, before replying, "*Perhaps* we will one day persuade you to change your mind, Miya-sama. Until that day, may the Fortunes smile on you and your work in the Emperor's name." She signals to her men, and they ride away once more.

If the roll fails, however, or if no PC chooses to intervene, Gokinju's reply is far less conciliatory. "I have said my piece, samurai. If you think to contradict it in the name of honor, then prove yourself worthy to hold the blade you carry, or else show yourself no better than the pigs you live with." Chalisa dismounts without a word, sending her horse to one side with a sharp slap. She assumes an iaijutsu stance, mirrored immediately by Gokinju. There is a brief pause, and then both blades flash. Chalisa's strike is wide of the mark, however, while Gokinju slashes a deep cut across Chalisa's cheeks and nose. Blood pours down her face, and Gokinju laughs as he flicks the red from his blade. "Begone, you fool, and warn your so-called 'lord' that the Emperor's wrath falls swiftly on those who violate his laws." With that, Gokinju signals to the group to move on, leaving a shamed and bleeding Chalisa behind.

## The Forgotten Shrine

After the confrontation with the Band of the Ox, Gokinju leads the group to another campsite near the foothills of the Great Wall of the North. Ahead, the topmost peaks of the Dragon Mountains mark the far edge of the Dragon Heart Plain, and Gokinju announces that he expects they will reach Tetsu Kama Mura, on the border of the Dragon Clan provinces, in two days' time. If the group has so far avoided losing any food, there are no issues with supplies, but if they have, they might be under pressure to replace what was lost along the way, especially if they also lost a days' travel time in crossing the Hadazamui. If necessary, Gokinju suggests another hunting party on the following day, before they reach the Dragon Mountains and game becomes much more scarce.

The next morning, the expedition sets out once more, still headed west. Occasional small villages still dot the horizon, but few seem to be so close to the mountains as the party is traveling. Ahead, the Dragon Mountains grow slowly higher, their bases still lost below the horizon but their peaks climbing ever upward toward the sky.

A few hours after dawn, the party reaches a small stream, one of what seems like dozens they have crossed over the last several days. This one has carved its way through a sheer rock wall, pouring out toward the plain through a crevice in the stone barely wider than a man's shoulders. As the group approaches, though, a strange odor wafts toward them from the stream: a smell like rotten eggs. Anyone touching the water, either through stepping in it (the creek is quite shallow, only a few inches deep, but once it breaks free of the narrow crevice it widens far enough that one cannot cross it without getting one's feet wet) or touching it, notices that the water is actually quite warm, in contrast to all the other snowmelt-fed streams the group has encountered in the area. A **Lore: Nature / Intelligence** roll, TN 15, recognizes these markers as signs of a sulfurous hot spring, which are sometimes associated both with healing properties and with valuable mineral resources.

If the PCs choose to investigate (Gokinju is very supportive of the idea), the crevice is only wide enough to allow them to travel single-file. It runs through the rock for perhaps fifty feet, a claustrophobic corridor of darkness, with only a thin strip of sunlight far above allowing any vision at all. With little warning, however, the PCs step out into a large hollow in the rock, about a hundred feet across, featuring a large pool of water in the center, about sixty feet wide. It is about

four feet deep in the center, smells strongly of rotten eggs, and actually bubbles slightly at times. In the cool mountain air, tiny wisps of steam drift up from the surface of the water.

On the far edge of the pool is a small structure, a simple roof and four poles, with a torii arch in front of it and a bronze statue, about two feet high, in the center. The shrine is clearly long abandoned – leaves and animal droppings cover the floor, corrosion covers the statue itself, and the paint on the walls and arch is faded to almost nonexistence.

Characters who examine the shrine can make **Lore: Theology** or **Lore: the Fortunes / Perception** roll, TN 15, to find the signs that mark the ancient shrine as a shrine to Jurojin, the Fortune of Longevity. Characters who make the roll know that such shrines were often placed at hot springs such as this one, in the belief that the springs had healing properties.

If a character wishes to bathe in the spring, they are welcome to do so. It has no game effect, but does serve as an opportunity for a warm bath, something that the party has not enjoyed since Ryokou ni Joukai Mura. The party may also, if they choose to do so, work to try to restore the shrine to usable shape – Gokujin, despite his earlier rush to move forward, supports these efforts if they are suggested. In addition to physically cleaning the shrine, a process that takes more than a Rokugani hour (two standard hours), it also requires a **Lore: Theology / Void** roll, TN 30 (or TN 25 if the character is a shugenja or monk); if a single character leads the group in a combined ritual, they may use the Cooperative Skill rules to give the ritual leader a bonus to his or her roll equal to the total of all the other participants' Lore: Theology ranks. Though there is no obvious effect of successfully restoring the shrine, any character who participated in the ritual gains +1 Reduction for the remainder of the adventure, as Jurojin blesses them. (A character who is Cursed by Jurojin does not gain this bonus, and in fact is mildly uncomfortable during the entire ritual.) Regardless, Gokinju marks the location of the shrine on his maps, and the party is ready to depart once again.

## Part Three: Mountain Raiders

After the party moves on from the sulfurous stream, the terrain grows increasingly rocky, the rolling foothills of the eastern Plain transforming into rocky outcroppings as they grow closer to the Dragon Mountains. The evening's campsite is on a small plateau in the shelter

of the mountains to the north, a smooth shelf of rock about ten feet above the ground to the south, but protected from the chill night wind by higher rock formations on all the other sides.

The next day (day six or day seven), the group breaks camp around dawn as usual. If the group has run out of food at this point, assume that they are not actually out of food, but that they have all been put on short rations. This means that, until they can get a good meal, the PCs are considered Fatigued (+5 TN to all Skill rolls, Trait rolls, and Spell Casting rolls). Hunting may be possible in the mountains, but it is likely to be more difficult, and in fact, fate has something quite different in store for the expedition once it gets moving.

After setting out, the group travels less than a mile before encountering a strange sight: in the valley directly ahead of them, a massive bird, larger than a Unicorn steed, stands crouched over what looks like a single human figure. The bird, which looks like nothing so much as a gigantic hawk, eyes the party warily, then half-spreads its wings and lets out a deafening scream of warning.

The PCs can if they choose, skirt around the giant hawk; there is a more difficult but still usable trail higher up the slope across from the bird. They cannot get close enough to see the body clearly if they make this choice, however. The bird stands protectively over it, and will attack if anyone approaches closely enough to see details of who or what the prone figure might be. The only way to approach the bird without battling it is an **Animal Handling (Giant Hawk) / Awareness** roll, TN 30; even then, however, the hawk will not allow the body to be touched.

### Giant Hawk

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3
Reflexes 4		Agility 4	Perception 6

**Armor TN:** 25

**Reduction:** 5

**Attack:** Talon 5k4 (Simple) or Beak 7k4 (Complex) **Damage:** 3k2 (Talon) or 5k3 (Beak)

**Initiative:** 5k4

**Skills:** Jiu-jitsu 1

**Special Abilities:** Swift 3 (flying only), Huge, Grab (if a giant hawk makes a successful beak attack, it automatically grapples the target without needing to make a separate roll)

**Wounds:** 12: +5; 24: +10; 36: +15; 48: Dead

The hawk has already suffered 14 Wounds, and will flee if possible once it takes more than 36 total Wounds. Its usual tactics will involve swooping toward

a target to slash at it with its talons, then flying back to stand protectively over the body once more.

The body the hawk is guarding is that of a Yobanjin raider, wounded by a lucky spear throw from a retired ashigaru spearman during a recent raid. The raider fled on his hawk, but died of his wound shortly thereafter. The bond between the hawk and its rider is so strong that the hawk will protect the rider even after death, leaving only once near-starvation drives the animal to fly off.

Recognizing the hawk or its rider requires a **Lore: Yobanjin / Intelligence** roll, TN 15, or a **Lore: Nature / Intelligence** roll, TN 25 (the hawk only). Success on either roll allows the character to recall that the Yobanjin tribes of the northern mountains sometimes use giant hawks during raids, though they are extremely rare and considered near-sacred by the Yobanjin themselves. (Making either roll by 10 or more allows the character to recall that it is specifically the Yobanjin tribe called the Sons of Wind that have somehow mastered the giant hawks for riding purposes.) If the PCs examine the body of the Yobanjin raider, they will easily determine that he died of a spear wound to the stomach; moreover, his carrying pouch (only accessible if they kill the hawk) holds several small valuables of Rokugani origin, including a tiny jade statue of Osano-Wo and a finely-crafted tanto.

## Fuchi Mura

Not long after they leave the body of the hawk rider behind, the party detects the faint smell of wood smoke in the air. Scrambling over a rocky outcropping, the PCs discover that they are looking down across a long valley, whose southern end opens out onto the western edge of the Dragon Heart Plain. Nestled in the nearest part of the valley, just down the slope from where the expedition stands, is a small village, probably no more than 150 people. Flames flicker across most of the buildings, and smoke curls up toward the watching PCs. Even from where they stand, the group can hear the cries of wounded and dying people, as well as the anguished sobs of the survivors.

If the PCs head toward the village, they find it in shambles, the recent victim of a Yobanjin raid. Women and children howl the grief in the streets, while their dead husbands, brothers, sons, and fathers lie in the streets around them. One woman, perhaps 22 or 23 years old, races toward the samurai as they enter the village; she carries a yari awkwardly, dragging it behind her as she prostrates herself before the party.

The woman's name is Aki, and she half-stammers, half-sobs out the story of the village, which is called Fuchi Mura. The peasants were just leaving for their fields in the early dawn when the raiders came, savages in strange fur wrappings, shouting in a language that was harsh and guttural, like a wolf trying to snarl Rokugani. Two were on massive birds, while the rest attacked on foot; those on the hawks fired burning arrows down on the village to distract the residents while their allies rushed down the mountain to slaughter and pillage. "My husband," Aki says, "he... he was an ashigaru with Lord Daini during the march to Voltturnum... he managed to hurl a spear into the belly of one of those savages, and he flew off, but the other shot him with a burning arrow... he died in front of me, holding this..." She raises the yari weakly. "Sasho... Sasho died to protect me... but my Ichiro... the flames... I was too far away..." She collapses into sobs, dropping to her knees and burying her face in her hands.

As Aki can tell them, once she recovers herself, or as the party can learn from another survivor, the raid occurred less than an hour previous, and it should take little deduction to determine that the hawk and rider the party encountered earlier came from this raid. Aki's husband did indeed slay the hawk rider, and that marked the turning point for the assault; the other hawk rider flew into the mountains, while the raiders on foot scattered and fled.

One thing that the PCs will quickly learn from the survivors, however, is that the Yobanjin that fled on foot did not head north, toward the mountains, but rather south, toward the plains. According to the villagers of Fuchi Mura, there are two more villages along the valley floor that the raiders might choose to attack before they return to their mountain homes.

The idea of Yobanjin raiders loose on Rokugani territory should be all the PCs require to set them on the trail of the attackers; should they need additional encouragement, however, Gokinju will state, with his hand on his katana hilt, "It is the Fortunes' will that led us here, I think. Our planned course turned south here, toward Tetsu Kama Mura; now it guides us directly after these butchers."

Regardless, once she has finished weeping for the moment, Aki drags herself to her feet again, gripping the yari with knuckles turned white. "Please, samurai-samas, please... let me come with you. My husband was a soldier once, and now I have nothing left of him but this... please, please, let me use it to... to... let me bring his spirit peace!"

How the PCs choose to respond to Aki's request is up to them. If they wish to allow her to act as a peasant warrior, they may do so – Aki is quite correct that there is plenty of precedent. If they allow her to fight with them, she quickly scavenges armor pieces from the remains of her burnt out home, donning them at a run if necessary to keep up with the party. She grows silent and grim, entering into a death trance many samurai might envy. She truly has nothing left to live for, and her every action and expression shouts that to the world.

If, on the other hand, they deny Aki's request – and they must order her to stay behind, as she cannot be persuaded to do so of her own will – she collapses into a catatonic state, weeping and tearing at her hair. If the PCs stay long enough to watch, she eventually slumps to the ground and stares blankly at the shell of her home, all passion and will drained from her. Should the PCs return after the Yobanjin have been dealt with, they discover that Aki has disappeared, taking only her husband's yari and armor with her.

## Revenge

Regardless of whether Aki accompanies the group, they set out after the Yobanjin as quick as they can. If the PCs are Fatigued from hunger, they can eat from what remains in Fuchi Mura; otherwise, they leave as soon as the decision is made, Gokinju pushing hard to make up the ground they have already lost.

Fortunately, the Yobanjin are somewhat demoralized from the loss of one of their hawk riders, and they have wounded with them as well. Though none of the raiders (besides the dead rider) were seriously injured, the wounds they took are slowing them down. Assuming the PCs don't delay excessively, they can catch up to the Yobanjin just as the raiding party encounters the next village, an even smaller hamlet called Konchuu Mura. Konchuu Mura is a cluster of small peasant huts in the shadow of the Dragon Mountains, huddled around a small stream that the peasants have diverted to irrigate their rice paddies. It has no more than fifty residents, most of whom are working in the farmland around the village when the raiders arrive.

There are more than 25 surviving raiders, although many of them are wounded. It is extremely unlikely that any table will be able to defeat all the raiders at once. However, the PCs first come up on a group of stragglers, some of the injured raiders who have fallen behind their brethren. There are three more raiders than combat-capable PCs (bushi and combat-oriented

shugenja); the PCs come up behind them over a low ridge line, so the two groups begin about sixty feet apart.

### **Yobanjin Raiders**

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 2
Reflexes 3		Agility 3	Strength 3	
Honor 1.5		Status -10.0	Infamy 0.8	

**Armor TN:** 23 (leather armor) **Reduction:** 1

**Attack:** 6k3 (ring sword) **Damage:** 6k2(ring sword)

**Initiative:** 4k3

**Skills:** Animal Handling 2, Athletics (Climbing) 2, Hunting (Survival) 2, Kenjutsu 3, Jiujutsu 2, Lore: Yobanjin 3, Stealth 2

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** n/a

**School/Rank:** n/a

**Wounds:** 10: +0; 14: +3; 18: +5; 22: +10; 26: +15; 30: +20; 34: Down; 38: Dead

All of the raiders have suffered 18 Wounds, enough to fill their +5 Wound Level.

### **Aki**

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 2
Reflexes 3		Agility 3		
Honor 2.5		Status -2.0	Glory 0.0	

**Armor TN:** 23 (ashigaru armor) **Reduction:** 1

**Attack:** 4k3 (yari) **Damage:** 4k2(yari)

**Initiative:** 4k3

**Skills:** Animal Handling 1, Craft: Cooking 2, Craft: Farming 1, Craft: Weaving 2, Defense 1, Hunting (Survival) 1

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Crab Hands, Strength of the Earth/Driven, Lost Love

**School/Rank:** n/a

**Wounds:** 10: +0; 14: +0; 18: +2; 22: +7; 26: +12; 30: +17; 34: Down; 38: Dead

Gokinju and Aki (if she was allowed to come) leap into the battle with brutal determination; Gokinju fights with a deadly efficiency, while Aki's strikes are filled with rage and relentless hate. Those watching her are astonished to see that, despite her complete lack of training, the yari she holds seems alive in her hands, striking almost of its own volition. (She always enters Full Attack as soon as combat begins, spending a Void Point on the first two rounds to increase her Armor TN back up to where it is normally.) Gokinju also notes who participates in the battle – if any PC previously determined to be “useless,” particularly a seemingly court-focused courtier, not only takes part in the battle but does reasonably well, that character earns Gokinju's respect.

Once the battle is over, the PCs can see that roughly twenty additional raiders are still ahead of them, less

wounded and more organized. The odds are daunting, but even as they realize this, the sound of hoofbeats intrudes on the scene: a squad of roughly a dozen horsemen, lead by a woman wearing a flickering back banner painted with an ox head, charges toward the raiders from the south. Even as the Yobanjin enter Konchuu, they see the oncoming riders, and their nerve breaks. Pursued by the Ox cavalry, the Yobanjin turn and run, directly into the blades of the waiting PCs; caught between the hammer and the anvil, the Yobanjin are slaughtered easily.

Once the battle ends, the Ox cavalry approach the PCs and Gokinju, and they easily recognize Chalisa in the lead once more. If she dueled Gokinju, her face still bears the half-healed scar from the wound she took a few days prior. In this instance, her expression is filled with rage, and without dismounting, she all but spits at Gokinju: “I hope the Emperor’s eyes can see this, Miya. I hope his ears ring with these people’s screams. I hope he can taste their blood – and chokes on it.” With a sharp command, she turns her horse and leads her men away at a full gallop. (If the PCs attempt to attack her and her men, they should remember that they are outnumbered two to one and their opponents are both unwounded and mounted; any attacking PC is cut down without mercy.)

If, on the other hand, Gokinju did not duel Chalisa, she is much more cordial, bowing deeply from her saddle again, an action that Gokinju acknowledges with a nod. “I am sorry that we meet again under such circumstances, Miya-sama, but we are once again honored by your presence.” Gokinju studies her for a moment before replying, “This was well done, Chalisa-san. While I believe we have dealt with those raiders here, there may be more that did not travel with this group from Fuchi Mura. Your men might be useful in finding any such remnants and eliminating them.” With a slight tilt of his head, he adds, “Such actions would likely be worthy of the attention of the Imperial Treasury, I would think.”

Chalisa shakes her head gravely, replying, “We do not require such attention, Miya-sama. We are samurai – we exist to serve.” With a sharp command, she spurs her horse to a gallop, leading her squad north toward Fuchi Mura.

## Conclusion

With the raiders dead, the group’s journey is essentially complete. Aki, if she was allowed to accompany the PCs and then lived through the battle, takes her yari and returns to Fuchi Mura to begin rebuilding. As she

leaves, she begins speaking quietly to the yari, in a voice too low to make out specific words, but she seems to be smiling slightly.

Although somewhat later than they had intended, the PCs themselves reach Tetsu Kama Mura later that evening, at last spending a full night in the comforts of civilization once more. Over a late dinner, Gokinju congratulates the group on dealing with the Yobanjin raiders. “In acknowledgement of your assistance,” he adds solemnly, “I will see to it that copies of the maps we made on our journey are given to each of your families.” With a final nod, he dismisses them to return to their duties.

### 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
Defeating the Yobanjin Raiders	+2XP

**Total Possible Experience: 4XP**

### Honor

Any PC who successfully persuaded Gokinju to retract his insult to Chalisa gains 1 point of Honor.

### Glory

The PCs gain 2 points of Glory for defeating the Yobanjin raiders.

If any PC managed to earn Gokinju’s respect, that PC gains an additional point of Glory.

Discovery of the bridge across the Hadazamui gains all PCs an additional point of Glory.

### Other Awards/Penalties

If a PC has Gokinju's respect at the end of the adventure, he or she gains him as an Ally (1 point Devotion, 2 points Influence).

For completing the adventure, all surviving PCs receive copies of Gokinju's maps of the border along the Dragon Heart Plain.

### Module Tracking Sheets

If Gokinju "recommended" a PC to Otomo Mitsuhide, this should be noted on the sheet.

If a PC argued for or allowed Aki to join the group as a ashigaru and she survived the battle, this should be noted on the sheet as well.

Finally, all PCs should have the map they receive noted on their sheets.



## Appendix: NPCs

### Miya Gokinju

Gokinju is, in his own mind, an ideal specimen of what a samurai should be. He is talented with a blade, skilled in the courts, paints well, writes poetry, and offers devout prayers to the Fortunes at every reasonable opportunity. Unfortunately for both him and those around him, he is constantly disappointed by the rest of the world's inability to live up to his own standard. This makes him slightly saddened by the implications for Rokugan's future, and makes everyone around him think of him as arrogant and spiteful. That he has some justification for his arrogance only makes matters worse. There are those in the courts who know him who believe that the fact that his missions take him so far away from the courts is not actually coincidence; sadly, even those rumors are not true, because he is, in fact, quite good at his duties.

Gokinju does not wear his armor while in the field unless he expects combat, preferring additional mobility. However, he is never far from his daisho, and is more than willing to defend himself in a duel (as demonstrated by his interaction with Chalisa).

Air 4      Earth 3      Fire 3      Water 3      Void 3  
                                 Agility 4      Perception 4  
Honor 6.5      Status 3.8      Glory 3.7

**Initiative:** 7k4

**Armor TN:** 30 (light armor)

**Attack:** 8k4 (katana)

**Damage:** 7k2 (katana)

**School/Rank:** Miya Herald 3

Rank One: Voice of the Emperor (may spend Void Point to gain Way of the Land for current province until he next sleeps; attackers who revere the Emperor lose 6 Honor for attacking him)

Rank Two: Eyes of the Emperor (adds Honor Rank to Etiquette [Courtesy] rolls made to resist social influences)

Rank Three: Hand of the Emperor (may spend a Void Point at start of combat or during Reactions Stage to prevent attackers who revere the Emperor from harming him for next turn; only works while he is not participating in combat or duel)

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Courtier (Rhetoric) 3, Craft: Cartography 5, Defense 2, Etiquette (Courtesy) 2, Horsemanship 1, Hunting (Survival, Trailblazing) 5, Iaijutsu (Assessment) 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: History 2, Sincerity 2

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Precise Memory, Soul of the Artisan/Failure of Compassion

**Wounds:** 15: +0; 21: +3; 27: +5; 33: +10; 39: +15; 45: +15; 51: Down; 57: Dead

### Chalisa

A former Shinjo who followed Morito out of the Unicorn seven years ago, Chalisa believes strongly in the ideals of what the Band of the Ox are trying to accomplish. Although she believes that the Dragon Heart Plain is rightfully the territory of her otokodate, she realizes that this is respect that must be acknowledged by the rest of the Empire before she can help her brothers stake the claim fully. As such, she is willing to do whatever it takes to protect the land and people she sees as hers.

Air 3      Earth 3      Fire 2      Water 2      Void 3  
                                 Agility 3      Strength 3  
Honor 1.2      Status 0.0      Glory 2.1

**Initiative:** 5k3

**Attack:** 4k2 (tetsubo)

**Armor TN:** 25 (heavy armor)

**Damage:** 8k3 (tetsubo)

**School/Rank:** Morito Bushi 2

Rank One: Legacy of the Four Winds (+1k0 to initiative while mounted; +1k0 to attacks while mounted)

Rank Two: The Wind Blows Many Ways (+1k0 to any two Bugei Skills for the duration of one combat, chosen at the combat's beginning)

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Battle 2, Defense 1, Horsemanship 4, Hunting (Tracking) 2, Iaijutsu 2, Intimidation 1, Jiu-jutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Kolat 3, Lore: Underworld 2, Spears 2.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Perceived Honor (2 ranks)/Dark Secret, Social Disadvantage (Ronin)

**Wounds:** 15: +0; 21: +3; 27: +5; 33: +10; 39: +15; 45: +15; 51: Down; 57: Dead