

Prison of Earth

**A One-Round Low/Mid-Rank Adventure for Heroes of
Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido
Month of Akodo, 1138 (Summer)**

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Mysterious accidents have plagued the Iron Mines of the Crab, and the Kuni have called for assistance in their investigation. Is it sabotage, or something more sinister?

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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 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 low-end and high-end parties, as follows:

Low End Party (more than two combat-capable characters are Rank 1): There are only sixty goblins at the mouth of the mine.

High End Party (more than two combat-capable characters are Rank 3): The Goblin Shaman knows and will cast the “Summon Undead Champion” spell on the dead Crab patrol, raising them as zombies to attack the PCs.

Adventure Summary and Background

The Crab rely upon the rich iron deposits found in the Twilight Mountains to supply not only weapons and armor for their forces on the Wall, but also tools and equipment for their peasants and an important export to other Clans. Recently, that iron has become incredibly difficult to mine, due to a bizarre phenomenon caused by all of the Earth kami departing the center of the mountain range. In some areas, this has led to cave-ins as the mountains lose the strength granted to them by the earth spirits, while in others, extracting ore is almost impossible because of the increased presence of strong earth kami.

The Kuni have determined that an area roughly ten kilometers in diameter has been effected by this exodus of earth kami, likening it to what happened to their family’s lands when they were cleansed of the Taint (resulting in the Kuni Wastes). Why only the spirits of Earth seem affected is unknown, and a Jade Magistrate has been assigned to assist the Crab in their investigation.

While the Crab believe these events are likely caused by some new Shadowlands threat, the reality is a danger far greater than most can imagine: the death of the Oracle of Void, Toturi Kaede, has had a profound effect upon the spiritual fabric of Rokugan and few are more aware of this than the remaining Oracles of the

Elemental Dragons. For millennia, samurai have sought the insight of the Oracles concerning major events in the Empire. With Kaede’s murder, the Oracles have lost their tie to the Void, and their ability to see the future has been altered with this lack. The Oracles are blind, under attack by agents of the Shadow Dragon, and for the first time, the Oracle of Earth knows fear.

Hiruma Osuno, the current bearer of the Earth Dragon’s blessing, witnessed the Goju’s recent attempt to claim the Elemental Nemuranai. Believing that these items can be used not only to kill the Oracles, but to destroy the Dragons’ connection to Ningen-do, and faced with a foe that he could not see how to defeat, Osuno did the unthinkable: he retreated. His fear is not primarily for himself, for as a Crab bushi, Osuno had faced death on a regular basis. His fear is, rather, for the Realm and the other Oracles: he has seen what effect Kaede’s death has had on those chosen by the Elemental Dragons, and with no way of knowing what might result from his own demise, he believes that it may prove even more disastrous for Ningen-do if the Oracle most tied to the realm of matter is destroyed in the same fashion that the Oracle of Void was. Descending deep into the Twilight Mountains, the Oracle has surrounded himself in a cocoon of pure crystal and forced the local earth spirits to flee the area.

In an attempt to solidify his tenuous position as Jade Champion, Kuni Utagu has sent one of his recently appointed Jade Magistrates, Isawa Zeppeki, to lead the investigation into the cause of the problem and its solution. Zeppeki is a talented Earth shugenja and competent investigator, but he is caught up in the pomp of his new position, and has gathered a large entourage to assist him. In addition to a shugenja from each of the Great Clans, he may have several bushi or courtiers (any non-shugenja PCs) along to provide assistance and support.

The following NPCs represent their Clans in the expedition. Shugenja PCs replace their Clan’s NPC (that NPC will not appear in the module).

Crane: Asahina Teisei
Dragon: Agasha Nadare
Lion: Ikoma Kuriku
Mantis: Moshi Udara
Scorpion: Yogo Rikujo

These Crab and Phoenix NPCs have been sent in addition to any PCs from those Clans:

Crab: Kuni Sarako
Phoenix: Agasha Shikkui

Character Notes

Check the PCs' character sheets for the following:

- *Fire and Water*: Characters who played this may have been granted their vision by the Earth Dragon, which will effect their interaction with the Oracle.
- Characters with the following Advantages will experience difficulties with those Advantages: **Chosen by the Oracles (earth)**, **Friendly Kami (earth)**, **Friend of the Elements (earth)**, and **Strength of the Earth**.
- Characters with the following Disadvantages will experience greater difficulties as a result: **Elemental Imbalance (earth)** and **Wrath of the Kami (earth)**.

Additionally, characters with "Oath of Fealty: Kaiu Mai" are native to the Crab Hokufuu province where the module takes place. They will be present to act as their liege's representative on the mission, and will have access to the basic information (in the Gossip checks) without requiring a roll.

Introduction

The winds coming off of the nearby Twilight Mountains are strong, blowing dust and debris around the streets of Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi, the Face of the East Castle, and forcing several merchants in the Golden Carp Marketplace to shutter their stalls early. Despite the dry summer air, several large pools of standing water are being drained by peasants using wooden push-brooms, the remnants of the heavy rains that accompanied your arrivals over the last week. You have been given rooms at the Inn of the Stone Circle, awaiting the arrival of the Jade Magistrate and his entourage.

The PCs have been sent by their daimyo to Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi in the Crab lands to assist the Jade Magistrate, Isawa Zeppeki, with his investigation into some strange occurrences within the Twilight Mountains. Many of them have been here for the better part of a week waiting for Zeppeki and the Phoenix and Dragon characters (both PC and NPC) to arrive, and have heard wild rumors about mountains crumbling like they were made of sand and conflicting reports of easily tillable soil becoming hard as stone.

Upon entering the province, any PCs with the "**Wrath of the Kami: Earth**" or "**Elemental Imbalance: Earth**" Disadvantages will become afflicted with

terrible headaches, resulting in the TN for any roll that uses a mental Trait being increased by 5; all Spellcasting Rolls have their TNs increased by 10. Additionally, PCs with "**Friendly Kami: Earth**", "**Friend of the Elements: Earth**", or "**Strength of the Earth**" will find themselves feeling heavy and sluggish, and the effects of those Advantages are doubled (for now).

The NPCs are also staying at the Stone Circle, and will have introduced themselves (remember if there are any shugenja PCs from these Clans, that the PCs replace the NPCs).

Asahina Teisei is a tall, stoic man with a soft voice that echoes the pattern of waves crashing against ocean cliffs that decorate his blue silk robes. He is polite, but chooses to spend most of his time quietly contemplating the mountains that loom in the distance.

In contrast, **Ikoma Kuriku** is a heavy-set, boisterous veteran whose voice fills the common room of the inn with tales of his family's heroism stretching all the way back to the Great Ikoma himself. He is careful however, to distance himself from any claims of boasting or self-aggrandizing by not telling stories of his own adventures.

Iuchi Luanshi and **Moshi Udara** have struck up a fast friendship based on their mutual love of reaching high speeds on horseback or at sea, respectively. Udara will gravitate toward any Unicorn PC that replaces Luanshi, while her Unicorn counter part will be drawn to a Mantis shugenja. Non-shugenja characters with similar skills or inclinations are likewise approached.

Yogo Rikujo is friendly and outgoing on any first meeting, but quickly becomes cautious and a little bit paranoid when he thinks no one is paying attention. He wears a mask covering his entire face, save for small openings for his eyes and mouth. The mask has been crafted in such a way that it resembles a marble sculpture.

By now, most of the PCs should have been in town for a few day. **IMPORTANT:** Earth shugenja can Sense the earth kami in the area without casting the spell, and they receive a Free Raise on any Earth spell cast in the area with the exception of Commune. Communing with the earth kami requires calling two Raises for clarity, and the TN is increased by an additional 10 (for a total base TN of 30). If the spell succeeds, a small, angry earth kami will appear and answer one question before vanishing into the dirt. The answers to relevant questions are listed toward the end of this section.

Allow the players to make **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** rolls at a TN of 10 in order to find out some of the following rumors that are circulating in town, revealing more information for each increment of 5 they exceed the TN by. (Dragon and Phoenix PCs may have heard these rumors during their recent travels.)

- Mining operations in the Twilight Mountains have come to a standstill due to increasingly unsafe working conditions. Several mines have collapsed altogether, while others have become almost impossible to mine using standard tools and techniques.
- Wells in some of the outlying villages have started to dry up, despite the recent rains. The water simply stays on the surface rather than seeping into the earth, becoming stagnant and fetid unless the pools are drained.
- Whispers among visiting Kuni shugenja compare what is going on to the desolation of the Kuni Wastes, though only the earth kami seem affected by the banishment.

Players who ask specifically about Underworld information in the Golden Carp Marketplace can find the following by rolling **Lore: Underworld / Awareness** at a TN of 20 (and losing Honor accordingly for the use of a Low Skill): A number of factions had been competing for control over the Golden Carp Marketplace, but a series of disappearances and mysterious deaths has resulted in most of the trade being handled by a group of ronin merchants calling themselves the Dama.

Towards mid-afternoon, the Dragon representatives arrive, followed shortly thereafter by Isawa Zeppeki and his fellow Phoenix. The magistrate goes directly to the Inn and straight up to his room. One of the Phoenix will approach any non-Crab, non-Dragon PC who is in the common room, and shyly introduce himself. (In the event of only Crab or Dragon being present, he will approach Crab shugenja first by preference, but he has been ordered to deliver a message, and will do so despite being uncomfortable with Dragon samurai if necessary.)

“G..good afternoon, [Clan]-sama. I am Agasha Shikkui, h..humble scholar and assistant to the Jade Magistrate, Isawa Zeppeki. F..forgive my presumption, but I assume you are also here to assist in his investigation. If so, Zeppeki-sama has tasked me with letting you know that we will be attending dinner this evening within the castle as the daimyo’s guests, and that you should be ready to leave within the hour. Please let any of the other members of Zeppeki-sama’s retinue know when to meet us.”

Without waiting for a response, Shikkui turns and heads up to his room to get cleaned up as well.

Agasha Shikkui doesn’t appear to put much stock in the niceties of the Empire, preferring to spend his time testing his theories of elemental magic and convincing the kami to accomplish feats normally reserved for a different element. He is just as blunt with the kami as he is with people, sometimes acting as though they are tools to be used rather than sacred spirits. This is not due to arrogance on his part, but entirely because he simply does not understand most of the rules that form the basis of polite society in Rokugan.

Any PCs or NPCs in the Inn will have heard this exchange, and may hire a messenger from the Inn to locate any PCs that may be wandering around town. If all of the PCs are out and about, a messenger will find them in time to meet Zeppeki, but only if they hurry.

If she hasn’t been replaced by a PC Dragon Clan shugenja, **Agasah Nadare** will arrive at the same time as Zeppeki and Shikkui. She will give polite greetings to any non-Phoenix PCs present, but hurriedly go to prepare herself for the dinner, with a few mutters about “presumptuous Phoenix goats” and “falsely-named oathbreakers” under her breath. Nadare is quite pretty, save for the scowl that crosses her face whenever Shikkui or any other Phoenix Clan Agasha are present. Shikkui, of course, is oblivious to her antipathy. (She is properly respectful of Zeppeki’s rank as Jade Magistrate, between the Imperial nature of that position and the fact that he is an Isawa rather than an Agasha: while she is tense with non-Agasha Phoenix, she is only actively rude to Agasha Phoenix.)

Once the PCs have assembled at the Inn and made any necessary introduction, **Isawa Zeppeki** and **Kuni Sarako** will meet them in the common room and introduce themselves.

Kuni Sarako is the arch-typical Crab samurai-ko: stockier than most Rokugani women, a little bit loud, and ready to unleash a pile of hurt on any man or beast that threatens the Crab. Unmarried, she has served Kaiu Mai for four years, following a ten-year tour of duty on the Wall. She does have one weakness: if one of the PCs has a small animal as a pet, Sarako will obsess over it, spoiling it with table scraps or sweets and offering to look after the creature for extended periods.

Isawa Zeppeki, on the other hand, could be easily confused for Crane if his robes were sky blue instead of fiery orange due to his genteel manner and strict adherence to proper protocol. He gives the impression

that there is room for him to grow a bit before the green and gold sash he wears so proudly will fit properly, but he is confident of his abilities and trusts that the samurai sent to serve him are equally competent. (It may prove necessary to tailor his speech somewhat to fit the skills of the PCs at the table; though Zeppeki is somewhat aware of their reputations, he will make assumptions based on their family and School.)

“Thank you, friends, for your patience while I prepared our dinner with Kaiu Mai, the daimyo of this province. I am Isawa Zeppeki, and am pleased that you have been sent by your lords to assist in my efforts to solve the mysterious events occurring within the mountains. Among you are scholars, scouts, diplomats, and warriors – I trust that each of you will find a role to fill. Kuni Sarako here will guide us through the passes that lead to the mines we are to investigate.” Sarako bows humbly as she is introduced. “You can begin by leading us to dinner, Kuni-san, as I am sure we are all interested in learning what your daimyo has to tell us.”

And with a smile that barely disguises her disinterest in the by-the-book manner in which Zeppeki is conducting himself, Sarako leads you through the streets of Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi towards the castle proper.

Part One: Dinner at the Castle

Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi is somewhat more decorative than most Crab castles, as it serves as an occasional center for the Clan’s diplomatic efforts with the north-western Clans. Though the battlements are finely-cut stone, they are still sturdy enough to resist sieges and the guards on the walls are obviously dedicated to their duties. Statues and elegant stonework is visible everywhere, though none of the carving presents a foot-hold for enemy forces or would hinder the defenders in any fashion. The servants greet their guests with respect and guide them to a large hall where the daimyo and her staff await.

Kaiu Mai is a large, practical woman who approaches her duties as a master craftsman would any challenging project: with patience, determination, and exacting standards. She has played host for delegates from other Clans on a regular basis, but the current crisis has taken much of her attention and her hospitality is being stretched thin.

The meal is typical for the Crab, high in protein and carbs, but light on refined flavors. Finely crafted statues representing each of the Great Clans decorate the table, with the Phoenix close to the head and the Crane notably placed at the far end. Zeppeki compliments Kaiu Mai on her artistry, correctly assuming that she was the sculptor (though the works were made years ago, as she has found less time to devote to her art while burdened with the administration of the province). The guests are expected to sit near their Clan’s representative statues, placing the Crane as far from their hostess as possible within the bounds of propriety. Because of the various conflicts brewing in the Empire, conversation at the table is kept to small talk (and possibly Ikoma Kuriku’s tall tales). Kaiu Mai sits at the head of the table with Zeppeki to her right, questioning him on his travels from the Phoenix Clan; though the Isawa is clearly more interested in finding out why the Twilight Mountains have become a concern of the Jade Champion, he answers her with exquisite courtesy.

Once the final course has been served and enjoyed, Kaiu Mai stands, clears her throat, and signals a pair of servants, who quickly leave the hall. More servants begin refilling cups and clearing the tables as she addresses her guests. “We are grateful to Utagu-sama for sending us one of his Jade Magistrates to find the source of the rot that plagues our mountains, and eradicate it.” As Mai speaks, the pair of servants returns, each pushing a cart that bears a head-sized piece of marble. “To give you an idea of what you and your assistants will be dealing with, I have had these samples brought from our finest marble quarry, which sits on the boundary of the affected area. Both were cut the same day, from the same quarry, but are very different, as you will observe.” Picking up a hammer and chisel, Mai attempts to split a piece off of the first stone. Despite the strength put into the blow, the only result is a small indentation in the rock and a dulled chisel. “A strike like that should have split the stone,” she explains as she moves to the other sample. This time, after carefully placing the chisel atop the rock, she brings the hammer down with more artistry than brute force, yet almost stumbles as the stone grumbles into gravel instantly upon impact.

“As you can see, the condition of the mountains makes it difficult to continue our mining and marble quarrying operation. Our cousins in the Kuni have traced the cause of this phenomenon to a mass exodus of earth spirits from the mountains. The resulting buildup of kami in the surrounding area makes working the land or mining all but impossible. Additionally, the earth kami fleeing the mountains are

angry, and refuse to answer our shugenja's questions regarding what... or who... is behind their expulsion.

“Two weeks ago, I sent a group of engineers and shugenja into the mountains, and they were able to pinpoint the center of the affected area – a mountain known as Akai Yama (Red Mountain) due to the large deposits of iron ore it contains. That is where I’d suggest you start your investigation. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have to try and explain to one of our generals why he can’t get any more spearheads for his ashigaru. Kuni Sarako can answer any questions you may have – she was one of the shugenja that went with the survey team. If you have any other requests, you may speak with my hatamoto.” And with a short bow, Kaiu Mai departs.

Sarako will answer the PCs questions as best she can, but the Earth kami have been extremely difficult to communicate with, especially the older, more powerful mountain spirits. Answers to some of the basic questions the PCs may have follow, but the local Crab simply do not have much in the way of information to impart.

- **When did this problem begin?** – Reports of mine collapses began shortly after the earthquake that occurred a few months back and were thought to be tied to that catastrophe, but the increasingly strange instances became pronounced about three weeks ago.
- **Why haven’t the Crab sent anyone into the mines to investigate?** Kaiu Mai was about to organize such an investigation when Kuni Utagu sent word that he was sending one of his new Jade Magistrates to look into it. This has caused extra delays and has cost the mines and quarries at least a month of production, but Mai accepted Utagu’s request (though astute PCs may note that the daimyo was not happy about it).
- **What condition are the passes and roads in as a result of the weakened earth closer to Akai Yama?** Most of the roads leading in are extremely sturdy, likely as a result of the increased concentration of earth kami, but the paths closest to the mountain are more treacherous. Sarako suggests taking extra precautions when approaching the mine.

If one of the PCs wishes to commune with the earth kami in the samples Kaiu Mai presented, the caster must call two Raises for clarity and the TN is increased by an additional 10 (for a base TN of 30, as mentioned above). If no shugenja PCs step up to do so, Zeppeki will cast Commune himself.

On a successful casting, a small, angry earth spirit will appear, but will only answer a single question before disappearing.

- **Why did you flee the mountains?** “The man in the mountains made us leave.”
- **Why are you angry?** “There are too many of us here, and many are not in their place.”

Should the PCs attempt to ask another question, the only answers they can get revolve around those two topics – the earth kami are too agitated to have much thought for anything else. Questions that cannot be answered as above will be met with stony silence. Zeppeki will focus on the spirits’ anger, but if a PC makes their Commune roll by more than 10, they can learn that the kami are referring to a “Man OF the Mountain” – some significant elemental power by the kami’s reaction.

Once the questions have been dealt with, Zeppeki will thank Kaiu Enshiro, Kaiu Mai’s hatamoto, for his daimyo’s hospitality, and lead the party back to the Stone Circle. If any of the PCs wish to ask for material assistance from the Crab, they may petition Enshiro for any reasonable equipment (climbing tools, supplies, or clothing, for example, not weapons or armor), but he has no more information at his disposal than Kuni Sarako does.

Part Two: Magical Engineer Shikkui

Isawa Zeppeki will give the party one last chance to get any special equipment they need from the Golden Carp Marketplace, but wants to be on the road by mid-morning. Due to the uncertain footing in the mountains, Zeppeki instructs the group to leave any horses or ponies at the Inn for their own safety. Once everything is in order, Kuni Sarako leads the party out of the city, providing the PCs with more information from her previous trip and reports from the sentries that regularly patrol the area.

“Several of the more treacherous passes have collapsed completely, leaving only one relatively direct route. If it becomes impassable, the alternative requires a three-day hike to the other side of the mountain range. Let’s hope the first choice is clear.”

A few hours of travel brings the party to the edge of the area that has been affected by the disappearance of the

earth kami. As they near, any PCs who are feeling the effects of the elemental disruption (anyone with one of the noted Advantages or Disadvantages) will feel an increase in the sensation – whether that be greater lethargy or headaches as appropriate.

After travelling through winding mountain roads for a few hours, Kuni Sarako calls a halt just after mid-day and motions for you to join her. “Just ahead, we will cross into the blighted area. You should expect to feel weaker, as the spirits of the earth are not there to support us. In some places, the path will be as shifting sand, while it can compress to fine powder in others. This uneven ground is why we asked you to leave your mounts back at the city – it’s dangerous enough for us, but a thousand pounds of horseflesh breaking a leg could bring an entire mountain down on top of us. Take a few minutes to prepare yourselves – I will be meditating on the importance of the earth spirits, and what their presence means for all of Rokugan. I welcome any who would join me.”

Isawa Zeppeki will join her, as will Asahina Teisei, Agasha Nadare, and Yogo Rikujo, if they are present. Agasha Shikkui’s curiosity has convinced him to examine the boundary of the phenomenon, but will not invite any of the others to join him. He will not stop them from following, however, and Iuchi Luanshi, Moshi Udara, and Ikoma Kuriku will do just that if they are present. The PCs are free to do whatever they wish, but Zeppeki and Sarako will be ready to continue in thirty minutes, so wandering off too far would not be recommended.

Sarako will spend this time praying to the earth kami of the mountains, asking them for understanding and patience while their humble servants work to return the spirits to their rightful place. Any PC who wishes to join in her prayer may roll **Meditation / Void** or **Courtier (Manipulation) / Void** at a TN of 20. Nothing remarkable happens now, but make a note of how many successes are rolled for later reference.

Once the prayers are complete, the party moves on, quickly catching up with Agasha Shikkui and anyone who followed him. They find Shikkui picking up a large rock, walking ten paces, and setting it back down. He then picks the rock back up and moves it back to its previous position. Any characters who were present will have watched him do this for the better part of twenty minutes, with two attempts at Summoning an earth kami on either side of the barrier. The NPCs will be somewhat disparaging of Shikkui’s antics.

The boundary that separates the blighted area from the area of abundant kami is plain to see as Shikkui

moves his rock back and forth between the two. The sparse grass and occasional small tree that edges the path up to this point are healthy and green, while the plants mere inches away are sickly and dying. Looking up as the rest of the party approaches, Shikkui smiles and reports his findings with blithe enthusiasm. “This is fantastic! Well, not fantastic for the earth spirits – or the mountains, really, I suppose, but I mean for my research. When I put the granite...rng,” he explains, grunting as he picks up the rock, “over... unh... here, the kami inside it flees. You can tell because the light doesn’t reflect off of the stone as brightly. When I move the rock back, the glimmering effect increases briefly, but I think that’s mostly because the spirit is mad at being forced out of its home. I can’t say for sure, because the kami of this stone won’t uh... answer me.” As he moves to pick up the stone once more, Kuni Sarako (or Agasha Nadare, if she’s present, though she will be more critical) swats Shikkui’s hand away, saying, “Have some respect, Phoenix! You may be delighted at having learned a new trick, but the kami are suffering!”

Shikkui blinks, the concept that the kami are experiencing difficulty seeming somewhat alien to him, and bows. “Ye..yes, of course, sama. Forgive me.”

If any PC attempts casting an Earth spell or tries to summon an earth kami at this time, they will get the same response and effects as in the city; successfully casting Commune on the stone Shikkui was testing will reveal its irritation with him for his meddling. They will get no response whatsoever if attempting to cast any Earth spell while in the blighted area.

Within the Earth-Blight

Crossing into the area abandoned by the earth spirits has an immediate effect upon the party: the Advantages “Strength of the Earth” and “Friend of the Element: Earth” no longer function at all, and characters with those advantages feel a weakening within themselves. A PC with the “Friendly Kami: Earth” Advantage will find themselves alone, quite possibly for the first time, and will likewise gain no benefit from this Advantage (though they would not in any case). All members of the group will feel some sort of discomfort, as they feel the weight of their own bodies pressing down on them.

From this point forward, any Earth spell cast automatically fails (using up the spell slot). Casting Commune or Summon targeting Earth will require a ritual casting involving multiple shugenja, which will be described later.

On a positive note, the headaches experienced by characters with “Wrath of the Kami: Earth” or “Elemental Imbalance: Earth” disappear immediately, as do the mechanical effects of those headaches.

After the party has had a minute or two to collect itself, Kuni Sarako motions for them to move forward. The path is as treacherous as described, and eventually the party comes to a stop once more as Sarako goes on ahead to inspect a portion of the pass overlooking a deep ravine that appears to have partially collapsed. The Kuni probes at the trail where it skirts the edge of the cliff, narrowing down to about four feet in width but with a sheer rise on one side and a dizzying drop on the other. She returns with bad news:

“The outer edge of the trail ahead has crumbled under its own weight, and is very unstable. I believe that we can make it across if we are careful. We do have the option of turning back and taking the southern route, if you prefer, Isawa-sama.”

Zeppeki nods thoughtfully. “If you think it is safe enough for us to pass, then I trust your judgment. I would suggest—”

“I have an idea!” Shikkui interrupts excitedly. “Back home, during my researches, I was talking to this mortar spirit that was part of a defensive wall built when the Mantis att.. built a few years ago, when it suddenly dawned on me – it was a water kami! It had been mixed in with the mortar and then became trapped when the rest of the water evaporated. Over time, it saw that it was surrounded by dirt, and started behaving as if it were an earth kami. What truly fascinated me was...” A stern look from just about everyone and a loud clearing of Zeppeki’s throat sets Shikkui back to his point. “Ahem. Yes, anyway, my idea is this: the ground here is like the loose sand used to make mortar. If we can mix enough water and... and.. dry grass should do the trick, we can apply it to the path and the extra support should solve our problem!”

Without waiting for an answer, the enthusiastic young Phoenix begins tearing up clumps of dead and dying vegetation, leaving the rest of you to discuss your options.

Plan A: Risking It

If the party decides to disregard Shikkui’s plan and follow in Sarako’s cautious footsteps, have them determine a marching order. Crossing requires rolling **Athletics / Agility** at a TN of 15. (If the PCs do not, the Kuni will suggest using a rope as a safety line, which is factored into the TN.) Each of the NPCs will

make this roll, except for Ikoma Kuriku, who stumbles. If a roll is failed, a portion of the path crumbles away, but the safety line prevents anyone from falling into the ravine as long as one of the characters on either side of the falling characters (including Ikoma Kuriku) makes an **Athletics / Strength** roll at a TN of 15. (PCs on the other side of them can make the same roll to give them a Free Raise.) If three total failures occur (two PCs and Kuriku), the weakened path crumbles completely away. Anyone caught on the wrong side of the gap will need to rappel across while the rest of the party anchors the rope. At this point, an **Athletics (Climbing) / Strength** roll at TN 15 is required to cross, with a failure resulting in a slight fall before the rope catches them, and 2k2 damage.

Plan B: The Long Way

If the party decides it is safer to turn around and take the other ‘safe’ path to Akai Yama, they will be adding three days to their journey, as the other pass is located on the south side of the Twilight Mountain range. This will have no real effect on their ability to get to the Akai Yama, though the Goblin Shaman will have had more time to create his binding ritual, and this will increase the TN to purify the cave.

Plan C: Shikkui’s Idea

Agasha Shikkui’s plan is to Summon water over the weakened trail, then mix the dried grass and weeds into the mud. Once the slurry is ready, he plans to use Summoned fire kami to dry out the trail, creating a harder and hopefully more stable walkway. Any PC who wishes to help may do so, though being involved in the actual gathering of grass and mixing the mud will result in a loss of two points of Glory. Shugenja may Summon water or fire to assist; at least two castings are needed to complete the work. Mixing the fibrous material into the mud helps strengthen the path, eliminating most of the chance of complete collapse. Once the newly paved surface has been dried by the fire kami, it is safe to pass for now. Kuni Sarako will still urge caution, though no rolls will be required for safe passage.

Any shugenja PC who backs Shikkui’s plan – whether or not it is the method eventually chosen – has gained his attention, and he will remember them later. Conversely, any PC lending the Phoenix Agasha any support will be scorned by Agasha Nadare. The Dragon will insult their choice, but let it go at that; if the PC chooses to continue the argument in that vein, it may result in earning Agasha Nadare as a Sworn Enemy.

Isawa Zeppeki sees value in each of the proposed plans, and is willing to be convinced by the PCs which option

tot take. His concern is the mission, and a minor obstacle of this nature is not his priority. Regardless of how the party overcomes this obstacle, they resume their journey promptly.

Part Three: Your Mine, Ours

Lord Sun is directly overhead as you reach the trail that leads to the base of Akai Yama. From up ahead, you hear indistinct shouting and manic laughter.

Any PC with two Ranks of Lore: Shadowlands instantly recognizes the sound of bakemono. Other PCs may roll if they wish, but as they consider the matter, their guide snarls in recognition.

“Goblins!”, Kuni Sarako hisses as she turns toward Isawa Zepeki. “We had no reports of a mob making it past the Wall, but that cackling is unmistakable. From the sounds of it, there may be as many as a hundred of them! We must hurry!” She then turns and hastens up the path without waiting.

Zepeki, for his part, has already begun moving forward, and urges the rest of you to prepare for battle. “We must proceed with caution, but we cannot allow these foul creatures to live one more day within the Empire.”

Coming around an outcropping of rock, the PCs find Sarako laying on the path and peering over the edge of a small cliff. Hearing their approach, she raises her hand in a cautionary signal, then motions for the others to join her. Anyone who does so will have a clear view of the entrance to the Akai Mine some seventy-five to one hundred feet below – and the mob of goblins cavorting on a wide plateau in front of it. Approximately 80 of the creatures mill around the base of Akai Yama, moving in and out of the mine. Several dance around a trio of corpses – the remains of a Crab patrol by the color of the armor now being fought over by some of the larger goblins while the smaller ones are tearing at the corpses with claws and fangs. While the party is close enough in their current position to reach the creatures with bows or longer-range spells, the descent straight down from the ledge is precarious, requiring an **Athletics (Climbing) / Agility** roll at a TN of 25 to climb down and a **Stealth / Agility** roll at a TN of 20 to avoid being noticed. Failing the climbing roll results in 3k3 Wounds (plus one additional die of damage for every 5 points the character failed the roll by), and automatically attracts the attention of the goblins.

The trail the characters have been following winds down, snaking back and forth around the outcropping before opening out onto the flattened valley from a somewhat narrower passage. If the PCs are specifically looking for an advantageous position, a **Battle / Perception** roll at a TN of 20 will allow the characters to determine that a small group of warriors could hold the end of the trail while only allowing a few attackers to threaten them at a time. This would also allow shugenja and archers to deal with the enemy from higher ground.

The goblins have two sentries watching the main path down to the mine. If any PC attempts to sneak closer, allow them to roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** or **Battle / Perception** at a TN of 15 to spot the sentries hiding among the rocks, and **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** (at TN 20) to avoid being spotted in return. If no one is trying to be subtle, or if one of the characters fail their Stealth rolls, the goblin sentries will screech out warning and combat will begin immediately. The PCs will have to scramble to get in position before the tide of monsters rolls over them.

The closest goblins other than the sentries are approximately fifty feet away from the samurai, and will close at full speed in the Full Attack stance, meaning that they will be in range for melee on their second round. In general, if the PCs are fighting at the choke-point, no more than two goblins should be able to reach any character on the front lines in one round. If the PCs are not fighting at the choke-point, they will be surrounded and split apart by the superior numbers of the goblin horde and attacked by more than two each round – PCs who represent the greatest threats will attract the most attention.

The PCs are primarily here to provide protection for the less-martial priests in the group, but the NPCs are still samurai and most of them will attempt to contribute in some fashion. For ease of tracking the actions of multiple NPCs in this combat, some guidelines are provided both here and in Appendix #2. It is suggested that the GM keep a running tally of the number of goblins slain or incapacitated by the party; the enemy will fight to the last creature, as goblins have no concept of fear.

Isawa Zepeki will begin the first round of the combat in the front line in the Defense Stance (unless forced back by the PCs, something that must be done with great care; manhandling the Status 4 Imperial Magistrate will have serious consequences, starting with loss of both Honor and Glory as appropriate for the character’s Honor Ranks – consider it a minor

Breach of Etiquette per the chart on page 91, with an equal Glory loss). On his Turn, he raises his fists to the air, shouting *"Hear me, Father of Storms! Your humble servant stands against a sea of goblin filth! Crush these foul vermin beneath the fist of your righteous wrath!"* He will take two Wound levels during the first turn unless one of the PCs spends a Guard action to keep him safe. On the second round, **Fist of Osano Wo** resolves, crushing 20 goblins with a giant fist made of Thunder and pain. The thunderous boom made by the spell causes the earth to shake, and large sections of the surrounding mountains crumble to dust. Somewhat sheepishly, Zeppeki retreats to the second line, and will cast **Tempest of Air** on subsequent rounds, knocking down several goblins each round and killing six each turn. If things start going badly for the PCs, he will cast **Fist of Osano Wo** a second time, causing the walls of the valley to crash down, doing 3k3 damage to the party, and killing the remainder of the goblins.

Sarako will begin the first round with Fires from Within, killing two goblins, before casting Katana of Fire and entering into melee combat. She will lose one Wound Rank per turn unless the PCs make an effort to lend her support.

Having expended a number of spell slots in his experiments on the journey and in attempting to restore the path, Shikkui will remain at the top of the trail and stay out of harm's way. He has few offensive spells anyway, but his resources are getting low as it is.

The goblins raiders will take the Full Attack Stance for the entire combat (and their stats have been adjusted to reflect this). Beginning on the second round of combat, PCs will be targeted by the Goblin Shaman as he exits the cave to see what the extra noise is about. Spotting him in the throng is difficult: it requires taking a Simple Action and rolling **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** at a TN of 15. Once spotted, if the PC attacks another target, they must again spend a Simple Action looking for the shaman and succeed at the Investigation roll as the shaman scurries through the crowd. Unless it is a high-end table (where more than two of the combat-capable characters are of Rank 3), he will target a random front-line PC with Disrupt the Limb. Since he is just a goblin, his mastery of maho is not as strong as a human tsukai, and the affected PC may roll **Earth** at a TN of 20 to shake off the effects of the spell during the Reactions Phase every round (beginning the round after it was cast). Note that if the party is high-end, the shaman will cast Summon Undead Champion on the dead Crabs, and they will attack as somewhat enhanced zombies in the Full Attack Stance every Round (again, already factored into their stats).

Also of note is that the Goblin Shaman will be sacrificing raiders to successfully cast his spells – this accounts for one raider each turn, as long as there are targets. This should grant him enough Free Raises on his spells that he need not roll to cast his spells until he is wounded.

Goblin Raiders

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 2		Agility 2	2
Initiative: 3k2		Attack: 6k3 (knife or sharpened stick, Complex)	
Armor TN: 5		Damage: 4k2	
Reduction: 3			
Wounds: 9: +15, 18: Dead			
Taint Rank: 2			
Skills: Stealth 2			
Special Abilities: Swift 2			

Goblin Shaman

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 1	Water 2
Initiative: 3k2		Attack: 3k2 (knife, Complex)	
Armor TN: 15		Damage: 4k2	
Reduction: 5			
Wounds: 15: +5, 30: Dead			
Taint Rank: 3			
Skills: Lore: Maho 2, Stealth 2			
Special Abilities: <i>Maho-Tsukai</i> : can cast the following spells with the listed dice pool and TN: Bleeding (3k1, TN10); Disrupt the Limb (4k2, TN10); Written in Blood (3k1, TN10); Summon Undead Champion (5k3, TN10)			

Zombies

Air 0	Earth 4	Fire 0	Water 1
Reflexes 2		Agility 3	Strength 4
Initiative: 2k2		Attack: 9k4 (fist, Complex)	
Armor TN: 5		Damage: 4k2	
Reduction: 5			
Wounds: 84: Dead			
Taint Rank: 3			
Special Abilities:			
<i>Beheading:</i> A zombie normally can only be destroyed by literally hacking it to pieces (reducing it to Dead). However, it can also be destroyed instantly by severing its head. This requires taking three Raises for a Called Shot and then inflicting at least 18 Wounds.			
<i>Fear 3</i>			
<i>Undead</i>			

Once all of the goblins have been dealt with, Kuni Sarako begins funeral rites for her fallen clansmen, as Zeppeki puts fire to the dead Shadowlands vermin.

Part Four: The Man in the Mountain

The path to the mine now clear of goblins, Zeppeki is eager to begin his investigation in earnest. Kuni Sarako produces a few lanterns from her pack and lights them; she will then take any like-minded PCs and scout the mine entrance, quickly coming to the conclusion that there are no additional goblins or other fiends hiding in the immediate vicinity. Curious PCs may roll **Hunting (Survival) / Perception** at a TN of 15 to determine that the goblins have been in the mine for less than a week, based on the amount of mess. Rolling a 25 or more also reveals that there are likely more located further in the mine.

Proceeding into the mine, the characters will note signs of deterioration everywhere. The goblin occupation has done nearly as much damage as the departure of the spirits. The group travels along several tunnels that lead deeper into the earth in a somewhat spiral pattern, descending through a series of chambers. Occasional signs of broken tools or a few incidental blood-spatters are the only indications of habitation or violence. The Kuni guide leads the way down through five chambers, warily watching for any sign of danger, and then comes face-to-face with a horrible sight.

Sarako inhales sharply as you round a corner behind her. Rage fills her eyes, and as you follow her gaze, you understand why. Surrounded by strange symbols and blasphemous images, the body of a young Crab samurai-ko has been pinned to the wall by broken pickaxes and crude goblin spears. "Go tell Zeppeki." Sarako commands flatly, regaining some of her composure. Her already stern face becomes a mask of determination as she steps forward to remove the implements holding her clanswoman in place.

Players who wish to remain and assist Sarako should roll **Etiquette / Intelligence** at a TN of 10 to realize that she has sent the PCs away so that they do not shame themselves by watching her handle a dead body. If a non-Crab player insists on staying, they lose two points of Honor for failing to ignore Sarako's shame (turning their back does not cover it in this case) and any samurai will lose an additional four points if they actively assist in removing the corpse. Cremating the body where it is will not be an option, as Sarako will insist on a proper ceremony outside.

Isawa Zeppeki and those who left to recover him return to find Kuni Sarako staring intently at the symbols painted on the wall. "I can't be sure, but I believe these symbols are part of a binding ritual. This symbol here, however, I don't recognize at all." She indicates a series of jagged swirls. No mention is made by her of the slight form swathed in linen in one corner of the stone chamber.

Studying the symbols on the wall is not, in and of itself, a dishonorable action, but attempting to decode the information on it is an active use of a Low Skill and will cause any PC doing so an appropriate amount of Honor. A **Lore: Shadowlands / Intelligence** roll at TN 20, or **Lore: Lying Darkness** at TN 10, will reveal that the symbols are actually similar to the "Shadow Brands" that appeared on people who were infected by the Living Darkness during the War Against the Shadow. (Scorpion PCs may also make **Lore: Scorpion / Intelligence** at a TN of 15 to recognize the similarity to the marks once used by their Clan intentionally.)

While this is going on, any PC who rolls **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** at a TN of 5 will spot Agasha Shikkui wandering off on his own. If anyone follows him, Shikkui wanders the mine, shoring up any loose supports and repairing broken tools. He will ignore any followers unless they offer to help him (which makes him very happy) or attempt to hinder him (in which case he will point out the shoddy condition the mine is in, and attempt to convince them to let him do what he can to help the situation).

If any PC recognizes the symbols and explains them to the group, Zeppeki will look away with a pained expression but otherwise overlook the breach of etiquette. Regardless, he will recognize this as a significant part of the problem and react accordingly:

The Jade Magistrate's only response is to nod gravely and set his travel pack on the ground. "What it means is less important than the fact that it exists, and defiles any work we might accomplish here. Before we begin the investigation into what has stripped this mountain of its sacred spirits, I must seek out and remove any kansen left behind as a result of this foul creation." Taking several small incense burners from his pack, he walks a circle around the floor of the mine, placing one of the small silver bowls at each compass point. He then kneels in the center of the circle and begins to pray.

As Zeppeki chants, any shugenja character may roll as though they were casting Sense Earth (without

expending a spell slot). Successfully doing so allows them to realize that Zeppeki is attempting to Banish the kansen. They will sense the kansen gathering, and then fleeing from Zeppeki's incantation deeper into the earth before being driven away with incredible force by a powerful presence of pure elemental Earth somewhere deeper in the ground.

“Tracherous spirits of the Tainted earth, show yourselves! The creature that bound you here is defeated, its corrupted and twisted body given over to purifying flame. You cannot hide from me, shameful spirits! I see you hiding in the blasphemy smeared on the tunnel walls. You cannot hide from Isawa Zeppeki, who calls the great kami that reside in the Spine of the World friend. Flee this place! Flee back to your festering swamps and blackened hills! Flee! Depart now, lest you be consumed by the holy fire as well! FLEE!” Zeppeki shouts this last command, slamming both fists against the dusty floor of the mine. The force of this admonition causes the mountain itself to shake, sending dirt and debris cascading down on top of you. As you wipe the dust from your faces, you can see the blasphemous images on the wall writhing and drawing in on themselves, creating three inky stains that seem to sink into the wall before three fist-sized chunks of stone explode from the wall to crumble against the far end of the tunnel. No trace of the tainted spirits remain behind. Breathing heavily, Zeppeki rocks back onto his heels, and tries to calm himself. *“Forgive me, each of you. In my fervor, I forgot how fragile the mountain is right now.”*

If any of the PCs noticed the reaction of the kansen and the spiritual presence, they may choose to mention it now. Otherwise, Sarako speaks up with a concerned expression.

“No forgiveness is needed, Isawa-sama,” Sarako replies. “During your prayer, I sensed the kansen you were.. speaking to, and felt them attempt to flee deeper into the mountain before being repulsed and cast out of my awareness. I think that whatever launched those foul spirits out of the mountain like hanabi may have driven the local earth kami from their home as well.”

The PCs may confirm Sarako's statement (or she will confirm theirs, as appropriate), but Zeppeki merely nods determinedly.

Zeppeki speaks slowly, obviously pondering the new information. “I sensed it as well. About a hundred feet beyond this wall and down is a source of tremendous, unTainted Earth magic. I was able to

locate it only because of how very strongly it resisted being found. It had a presence like a powerful kami, but different somehow. I believe that we may indeed have stumbled across the solution to our problem. We simply need to figure out...”

“What was that?!” Agasha Shikkui interrupts, suddenly returning [along with any PCs who accompanied him] from meandering through the mine. “I was afraid the whole mountain was coming down!”

“We believe we have located the source of the banishment, Shikkui-san,” a clearly exasperated Isawa Zeppeki explains. [If she is present, Agasha Nadare admonishes Shikkui for interrupting his superior in fairly blunt terms.] “All we have to do now is figure out how to contact it to see what it is and find out why it has driven off the spirits of this mountain.”

Shikkui responds with his usual unthinking manner, “Really? That's easy! Well, it should be, anyway, with all of us here to perform the ritual. Start with Commune and Summon Earth, like you did before. If the rest of us help, maybe we can convince it to show itself.” He looks over at the non-shugenja in the group. “Ooh! Some of you should talk to it, especially if you have any skill with words... I think we may be busy just trying to maintain contact, and it could be helpful to have someone who doesn't have to focus on bending the spirits to their will actually do the talking.”

Zeppeki agrees to this plan with resignation, though it is clear his patience with the little Agasha's antics is at an end. The shugenja begin their prayer, with any PC shugenja participating by casting Summon or Commune with Earth as normal. Non-shugenja can roll **Courtier (Manipulation) / Void** at a TN of 20 (and may call Raises) to assist the priests in convincing the strange entity to reveal itself. If a PC has the **Chosen by the Oracles (Earth)** Advantage, they get a Free Raise for this roll and a free Void Point to spend on it. Total up each successful roll, including Raises and the successes from the meditation at the start of the journey, and award additional successes based on well-played petitions. A total of five successes will attract the attention of the object in the rock.

The mountain shakes, causing more debris to fall, and Isawa Zeppeki jumps away from the wall just as glittering crystal shape the size of a carriage bursts from the floor and settles in the middle of the chamber. Blocky and worked with crenellations like a castle wall, the crystal pulses like a beating heart; looking deeply into one of the thousands of smooth

facets reveals the shape of a muscular man, curled into a fetal ball.

Players may roll **Lore: Crab** or **Lore: Oracles / Intelligence** at a TN of 10 or **Lore: History / Intelligence** at a TN of 15 (rolling at the higher TN if they do not possess actual ranks in the more specific Skills) to recognize this man as once having been known as Hiruma Osuno, and now the Oracle of Earth. Crab Clan characters get a Free Raise on this roll.

At this point, have the players roll **Perception** at a TN of 15. Success allows them to hear chattering and the slap of feet against stone – the remaining goblins are approaching, drawn by the tumult. Those rolling a 25 also hear the clink of lacquered plates on metal – something or someone in functional armor is accompanying the bakemono.

“O... Osuno-sama? But why?” Kuni Sarako asks incredulously. She then starts and spins to face one of the other tunnels leading out of the chamber with a snarl. “More goblins!”

Zeppeki draws a breath, seeming overwhelmed for a moment, then visibly takes himself in hand and begins issuing orders. “We need to hold them off while we determine what is happening with this.” Gesturing at the crystal castle, he begins with the other shugenja, instructing them to move to positions within the chamber and prepare to use their prayers to best effect. As they move to obey, he turns to you and begins to speak. Before he can deliver his command, however, a bright flash of light pulses from the crystal structure.

You find yourselves standing in a field of crystal. In front of you, a large chair made of the same shimmering stone contains the withered form of a man clutching his knees to his chest and rocking gently. “Go away,” he says, seemingly resigned to the fact that you will not.

The PCs and Agasha Shikkui are the only ones present; the other shugenja were moving to fulfill Zeppeki's orders, and Zeppeki himself was standing in front of the crystal and facing away from it. If the PCs did not recognize the Oracle, Shikkui with clear his throat and hesitantly ask, *“Sarako-sama called you ‘Osuno’... are..are you the Oracle of Earth?”*

The Oracle will confirm his identity listlessly, whether asked by the PCs or Shikkui. If asked by the PCs for his assistance in dealing with the spirits, he will respond despondently:

The wasted form shakes his bald, dusty head slowly. “I cannot. I am the one who banished them.”

The Oracle of Earth is clearly afraid of something and has hidden himself away inside Red Mountain as a result of this fear. The PCs will need to convince the Oracle that his actions are unbecoming in a samurai, and do not reflect his former reputation as a fearless opponent of the Shadowlands. (**Lore: Crab / Intelligence** at a TN of 20 will recall tales of Osuno's bravery and courage as he guarded the gates that separate Rokugan from the Shadowlands, often single-handedly and without support.)

The Oracle will answer questions listlessly, filled with a quiet shame for his withdrawal.

- **Why can't you help us?**

Because it's my will that the kami have fled. Since Void died, I am blind to Destiny. I cannot see the manner in which fate will unfold itself. I can't protect them, or you.

- **Why are you hiding in the mountain?/Who are you hiding from?**

The minions of the fallen Air Dragon are trying to kill us. Our sister is dead, and the Shadow has tried to steal our Gifts to use them against us. I do not know how to fight it, so I have retreated to this stronghold. A tactical withdrawal is sometimes necessary... (It is clear, however, that he does not truly believe this last statement.)

- **Why did you drive the Earth kami away?**

To protect them. It's coming for me, and I don't want them to get hurt. Also, the Armor of Earth cannot be used against me if it cannot get close enough, and my banishment will make sure it cannot.

- **What do you mean by “Blind to Destiny”?**

When our sister was killed, we lost our ability to see the threads of Destiny that bind all things. Where once we could see the past and future of all that came to us seeking guidance, now we can only see this moment, and shades of the Empire as it could have been.

- **What about the other Oracles?**

Aspects of our lost humanity cast shadows on all of us. We must each deal with grief, though our methods may be different.

- **Why are you afraid?**

The Oracle of Void's death proves that we are connected – her demise, in that manner, cost the rest of us our vision. If I die, what effect will that have on the others? Because of her death, I don't know – I *can't* know. I represent

our connection to the physical Realm; would the others simply become as ghosts?

As the Oracle answers questions, allow the PCs to roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** at a TN of 20. Any answer that the Oracle gives that relates to his fear is accompanied by a swirling miasma of darkness through the throne that he sits upon. This threatening manifestation fades whenever it is focused upon, and trying to call Osuno's attention to it will fail as it disappears completely as long as he is looking for it. (This is, in fact, a manifestation of the Shadow Dragon attempting to influence the Oracle; PCs may recognize this with a **Lore: Lying Darkness / Perception** roll at a TN of 30.)

The PCs can roll **Lore: Theology / Intelligence** at a TN of 20 know that Oracles, while vastly powerful, are not invulnerable. Normally, when an Oracle dies or steps down, the Dragon of that element simply chooses another mortal to bear their power, but evidently the death of Kaede has had massive repercussions for the other Oracles. However, Kaede was slain by an actual part of her spiritual patron (the Dragon's Claw Katana having literally been fashioned from the claw of the Void Dragon), and there are no other such objects remaining in the Empire. Pointing this out to Osuno is helpful, though not sufficient on its own: part of the problem is that the Oracle's perceptions have been greatly limited, and the resulting uncertainty has become the avenue the Shadow Dragon is using to undermine Osuno's resolve.

When the PCs seem to be running out of questions, Agasha Shikkui will interject, possibly derailing the appeal from the PCs. *"Osuno-sama, you are the representative of the Earth Dragon on Ningen-do, sworn to serve humanity and offer guidance during dark times. For a thousand years, humanity has relied on the Oracle of Earth and its siblings to protect us. Would you have us believe that time is at an end?"* Allow the PCs to roll **Courtier (Rhetoric) / Awareness** at a TN of 25 to gauge the Agasha's argument and realize that if they continue on that line of reasoning, they will make breaking Osuno out of his retreat harder. (They may realize it on their own, of course, but this will give them a chance to catch the error otherwise, and by now Shikkui should have amply demonstrated that his instincts for interpersonal relations are somewhat lacking.)

Convincing Osuno to regain his courage and throw off the fear that binds him will require a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll at a TN of 40. The player leading the questioning rolls, and gains a bonus of +5 for each player who participates in the discussion

and succeeds on the same roll at TN 15. (Characters with the "Chosen by the Oracles: Earth" Advantage gain a Free Raise and an extra Void Point for use on this roll, whether they lead the discussion or provide assistance.) Success on this roll gives the characters "Option One" below; failure on this roll or using arguments based entirely on Osuno's obligation results in "Option Two". (Arguments following Duty over Courage do not require a roll, but do not have as positive an effect, though the GM should have the players roll regardless to determine if they gain the Oracle's Favor as listed in the Rewards Section.)

Option One: Courage

The man once known as Hiruma Osuno straightens slowly on his throne. Resolve enters his eyes, turning them hard as stone. "Thank you, children of Ningen-do, for placing the mirror of honor in front of me. In my sorrow, I allowed the claws of fear to gain a hold on my heart, and ran to hide like a child in his mother's kimono." You realize with a start that you have returned to the Red Mountain Mine, and you hear a few cries cut off immediately as you appear in the chamber – the others have clearly been defending themselves from the goblins, though the appearance of the Oracle has obviously paralyzed the creatures in fear. A dark, shadowy form turns from crossing blades with Sarako and runs down the tunnel at an incredible speed. The Oracle of Earth rises, and looms over entire group as he speaks, gaining strength and mass as the earth spirits return at his behest. His voice echoes through the tunnels and the very mountains seem to ring with triumph. "Come, spirits of Earth! Return to your homes! No longer will my fear prevent you from tending to your mountains! Together, we will defend these mortals as they create their own destiny in the face of the unknown!" The Oracle brings his hands together with a thunderous clap, and the mountain trembles and quakes. Several of the shugenja with you seek shelter, but there is no rain of debris as there was before – save over the head of Agasha Shikkui, who gets knocked to the ground by several large stones. You feel a renewed strength that you are certain signals the return of the spirits to their mountain. All around you, thick streaks of ruddy gray iron ore spread throughout the mine.

As you watch, Osuno holds a hand to one side, and a massive one formed of iron and jade rises from the cave floor to his grasp. Raising the weapon aloft, Osuno takes a slow, deliberate step forward toward the frozen goblins. His eyes glow with a pure green light, and the twisted mockeries are burned away like mist in the sunlight before his jade fury.

The Oracle lowers the ono and examines the head with a frown. Threads of glimmering white crawl over the blade and form an intricate pattern against the black metal and green jade. He raises a hand to the weapon and pulls several shards of crystal free.

He turns to each of you and bows, pressing the pieces of crystal firmly into your hands. "This is not a gift," he says before any can refuse him. "This is a token of my favor and a tool for your protection. To refuse it is to refuse the earth in your bones. Return to your battles and your homes, young samurai. Earn your glory and protect your honor, for these will be your only true weapons when your enemy, our enemy, reveals itself."

The other shugenja are battered and injured, but none of them have been slain. They will report that the goblins were led by a strange samurai in shadowy black armor. Though his face was covered with a full mempo, the enemy leader exhibited many signs of being touched by the Shadow. PCs who have played Fire and Water will likely recognize it as a Goju of some sort, though the fact that it actually wore armor will stand out as unusual.

Option Two: Duty

Hiruma Osuno reclines in his throne, and contemplates your words. "We have taken it upon ourselves to guard humanity and this Empire. For centuries, you have politely commanded the elemental spirits to do your bidding, and I can do no less than they, who honor your wishes as best as they can. I will summon the spirits back to their homes, and you may go on your way, safe in the knowledge that they will be here, providing and protecting you. I will seek a new home, and prepare for the day when the next mortal comes to seek my aid. I only hope that when that time comes, I will have an answer worth giving."

The Oracle of Earth kneels on the floor, and as he moves you notice the light fading, until you find yourselves once more in the cavern in the mine. Combat swirls around you, the goblins pressing your companions mercilessly despite the massive losses the shugenja have inflicted upon them. A human form, clad in black armor with a full mempo covering their face, stands before Zeppeki with dripping blade in hand. Zeppeki is defiant despite his wounds, blazing with holy fire and with scroll in hand. The goblins fall back in the face of Osuno's presence, and the armored figure spins at your group's reappearance before blurring into motion and fleeing the chamber with unnatural speed.

Reaching into the cavern floor, Osuno pulls a large ono of iron and stone from the ground. With a mighty swing, he shatters a nearby support column, causing the mountain to tremble once more and burying Agasha Shikkui in a pile of stone and rust. The remaining goblins turn and flee from this demonstration of power, and the Oracle's voice peals through the tunnels after them. "Hear me, kami of the earth! Return to your stones and mountains! Return to the roads and passes! Return and heed those that would have your help! These children of Ningen-do require our aid, and we have pledged it to them!" You feel somehow lighter as the earth spirits once more ease the weight on your bones. Turning to each of you, Osuno inclines his head gravely, "Thank you, samurai, for reminding me of my duty to humanity."

In this instance, Osuno did not manifest himself with enough force to obliterate the enemy, and Kuni Sarako was slain by the enemy leader. All of the other shugenja are injured, and one other NPC will have been killed as well – choose at random from the Clan shugenja present other than Zeppeki. Again, they will describe the enemy leader as a Shadow-touched warrior.

Option Three: Something Else

It is possible that the players will come up with other arguments or blandishments to use to convince Osuno to return to the Empire. For the most part, these should be assessed as either building Osuno up (and be treated as appeals to Courage) or putting more pressure upon him (and be treated as appeals to Duty). In any event, unless the PCs simply refuse to interact with the Oracle, they should be able to convince him to return and lift his banishment of the earth spirits in the area.

Conclusion

Once the goblins have been dealt with, the PCs may wish to help tend to any wounded shugenja NPCs. There will be no sign of the black-clad figure; either they escaped the mine or the Oracle destroyed even their body. Osuno will not depart immediately, but other than stabilizing the wounded so that they do not bleed out (by enhancing their elemental Earth), his gifts are not suited to healing. Before he leaves, he will address the PCs:

"It is customary for an Oracle to answer truthfully any one question a mortal asks, and I will do my best to do so, but you must understand that I can no longer guarantee how accurate my answers may be."

PCs may ask any one question pertaining to their character, the campaign, or whatever they wish so long as it is in-character. The Oracle can see glimpses of the official canon storyline and what would come to pass there, but cannot guarantee that things will remain the same in this new version of reality. Lost items may or may not be where they were in that other timeline. An answer of “You will die fighting alongside Kakita Kaiten during the Yasuki War” might be appropriate for a Crane character asking about his destiny, but it is unlikely to happen, given that Kaiten is already dead in this campaign. If the GM is uncertain of the answer, have the player contact the Admin staff through the fiction submission guidelines.

With a final bow, the Oracle of Earth reaches into the ceiling of the cavern and hauls his massive body upwards into the mountain, leaving no trace of his passage. Gathering your belonging and digging an unconscious Agasha Shikkui out from under a pile of rubble, you set out for Face of the East Castle.

After tending to the wounded, Zeppeki (and Sarako, if she survived) will lead the group back to Face of the East Castle. The effects of the earth spirits’ return is immediately visible, and the return journey is simple enough.

If a PC shugenja supported Agasha Shikkui’ s mad plan to pave the path with mud and grass, he will nervously approach them privately during the trip back to the castle. *“Thank you for backing me up, at the pass – not many would have. I found some interesting bits of stone and rock while I was exploring the mine, and I want to give you this,”* he offers a hastily crafted necklace made of orange silk tied around a thumb-sized teardrop of opaque crystal. If the PC refuses (as per the rules of gift giving), Shikkui will try a slightly different tactic. *“I think someone probably dropped it when they were in the mine, but I don’t have time to look for them. It’s not a gift, really.”* A second refusal elicits a shrug, and he walks off. If the player attempts to determine Shikkui’ s sincerity, it is clear that there is something he is hiding, but he won’t answer other than to take his pendant and wander off.

He will only make this offer to one shugenja, in cases where multiple PCs apply.

Once back, Isawa Zeppeki will undertake the task of compiling a report for both Kuni Utagu and Kaiu Mai (and explaining Kuni Sarako’ s death, if necessary). He will thank the PCs for their assistance and send them back to their lords with gratitude for their service.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

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

Experience Points

Surviving the adventure:	1XP
Good roleplaying:	+1XP
Defeating the Goblins outside the cave:	+1XP
Discovering Osuno’ s Prison:	+1XP

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Honor

Completing the investigation and returning the Oracle of Earth to the Empire gains all PCs 2 points of Honor if they have less than 8 Ranks of Honor (1 point if they have 8 or more Ranks).

Crab PCs gain an additional point of Honor.

Glory

Assisting Isawa Zeppeki gains the PCs an amount of Glory equal to (five minus their current Glory Rank), to a minimum of one point. For example, PCs with Glory 1 gain four points, PCs with Glory 4 gain 1.

Other Awards/Penalties

Crab PCs who have “Oath of Fealty: Kaiu Mai” gain one point of Status.

If the characters inspired the Oracle of Earth to return by inspiring his Courage, they each gain a “Crystal Shard” cert.

Refusing this token and making an enemy of the Oracle gives them the “Wrath of the Kami: Earth” Disadvantage, and other penalties may well apply at the GM’s discretion.

Module Tracking Sheets

Oracle’s Favor – if the PCs successfully made the Courtier roll to inspire the Oracle (whether they used Courage or Duty), every PC gains a minor boon from Osuno. This takes the form of an extra Void Point that can be used only to reduce Wounds taken. This follows all the other rules regarding Void Points (it cannot be spent in the same round as another Void expenditure, for example), and is one-use only; once spent, it is gone forever.

Shikkui’ s Pendant – A token of appreciation , or someone’s misplaced heirloom? Note the possession of this on the mod cert.

If Yogo Rikujo cast Ebbing Strength on a PC during the fight with the goblins, make a note on their Mod Sheet – he will not speak to that character again, should he appear in a future module. (Rikuji’s paranoia makes him worried about a possible link between the two characters now)

GM Reporting

Did the PCs convince the Oracle to return by encouraging him to overcome his fear (Courage) or by reminding him of his obligation (Duty)?

Which NPC shugenja, if any, died?

Which PC shugenja, if any, accepted Shikkui’ s pendant?

GM must report this information BEFORE 11/15/20011 for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

This module contains a large number of NPCs, who widely vary in capabilities. Rather than providing full statistics for them, the following information should be used as guidelines as to their abilities.

Isawa Zeppeki: Rank 4 Isawa Shugenja (Earth Affinity); Honor 7.3, Status 4.0, Glory 4.0; Notable Mechanics: Earth 5, Void 4, Etiquette 5, Spellcraft (Importune) 5, Elemental Blessing (Earth), Irreproachable, Idealistic, Overconfident; Common Spells: Tempest of Air, To Seek the Truth, Courage of the Seven Thunders, Jade Strike, Minor Binding, Force of Will, The Wolf's Mercy, Armor of the Emperor, Tomb of Jade, Major Binding, Fires of Purity, Fist of Osano-Wo, Rejuvenating Vapors

Kuni Sarako: Rank 3 Kuni Shugenja (Earth Affinity/Air Deficiency); Honor 4.2, Status 3.0, Glory 4.5; Notable Mechanics: Earth 4, Void 3, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Strength of the Earth, Fascination: Animals; Common Spells: Armor of Earth, Jade Strike, Strength of the Crow, Katana of Fire, Fires from Within, Path to Inner Peace

Agasha Shikkui: Rank 1 Phoenix Agasha Shugenja (Fire Affinity/Water Deficiency); Honor 3.9, Status 1.5, Glory 1.0; Notable Mechanics: Earth 2, Fire 3 (Intelligence 4), Spellcraft (Spell Research) 4, Sage, Antisocial 1, Obtuse; Common Spells: To Seek the Truth, Elemental Ward, Never Alone, the Raging Forge

Asahina Teisei: Rank 2 Asahina Shugenja (Air Affinity/Fire Deficiency); Honor 7.1, Status 2.0, Glory 1.5; Notable Mechanics: Air 3, Earth 4, Artisan: Sculpture 5, Friend of the Elements: Earth, Hotei's Curse; Common Spells: Blessed Wind, Legacy of Kaze-no-Kami, Way of Deception, Armor of Earth, Be the Mountain, Hands of Clay, Earth's Protection, Path to Inner Peace, Reversal of Fortunes

Agasha Nadare: Rank 2 Dragon Agasha Shugenja (Fire Affinity/Water Deficiency); Honor 5.1, Status 1.5, Glory 2.3; Notable Mechanics: Earth 3, Fire 4, Athletics 2, Defense 3, Kenjutsu 4, Friendly Kami (Fire), Brash; Common Spells: Armor of Earth, Earth's Touch, Biting Steel, Burning Kiss of Steel, Fires of Purity, Katana of Fire, Hungry Blade

Ikoma Kuriku: Rank 2 Kitsu Shugenja (Water Affinity/Fire Deficiency); Honor 4.8, Status 2.5, Glory 1.8; Notable Mechanics: Earth 3, Water 3, Perform: Storytelling 5, Voice, Failure of Courage; Common Spells: Way of Deception, Jurojin's Balm, Path to Inner Peace, Reflections of P'an Ku, Cloak of the Miya, Wisdom & Clarity, Regrow the Wound

Moshi Udara: Rank 2 Moshi Shugenja (Air + Fire Affinity/Earth Deficiency); Honor 5.9, Status 1.5, Glory 2.4; Notable Mechanics: Earth 3, Athletics 3, Sailing 5, Daredevil; Common Spells: Tempest of Air, Call Upon the Wind, Fury of Osano-Wo, Enticing Dance of Flames, Hurried Steps

Yogo Rikujo: Rank 3 Yogo Shugenja (treat as Soshi with Affinity for Ward Spells); Honor 2.8, Status 2.0, Glory 1.8; Notable Mechanics: Earth 3, Courtier 4, Wary, Insensitive; Common Spells: Elemental Ward, Bonds of Ninendo, Earth's Protection, Flames of Purity, Envious Flames, Ward of Purity, Ebbing Strength

Iuchi Luanshi: Rank 2 Iuchi Shugenja (Water Affinity/Fire Deficiency); Honor 5.3, Status 1.5, Glory 2.9; Notable Mechanics: Earth 3, Water 4, Athletics 3, Horsemanship 5, Absolute Direction; Common Spells: Nature's Touch, Clarity of Purpose, Path to Inner Peace, The Rushing Wave, Wave-Borne Speed

Appendix #2: NPC Actions in Combat

NPC	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
Zeppeki	Casting of Fist of Osano-Wo	Fist of Osano-Wo kills 20	Tempest of Air kills 6	Guard
Sarako	Fires 2	Katana of Fire	Kills 1	Kills 1
Teisei	Be the Mountain	Be the Mountain	Reversal of Fortunes	Heals 12
Nadare	Katana of Fire	Kills 3	Kills 3	Kills 3
Kuriku	Guard	Guard	Guard	Guard
Udara	Fury of Osano-Wo kills 1	Enticing Dance of Flames kills 12	Tempest of Air kills 3	Tempest of Air kills 3
Shikkui	Hide	Hide	Hide	Hide
Rikujo	Ebbing Strength	Envious Flame kills 1	Flames of Purity	Rescue
Luanshi	Clarity	Stand	Stand	Heal 10

Due to the size of this combat, it can be assumed that the NPCs will successfully cast each spell they attempt. Their purpose is not to overshadow the PCs, but they should be using their magic as appropriate, and enhancing the combat ability of samurai is not uncommon for the battlefield. Most of the shugenja will be relatively conservative with their spell-slots, but the purpose of this combat is not to drag the players through a long, drawn-out encounter. The GM should feel free to be approximate with the number of goblins the NPCs are accounting for, and if the combat is lasting more than six rounds, it may be appropriate to cut it short with more powerful spells from the NPCs (part of why they do not have fully-determined statistics). Hopefully, the PCs are defending the shugenja, but allow the players to make their own choices.

Asahina Teisei: As his first combat action, Teisei casts Be the Mountain with Zeppeki as the target, providing the magistrate Reduction 10. He will repeat this once with any PCs who seem to be stationary already or are being overwhelmed. He will also cast **Reversal of Fortunes** on a character that is having issues being effective. If a PC combatant falls, he will leave cover to pull them to safety, and heal them for 12 wounds using **Path to Inner Peace**.

Ikoma Kuriku: Will volunteer to 'guard any non-combatant courtiers,' if there are any. If he has no one to guard, he will take up a position to the rear of the group, so he can 'fend off any potential threats to our flank.' (If the players are curious, they can roll **Sincerity / Awareness** at a TN of 15 to determine that he is, indeed, all bluster and trying to avoid harm.) He will offer healing magic after combat ends.

Iuchi Luanshi: Casts **Clarity of Purpose** on as many of the front-line combatants as possible during the first round of combat, then retreats to cover. After that, she will grant additional attacks to front-line fighters with **Stand Against the Waves** until it appears that someone will require healing.

Moshi Udara: Will cast a variety of ranged attack spells each round from just above and behind the main line.

Yogo Rikujo: Will cast **Ebbing Strength** targeting himself and a PC combatant, preferring a Shugenja or Militant Courtier target. He will reduce his Strength by 1 to increase the target's Strength by 1. He will then use some fire magic, killing a goblin with Envious Flames and then enhancing the same PC with Flames of Purity.

Agasha Nadare will down a potion containing Fires of Purity, bursting into flame as soon as combat begins. Afterwards, she will insist on fighting up front, summoning a Katana of Fire and killing one goblin every round. She will also kill two more every round as they attack her; unfortunately, this will take its toll on her, and she will take a Wound Rank of damage every round without some support from the PCs.