

Walk Through the Mountains

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

Part Two of *Legion of the Crow*

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The hearts of men are easily swayed into performing dark deeds, when what once was filled with honor is now fueled by vengeance and despair.

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

GM's Information

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

Reminder

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a low-mid rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank 1-2.

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 (at least three PCs are Rank 2): Increase the bandits' skill rolls by 1k0.

Adventure Summary and Background

All good adventures begin in an inn, and fittingly, the PCs find themselves in one such establishment. They have been assigned to escort senior researchers of their Clans to a botanical conference in the remote Sabiishi province of Dragon lands, to speak with a learned spirit who has returned through Oblivion's Gate. The week promises to be rather boring until they are asked for assistance in taking down a bandit gang who has attacked a local village. The bandits are disgruntled war veterans, mostly ronin samurai and ashigaru, who feel that the Empire has overlooked them now that they are no longer of use. Their leader is a disgraced samurai named Kazari, and he has led them back to the Sabishii Province where many of them were born. This bandit gang is not the only group of upset soldiers, unfortunately, and this problem appears to be occurring throughout the Empire. Should the problem not be curbed, it could lead to wide-scale civil unrest. Luckily the remedy is simple: listen to and address the complaints of the veteran soldiers before they descend into lawlessness. However, with Rokugan's strict caste system that lawlessness may only be met with a sword's swift justice.

In the meantime, other fateful conversations are taking place. The monk Kyushu, of an obscure branch of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, finds himself and his brothers in a precarious position: should they now worship Hitomi, or should they seek vengeance for the murder of their patron Lord?

Character Notes

Check the PCs' character sheets for the following:

- Oath of Fealty: Agasaha Odasake (Sabiishi Province)
- Way of the Land: Dragon Agasha Family Provinces
- Ally: Doji Oharu (and/or Obligation: Doji Oharu)
- Additionally, Scorpion characters with Oath of Fealty: Shosuro Atsumori (Ryoko Province) gain an extra 3 koku in their starting outfit for this module.

Introduction

The month of the Rooster (September) is a very busy month for the city of Yamasura, as the Dragon Clan finishes its preparations for the harsh Rokugani winter. Merchants crowd the small city, eager to harvest the bounty of the Dragon province and leave before the (inevitably early) snow closes the roads; they do not have time to enjoy the beautiful fall colors or the crisp mountain air. The weather is rather cool and breezy, due to the high altitude, and the sky is a deep, vibrant blue, brushed with only a wisp of distant clouds. The townspeople here are rather cheerful about the weather; it is warmer than usual and as such the season's harvest is expected to be abundant. None are too optimistic, however, as Inari, the Fortune of Rice, is a fickle Kami.

You find yourselves in The Warmed Hearth, a modest but sturdy inn built of the gray stone prevalent in this region. Inside, the inn is bright and inviting - rich walnut floors lay a heavy, earthen foundation for the light walnut accents that seemingly float around the large hearth fire, which crackles invitingly. While certainly not small, the place is best described as cozy. Each wall is decorated with a single ukiyo-e (wood block) print, describing the lands in that direction - to the north, mountains; to the west, rolling plains; to the east, ocean; to the south, rivers; while the hearth provides a familiar and comfortable center to the world. The small private garden behind the Inn is similarly cozy and inviting.

Why the PCs find themselves cooling their heels in *The Warmed Hearth*, sipping afternoon tea, is an altogether different matter- they have been chosen to escort a

number of representatives from their respective Clans to a conference, though they do not have the Status to attend the discussions.

Ronin PCs have been hired as escorts by (Kaeru) Maiko, a ronin shugenja herbalist from the City of the Rich Frog, for the rate of 2 *bu* each, including their room and meals at the inn. A successful Contested **Commerce (Haggling) / Awareness** roll against Maiko's 6k3 will give them an extra *bu* for their time, at the cost of 1 honor if their honor is above 4.0.

PCs who serve **Kaiu Mai, Kuni Roka, Daidoji Tsukasa, and Utaku Ruri** have been given the highest quality rooms here, because those specific daimyo have family members attending the conference in their place. The samurai servants of Lord Odasake most likely have their residences in Yamasura, and he has instructed them to entertain the other clan's guests staying at the *Hearth*.

If a PC has not traveled in Dragon lands before, and did not pack extra clothes or a blanket in their travel pack, they will find the nighttime exceedingly cold. This may lead to issues later, but the cool weather in the city should provide some warning for the players as to possible conditions in the mountains.

The PCs arrived the day before, and saw their charges to their destination. They now have a week to themselves while the samurai they are escorting go about their own business, and are welcome to explore the city while they wait.

Part One: Yamasura

The Mountain's Crossroad

The city of Yamasura is a widely-spaced city on one of the few flat plains located high in the mountains, near the edge of a region known as "the *Twisting Labyrinth*." It could easily be called the last bastion of civilization before the wild, untamed lands begin, and it is an important, if distant, trade city. Merchants from the western Empire (mainly the Unicorn and Lion) come here to do business with the Dragon, seeking the riches of the mountains. While the city is not large by the standards of other Clans, it does hold all of the amenities one would expect to find. A **Lore: Dragon Clan / Intelligence** roll of TN 10 will allow the PC to know that this is because the Agasha family conducts almost all of their business here, as Kyuden Agasha is far too secluded for regular use (members of the Agasha family, local PCs, or others with experience

with the Agasha, know this without requiring a roll). An **Investigation (Notice) / Awareness** roll of TN 15 will show that though the city is orderly and clean, many of the samurai residences stand empty.

Asking among the locals, at the inn or in the process of wandering around town, can allow the PCs to pick up on a number of rumors. 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. (Local PCs gain a Free Raise on this roll.) The rumors include:

- The Agasha family is in turmoil. Their numbers were severely depleted due to the Phoenix Defection six years ago, and even bolstered by the returned Agasha spirits, the family itself is dangerously small. The Dragon Clan is busily attempting to arrange marriages to rebuild the family, but so far have met with mixed success. The Agasha Phoenix at the conference are treated with polite, but cold, silence.
- Tales have begun to spread that Toturi's young daughter may be the reincarnation of Amaterasu, leading to speculation about Onnotangu's inevitable return.
- Relations between the Unicorn and Lion Clans have become somewhat strained of late. Their shared border was the location of a minor skirmish two years ago, with the Lion as conclusive victors, but many wonder when the Khan will seek a rematch. Others speculate that perhaps this is simply part of some Scorpion plot...
- Agasha Odasake, the daimyo of the Sabishii Province, has twin daughters, Miko and Atatori. They are said to be quite beautiful and will be available for marriage soon. Miko has her deceased mother's skill in gardening and Atatori is a promising shugenja and researcher.
- The city is home to Kitsuki Yukehime, one of the most promising *ukiyo-e* artists in the Empire. Her work can be seen in a number of places across the city, though it has not really gained a great deal of attention from most samurai.

No roll is required to know the basic details of the conference: The conference centers around lectures by Agasha Meitaro; a spirit that returned through Oblivion's Gate a few years ago, he studied under Agasha herself and has written many famous books on the subject of botany. Interviewing him is a rare glimpse into history, and as such there are a fair number

of important persons in attendance. The following information about various delegates and guests of importance is also available with a separate **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll, as above. (Details on the guests can be found in the Conclusion section.)

- Kuni Hanatori is going to be staying in Yamasura for the winter to study under Meitaro and to interview the other remaining Agasha spirits on her father's behalf.
- Kaiu Kazuma was more interested in Lord Odasake's daughter Miko than the actual topic of the conference. There is a rumor that the two will be married this winter to solidify the trade agreement, and that Kazuma will be joining the Agasha family.
- Agasha Atatori is available for marriage, preferably to a handsome shugenja, as long as the prospective husband is willing to join the Dragon Agasha family. It is said that her dowry will be rather substantial, because the family is trying to repopulate their numbers.

The city itself is centered around the marketplace (as they inevitably are), and the temple and *kuge* (noble) districts are bustling with activity. Lord Agasha Odasake's manor is especially busy, since it is the location of the botanical conference, as is the opulent (by Dragon standards) inn *House of the Golden Plum*, in which the most important dignitaries are staying.

The Temple District has numerous shrines to minor Fortunes and important Dragon ancestors, and at least a small temple for each of the Seven Fortunes. The largest is a sprawling Temple to Daikoku, the Fortune of Wealth, which is full of merchants busily praying and conducting commerce with the monks - a **Commerce / Intelligence** roll at TN 10 will inform the PC that the gold mined in the nearby mountains is traded to the other clans here, and the temple is guarded by Mirumoto soldiers and heavily armed and armored *yamabushi* (warrior monks). There is a wizened old beggar named Jin sitting quietly by the door, and though his upturned basket hat is heavy with *zeni*, *bu*, and *koku*, he himself is clad in pauper's rags. Though a follower of Daikoku, he himself has taken a vow of poverty, and will declare that the happiness and karma that come from helping others is what makes him truly wealthy, should a PC ask. All of the money he collects is distributed by other monks of Daikoku to help "those in need" - mostly peasants who have experienced difficulty following the many wars of the last decade.

The Market District is a typical Rokugani market, selling foodstuffs and miscellaneous crafted goods (anything on the item list can be found here, though more extravagant goods and silks will have a 50%

markup due to distance. There is no gaijin gear available). A PC looking for shady doings may make a **Lore: Underworld / Awareness** roll at a TN of 15 to determine that there is almost no trace of underworld activity here, due to the high traffic of magistrates through the city.

The only location in the market that particularly stands out is a *ukiyo-e* (woodblock print) shop called *Yukehime's*. In the doorway of the shop sits a white bobtailed cat with black toes who will go directly to the PC with the lowest **Animal Handling (Cats) / Awareness** roll (alternately, any PC with the Unlucky Disadvantage, though this does not count as a use of the Disadvantage) and entwine himself around the PC's legs, purring loudly - the PC must make an **Athletics / Agility** roll TN 5 to not step on the cat or trip (though this can be avoided by either picking up the cat or petting him until he grows bored and walks away). Stepping on Sumifito-san causes the PC to lose 1 point of Glory for his clumsiness. The shop's clerk is a smiling man named Agito, who sells prints of all shapes and sizes. Though not overly forward about sales, he will politely offer prints appropriate to the PC's nature at the cost of 1 *bu* per print (cheaper PCs will be shown lesser quality 1 *zeni* prints, while the obviously richer PCs will be shown fine-quality 3 *bu* works).

An **Artisan: Painting (Ukiyo-e) / Awareness** roll of TN 10 or a **Courtier / Awareness** roll of TN 25 will let the PC recognize these as the works of Kitsuki Yukehime, the renowned artisan. Even though *ukiyo-e* as an artform is favored by the *bonge* (middle class samurai) and the *heimin* (peasant) caste, due to its availability and low price, she has made great strides in advancing the artform within the *kuge* (noble class). Asking Agito about the artist will require an **Etiquette / Awareness** roll of TN 15 to convince him to tell them she is in fact here, working in the shop behind the gallery. She is busy at the moment but will have Agito ask the PC to return after dinner, should they wish to speak to her (unless they were mean to her cat).

Kitsuki Yukehime will dress very conservatively for the meeting and will be accompanied by her uncle, Kitsuki Makoto, her yojimbo, Mirumoto Ginsai, and of course the cat, Sumifito. She has a ready smile and would be a youthful beauty if not for her scarred and ink-stained hands. She will be happy to discuss the arts, seasonal kabuki plays, fashion, as well as any other courtier-related trivialities, but will also politely ask about some location relevant to the PCs life. If the PC impresses her with his knowledge of the arts and makes a **Courtier / Awareness** roll TN 15, she will show the PC her latest work in progress, a series titled *Scenes from the Empire*, which showcases the lives of various

people who live in different parts of Rokugan. She has completed seven pieces so far (one for each of the Great Clans), and a fair number of test prints for the final section, *Two Kobune Crossing the Sea*. An **Artisan: Painting (Ukiyo-e) / Awareness** roll TN 10 will show that it is almost complete and looks to be exquisite. None of these are for sale yet, as she is scheduled to introduce the series at the Otomo Winter Court this year. She does have a Dark Secret to which she will not admit: she writes and illustrates risqué pillow book prints under a pseudonym, but any impolite implications or suggestions will abruptly end the meeting. This is the only evening she is available to chat, as she must continue her work and is pressed for time.

Fateful Conversations

The common room of *The Warmed Hearth* is somewhat busy, especially at dinner time, but the layout of the place makes it feel neither crowded nor empty. The proprietor, an old woman named Ako, guides the servants with precision and serenity, and the food is a simple and hearty dish of noodles, seasonal vegetables, and freshwater fish. After dinner, there are three other people besides the PCs: a monk, a Dragon bushi, and a large ronin.

The monk is Kyushu, a tall, lean man wearing nondescript gray robes and has deep-set black eyes. He is older, and absently fiddles with a set of prayer beads worn black with use. He is polite to anyone who speaks to him and will invite them to have tea and play *go* with him (he rolls 5k2). He will converse at length with the PC over any subject, but at some point, will ask the following question: *"Tell me, my friend, to what length would you go to avenge the murder of your Lord? Hypothetically speaking, of course."* He will not answer questions as to why he would ask this, aside from being "merely curious," and clarification upon the actions of the lord will be met with a simple "does it matter?" He will listen intently to the PCs response: so intently, in fact, that the PC should write down their one-sentence response on their module tracking sheet. A **Lore: Theology (Brotherhood) / Intelligence** roll TN 25 will let the PC recognize that he is of an obscure sect that venerated Onnotangu, and those temples are often sanitariums.

The large ronin is a veteran named Tetsao, who is sitting at the bar and slowly losing himself in a bottle of cheap sake. His bowl of rice is half-eaten and cold, but he will not let the servant girl take it away. He is a middle-aged man and has the haunted eyes of one who has seen one too many battles. He will be properly differential and share his sake with the PCs, but he is

distant and quiet. A **Battle / Awareness** TN 15 or a **Medicine / Awareness** TN 20 roll will inform the PC that Tetsao is suffering from extended battle fatigue (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), insomnia, and most likely, nightmares. PCs with experience in war (especially Crab bushi who have Shadowlands experience) will find that he opens up to them quickly, but in a hushed tone: *"I see them, sama, I see the demons in every dark corner, every shadow. I, I see them in my wife when she sleeps, in my children when they play. The Kuni said I was not afflicted by the Taint after the March to Voltturnum, but even now, I cannot escape that accursed place."* He will ask Crab samurai in a somewhat hopeless voice if they have any advice on how to deal with the memories; he has been trying to drown them in sake for years, and has met with little success. The ultimate problem here is that Tetsao has no one to talk to about this - he is just a ronin, and even through he has military training he has neither the support structure nor mindset to deal with something of this magnitude. There are no dice involved in talking to him about this, just roleplaying - this is not something that medicine nor the kami can heal. (If no PC counsels Tetsao, Kyushu will.)

The Dragon bushi, Mirumoto Yamato, who is friendly to everyone except the Phoenix Clan (though he will go out of his way to try to make friends with Lion PCs). He holds a bitter hatred against the Phoenix Agasha due to their defection to the Phoenix six years ago, to the point that he will openly insult any Phoenix who happen to be present. He will accuse Agasha Gennai (the Master of Air) of disloyalty and brand him a "cowardly traitor" for "abandoning the Clan in our time of need", and declare Agasha Hamanari (the Phoenix Agasha daimyo) to be a man blinded by greed and ambition; his current high rank makes it "obvious what his bribe was." (A **Lore: Phoenix (Agasha) / Intelligence** roll TN 10 will inform the PC that Hamanari in fact developed the current Agasha Phoenix shugenja school Technique, should they wish for a counterpoint to Yamato's argument and are not already aware of this fact.) Confronting him will have little effect other than to fan the flames of his anger - the only way to avoid a scene would be for any Phoenix to leave immediately upon his starting to vent his insults (this will still cause a loss of 1 point of Glory; ignoring his spectacle will balance out the Honor loss for enduring the insults). Yamato will not recant unless challenged to a duel; words mean nothing when the actions of the family have already spoken so loudly. Enduring an insult to their family or Clan may cause a Phoenix samurai to lose Honor - 2 points for characters with Honor above 2, and an additional 2 points for characters with an Honor above 6.

Responding with insults directed at Yamato (or the Dragon Clan) will result in his issuing a challenge. This will give the PC the opportunity to decide the time and place of the duel, and to find a champion should they require, but any duel taking place in the future will have to be resolved in a later module (the PC should note on their Mod Sheet “Pending Duel with Mirumoto Yamato”).

Yamato and the PC may fight an iaijutsu duel to first blood immediately, and this will be what he demands if challenged. (A shugenja PC ought to have a champion in mind should they wish to issue a challenge, and the player ought to be reminded of this if necessary.) The PC gains +2 Glory and +1 Honor for winning, or -2 Glory and -2 Honor (for failing to defend the reputation of their lord) should the PC lose. A Kharmic Strike results in no gain and no loss, and Yamato will grit his teeth and head to his room. Killing Yamato gains the PC Bad Reputation (Killed a man in an illegal duel), 5 points of Infamy, and an interview with the local magistrate, Kitsuki Otojiro, who will write a letter of reprimand to the PC’s lord.

Should there not be a duel, Yamato will be happy to spar with any other duelist who wishes to test themselves, but the loser must buy the first round of drinks afterward. He will not stay up late, however, as he is leaving for the Lion lands before dawn. He is seeking admission to the War College, is well-versed in Akodo’s *Leadership* and *go* (he will gladly play with Kyushu if no PCs respond to him). A letter of recommendation from a vassal of an Akodo lord (any will do) will help him with his admission, should the PC volunteer it and be in good standing (no Black Sheep, minimal Infamy, etc).

Mirumoto Yamato

Air 3	Earth 2 Stamina 3	Fire 3	Water 2 Perception 3	Void 3
Honor 4.5		Status 2.0	Glory 1.0	

Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** 7k3 (katana)
Armor TN: 27 (light armor and daisho) **Damage:** 5k2(katana)

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 2

Skills: Battle 3, Defense 3, Games: Go 3, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Lore: History 1, Lore: Lion Clan 3, Lore: Shugenja 1, Meditation 1, Sincerity 1, Theology 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Tactician / Brash

Iaijutsu Rolls: (including benefit from Center Stance)

Assessment: 7k3+4

Focus: 8k4+7

Strike: 8k4+7

Part 2: The Pursuit of Justice

The next morning, after breakfast, two men enter the common room: one is a young Kitsuki magistrate with a perfect topknot and fit build, and the other is a hulking, stoic *kikage zumi* (tattooed man) with swarthy skin and vivid tattoos. The magistrate clears his throat and speaks, giving each person in the common room a piercing look as he introduces himself and explains his presence. *“Greetings, samurai-sans. I am Kitsuki Otojiro, magistrate of Yamasura, and I need yoriki to assist me in apprehending a bandit gang. Who here believes in protecting the Empire from lawlessness?”* Otojiro is a dedicated samurai with several successful cases behind him, which led to his having this important position at a relatively young age, and his idealistic enthusiasm is quite evident with this initial speech. The Hitomi behind him is Jiang, one of the city’s more noteworthy yoriki, though a man of few words.

Kyushu and Tetsao both promptly volunteer. Any PC who steps forward immediately will make a very favorable impression on Otojiro. Only a few moments after Otojiro’s pronouncement, however, a portly Crane samurai enters behind the Dragon magistrate, leaning heavily on an ornately-carved walking stick. The Crane gives Otojiro a somewhat wry look as he laboriously enters the common room. Characters who have played “Stand Against the Waves” will recognize Doji Oharu, and everyone should note the mon of an Emerald Magistrate on his exquisitely-tailored kataginu.

“With all respect to my young colleague, I am certain that he did not intend to imply that any samurai here do not ascribe to such a belief.” He will scan the room, nodding genially at those samurai he recognizes. *“But we understand that several of you are at loose ends, and I have taken the liberty of speaking with your superiors to engage your services. Would you be so kind as to join us for a cup of tea while we discuss a matter of some importance?”*

Otojiro calls for a large table and a round of *Iron Benten* tea, and though Oharu winces slightly at the choice of brew, he makes an effort to let the PCs feel honored to be a part of the expedition. Otojiro and Oharu will brief the PCs over the strong tea, with the younger magistrate firm and eager to bring the miscreants to justice, while Oharu is more relaxed and matter-of-fact about the matter. The two of them will

share the briefing, with Otojiro respectfully (if somewhat grudgingly) deferring to the Emerald Magistrate. (If any of the PCs are Crane trained at the Doji Courtier School or have the Courtier Skill at 5, Oharu will take advantage of the Cadence Technique to deliver slightly sardonic, if amused, commentary on Otojiro's enthusiasm and experience.)

- Bandits attacked Koyamatani Mura, a nearby village in the Twisting Labyrinth, the day before yesterday. The PCs will need to leave immediately to catch their trail. (It will be mentioned that the villagers are the only witnesses, which explains why courtiers would be included on such an otherwise dangerous mission.)
- The conference is occupying the local constabulary force and he cannot pull guards away from the Temple, therefore Otojiro is seeking outside help.
- Oharu has been pursuing leads on a number of bandit gangs in the Empire; many of them are displaying better training and tactics than seen before, and the widespread nature of the problem has attracted the attention of the Emerald Magistrates. (Oharu believes, however, that he has been assigned this task because he is in disgrace with the Emerald Champion, though he will only mention that if pressed.)
- The bandit force is reported to have approximately 30 people. Otojiro and Oharu are certain that ten to twelve samurai should prove sufficient to the task. Otojiro will accompany the group, but Oharu will remain the city "to follow up on some other leads". (He's not actually lying, but the main reason is to avoid facing the danger of the mission personally.) Oharu is also certain that the reports are somewhat exaggerated.
- Oharu has arranged everything with the delegations, and Otojiro will grant permission to bear arms and armor for the mission. If all goes well, they should be back before the conference ends.
- Otojiro will requisition mountain ponies for those PCs (and the NPCs) who do not have their own mounts.
- A repair team will be sent to Koyamatani Mura as soon as the bandits are defeated. With luck, the villagers will still have time to prepare for winter.
- The PCs will have two hours to gather their supplies and make ready before their departure.

When Otojiro departs, Oharu will ask the PCs to remain for a moment. (As the NPCs accompanying the group are not part of his arrangement, they will not be asked to remain.) *"I do not wish to give a poor impression of my young associate there, but I would take it as a personal favor if you would do your best to ensure that his enthusiasm does not cause him to over-reach himself. From what I can tell, he is a competent young man, but I have some concern that his youth could prompt him into some ill-considered action."* He chuckles lightly. *"Deal with these bandits, but make sure our promising young friend returns, eh?"*

Other information:

- PCs who require monetary compensation (ronin) will receive 1 koku upon successful completion of the mission.
- Should a PC make a compassionate plea to the monk Jin (**Courtier / Awareness**, TN 15), he will be delighted to assist the poor village and will fund the repair team. Calling two raises on the roll will give the PC 1 point of honor for such heartfelt Compassion.
- If a PC fought a duel with Mirumoto Yamato, Otojiro will privately ask that person if there will be any trouble from them on the journey. It is assumed that there will not be, but PCs will be asked to stay behind if they cannot control themselves in the future; the good of the Empire comes before personal disputes.
- Make sure the PCs have determined the contents of their travel packs before embarking. If the PC needs to purchase food, they can acquire a week's worth of food and water in the market for 1 *bu* (water, rice, fruit, vegetables and dried tofu). Other supplies (rope, tent, blankets, etc) can be gotten in the market.
- Kyushu will arrive at the designated time with a naginata and black heavy armor, his face covered with the white wrappings of a yamabushi sohei. Tetsao will meet with whichever PC spoke to him, wearing brown and green ashigaru armor and carrying a spear. Otojiro will have vivid green light armor, complete with helmet, mempo, and backbanner identifying him as a magistrate of the Dragon clan. Jiang will arrive with nothing more than he had earlier. Kyushu and Tetsao wear armor that shows signs of hard use in the past, while Otojiro's bears gleaming lacquer that has obviously never seen battle.

Travel to the village requires a **Horsemanship / Agility** roll of TN 10 to reach the village before dusk, while

failure means that the PCs arrive late in the night. PCs on foot will need to make an **Athletics (Running) / Stamina** roll of TN 15 to maintain pace. Kyushu, Tetsuo, and Jiang are afoot; Otojiro is mounted. All will succeed at this roll.

Koyamatani Mura

The road to the village is a little-travelled but clear path northeast from Yamasura, leading deep into the region of the Agasha lands known as the “Twisting Labyrinth” for its steep hills, tight ravines, and winding box canyons. This area is highly prized by the Agasha for the wondrous plants that can be found here, though the terrain makes harvesting and transporting them very difficult and impractical to attempt on any large scale. The road travels from ridgeline to ridgeline, staying safely above the treacherously forested gulches. As the sun begins to set, cold blue shadows stretch across the road.

PCs with “Way of the Land: Dragon Agasha Lands” gain a free raise on all Hunting rolls while in the Sabishii province.

Investigating the Village

Koyamatani Mura is a village situated on a small rise at the bottom of a deep, wide valley. It is surrounded by rice patties and fields of grain, recently harvested, with dense forests beyond. The sun is just beginning to set over the western hill, and it is from this direction the PCs will ride into town. Once the peasants see the banner of the magistrate they will swarm the group, thanking them profusely for their assistance, and usher them to the elder’s house.

The village elder is an ancient woman named Obaa-sama (Honored Grandmother) who lives beside the town’s lumber mill. The PCs will be escorted inside her modest hut where she will greet them properly and perform a tea ceremony for them, once the PCs have had a chance to wash in the stream. Though the tea is weak and her hands are shaky with age, she performs the ceremony with precision. In her youth, she had the honor of waiting upon O-Togashi-Kami once, when he stayed at her uncle’s inn (the *Golden Plum*) in Yamasura, and she will tell the story with quiet pride. Dinner is meager at best (quail egg and wild onion over a small bowl of rice), but she will do her utmost to present her guests with a relaxing dinner before the work begins. Even in the face of tragedy decorum must be observed, and such hospitality is an important point of pride for the villagers (the only point remaining, in fact, as many of them are going hungry this night).

Once dinner is over, Obaa-sama will summon a few of the villagers for the PCs to interview. While more than willing, these are still peasants and getting a coherent account of them will take some effort; have the PCs roll **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** at a TN of 15 to get the following basic information:

- There were about 20 bandits, with a half-dozen or so on horseback. Masu, the headman (Obaa-sama’s son) killed one, as did Yashoku, the monk who tends the shrine. Both of these men were in turn killed by the bandits.
- About half of the village’s huts were burned and 80% of their stores were taken. They had already sold the season’s lumber at the market, and that coin was also taken. The peasants are busily trying to gather more food from the forest so that they can survive until the harvest comes in. Most expect slow starvation.
- There was a tattooed monk with the bandits. He did not participate in the raid, but neither did he stop them.
- The village shrine, dedicated to the Frost Dragon, was desecrated by the bandits when they fought Yashoku.
- The bodies of the fallen have been laid out in the eta’s hut, but without a priest they are unsure of the complete funeral rites. They do not wish to be haunted on top of everything else.

If the questioning PC(s) get more than 25 on the **Investigation** roll, they are able to get enough information out of the peasants to learn the following in addition:

- The bandit riders came down the main road while the footmen attacked from all sides, herding the villagers into the center of town. Masu and Yashoku were the only ones to fight back, but they were also the only ones killed (many more got roughed up, however). A **Battle (Skirmish) / Intelligence** roll TN 20 will inform the PC that this is a basic military tactic called a “Lion Ambush” (named for how the animal hunts, not the Clan). This tactic is common to Clan military groups across the Empire, and is typically used for hit and run strikes against enemy holdings.
- The samurai are not the only people interested in the attack; the villagers will report that a strange peasant man travelled through yesterday and asked the locals all of these same questions. If asked, they will describe him as an older man, scarred and dressed in battered clothing. He headed west after the bandits, leaning heavily on his staff.

Inspecting the village directly must wait until morning, so the PCs will be given places to sleep in the few remaining huts that still stand while the displaced villagers spend the night in the mill. Before dawn they will rise to scavenge for more food and resources, waking the PCs with a light breakfast of rice. Marite, Obaa-sama's young grandson, will show the PCs around and act as their guide and servant while in town.

The shrine is a little pagoda, open to the elements and surrounded by a small dry garden, with a statue of a dragon ornately carved out of white burl maple that has been sprayed with blood (from the combat). Two eta are dutifully cleaning it, but an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll of TN 20 will point out that they missed a spot: a bit of blood has encrusted between the scales, and this must be removed before any consecration ceremony can be completed. Other than that, the shrine has not been damaged nor altered. Ritual consecration takes an hour (once the shrine has been cleansed, which will also take an hour), and requires a **Lore: Theology (Dragons) / Void** roll of TN 20. If there are no shugenja present, Kyushu can make the roll but will need assistance, and PCs who are neither shugenja nor monks must call one Raise to remember the details of the ceremony properly (which does mean that they must have the Skill or spend a Void Point to gain a rank in it). The bodies of the fallen must have funeral rites as well, and these rolls are the same as the consecration.

While the consecration and funeral are taking place, other PCs may wish to assist the villagers forage for food. With a successful **Hunting (Survival) / Perception** roll TN 20, they will be able to find a few sources of food (a bee's nest from which the villagers will be able to harvest honey later in the day, a clearing with edible berries, etc). Additionally, searching the surrounding area allows the PCs to make a **Lore: Nature / Perception** or **Poison / Perception** roll TN 15 to spot a rare scarlet nightshade hidden in the underbrush. The flowers by themselves are quite beautiful, but stirring the flower's pollen into a victim's tea creates dangerously high fever similar to Dripping Poison (found on page 332 of the base book), though it only reduces the victim's Stamina by 1 for every failed roll. There is enough pollen for 1k1/3 doses. Alternately, an **Artisan: Gardening / Intelligence** roll of TN 15 will allow the PC to carefully dig up the plant for transplanting it, should they wish to take it home and have gardening tools available (without proper tools the roll automatically fails: scarlet nightshade is very fragile).

Otojiro will insist upon leaving immediately after the consecration and funeral. *"I am not unmindful of these peoples' plight, but we must recover their food to give them a chance to survive the winter. Our quarry is on the move. There is no time to waste."*

Tracking the Bandit Gang

At any point if the PCs fail a tracking roll, they will get lost and have to backtrack. The tracking roll will have to be repeated and it will waste time, making it later in the day. Failing three times means that the PCs have lost the trail. Shugenja may Commune with the Earth spirits to gain additional help, granting a Free Raise to the Hunting rolls (plus an additional Free Raise for every Raise on the Commune). Communing with the Earth spirits will also gain a Free Raise to the Spell Casting roll, as the spirits have been recently stirred and are still somewhat eager to help find the bandits. (A result of Isoshi, the peasant shugenja that the villagers mentioned, making these same inquiries when he passed through.)

Tracking the bandit gang requires a **Hunting (Tracking) / Perception** roll TN 15, if the PCs do not think to ask the peasants which way the bandits left: they left west along the main road and exited north into the wilderness about a mile away from the village. Another **Hunting (Tracking) / Perception** roll TN 20 will lead them three miles through the dense forest to a clearing, and a **Hunting / Perception** roll TN 15 will show that this is the camp where the bandits spent the night after the raid. A **Battle/ Perception** roll TN 10 will show that the tents were organized in a strict military manner, as written by Akodo's *Leadership*. The PCs will have to press on if they wish to catch up to the bandits, however.

Continuing onward, the trail will cross a deep ravine that is full of fallen trees, likely toppled during one of the many flash floods that afflict this type of terrain. While there is no safe path over the logs, a **Horsemanship / Agility** or **Athletics / Agility** roll of TN 15 will get the PCs safely across, while failure means falling and 2k2 damage from being impaled upon a stick. Using a rope to get across, or a long stick to add balance (such as a staff or spear), will give the PC a free raise on the Athletics roll (a horse can make it across on its own, as long as there is no rider).

At some point, the PCs will get thirsty from travel and if they did not bring water with them, will have to make a **Raw Willpower** roll TN 5 to resist having drink directly from a small burbling stream. A **Hunting (Survival) / Intelligence** roll TN 10 is required to filter

the water successfully, but should they fail this (or not think to filter it), the PC will suffer painful cramping during the next night, in which they will not sleep well (and therefore be unable to recover Void), though the water is clear and clean-tasting.

Once across the ravine, the PC with the highest score on a **Raw Void** roll (with a Free Raise for members of the Utaku family) will catch a fleeting glimpse of a mythical *ki-rin* running through the trees on a hillside opposite a wide valley. A **Lore: Omens / Intelligence** or a **Lore: Mythical Animals (Ki-rin) / Intelligence** roll of TN 10 will inform the PC that spotting one is an omen of great upheaval, and a **Lore: History (Unicorn Clan) / Intelligence** roll of TN 20 will allow the PC to remember that the last one was spotted when the Unicorn returned to the Empire in 815. It will be gone before anyone else can see it, however, leaving nothing to the eye but tall snowcapped mountains in the distance.

An hour before nightfall, the PCs will arrive at another clearing - the campsite that the bandits used just last night. The trail continues northward, but it will soon be dark. If the players seem inclined to press on, a **Hunting (Survival) / Awareness** roll at TN 5 will determine that the terrain is too dangerous to risk going further in the dark. (Otojiro is fully capable of making this roll, and will veto any travel at night.)

Scavenging for food requires a **Hunting (Survival) / Perception** roll TN 15, and finding firewood requires simply searching the nearby forest because it is everywhere and no roll is required. However, any PC who searches the surrounding area may make a **Lore: Nature / Perception** or **Medicine (Herbalism) / Perception** roll TN 15 to spot a rare variety of golden arrowroot, and should it be added to the PC's medicine kit will give them an extra 1k0 on their next few Medicine rolls (enough for 1k1/2 doses). Alternately, an **Artisan: Gardening / Intelligence** roll of TN 10 will allow the PC to carefully dig up the plant for transplanting it, should they wish to take it home (to keep or to give to another).

The night is very cold, and sleeping safely without a tent, blanket, or constantly tended fire requires a **Raw Stamina** roll at a TN of 15 - otherwise the PC will develop a cold, adding +5 to all rolls (though this can be negated with hot tea and a **Medicine / Intelligence** roll TN 10). Sneezing is a sign of weakness, and repressing an inconvenient one requires a **Raw Willpower** roll TN 5.

If at some point during the night the PC who spotted the *ki-rin* is alone (ie on guard), they may make an

Investigation / Awareness roll TN 15 to notice the following:

A soft flash of silver and gold stands hidden in the long shadow of a distant tree, and a movement, or more precisely the thought of a movement, draws your eye closer. Hidden there is a small ki-rin, no more than a curious foal, nervously flicking its wild mane in an imperceptible breeze.

Approaching the young *ki-rin* requires an **Animal Handling (Horses) / Void** at a TN of 20 or **Horsemanship / Void** at TN 25, with +5 penalties for Brash and any other spiritual flaws (including each rank of Taint). Success means that the PC is allowed to pet the small animal for a fleeting moment, brushing its moon-hued hair before it turns and scampers back to join its herd on a distant hill- even at a trot it runs faster than any horse the PC has ever seen, and in a fleeting heartbeat the small group has turned and disappeared into the dreams of the earth. There are no tracks to follow. A few of the *ki-rin*'s hairs will have come loose in the PCs hand, and they smell of wind, sun, rain, and of course, horses. Failure at the roll means the little *ki-rin* is spooked by the PC's demeanor and bolts away, almost faster than the eye can see.

Awakening before dawn provides the PCs with a most striking scene: the hilltop that they were on is now an island in a sea of fog, lit with the cool yellow of the rising sun, while the few evergreen clad hills that rise above the plain of clouds cast long lavender shadows upon the mists. This is not a painting excursion, however, and the scene is disturbed by Otojiro and Jiang having a one-sided conversation about how far away the bandits might be. An **Investigation / Perception** roll TN 15 will inform the PCs that the horses of the bandits' gang would be heavily loaded given the depth of their prints, and considering the speed at which the PCs are traveling, they will catch up to them before nightfall this evening. The forests muffle sound, so stealth is not required... yet.

Tracking the bandits this day is a fairly simple affair, requiring a **Hunting (Tracking) / Perception** roll TN 10. The trail crosses another ravine, and while this one is not full of fallen trees there is a fairly steep climb on the other side (the tracker will see where the bandits had trouble ascending the rockslide, as it covered with deep hoof and sandal prints). Climbing in the loose rock requires an **Athletics (Climbing) / Agility** or a **Horsemanship / Agility** roll of TN 20. Using a rope gives the PC a Free Raise to either of these rolls, and if none of the PCs can make it up the slope unassisted, Hitomi Jiang will climb up first to tie the rope off, making it all look quite easy. He will carry

unencumbered normal or small-sized PCs up the hill if needed as well, but that will cost the PC 1 point of Honor and 1 point of Glory for the indignity. An **Investigation / Perception** roll TN 10 will allow them to find the remnants of the previous day's camp: the PCs will indeed catch up to the bandits at or just before nightfall.

Hot Pursuit

As the scenery becomes drier and less forested, the trail here is as obvious as a Hida's need for drink. However, without continuous cover from the trees, the PCs will kick up a small dust cloud that alerts the bandits of their presence. They may make a **Battle / Perception** roll at a TN of 20 to notice this and realize that their quarry may have been warned.

Accordingly, some of the bandits will pause in their travel to lay a trap for their pursuers. There will be one ashigaru for every PC in the group, and two ronin. One of the ashigaru will step out into the road just out of bowshot ahead of the party, look at the party, and start running away. The PCs may roll **Battle / Perception** or **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** to notice the rest of the ambushing party (against their 4k2+2 Cooperative **Stealth / Agility** roll). Otojiro will focus on the fleeing suspect and begin to charge his horse after him. The PCs may roll **Investigation / Perception** against the bandits' **Traps / Agility** of 3k2 to notice a rope trap jerking into place just in front of the lead horses (Otojiro and any PC charging with him, if they chose to do so). If they fail to notice the trap, they will be knocked Prone and take 3k2 damage (as will Otojiro). If they notice it, they must roll **Horsemanship / Agility** at a TN of 10 to jump the rope or suffer the same consequences.

Any PCs who did not notice the ambush may not act in the first round of combat, nor will any of the NPCs. The ronin bandits will stay on opposite sides of the road, taking cover behind rocks and trees, and use their bows against the most dangerous-appearing characters. Tetsao will move to support whoever encouraged him at the inn – either a PC or Kyushu. Kyushu and Jiang will each occupy one ashigaru by the third round, and Otojiro will extricate himself from his horse by the fourth round. (Let the PCs take the forefront of this encounter, and reserve the NPCs in case they appear to be over their heads.)

After the combat, Tetsao will frown deeply and diffidently offer information on the opposition. *“Your pardons, samurai-sama... but I think I recognize some of these men. They were members of the Sabishii militia; I fought alongside them on the March, and at*

Volturnum.” He knows little enough of them beyond that, though he can and will respectfully offer suggestions on the sort of tactics the group was trained to use (including the earlier information on the Lion Ambush).

Otojiro will take the time for wounds to be treated, but insists on pressing on. *“We have almost caught up to them. This ambush means they are obviously expecting us, so we should strike while they are still waiting word from their companions.”* He adjusts his daisho in his obi, clearly feeling chagrined by his performance in the ambush. *“I will challenge their leader to a duel. When their chief falls to my blade, it will demoralize the rest.”* He nods, firmly, but any PC who makes a **Battle / Awareness, Kenjutsu / Awareness, or Iaijutsu / Awareness** roll at a TN of 20 will note that Otojiro, while a competent swordsman, is not a bushi and would likely find it very difficult to face a trained warrior in single combat. It may behoove them to try to talk him out of this course of action; proper role-play should be sufficient, but if the players are struggling to express their concern politely, allow them to roll **Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness** at a TN of 20 to talk him out of it.

The rest of the bandit gang will quicken their pace and reach their box canyon lair sooner, allowing them time to prepare for confrontation.

Part 3: Confrontation

The western setting sun casts long shadows over the rapidly cooling landscape, and fast pursuit is becoming more dangerous due to the fading light. There are no clouds in the sky, which is quickly filling with darkness and stars. A cold, fat moon hangs low and heavy, watching.

The trail leads into the winding rocky passages and follows a narrow, treeless, steep-walled canyon. The canyon walls are only about twenty feet high; ahead, the rocky path makes a sharp turn to the left, and flickering firelight illuminates the wall opposite the turn. No sound disturbs the night, but the air is heavy with anticipation.

Ascending the outer wall of the canyon requires an **Athletics (Climbing) / Perception** roll TN 10 to spot a faint goat path (no roll needed to climb here), otherwise the PC will have to scale the wall directly: **Athletics (Climbing) / Agility** roll, TN 15 (climbing tools give a free raise), with failing the roll causing 2k2 falling damage.

Moving along the ridgeline without being spotted requires a contested **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** roll vs. the sentries' **Investigation / Perception** (3k2), who are hidden in the shadow of a boulder above the camp (no roll needed to spot them from this position).

Villains or Victims?

The bandits are aware of the PCs, waiting for the magistrate's detachment with their weapons at the ready: two ashigaru for each PC with spears wait in formation to the right of the fire, three mounted samurai with katana are hidden in a large cave to the right, and the two samurai sentries hidden up on the ridgeline with bows. The leader, Kazari, stands on a rock projection behind the spearmen's line with his katana drawn, and the tattooed monk, Hoshi Hitofu, is sitting seiza-style on his heels in front of the fire, with his back to the PCs.

How the PCs present themselves (and whether the bandits are prepared for them) will determine the first interaction. This will be Kazari's speech, regardless:

"Ah, so this is how the Emperor rewards his forgotten vassals! You would not acknowledge service or reward loyalty when it was needed most, yet you presume to come here and punish us when we are left to fend for ourselves? We are not dogs to be beaten and fed scraps, we are men who fought the demons and bled for the Empire!"

Like Tetsao, Kazari and his men are veterans of the War Against the Shadow and have been left hanging - disgruntled peasant ashigaru from the Dragon lands and scattered ronin, who have through various circumstances been left to fend for themselves. These are men whom society has failed. Kazari is a proud samurai, a former Lion who could not bring himself to rejoin the Clan when the Akodo were restored because of the things he did to survive in the intervening years. He fought with the Dragon armies at Volturnum, where he met Hoshi Hitofu, and has been gathering men to his cause ever since. They all feel that the Rokugani social system brings an unacceptable burden upon the lowest orders, and that those who fight and die for the Empire are only remembered if they belong to a Clan.

Unless the PCs talked him out of challenging the leader, this is the point that Otojiro will speak up: *"Once you were men, perhaps. Now you are outlaws. You have stolen from my lord's people, and, thus, from my lord. I am Kitsuki Otojiro, magistrate of Yamasura. Face me, if you dare, ronin. I will grant you the mercy of a quick death."* Kazari spits on the ground and sheathes his

sword. *"In another life, I stormed the gates of Kosaten Shiro twice and slew more men each time than you have brought with you. I faced the White Demon of Ninkatoshi, and only one of us survived tell the tale. I broke the line of Goju Nibori at Volturnum. I am Kazari. I will leave your blood on these stones and only the mountain winds will remember your name."* This is a typical Lion-style pre-battle boast, which should be familiar to any Lion PCs. The inequity of this match is obvious to the characters, and should they simply allow Otojiro to face Kazari in a duel, the Dragon magistrate will be cut down almost immediately. If that happens, Kazari will grant the PCs one chance to depart, but should they hesitate whatsoever, he will order his men to attack.

A duelist PC may attempt to take Otojiro's place; again, this is primarily a roleplaying challenge. Should they succeed, and win the duel, then the rest of Kazari's men will still attack; however, demoralized by the fall of their leader, they will suffer a penalty of -1k0 to all their attack rolls, and the mounted ronin will simply flee.

Violent Resolution:

Should it come to violence, the bandits will fight to the end, all except for Hoshi Hitofu, who will not move from his seated position, though he can go into Full Defense while on his knees. Kazari will accept any PCs challenge for a duel, and the last one to die (ideally Kazari or a samurai NPC) will give the following death speech:

"Please, do not punish the one man who tried to save us from the road to hell... Hoshi-san played no part in our banditry, this I swear to you... Say that you will not punish him... say it..."

If time is pressing, it may be worthwhile to handle the NPCs separately in the combat - do not roll for them, but assume that they will handle their opponents. Only have the PCs deal with a number of ashigaru equal to their own number, two of the ronin, and Kazari.

Nonviolent Resolution:

Convincing the bandits to stand down will involve acknowledging their legitimate complaints - that the samurai caste has failed to meet their obligations to those men who fought and died for the Empire without being members of the Clans. Any PC laying blame upon his Clan or daimyo faces a steep Honor loss (5-10 points of Honor, depending on their current Honor Rank), and laying blame upon the Emperor, Toturi I, is bald-faced blasphemy (2 ranks of Honor lost, gain 1 rank of Infamy). The only way to resolve this with minimal bloodshed is for the PC to accept the blame

and take responsibility for the failure personally. Doing this convincingly requires an **Sincerity / Awareness** roll TN 25. (Which Emphasis applies depends entirely on how the player presents their case – the player may choose between Honesty and Deceit, with appropriate Honor loss if Deceit is chosen.) If the PC is successful, the bandits will stand down.

“Very well. While we have strayed from the true path, it is important that our concerns are heard. If you would allow us one last favor: please deliver our message to your lords so that the rest of the Empire’s forgotten soldiers do not suffer as we have. Also, Hoshi-san here played no part in the banditry. I and my men all swear to this. Please, do not punish him.”

The bandits’ seppuku will occur at dawn, upon the crown of the ridge, which as the morning before is surrounded by golden fog. Two of the ashigaru soldiers were once *eta* and will fulfill this position so that the PCs will not have to sully themselves. One by one, the bandits will climb up out of the mists and meet their fate with stoic silence (seppuku for the samurai, beheadings for the rest). There is enough fallen wood for a bonfire.

Kazari’s Death Haiku:

*Green, gold, and brown leaves,
blanketing the young saplings
safely for winter.*

Lying to Kazari and not reporting his words will cost the PC Honor.

Blasphemy?

It is possible that certain PCs may have some sympathy for the bandits’ stated issues with the samurai social system. Otojiro, on the other hand, will treat those who have violently taken up arms with no leniency. If the PCs wish to side with the bandits, they will have to kill Otojiro, Jiang, and Tetsao, though Kyushu will stand aside. The PCs will all lose at least two full Ranks of Honor, and gain a Dark Secret to reflect this incident. Though they will earn the gratitude of Kazari and his men, they will also be forced to lie to Oharu about the result of the mission (requiring a **Sincerity / Awareness** roll at a TN of 40), or else face possible execution as criminals themselves. Needless to say, this outcome is hardly ideal for the long-term survival of the characters.

Aftermath of the Battle

Hoshi Hitofu will submit silently to seppuku if the PCs insist, though Hitomi Jiang will speak in his defense. Hitofu has taken both a vow of silence and of non-

violence. Jiang identifies him, and will describe him as a peaceful man with a troubled past. Jiang knows of Hitofu’s vows (non-violence and silence), and will speculate that the Hoshi likely tried to steer the gang away from their path, obviously to no avail. This is almost the only thing Hitofu will react to, with a sorrowful, somber nod.

Nothing short of an **Honor Roll** of TN 20 will convince Hitofu and Jiang that his seppuku is the appropriate action. If asked to weigh in, Otojiro is in favor of leniency because that was the last wish of a dead man, and he feels he must honor that request. He will recommend that Hitofu seclude himself until his vows of passive inaction have passed, though. Whichever PC demanded Hitofu’s seppuku should write the reason down, in one sentence, on their Module Tracking Sheet. Denying the virtue of Loyalty will cost the PC Honor (GMs discretion).

Tetsao is noticeably troubled by the incident because several of these men served beside him during the war. He will confide to the PC that advised him his concerns that this problem is likely occurring throughout the entire Empire. “... and if the only possible answer is death, there may be no true peace to be had.”

After the combat is over, while the PCs are dealing with the after-effects, they may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** at a TN of 25 to catch a glimpse of a robed figure standing on the ridgeline above the camp. This is Isoshi, who watched the confrontation with an expression of deep disappointment on his seamed, weathered face. PCs approaching or attacking him will drive him away – he will cast “Embrace of Kenro-jo-jin” and effectively swim away through the copious stone formations around the area.

Returning the stolen goods to Koyamatani Mura is a straightforward affair (no return rolls needed), and the villagers are overjoyed, praising the names of the magistrate and his yoriki. Otojiro will give any PC that had to borrow a horse one of the bandits’ steeds. A light, lazy rain begins to fall as the PCs return to Yamasura.

Failure?

Should more than half of the PCs be reduced to the Down or Out Wound Rank, Otojiro will reluctantly call for a retreat:

The battle has gone disastrously wrong, and through the din of combat you hear Kitsuki Otojiro shout “Fall back!” Kyushu, Tetsao, and Jiang look at each other and nod, throwing themselves at the bandits like wild

men. “We will hold them off, samurai-sans! For the Emperor!!”

The bandits will not pursue the PCs (nor will they kill Kyushu, Tetsao, or Jiang), but when they make it back to Yamasura to get reinforcements, Otojiro will thank them for their assistance and relieve them of duty (without pay).

“Thank you for your assistance, my friends, but it was foolish to think we could take them alone. Please forgive me.”

When Otojiro arrives the next week with a platoon of Mirumoto bushi, the bandits will be long gone and the graves of the fallen lie covered with a thick blanket of snow.

Conclusion

Other plot resolutions:

- The repair team (and possibly the Daikoku monk Jin, if the PCs asked for his help) will leave immediately for Koyamatani Mura, once the PCs declare to them that it is safe and the rain stops.
- Kitsuki Yukehime has already left for Kyuden Otomo, having successfully completed her print series. She did leave a package for the PC who spoke with her most favorably - inside is a framed print of *Two Kobune Crossing the Sea*, however, this copy has signed by Sumihito and as such black cat prints all over it (see handout 1).
- If a PC spoke to Tetsao and helped him resolve his issues, he will thank the PC profusely before returning to his family. If no PC spoke to him, he will leave with Kyushu.
- Kyushu will leave to continue his travels, but not before stopping to speak to the PCs and thank them for an enlightening conversation and experience.
- Kitsuki Otojiro will pay any PC who requested compensation and thank them for their services.
- If Hoshi Hitofu survived, he and Hitomi Jiang will leave together to return to the High House of Light (similarly, he will thank the PCs for their help). If Hitofu did not survive, however, Jiang will leave with Kyushu (and will not speak to the PCs unless they too are *ise zumi*).

The PCs are invited to Lord Odasake's closing court, where they (and Otojiro) are seated as the guests of honor alongside Agasha Meitaro. There are many delegates from the other clans here, but the following NPCs are of note:

- **Agasha Chosai:** The acting Dragon Agasha family daimyo while his brother Agasha Tamori is away, Chosai is a grim man who favors the garb of a monk and has a long ponytail and a shaved head.
- **Agasha Odasake:** Daimyo of the Sabiishi Province, he is a sharp-eyed middle-aged man with a slight gut and stoic eyes, whose favored hobby is gardening. He dotes on his eldest twin daughters, Miko and Atatori, who are also present.
- **Kaiu Kazuma:** one of the many nephews of Kaiu Mai, Daimyo of the Hokufoo Province, he is here to discuss trade agreements with a representative from the Dragon's Kaiton province. Botany is not his thing, but this was the only opportunity for him to come this far north.
- **Kuni Hanatori:** The second daughter of Kuni Roka, the Lord of the Adauchi Province, she is here to interview Agasha Meitaro on behalf of her father, who is seeking knowledge from any and all returned spirits. She is an inquisitive earth shugenja who enjoys studying the flora that do not grow in her homeland.
- **Daidoji Wazikuro:** The third son of Daidoji Tsukasa, Lord of the Sabishii Province, he is a noted botanical researcher and often assists his father in training the soldiers under their command about nature and how to best use the terrain to fit their needs. His hair is dyed white, and he sports a thin moustache.
- **Utaku Lao-Tsung:** The eldest son of Utaku Ruri, the Daimyo of the Koubaku Province, he is traveling home from Shiro Mirumoto, where he studies the niten sword style, for the winter. He is a handsome, if slightly exotic, young man who enjoys the mountains of his father's clan.
- **Agasha Meitaro:** A spirit that returned through Oblivion's Gate a few years ago, he studied under Agasha herself and has written many famous books on the subject of botany. He is a tall, thin, middle-aged man with an angular nose.

Dinner is magnificent - well above what the PCs are used to (unless they are Imperials). As the NPCs are rather tired of discussing flowers, they welcome the PCs' exciting news and tales of adventure. Otojiro will

speak favorably to the PCs' nobles who are present, and Chosai and Odasake both will thank the PCs individually: all PCs receive a Favor from the Dragon Clan and PCs with Oath of Fealty: Agasha Odasake (Sabiishi Province) gain a point of Status for their good work.

Should the PC who petted the *ki-rin* speak of the incident, he/she will gain "Reputation: Blessed by Otaku." Note that this is a social advantage only, with no listed benefit (yet).

The road home is peaceful, calm, and uneventful.

Three weeks later, the PC who assisted Tetsao the most will receive a letter in the mail (see handout 2 and cert). Also, PCs who wrote a letter of recommendation for Mirumoto Yamato will receive a letter from him informing them that he was admitted into the War College and thanking them for their assistance. This PC gains the advantage "Ally: Mirumoto Yamato." If a challenge was made but the duel was not fought, then the PC involved in confrontation with Yamato will receive a letter stating that he has gained permission from his lord for a duel (to be held at a convenient later time). It is up to the PC to determine if they will seek permission for a lethal duel from their lord, however, Yamato's letter will strongly imply that they are a coward if they do not.

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:	1
Good roleplaying:	1
Defeating the bandits:	1
Tetsao is set on the right path, or Hitofu is spared:	1

Total Possible Experience:	4
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Other Awards/Penalties:

If the bandits were defeated, all PCs gain Kitsuki Otojiro as an Ally with 1 Influence and 1 Devotion. Any PC who immediately volunteered for the mission will gain him as an Ally either way.

Any PC who gave advice to Tetsao gains him as an Ally (0 Influence and 2 Devotion).

Any PC who answered Kyushu's question will gain him as an Ally (1 Influence, 1 Devotion).

If the PCs successfully dealt with the bandits, they gain Doji Oharu (2 Influence, 1 Devotion) as an Ally if they did not already have him. If they did, they receive a neatly-folded origami crane with a very politely-worded expression of gratitude.

If the scarlet nightshade flower was given to a Scorpion Lord, the PC who presented it gains "Favor: Scorpion Clan." NOTE: Personally cultivating the flower at home requires contacting the campaign administrator.

Giving the golden arrowroot to a Lord does not result in a favor, but the results will be announced in a future module. NOTE: Personally cultivating the herb at home requires contacting the campaign administrator.

Honor

+1 Honor for assisting the Magistrate without asking for payment.

+1 Honor for the PC who positively influenced Tetsao the most and helped him defeat his internal demons.

Glory

+1 Glory for defeating the bandits.

-1 Glory for PCs who failed to defeat the bandits and survived.

Module Tracking Sheets

The following are important points of information that should be recorded on the PCs' Module Tracking Section in the "Notes" category:

- What did the PC say when talking to Kyushu? Specifically, look for single sentence phrases like "I would go to any length to avenge my Lord."
- If there was a duel, what was the outcome? Specifically, did a Phoenix PC successfully defend the reputation of his Lord?

- Which PC found the poison flower/healing herb, and what did they do with it? Specifically, to whose gardens did the plants arrive (which Lord)?
- What did the PC say when convincing Hoshi Hitofu to perform seppuku? Specifically, look for single sentences like “The needs of the Empire are greater than those of one man.”
- Did the PCs report Kazari’s words (or the information that there may be more disaffected soldiers in other provinces) to their Lords?

GM Reporting

The following are important points of information that should be reported to the Campaign Administrator

- Were the bandits defeated?
- Did Otojiro survive?
- Was the Phoenix Lord’s reputation defended?
- What was the fate of Tetsao?
- What was the fate of the tattooed monks?
- Was the toxic flower given to the Scorpion?
- Which lord received the healing herb?
- Which Lords were informed of the problem with the disaffected soldiers?

GM must report this information BEFORE (4/14/2011) for it to have storyline effect!

Appendix #1: NPCs

Kitsuki Otojiro

A young, earnest magistrate recently promoted to his position, Otojiro has had some significant successes with investigations in the city. However, his practical experience is somewhat limited, and while he has some training as a swordsman, he has never faced a group larger than a small street gang. Clever as he is, he is still prone to acting without fully thinking through the consequences of his actions. He is slight of build, with a proper samurai topknot and a serious face.

Air 3	Earth 2	Fire 3	Water 2	Void 3
			Perception 4	
Honor 5.5		Status 3.0		Glory 3.0
Initiative: 5k3				Attack: 6k3
Armor TN: 29 (light armor and Technique)				Damage: 6k2
Reduction: 3 (light armor)				

School/Rank: Kitsuki Courtier 2

Skills: Courtier 2, Defense 2, Etiquette (Courtesy) 3, Horsemanship 1, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation (Interrogation) 4, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Law 3, Meditation 2, Sincerity 2

Mastery Abilities: +1k0 to sword damage

Advantages/Disadvantages: Clear Thinker / Idealistic

Hitomi Jiang

A man of few words, Jiang has served as a yoriki in Yamasura for only a few months. He is no great investigator, but is quite handy at getting street toughs to back down. Large and burly, his quiet demeanor manages to project more menace than many other's shouted threats.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 3
Reflexes 3		Agility 3	Strength 4	
Honor 4.0		Status 2.0		Glory 1.0
Initiative: 4k3				Attack: 7k3
Armor TN: 20				Damage: 5k2
Reduction: 3 (Crab Tattoo)				

School/Rank: Tattooed Man 1 (Crab & Dragon Tattoo)

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 1, Craft: Tattooing 1, Intimidation 3, Jiujutsu (Martial Arts) 4, Lore: Theology 1, Meditation 2,

Mastery Abilities: increase unarmed damage by +1k0

Advantages/Disadvantages: Hands of Stone, Large / Antisocial I

Kyushu

A strange, enigmatic monk from a militant order devoted to Onnotangu, Kyushu is wandering the Empire in search of a purpose since the demise of his divine Patron. He is a wiry monk in his middle years, who usually seems to be smiling at an unpleasant joke no one else knows.

Air 3	Earth 2 Willpower 3	Fire 3	Water 2 Strength 3	Void 3
Honor 3.0		Status 0.0	Glory 0.5	
Initiative: 5k3		Attack: 7k3 (bisento)		
Armor TN: 25 (light armor)		Damage: 6k3 (bisento)		
Reduction: 3 (light armor)				

School/Rank: Temple of Onnotangu (treat as Temples of the Thousand Fortunes)

Skills: Defense 4, Jiujutsu 3, Lore: Bushido 2, Lore: History 3, Lore: Theology (Fortunes) 3, Meditation 2, Polearms 4

Mastery Abilities: +5 to initiative for first round of skirmish while using polearm, +1k0 unarmed damage

Tetsao

Tetsao is a haunted man, a veteran warrior whose experiences in the War Against the Shadow have marked him ever since. He is a resident of Yamasura with his wife and children, but has had a difficult time finding work lately.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 2
		Agility 3	Strength 3	
Honor 3.5		Status 0.0	Glory 1.0	
Initiative: 3k2			Attack: 7k3 (yari)	
Armor TN: 18 (ashigaru armor)			Damage: 5k2 (yari)	
Reduction: 1 (ashigaru armor)				

School/Rank: none (True Ronin)

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 2, Hunting 1, Kenjutsu 1, Spears (Yari) 4

Mastery Abilities: may ignore 3 points of Reduction for first round of skirmish with spear

Kazari

A bitter, angry ronin, Kazari has turned against the typical Rokugani social order. However, while he has a certain practical cunning, he is not a sophisticated enough thinker to have truly considered the full ramifications of his philosophy – most samurai would consider it blasphemy, and they would not be far wrong. In his mind, he only wants what is right, but his demand that the Clans acknowledge their error simply cannot be met as he wishes. He is a tall, lean man with a sparse moustache and thinning hair.

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 3

Honor 2.5 Status 0.0 Glory 0.0

Initiative: 6k3 **Attack:** 8k3 (katana)

Armor TN: 25 (light armor) **Damage:** 7k2 (katana)

Reduction: 3 (light armor)

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

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 1 (Insight Rank 3)

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle (Mass Combat) 4, Craft: Traps 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu (katana) 5, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: History 2, Sincerity 3, Stealth 3

Mastery Abilities: +1k0 to sword damage, may draw katana as Free Action

Advantages/Disadvantages: Leadership, Way of the Land (Akodo Lands) / Disbeliever

Ronin Bandits

Air 2 Earth 2 Fire 2 Water 2 Void 2

Reflexes 3 Agility 3
Honor 1.5 Status 0.0 Glory 0.0

Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** 6k3

Armor TN: 25 (light armor) **Damage:** 6k2 (katana) or 4k2 (bow)

Reduction: 3 (light armor)

Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 28 (+15), 32 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Dead)

School/Rank: none (True Ronin, Insight Rank 1)

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Craft: Traps 1, Defense 2, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 3, Spears 2, Stealth 2

Mastery Abilities: +1k0 damage with swords

Ashigaru Bandits

Air 1 Earth 2 Fire 2 Water 2 Void 1

Reflexes 2 Status -2.0 Glory 0.0
Honor 0.5

Initiative: 3k2 **Attack:** 5k2 (spear)

Armor TN: 18 (ashigaru armor) **Damage:** 4k2 (spear)

Reduction: 1 (ashigaru armor)

Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 28 (+15), 32 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Dead)

School/Rank: none (Insight Rank 1)

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 1, Craft: Farming 3, Defense 1, Hunting 2, Spears (Yari) 3

Mastery Abilities:

Advantages/Disadvantages:

Hoshi Hitofu

An older monk with a deeply-lined face, Hitofu has a dark past and has sought redemption by trying to bring peace to the Empire. He fell in with Kazari, and has tried for years to calm the ronin's rage, to little avail. His pacifism served initially as an example to the bitter ronin, but eventually Kazari turned to banditry when it seemed that the way of peace has brought nothing but more pain.

Air 2 Earth 2 Fire 3 Water 2 Void 3

Reflexes 3 Status 1.0 Glory 1.0
Honor 3.5

Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** n/a

Armor TN: 25 (Bamboo tattoo) **Damage:** n/a

School/Rank: Tattooed Man 1 (Bamboo and Ki-Rin)

Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 4, Craft: Tattooing 2, Hunting 2, Jiu-jitsu 3, Lore: Theology 4, Meditation 3

Mastery Abilities:

Advantages/Disadvantages: Oath of Nonviolence (cannot cause harm to others), Oath of Silence (cannot speak)

Player Handout #1

Good day to you, my friend,

I apologize that my schedule has prevented me from meeting with you one last time before I departed for Kyuden Otomo, but the good of the Empire always comes before the wishes of its citizens. Please forgive Sumihito-san's insistence upon signing the print I made for you- he can be such a troublesome old man at times! I suppose he spotted a fish in the water. Who can know the nature of cats? Such things are mysteries. I hope this letter finds you well, and I look forward to your reply (I shall be in residence at Kyuden Otomo from now until the Month of the Dragon).

Sayonara, and may the Fortunes smile upon you!

-Kitsuki Yukehime

(spilled ink and cat prints)

=^.^=

Sumihito says goodbye too!

Player Handout #2

Dear O'Samurai-sama,

Please forgive my indulgence, but my name is Taki, and I am the wife of the man to whom you once recently spoke, an ashigaru named Tetsao (my noble Lord Odasake-sama has given me the permission to send this letter, and his scribe Kitsuki Hiroshi-sama is honoring us by writing it). Ever since my husband returned from his service in the Imperial Legions, I have prayed for his well-being, and those prayers have finally been answered- I am pleased to inform you that the darkness that once clouded his thoughts has gone, thanks to you and your kind words. You have brought happiness back to our family, and to see him once again play with his son brings such great joy to my heart. If it would not impose, we wish to name our next child after you so that your message will spread to future generations.

My husband also requests that if you ever return to Yamasura, to please find him and say hello. He has taken up the position as Chief Doshin for the local magistrate's office, and you may find him there if you wish.

May the blessings of Shinsei follow you always,

Taki

PS: Our son Saru drew you a picture and wishes for you to have it. I have included it with this letter. Please forgive the crudeness, he is only 6 years old.

(see cert)