

# **Emperor's Favor**

## **Part Two: Hidden From the Empire**

**A Two-Round Low-Mid Rank Adventure for Heroes of  
Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido  
Month of Bayushi, 1138 (Early Fall)**

**by Adam Thomas-Brashier**  
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A death in the Scorpion lands brings to light questions on the Empire's future...

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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.

### **This is a Two Part Mod!**

Remember, this is a two-part adventure, and both parts must be played in order and with no other adventures in

between. In a convention setting, this should usually mean two slots back-to-back. There is only one module cert for the entirety of Emperor's Favor.

## 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 Two.

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

**Low End Party** (most/all characters Rank One):

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

## **Adventure Summary and Background**

Shortly before the Scorpion Coup, the wife of the Scorpion Champion, Bayushi Kachiko, recognized the Lion Champion, Akodo Toturi, as one of the greatest threats to her husband's plans to kill Hantei XXXVIII and claim the throne for himself. To remove this obstacle, Kachiko sent a geisha, one of her finest agents, to seduce Toturi, with instructions to kill him with a poisoned drink on the day of Bayushi Shoju's attack. The geisha, Hatsuko, found she had little difficulty winning the heart of the Lion Champion, but also found herself falling in love with Toturi as well. As a result, on the appointed day, Hatsuko found she could not kill Toturi as Kachiko commanded. Instead, she gave him a lesser dose of the poison, enough to incapacitate him for a few days, and fled.

Toturi survived, but for his failure to defend the Emperor, he was made ronin, and the Akodo family was dissolved. Hatsuko, for her part, tried to hide away from Kachiko's agents, and while the Mistress of Scorpions did not find her, the former geisha discovered that her heart would not stop bleeding over how she had betrayed her love. Moreover, it soon became clear that she was carrying Toturi's child.

Unable to bear the shame and guilt, Hatsuko climbed a waterfall one beautiful morning and threw herself off of it. However, she was caught, by none other than the great Elemental Dragon of Water itself. Sensing the destiny of the unborn child within her, yet fearing that

the child might disrupt Toturi's own destiny, the Water Dragon carried Hatsuko back to Tengoku, suspending her and her son-to-be in a timeless sleep. In Ningen-do, Toturi built his ronin army, fought at the Day of Thunder and was proclaimed Emperor of Rokugan. The Celestial Dragons withdrew from the realm of mortals, but before it left, the Water Dragon returned Hatsuko to Rokugan, stripping her of all memory of Toturi so that her son would grow up without direct contact with his father.

As a result of the death of a Scorpion magistrate in Ryoko Owari and the machinations of an as-yet-unknown hand, the PCs are now among a select group of individuals who are aware of the existence of Hatsuko's son. The magistrate, Bayushi Kimetiko, was also aware of the boy's existence, and acting on behalf of her superiors, had made arrangements for Hatsuko to live a comfortable life as the okaa-san of a geisha house in an out-of-the-way part of Rokugan. At the same time, she had also made arrangements for the boy, called Kaneka, to begin training as a bushi. Because of Toturi's history, Kimetiko had sought a ronin trained in the Akodo style to act as the boy's sensei.

The sensei was not, however, who he seemed to be. Rather than a simple ronin, the sensei was in truth Akodo Arasou, Toturi's younger brother, returned through Oblivion's Gate at the same time as the Emperor. Arasou had intended to return to Ningen-do only long enough to defeat the Lying Darkness and perhaps help his recently-redeemed family reclaim their proper place in the Empire. Before he could either make himself known or commit seppuku to return to Yomi, however, he learned of Kaneka's existence, and the knowledge gave him a new purpose – to see his brother's son raised properly, knowing that Toturi would never be able to do so. He presented himself as a friend to Hatsuko and her son, a ronin who simply lived near their small hut in the Shinomen Mori and who offered to keep an eye on their house in exchange for the occasional meal or bottle of sake.

Roughly twenty months ago, that changed. The Scorpion were tipped off to Hatsuko's location and Kaneka's existence, and through their agents arranged for Hatsuko to purchase a small geisha house outside the side of Zakyo Toshi, which she renamed the Waterfall at Dawn. (She believes she named it this because of the east-facing waterfall that is near the house.) Arasou followed, suspicious of this generosity, but was in the perfect position to take up the mantle of sensei when the Scorpion suggested to Hatsuko that her son should be trained as a samurai's son.

Throughout this, however, a faction opposed to Toturi's reign has been guiding events. This faction was responsible for the assassination attempt at the Topaz Championship a year and a half ago, an attempt that claimed the life of Toturi's wife, Kaede. It was also responsible for revealing Kaneka's existence to the PCs, and now prepares another attempt on the life of the Emperor – using the PCs as its tools.

## Introduction

It has been a few weeks since the night the PCs spent in Ryoko Owari Toshi with Yotsu Seou. In that time, the battles between the Clans that flared up over the summer have finally calmed, and the courtiers of the Great Clans prepare to solidify their Clans' gains or undo their losses in the courts this winter. For now, however, the Empire is experiencing a period of relative calm. It is therefore something of a surprise when those PCs who are members of Clans find themselves suddenly given orders by their daimyo to travel to Otsan Uchi to meet with Seou once again. The orders give their daimyo no information about what their duties are going to be, but are signed by Kakita Toshiken, the Emerald Champion himself. The instructions are accompanied by 5 koku, and specifically command the PCs not to use their daimyo's resources to handle travel expenses. Unless a PC lives or works regularly in Otsan Uchi (such as member of the Imperial families), reaching Otsan Uchi likely costs about 2 koku in all.

Ronin PCs receive similar instructions and the same 5 koku, but the message is of course delivered directly to them. Given the generally rougher travel conditions that ronin are used to, assume it will only cost them about 1 koku to reach Otsan Uchi. (At the GMs discretion, characters with Ascetic or member of Minor Clans, particularly those known for being poor such as Sparrow or Badger, might also manage the travel at the cheaper price.)

Regardless, the PCs soon arrive at the Shimmering Scales Inn, a tea house in Otsan Uchi itself, just a few blocks from the Forbidden City. The Shimmering Scales is extremely exclusive, but the PCs are shown into a private dining room as soon as they arrive, regardless of the shape they are in. Seou is waiting for them; she remains as tense as she was when they last saw her, most of a month ago.

Once all the PCs have arrived and seated themselves around the dining room's table, Seou stands and bows briefly to the group. ***“I appreciate the speed and discretion you have shown in arriving here so quickly,***

***samurai-sans,” she says tightly. “I have called you here to help me present my report on our investigations in Ryoko Owari. Now that you are here, I encourage you to take advantage of the tea house's hospitality... because for the next few hours, none of us are leaving it. Once night falls, however, we will go to the Imperial Palace and present our findings... to the Son of Heaven.” Seou swallows once, hard, before reclaiming her seat.***

The PCs are free to make use of the tea house's bathing facilities to clean off the dust of the road; moreover, if any PC lacks clothing suitable for meeting the Emperor (such as the “extravagant clothing” included in many Courtier Schools' Outfits), the proprietor of the Shimmering Scales can arrange for measurements and quick delivery from nearby tailors for a total of 2 koku. All the PCs should have enough money remaining from their travel expenses to cover such an expense. Beyond that, however, Seou keeps the PCs contained within the dining room, wanting to make sure that no last-minute information leaks occur.

(Note: if Yogo Manesu was present at the discovery of Kimetiko's financial records, the PCs may be wondering where he is. Seou will explain in curt tones that Manesu was sent to serve on the front lines against the Mantis, and was reported killed in action about a week prior. She has not been able to independently confirm his death.)

The wait to meet the Emperor is frustratingly long and tense, though Seou makes some attempts at small talk to ease the passage of the hours. Eventually, though, the afternoon light spilling through the room's paper windows fades into twilight, and Seou stands up, announcing, ***“It's time.”***

## A Private Meeting

Seou leads the group out into Otsan Uchi and to the gates of the Forbidden City, where a contingent of stern Seppun guards examine Seou's papers and those of all the PCs with searching eyes. Seou maintains an outward impression of calm, but the time the PCs spent traveling with her is enough to reveal how nervous she is. Though it seems to take forever, in truth it is only a few moments later that the Seppun have stepped aside to allow Seou and the PCs into the Forbidden City.

***The massive form of the Imperial Palace would loom over you, sparkling in the sunlight, if it were still day; even in the gathering gloom, however, the astonishing edifice is breathtaking to see. The largest and most beautiful structure in Rokugan, the palace is both a***

*masterwork of architectural design and a center of pious worship, touching the souls of those who see it with a powerful sense of the presence of the Celestial Heavens.*

Shugenja, monks and any other characters with strong connections to the elements or spirit realms such as the returned spirits can sense the proximity of Tengoku (the Celestial Heavens) to Ningen-do (the mortal Realm) in this place. Every step is taken on holy ground, pulsing with the power of the Sun, Moon, Fortunes and Elemental Dragons. Mortals cannot help but feel insignificant against such majesty.

*The massive and intricately-carved double doors that mark the main entrance to the palace – each one a slab of jade as tall as a castle wall, enough to bankrupt some Minor Clans were they to try to purchase it – stand in front of you, but to your surprise, Seou turns aside, leading the group around to the right side of the palace, to a much smaller and far less impressive entrance. That door too is guarded by Seppun miharu, but Seou’s papers pass you through as easily as they did at the Forbidden City’s gates. On the other side, a maze of small, cramped passages – clearly the servants’ quarters of the palace – disappears into the dimly-lit interior.*

The hallways here are narrow and twisting, close enough for most PCs to touch both walls with outstretched arms if they wished. They are also exceedingly labyrinthine, but Seou leads the group unerringly through them, turning left here, right there, right again and then ducking through a door over there. At last, she steps into a room containing a couple of small tables and a handful of cushions, lit by paper lanterns hanging from the ceiling. It is small by most samurai standards, but still larger than most of the other rooms the PCs have seen since they arrived; those familiar with a servant’s life recognize the room as a communal “living room” and rest area. Seou silently gestures for the PCs to take a seat on the cushions, kneeling down on the bare wood floor herself to wait.

About 15 minutes later, where nothing appeared to be but bare wall on the far side of the room, a door suddenly opens and two men step inside. PCs who have played New Beginnings have seen both of these men before; the younger man is Kakita Toshiken, Emerald Champion, while the older and slightly taller man, surrounded by the soft glow of a returned spirit, is Toturi I, Emperor of Rokugan. Any PC who does not immediately recognize the Emperor for who he is should be quickly tipped off by Seou’s reaction to seeing him, which is to completely prostrate herself. (Should a PC still fail to similarly display his or her

respect for the Emperor, Toshiken’s blade removes the offending samurai’s head without hesitation.)

After only a moment’s pause, Toturi says, **“Rise, samurai.”** As Seou straightens up, the Emperor looks at her and continues, **“Seou-san. It is good to see you again. We understand you have a report to offer us.”**

With only a few seconds’ hesitation, Seou nods, stands up and begins speaking. She tells the whole tale of the party’s investigations in Ryoko Owari, leaving out nothing. Toturi and Toshiken listen carefully, asking no questions, until she is done. At the mention of Hatsuko and the note mentioning “the Emperor’s son,” however, the two men exchange glances. Soon, Seou reaches the end of her report and sits down again.

Toturi only asks one question: **“Do you believe it?”**

Seou does not answer immediately. Clearly choosing her words with some care, she finally responds, **“I do not know, Toturi-heika. The evidence was found in the Scorpion lands, a place known for trickery and deceit. We have no testimony – only the written words of a dead woman.”**

Toturi nods thoughtfully, then turns to the PCs and asks each of them the same question. He begins with Imperial characters and those from Clans with traditionally close ties to the Throne (Crane, Lion, Phoenix) and moves in turn through the Clans with lesser ties (Scorpion, Dragon, Crab, Unicorn and Mantis), but asks everyone, including Minor Clan samurai and ronin. If any PC hesitates, he politely but firmly says, **“Honesty is all we ask of a samurai who follows bushido. Speak your views.”**

Once all the PCs have responded, Toturi turns at last to Toshiken and says, **“And you, Toshiken-san? Do you believe it?”**

*Toshiken frowns as he answers, “It is either true or a very long-range plot.” There is something in his tone suggesting that he knows more than he is saying, and Toturi nods as though he knows it as well.*

**“The last time it was a threat to us,” the Emperor replies heavily, “and it killed our wife.”**

*There is a long silence as Toturi stares into the distance, apparently wrestling with a decision. Finally, he nods. “This must be resolved, and I will see to it personally.”*

*Toshiken nearly chokes. “Toturi-heika?” he sputters, and Seou looks as though she wants to say something as well, but Toturi raises a hand and they fall silent.*

*“The more who know of this threat, the greater it grows. While the question remains unanswered, it threatens the peace and stability of the Empire. Therefore it must be dealt with swiftly, and without bringing more people into it. I will deal with it myself.”*

*Toshiken again starts to protest, but Toturi cuts him off: “This may be my son.”*

*With clear effort, Toshiken forces calm into his next words. “Then I will of course go with you,” he says, but Toturi is already shaking his head.*

*“No. I can ‘withdraw into seclusion,’ but if you leave the capital again, it will draw attention. Moreover, if you stay, no one will question whether I am in the city as well.”*

*“Then Seou-san –”*

*“No. I trust Seou with my life, but she is also too visible. I require escorts who will not attract that kind of attention.”*

*“Like who?”*

And Toturi turns and points at the PCs.

## Part One: The Ronin’s Life

Toturi plans to travel incognito, so as to reduce the danger to which he might otherwise be exposed, as well as to avoid drawing the attention of the Empire to the situation. As a result, he prefers to return to the life of a ronin, perhaps one traveling alongside other ronin in the service of a samurai merchant patron or overly self-important courtier. The merchant patron is his preferred choice, and as such he will approach any PC that might be suitable for taking on such a role. This includes Yasuki, Daidoji, Ide or Kasuga courtiers, samurai with a reputation as merchants or for having wealth (as through the Wealthy Advantage), or samurai who appeared to have some knowledge of commerce during the investigation in Ryoko Owari as reported by Seou; he begins by asking such characters if they are familiar with the ways of merchants. Failing that, he will choose a courtier or other court-oriented character (preferring non-bushi), or at worst resort to the highest

Status character among the PCs. To his chosen character, he will step forward and ask, *“Samurai-san, perhaps you will be traveling toward Zakyo Toshi soon? No doubt such an important traveler will require ronin escorts for safety and prestige. A group of such retainers,”* and he gestures to the rest of the PCs, *“would surely not attract unwanted attention.”* He then bows as to a superior and asks, *“Perhaps you would also take into your service the simple ronin, Shishi?”*

The command of an Emperor is no small thing where honor is concerned, but Toturi’s desire to have Clan samurai disguise themselves as lowly ronin might well sit poorly with high Honor characters. A character with Honor Rank 7 who agrees to Toturi’s charade loses a single pip of Honor; a character with Honor Rank 8 loses 2 pips, while a character with Honor Rank 9 loses half a Rank. A character with Honor Rank 10 who chooses to disguise him- or herself as someone other than who he or she is loses a full Rank of Honor. If Toturi believes some of the PCs to be of high enough Honor Rank to struggle with this decision (and he himself does not take the struggle lightly, as the decision would affect his own Honor as well), he will add, *“Samurai, should your honors not allow you to set aside your names and ties, I understand. No doubt such an important individual could have also arranged for Clan samurai escorts as well, if needed.”* The PCs need not portray ronin in order to fulfill his command in this case and lose no Honor for doing so, but the decision will have other consequences (see The Treacherous Heights, The Fertile Village and the Conclusion, below, for the effects of this choice).

Assuming the PCs do not refuse Toturi’s command to accompany him (a decision with a very short life expectancy, given Toshiken’s presence), Toturi continues, *“We will leave at first light. Make whatever arrangements you require to give your new positions proper weight; Seou will handle the matter. The Imperial Treasury is open to you. I will meet you at the Shimmering Scales at dawn.”* With a nod to Seou – who looks rather poleaxed – and a gesture of summoning to Toshiken, Toturi departs through the same hidden door through which he entered. The PCs can hear the argument between Toshiken and Toturi start almost as soon as the door closes, but Seou ignores it. Shaking her head as though to clear it, she turns to the PC Toturi placed in charge and asks, “What do you need?”

Assuming the PCs are traveling as a merchant’s or ranking samurai’s escorts, likely purchases include a wagon and ponies, trade goods, sets of light or ashigaru armor, old or threadbare kimono, traveling supplies

such as food or blankets, and so on. Seou can make the arrangements to have any reasonable request met by sunrise, but she will veto anything she considers irrelevant to the task at hand. Regardless, as the money for the purchases is all coming from the Imperial Treasury, whatever she buys belongs to the Emperor, not the PCs, and they will not be allowed to keep anything once the journey is over.

Most ronin do well to have light armor, and ashigaru armor is more common, but some PCs – especially those with Techniques related to it – may wish to hold onto their heavy armor. The remaining time before sunrise is long enough to disguise personal equipment, including repainting or sanding down armor as well as rewrapping katana hilts and the like, but ronin in heavy armor will attract more attention than those in lighter forms, and Seou will remind the PCs of it if they don't think of it themselves. Again, this may have consequences later.

Once the arrangements are made, the PCs can grab a few hours' sleep before dawn arrives. Seou – who lacks such luxuries – is indeed able to make all the necessary arrangements by morning, and whatever the PCs have requested is waiting for them as they get ready to leave. At almost the same moment Lord Yakamo first clears the horizon over the Bay of the Golden Sun, Toturi arrives outside the inn in a set of well-worn but very well-made light armor, a plain-looking daisho at his hip and a simple jingasa on his head. As he did before, he bows deeply to the PC he has placed in charge of the mission and says with a slightly self-mocking smile, *“The ronin Shishi, reporting as agreed, samurai-sama.”* Unless the PCs have any last minute tasks, the group can leave at once.

There are two possible routes to take toward Zakyo Toshi. The first is the most popular one, heading west through the Lion lands and over Beiden Pass before turning south along the River of Gold. Because of its popularity, though, it is the least suitable for Toturi's goal of attracting as little attention as possible, and as such, Toshiken and Seou together have persuaded the Emperor to agree to take the alternate route. This route heads south from the capital, through lands held by the Imperials themselves as well as the Monkey and the Crane, before crossing the Spine of the World Mountains via a series of smaller, more disused paths. The route touches the Mantis lands (in the form of the Tsuruchi provinces) briefly, but otherwise avoids crossing the holdings of any Major or Minor Clan for more than a few hours' travel. The route is sometimes used by merchants trying to reach Crane ports without paying Lion excise taxes, but is sufficiently rough traveling that most don't bother. There are usually

reports of bandits somewhere in the area, but there are bandits everywhere, and the relative lack of wealthy traffic means it's not usually worth the effort to raid it regularly.

## On the Road

The first part of the journey takes two days, through lands well-patrolled by Imperial troops and along finely-built Imperial and Crane roads. Toturi – who insists on being called “Shishi,” and gently but firmly corrects any samurai who uses an honorific better than “-san” when addressing him – steps into his role with ease, becoming a “simple ronin” so well that it is hard to imagine him as Emperor, even for those like the PCs who have seen him in that station multiple times. He laughs easily, makes the occasional witty (and earthy) joke, and casually addresses his fellow travelers as equals – Toturi is making certain that the PCs are comfortable with him, as well as with each other; as the premier general of the Empire, he understands that a solid unit dynamic is important when traveling together, let alone possibly facing danger together. Characters who make **Investigation / Awareness rolls**, TN 20, detect a definite and sincere loosening of tension as Toturi moves further and further from the capital and its many obligations on him. The tension returns briefly on the afternoon of the first day, as the PCs skirt Toku Torid-e, the castle of the Captain of the Imperial Guard, just south of Otosan Uchi; Toturi knows well enough that it is one of the few places in the Empire where there are a large number of people who might recognize him on sight.

Afterward, however, Toturi lightens up again, and he begins to tell several funny stories from the time of the Clan War, when he and Toku were traveling together. These variously involve a time when he and Toku dressed in women's clothing in order to make contact with a scout who had hidden in a geisha house, a series of improbable adventures surrounding a chicken that mysteriously went missing, and a lengthy story that begins with Toku trying to teach a Naga how to use chopsticks and ends with Toturi losing a drinking contest against the Master of Earth. In each of these stories, Toku is invariably the hero, and in Toturi's eyes it is clear that the peasant-turned-samurai is almost incapable of doing wrong.

*Once the last story ends, Toturi sighs. “In many ways, I was never happier than during my time as a ronin,” he muses. “I never thought I would be anyone important. Arasou, my younger brother – everyone expected him to become Lion Champion. I was to be just another monk, and I was content with that. And*

*then later... what ronin dreams of becoming Emperor?" He chuckles, shaking his head. "Shinsei was right, of course, as he was in everything else: a samurai should not think of the future, nor dwell on the past. We live in the now, and we weaken our grasp on our duty if we reach for something that is not right here with us."*

That night, Toturi helps without hesitation in assembling the camp and taking his turns on watch. When he finally settles down into his bedroll, he produces a pillow book from his pack and begins reading it by the firelight. As he goes along, he starts chuckling, and several times laughs aloud. Should any PC ask him what it is he is reading, he shows them: it is called *The Lion's Triumph*, by an author who uses the pseudonym Sumifito, and it details Toturi's ascension to the throne in a ridiculously melodramatic and mythologized fashion.

*Raising a finger, Toturi clears his throat and begins to read – no, to declaim: "There he stood, atop the rocks, a mighty beast about to leap upon his helpless prey. His eyes set the mountains aflame with their fury, and all about him the samurai stood taller just for being in his presence. The breath caught in the throat of the Mistress of the Void, for his perfect jaw and muscled arms were lit by the last rays of the setting sun. He turned to her, and in a voice both powerful and gentle, commanded, "Let your spells turn aside their arrows, my beloved, and my men will send these demons back to Jigoku – where they belong." It was all she could do to bow her head in agreement."*

*With a disbelieving laugh, Toturi adds, "Kaede wasn't even there that day! And that was the third day in a row it had rained – every one of my men was as brown as the mud they were wearing, just like I was!"*

Should any PC ask where he got the book or what the Empress might have thought of such a portrayal, Toturi lets out a slow sigh before answering, *"Kaede... gave this to me, just a few days before she died. I haven't had time to read it until now."*

## The River of the Blind Monk

The next day's travel is generally uneventful until the party reaches a broad, fast-moving river in the early afternoon, which marks the southern border of the Crane lands. Beyond it rises the majesty of the Spine of the World Mountains, although the prospect of climbing into those snow-capped peaks should concern even the most courageous of samurai. At the river

itself, however, there is no bridge, only a single ferry tethered to a small dock on the far shore. There is a similar dock on the near shore and a guide line between them, but no indication where the ferryman might be.

Instead, there is an elderly monk seated alongside the road, in the shade of a large oak. He has a low table in front of him, and a go board and two bowls of stones rest atop it. The monk looks up as the party approaches, calling out a greeting, but the PCs immediately notice that his eyes are covered in a white film, and he shows no signs of being able to see them as he speaks:

*"Hello, honored travelers! It would seem the ferryman is taking a short break, although I am certain he will return to his work soon. If you wish, perhaps one of you would honor me with a game of go while we wait?"*

If any PC chooses to play him, the monk smiles broadly and allows the PC to choose which color he or she will play. (If no PC volunteers to play, Toturi does.) Despite his disability, the monk plays without hesitation, showing no sign of difficulty in either placing his own stones or knowing where his opponent's might be. As he plays, the monk begins to speak:

*"I am reminded of a story, travelers. Two monks reached a river that they needed to cross, but the waters were swift and deep. 'We cannot swim across in these robes – they will drag us under,' one said, and the other agreed, and they stripped to their skins. 'Our bowls and staves,' the second monk said, 'we cannot carry them either. We will have to leave them behind.' Again they were in agreement, and they set aside their staves and offering bowls. 'And our copies of the Tao,' said the first monk. 'They will only get wet, and we cannot carry them any more than we could our bowls or staves. We must leave them as well.' Here, however, the second monk did not agree. 'Without the Tao, I have nothing at all,' he answered. 'I will not leave it behind.' The first replied, 'Shinsei teaches that we must cast aside all worldly ties,' and discarded his Tao before diving into the river. The second raised his Tao over his head and waded in, forcing his way across with great difficulty. Eventually both reached the far side of the river and faced each other once more. One was naked and carried nothing; the other was naked and carried the Tao. 'Which of us is the true monk now?' asked one, and the other replied, 'I am.' And they were enlightened."*

*When he is finished, the blind monk asks, “What did you think of my story?”*

The PCs should each respond to the koan in some fashion. The monk should challenge each answer once or ask a follow-up question before nodding, satisfied. Possible responses and challenges might include:

- **It means that [one of the monks] was wrong.** “Both were enlightened. How do you know which was the one in error?”
- **The Tao shouldn’t be discarded; the monk crossed with it.** “He struggled to do so. Can one find the Way through struggle?”
- **We don’t truly need anything but ourselves.** “Would you set aside your sword so easily, samurai?”

Once all of the PCs have answered, Toturi offers his opinion: *“Perhaps it means that one path to enlightenment can be found by discovering the one thing without which we do not know ourselves.”*

The monk nods thoughtfully and replies, *“And what thing is that for you, Son of Heaven?”* Toturi does not answer, looking shocked, but the monk nods again, as though he had. Note: the revelation that the monk knows Toturi’s identity might well provoke some PCs to violence in the Emperor’s defense. Any PC who attacks the monk is instantly grabbed and hurled into the river before he or she can complete the attack – this does no damage, but costs the PC one point of Glory and they must swim back to shore. The monk smiles and continues as though nothing untoward occurred.

Once the conversation is concluded, the go game ends as well (to determine the winner, have the PC roll against the monk’s 9k5 – the monk loses to Toturi). Standing up, the monk bows and announces, *“I believe I have rested enough.”* With a single leap, the monk jumps across the entire river, landing lightly on the ferry on the far side. He poles the ferry across the river and allows all the PCs and Toturi to board (including anyone he might have thrown into the river). It takes only a few moments for the ferry to reach the far side, and the monk bows politely as the PCs move onward.

## Part Two: The Treacherous Heights

After crossing the River of the Blind Monk, the group begins their climb into the Spine of the World Mountains. The roads are noticeably less well-maintained, in many places little more than simple dirt paths. Travelers headed in the opposite direction are

rare – no more than a handful each day – and are a mix of lone merchants, small groups of peasants or samurai pilgrims toward the nearby shrine to Benten, and tiny ronin bands returning from mercenary work for the Mantis or Scorpion during their recent conflict. If the PCs have a wagon, it takes no small amount of patience and time to maneuver it through the narrow passes and up the steep inclines, clinging to the increasingly-questionable path. The weather takes a turn for the colder, the increasing elevation combining with the oncoming autumn for the first chill nights the PCs have likely experienced in several months.

As the PCs make camp on the evening of the second full day after crossing the River of the Blind Monk, they catch sight of a samurai heading toward their fire, a single bushi in heavy armor lacquered in the brown and gold of the Lion. As he gets close enough to see the PCs, he raises an arm and calls out, “Travelers! Ho, travelers!” turning his steps in their direction.

The man approaches, looking at what likely seems to be a traveling band of ronin without particular interest, but bows politely. *“Good evening, samurai-sans. If you would be so kind, I would appreciate the chance to share your fire tonight.”* As this is a typical request, refusal would be far more unusual (and attention-getting) than acceptance, and should the PCs look to Toturi for guidance, he will signal that they should agree to let the samurai stay. Moving toward the furthest part of the camp, Toturi whispers, *“Talk to him,”* as he passes by one of the PCs (someone who has shown some social skills, if possible). *“Find out what you can: who he is, where he is going, what he wants, so we know whether he is a threat.”*

The samurai introduces himself as Akodo Gashozu, a bushi of the Lion. Gashozu is moderately handsome but has a typical Akodo’s reserve and then some; he considers his words carefully, rarely putting any emotion into his tone whatsoever. He is from Yojin Province in the Lion lands – PCs who wish to recognize him must make a **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** roll, TN 40, but Lions gain a Free Raise, Matsu gain two Free Raises and characters with Oath of Fealty: Matsu Yoshiko recognize him automatically. Gashozu has a reputation for honor and courage in battle (he fought with distinction against the corrupted Kitsu during the War Against the Shadow), but has no living family and no Status to speak of whatsoever, making him of little account in matters of Clan politics. However, characters with Oath of Fealty: Matsu Yoshiko are automatically recognized by him as well unless they are disguised as ronin. Disguised characters must make an **Acting (Disguise) / Awareness** roll, contested by his **Investigation / Perception** of 5k3, to avoid recognition

– the unusual context and Gashozu’s own concerns grant the disguised character two Free Raises. If he does recognize the character, though, he demands to know what they are doing – he will accept most answers, including “I am under orders and cannot tell you,” but clams up afterward and does not proceed with the rest of the conversation. He leaves the next morning without saying much of anything else.

Under the circumstances, some PCs may feel the need to kill Gashozu after he recognizes one of their number; should this occur, Gashozu will not be able to stand against an entire party, and will die quickly. If you wish (and have enough time remaining), you can actually run the combat; use the stats for the Ronin Hirelings from Part Four for Gashozu’s stats, adding the Akodo Bushi Rank One and Two Techniques, changing his Honor to 6.7 and giving him heavy armor (he usually uses the Free Raise from his Rank One Technique to offset the attack penalty from his armor). Otherwise, you can deal 2k2 Wounds to three randomly chosen party members and narrate his look of betrayal as he dies. (Toturi might reveal himself to a captured Gashozu to ameliorate the sense of betrayal, but once katana are drawn, Toturi will regretfully insist on his death.)

Assuming he does not recognize any of the PCs, Gashozu settles himself near the fire, producing some dried fish and rice to cook over the fire. He makes casual conversation, asking where the group is headed and how their journey has been, but appears to be simply being polite; he shows no real signs of interest. He accepts any vaguely reasonable story without question.

Should the PCs ask where he is heading (and if they don’t, Toturi eventually does, looking for information), Gashozu answers, *“The shrine to Benten.”* He looks as though he is about to say more for a moment, but does not do so.

*Toturi smiles at this and replies, “Indeed? Have you met your heart’s desire, and go to pray for her hand?”*

*“No, samurai-san,” Gashozu replies heavily. “I go because I must kill a man, and only Benten is likely to understand why.”*

Rokugan has strong privacy taboos; after such a statement, many PCs may choose not to proceed. However, an **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** roll, TN 20, tells the PC that Gashozu is deeply conflicted about this mission, whatever it might be, and would like to talk about it. (Toturi comes to the realization if none of the PCs do, or if they choose not

to pursue it anyway – rather than drawing attention to himself by asking for more information, Toturi quietly asks one of the PCs to do so).

Once a PC has asked for more information, Gashozu considers the question for a moment before nodding:

*“I was born an Akodo, but the Scorpion Coup happened when I was seven years old, and my parents were killed in the fighting. I was sent to live with distant cousins among the Matsu, and grew up with them. One of them, Shioko... I... grew very fond of her. But even after my family was granted a place in the Empire once more and I became Akodo again, I had nothing to offer in a marriage negotiation. I have no political favors, no influence, no family connections – I am the last of my line.*

*“Shioko is a headstrong woman, given to romantic flights on occasion; in particular where the stories of the original Matsu are concerned. The tale of Akodokami’s duel with Matsu inspired her to swear on the day of her gempukku that she would submit to no man who could not defeat her in a duel. As I said, she can be melodramatic at times. But she is also a woman of honor, and means to keep her oath, as ridiculous as it might seem.*

*“Her mother, Matsu Yoshiko, who also holds my oath of fealty, has arranged a marriage between Shioko and an Ikoma named Tiaki. I fought with Tiaki-sama during the War Against the Shadow. He is a skilled general, but he is just barely competent with a sword. He has no chance to best Shioko. But he is also a man who... does not care to be denied that which he feels is his.*

*“Here is what will happen. Once they are married, Tiaki will attempt to claim his right as husband. Shioko will deny him. He will attempt to force the issue, and she will kill him, and then herself.”* Gashozu’s voice is very deliberately controlled in this part. *“There is only one solution. I must kill Tiaki before Shioko does.”*

If any attempts to determine whether Gashozu is being honest reveal that he is. The PCs can choose to respond to this situation in whatever manner they prefer. If they want to try to convince him not to go through with his plan, here are some of the possible responses he might offer to their arguments:

- **Desire is a sin, do not give in to it.** “This is about the end of desire, samurai-sans.”
- **Why would you take such dishonor on yourself or your daimyo?** “My seppuku will

cleanse my shame, and I have no family left to dishonor. Shioko would not be so fortunate.”

- **Your life is not yours to throw away – you owe it to your daimyo.** “I am saving the life of my daimyo’s daughter – what samurai would not do the same?”
- **Why not marry her yourself?** “I have nothing to offer her, where Tiaki is a well-connected and well-respected samurai. I have no hope.”
- **What if she wanted to marry you?** “I dare not hope for such a thing. I already sin too much with my desire. She has never shown any sign that she... cares for me as more than a friend. Let her mourn me as a friend should, then, and nothing more.”
- **Could you help Tiaki win the duel?** “He is fifteen years past his gempukku. I cannot see how I could manage in three months what a lifetime could not accomplish.”

Should they ask, Gashozu thinks he might be able to beat Shioko.

After the PCs have had a chance to offer their responses, Toturi finally offers his: *“I once allowed my desires to distract me from my duty, Akodo-san, and it brought me to my current state. But I also once knew a Matsu woman like the one you describe, and she loved an Akodo man with a passion I have rarely seen matched. But when he died... it is said that the Matsu and Akodo are not meant to be together. She never accepted that. She was the most honorable woman I have ever known. You must allow your honor to set your course, whatever it might be.”*

Should the PCs choose to try to talk him into changing his plan, they may attempt a **Courtier (Manipulation) or Lore: Bushido / Awareness** roll, TN 45; well roleplayed appeals should receive a Free Raise. Other PCs who choose to do so may attempt to counter such appeals, supporting Gashozu’s conviction, with the same roll; the higher roll will win out (assuming the PC attempting to change Gashozu’s mind manages to meet the TN).

Note: there is no “right answer” to Gashozu’s dilemma. Within the context of bushido, his solution is a valid one, but there may be others as well. This is purely a roleplaying situation, so let the PCs talk it out as much as they wish.

Eventually, Gashozu thanks the PCs for their insight and retires to his bedroll. In the morning, he departs at first light, heading either to the Shrine to Benten as

planned or elsewhere, depending on what happened the night before.

## Part Three: The Fertile Village

Over the next four days, the PCs reach and pass through the Tsuruchi lands, which are situated in the high valleys along the Spine of the World. In the aftermath of the Mantis/Scorpion skirmishes of the summer, security is tight, but legitimate travel papers from an Emerald Magistrate mean the group suffers only slight delays due to Tsuruchi patrols. The villages and outposts throughout the provinces show signs of the recent battles; peasants scramble to rebuild homes and restore order before the harvest, only a few weeks away. The peasants watch the PCs pass with hooded, wary eyes, the tales of their recent encounters with bands of ronin (as the PCs seem to be) clearly written on their faces.

On the far side of the Mantis territory, the PCs reach the ronin village of Koeru Mura. Koeru Mura is a ronin village in two senses: while it does indeed play host to a large population of ronin samurai, it also is one of the few settlements of any size in Rokugan that owes fealty to no Great or Minor Clan. Officially, Koeru Mura is an Imperial holding, but none of the Imperial families have ever laid claim to it. Instead, a “town council” of sorts leads the village, seeing to its own protection and meeting its Imperial taxation obligations through a semiannual auction of the village’s extremely rich rice harvests. This auction is always limited to representatives of Minor Clans – the Great Clans are not invited (due to “misdirected invitations,” naturally) in order to allow the Minor Clans the chance to actually gain the rice rather than compete against a Great Clan’s treasury. This has the further political benefit of aligning the village with the Minor Clans as a whole, allowing Koeru Mura to “borrow” the protection of the Imperial decree against Great Clans warring on Minor ones without provocation (and also reducing the temptation for a Great Clan to try to “take the village away” from a rival Clan...).

The village itself is fairly large, with an unusually high number of samurai relative to its peasant population, almost all of whom are ronin. It is surrounded by terraced mountains covered in lush rice paddies, all fed by the stream cutting through the center of the valley. Within the town, many of the ronin moving through its streets wear an unusual mon: a pair of crossed rice stalks. A **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** roll, TN 35, identifies this as the sign of the local peacekeeping

force, the Inari's Blades; asking a local produces the same information. The Blades are a ronin otokodate (brotherhood) of sorts, an organization sponsored by the leaders of Koeru Mura to maintain order in the village. Every new member must be sponsored by a current member, and if the new arrival is ejected from the order due to misconduct, so too is his or her sponsor. This tends to keep the Blades relatively honest and effective in maintaining the peace (which is to say, they are corrupt generally only in ways that don't endanger the town or its citizens).

The PCs might also notice that Koeru Mura boasts an unusually large number of fairly upscale inns, far more than a ronin village of this size would be likely to have ordinarily. These inns specialize in hosting the Minor Clan delegations during the periods just before and during the two harvest auctions every year, and indeed the delegations subsidize a large part of the village's prosperity. During the non-auction "off seasons," the inns charge rates that are extremely reasonable, catering to the visiting ronin who have at least a modicum of koku to spend on comforts. The inns often employ off-duty Inari's Blades to maintain order and make sure the notorious rowdiness of ronin does not threaten their establishments.

As the PCs enter Koeru Mura, they quickly find the town's central square, where a bustling market crowds one side of the space and a large platform for making public addresses (currently occupied by a Mantis recruiter calling out to passing ronin) dominates the other. On the edge of the square in between the two is a large wooden board, covered in paper notices. It is a jobs board, with each notice an indicator of some service that needs doing or some employer seeking retainers for whatever reason. Toturi smiles as he notices the board, turning toward it with an expression of mixed nostalgia and revulsion.

*"I loved and hated these things," Toturi murmurs, looking over the postings. "Hope for another meal and the honor of service, as befits a samurai, right alongside the piercing reminder of how far I had fallen, that such things would have meaning." He shakes his head and begins to turn away, but something catches his eye: a post reading "My neighbor's well has run dry. I need help to dig her a new one. Ask for Jaseki at the Jizo's Blessings Inn." The Emperor snatches the paper from the board with narrowed eyes, his mouth curving into a sharp and angry frown.*

A **Lore: Underworld / Intelligence** roll, TN 30, recognizes the unusual message as a coded request for an assassination or murder. (Simply having 3 Ranks in

Lore: Underworld allows a PC to know this automatically.) If the PCs do not understand the note's significance, Toturi explains through gritted teeth as he crumples the note in his hand.

*"No matter how I am dressed, I still carry the obligations of my station," he says firmly, looking around at the rest of you. "I will not allow a murderer to go unpunished in my Empire. Before we leave Koeru Mura, I will see to it that this 'Jaseki' suffers the full weight of Imperial justice."*

This is not a decision that Toturi can be talked out of, but he is open to a number of possible solutions to the situation. While Toturi of course possesses the authority to arrest and execute any samurai, doing so in this context would negate the purpose of the PCs' deception (not to mention the difficulties Toturi might actually have in proving who he is under the circumstances). A PC who is also an Emerald Magistrate could reveal him- or herself and also issue an Order of Appearance via the Inari's Blades – as Koeru Mura is theoretically an Imperial holding, the Emerald Magistrates have jurisdiction here. Such a solution also complicates the matter of anonymity, but to a far lesser degree than revealing Toturi might, and a clever PC could likely explain the party's presence as a scheme to track down a murder (which would be dishonorable, of course, but potentially quite effective) or provide some other explanation for the situation.

However, if they lack such direct options, the PCs still have other choices. The most circumspect approach would be to contact another nearby Emerald Magistrate, such as one of the many who are based in the Tsuruchi castle of Kyuden Ashinagabachi, or possibly even Yotsu Seou in Otsosan Uchi. Toturi still has his Imperial Seal, and could make the message unmistakably his. This is the safest means to deal with the matter from the standpoint of anonymity – by the time the message reached its destination, the party would have left Koeru Mura far behind. It lacks the satisfaction of a certain resolution, however, and also runs the risk that "Jaseki" might find an assassin and see the deed completed before justice can occur.

Another option is to involve the Inari's Blades. Finding their headquarters – a converted rice-storage building on the southern edge of the village – is a simple matter, but convincing them to take an interest in the situation is less so. If the PCs seek out the Blades, they are eventually directed to a man named Manozo, a tall man with more grey than brown in his topknot and an aura of surprising gravitas for a ronin. Manozo will listen respectfully to whatever story the PCs might put forth – the truth works just fine, at least where the hiring notice

is concerned – but is initially skeptical that the matter is worth pursuing. It requires a **Courtier (Manipulation)** or **Lore: Law / Awareness** roll, TN 25, to get him to agree to pursue the matter.

Finally, the PCs can try to handle the matter themselves. Toturi, as Emperor, has the right to pass judgment and issue sentence against any samurai, regardless of the position he is currently pretending to be. Should the PCs be able to arrange testimony, Toturi will declare “Jaseki” guilty, and the PCs can then attempt to bring Toturi’s sentence to pass. While the swiftest and most sure choice from the perspective of justice, it is also the riskiest course, as it might well place Toturi himself in danger, and could easily expose the group to unwanted scrutiny from the Inari’s Blades if things go poorly.

Regardless of whether the PCs involve Manoko or decide to have Toturi handle the judgment himself, both men make the same demand of the PCs: they must hear Jaseki confess his crime directly. The law demands that a samurai be sentenced only once he or she has confessed to a crime – this is why eta torturers are so important to Rokugani criminal investigations. Manozo will not authorize torture without more cause than a posted note, and Toturi cannot without revealing himself. In both cases, however, there is an alternative. If the PCs can meet with Jaseki and arrange for him to condemn himself in a place where Manozo or Toturi can hear, that will be sufficient. Manozo can use his authority to be placed close enough to the conversation that he can overhear it, while Toturi should be able to attend the meeting himself, as a “ronin.” If Jaseki openly admits his intentions, the law’s requirements will be satisfied.

## To Dig a Well

“Jaseki” is not, of course, the man’s actual name, any more than what he wants is for someone to dig a well. In truth “Jaseki” is Suzume Shimobukure, the Sparrow Clan representative to the Koeru Mura harvest auction. Shimobukure was once a fairly promising courtier of the Sparrow Clan, but repeated failures to win the auction for his perennially-starved Clan and the recent rise of a rival, Suzume Nizou (who last year obtained a large amount of food from various out-Clan sources at no cost to the Sparrow), have combined to weaken his position substantially. Traditionally, the Fox Clan have used their great wealth – for a Minor Clan, anyway – to win the auction. Shimobukure is determined to not see that happen this time, in hopes that he will be able to step into the breach and gain not only rice for his people but also a second chance at political success.

Shimobukure was trained by the Doji Courtier School, but his Honor is so low he gets far less use out of his Techniques than most.

Finding the Jizo’s Blessings Inn is not difficult; it is one of the several “upscale” inns in the city that cater to Minor Clan diplomats twice a year. With the harvest and the auction still some weeks away, the inn is currently hosting more humble guests: several ronin, currently drinking tea and enjoying the Inn’s excellent poached eggs and rice. The Jizo’s Blessings, like most of its kind in the city, has a strict policy against weapons in its common room; visiting samurai are expected to leave their blades and spell scrolls in a small nook near the front door “for safekeeping” while inside. (Those with rooms may of course leave their weapons upstairs if they prefer.) A smiling young peasant holds out cloths into which the blades and scrolls can be placed, so she does not touch them directly as she turns to store them for the duration of the samurai’s stay. Should the PCs wish to keep their weapons, they will have to either hide the weapon (**Sleight of Hand / Agility** opposed by the peasant’s **Investigation / Perception** of 4k2) or threaten her (with **Intimidation (Bullying) / Awareness**, TN 20, or the direct threat of violence, such as holding a blade to her throat). Regardless of the method, bringing weapons to the meeting with Jaseki costs the PC (Honor Rank minus 3) points of Honor in addition to any loss acquired from using a Low Skill.

When the PCs enter, they are greeted by the inn’s owner, a grumpy old peasant man called Sae who takes great advantage of Rokugan’s respect for the elderly to push the limits of a peasant’s deference for samurai. His granddaughter, the woman who takes the swords and scrolls, admonishes him with a sharp, “Granpa! Behave!” every time he does this, but he rarely corrects his behavior for long.

If Manozo is present, he immediately explains his requirements (a place close enough to see and hear the PCs’ meeting with Jaseki) and receives a grudging bow from Sae in response before being led to a hiding spot behind one of the paper screens near the inn’s private dining room. Otherwise, the PCs need only ask to see Jaseki in order for Sae to lead them to the inn’s private room for their encounter with Shimobukure.

Shimobukure is not a fat man, but he is surprisingly heavy for a Sparrow, with a well-oiled beard and long, drooping mustaches. He taps his fingers continually on the table and occasionally hums to himself, as though providing a musical accompaniment for his thoughts. When the PCs first meet him, he is flanked by two ronin yojimbo, silently leaning against the wall behind

him while he speaks. Neither has his swords, though they are not unfamiliar with unarmed combat.

If any PC is not currently dressed as a ronin, the meeting becomes much more complicated for the group. As soon as the PCs enter, Shimobukure makes a **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** roll of 8k4 to see if he recognizes any Clan samurai (see the “Effects of Glory” sidebar on page 93 of the L5R 4E rulebook); a PC dressed as a ronin can make an **Acting (Disguise) / Awareness** roll and add the total to his TN, however. Make a single roll for Shimobukure and compare his total to the TN of all the PCs, including any modifiers from the Acting roll; he will not recognize Toturi. He automatically recognizes any PC with a Glory Rank of 6 or higher who is not disguised as a ronin. If he recognizes a PC and the PC does not have a reputation that might suggest he or she would be willing to commit murder for koku, Shimobukure immediately clams up, introducing himself by his real name only and claiming complete ignorance of anyone called “Jaseki.” (“You were directed to me? The innkeeper’s an old fool – he must have sent you to the wrong room.”)

Assuming he does not recognize any of the PCs, however, he will ask them their business. Assuming they mention “Jaseki,” the “well,” or something similar, Shimobukure invites them to sit and says, *“I am so glad you came to answer my little note. I need the help of capable samurai such as yourselves to dig my good friend Kitsune Shu-Shen a well before the harvest auction next month. For such a demanding task, I would be happy to supply your group with a reward of, say, 50 koku?”*

Characters who played through the adventure Delicate Negotiations will remember Kitsune Shu-Shen as a highly ranked and influential Fox Clan samurai (she is a shugenja, however, not a courtier). Other PCs may roll **Lore: Heraldry, Lore: Fox Clan** or **Lore: Minor Clans / Intelligence**, TN 30, to also know who she is. If asked, Shimobukure tells the PCs that Shu-Shen will be arriving for the auction in about three weeks, roughly a week before the auction begins, and likely has not left Kyuden Kitsune at this point.

Shimobukure does not bother to use The Soul of Honor (the Doji Courtier Technique) on characters he believes to be ronin, as he thinks he knows what such samurai want, but if he recognized a Clan samurai and believed that PC to be willing to help with his problem, he will try to see if there is something he can offer that PC in addition to (or in lieu of) money. Should the PCs attempt to bargain a better price out of Shimobukure, he snaps, *“Your kind are all the same: always thinking about money, and how to get more of it. Would 60*

*koku satisfy your base desires?”* He will not go higher.

Regardless, if the PCs appear to agree to his plan, Shimobukure gives them 10 koku as a “retainer,” promising the rest on completion. (In truth, he plans to arrange for the PCs to be caught and convicted of Shu-Shen’s murder, sparing him the pain of having to actually come up with the other forty or fifty koku.) He then sends them on their way.

By default, Shimobukure is careful with his speech and phrasing, attempting to give himself plausible deniability. He refers to himself only as Jaseki (though characters can roll **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence**, TN 30, to recognize him once they meet him) and sticks to his “well digging” code rather than say outright what he wants. However, a clear statement is required in order to satisfy Manozo or Toturi. This requires careful verbal manipulation to draw him into saying more than he intends to; a successful Contested **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll against his **Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness** roll is necessary to pull it off. If he has recognized a Clan samurai, his suspicion grants him a Free Raise; regardless, Shimobukure rolls 7k3 for all Courtier / Awareness and Etiquette / Awareness rolls, and has all relevant Emphases. Each PC may attempt to lure him into honesty exactly once. Should the PCs all fail and do not appear to agree to Shimobukure’s plans, he eventually tells them to stop wasting his time and leave. Both Manozo and Toturi admit afterward that the conversation was more than a little suspicious, but would not meet the requirements for legal testimony. There is nothing more to be done.

## Carrying Out the Sentence

If a PC manages to trick Shimobukure into admitting what he wants outright, what happens next depends on who was listening for it. Manozo, if he is present, immediately steps into the room and arrests Shimobukure, pending the summoning of an Emerald Magistrate. Shimobukure’s yojimbo make no move to interfere, and the Suzume himself simply looks pale and shocked as he is led away by the ronin.

If, on the other hand, Toturi is listening to pronounce judgment, he nods slowly once he hears the words but gives no other outward indication. As he has not actually pronounced judgment or sentence, trying to arrest Shimobukure or attacking him is legally jumping the gun; nevertheless, some PCs may do so. The encounter then becomes a fight (see below), and the party is forced to flee Koeru Mura at once to avoid being captured or killed by the Inari’s Blades, possibly

depriving them of their supplies and the like, and Toturi's disapproval costs the PCs half a Rank of Honor.

Assuming there is no immediate combat, however, Toturi leads the PCs out into the street and quietly but formally states, *"In light of the testimony offered in my presence, I hereby find the samurai calling himself 'Jaseki' guilty of the crime of attempted murder by hire. The sentence is death."* (He uses Shimobukure's real name if a PC recognized him and mentions it.)

At that point, the question becomes how to best carry out the sentence. The PCs may offer any plan they like – Toturi will support any that seems to have a reasonable chance of success, as long as the plan also meets the following criteria: it must happen before the party leaves Koeru Mura, it must offer a reasonable chance of allowing the group to leave the village without having their identities uncovered, and it must have almost no chance of harming innocents. If the PCs offer no plan, Toturi's preference is straightforward: he asks the character with the best social skills (or one of them, if there are multiple) to attempt to charm Sae into revealing where "Jaseki" sleeps. (Doing so requires a **Courtier [Manipulation] / Awareness** roll, TN 20. On a success, the PC finds out that Jaseki shares a room on the second floor of the Jizo's Blessings with his two yojimbo. The PC also learns Jaseki's real identity if he or she didn't already know it.) He then asks for volunteers who believe they are able to quietly enter the inn that night after Shimobukure is asleep, allowing them to confront the Suzume without involving the rest of the inn.

If the PCs decide to go along with Toturi's plan, he takes anyone who volunteers, trusting them to be able to assess their own capabilities. At least one PC must volunteer or Toturi will scrap the plan and ask for another. Assuming he has at least one volunteer, Toturi then asks the rest of the PCs to wait in the alley behind the inn in case they require backup. Sneaking into the inn requires a **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** roll, TN 20. Because the purpose of the action is to avoid harming unassociated innocents, this use of the skill causes no Honor loss. If all the volunteers succeed on the roll, they reach the door to Shimobukure's room without incident, where Toturi quietly indicates the PCs should ready their weapons and take flanking positions while he opens the door. The room is dark and silent except for the sound of snoring. If there are at least two PCs with him, Toturi points to them and then to the two yojimbo, whispering, *"We cannot risk them waking up before we act – be prepared to kill them at my signal."* Otherwise he and the PC move to a yojimbo each, and at his nod, kill them.

The yojimbo cry out as they die, waking Shimobukure, but Toturi moves like lightning, placing his blade at the Suzume's throat before the diplomat can do more than half-sit up. With a sharp whisper, Toturi tells him, *"I, Toturi I, Emperor of Rokugan, find you guilty of attempted murder by hire, Suzume Shimobukure. You die a samurai's death, by the blade,"* before cutting off the ambassador's head. He then indicates the window, saying "Through there," before leading the PCs out into the alley where the rest of the group waits and then out of town as quickly as possible.

If something goes wrong, such as a failed Stealth roll during Toturi's plan, the clean execution is likely to become a messy fight. Shimobukure has no meaningful combat abilities – in a melee he assumes the Defense Stance, which gives him an Armor TN of 19, and attempts to flee the area. He has Earth 2. Use the following stats for his two yojimbo:

#### Ronin Yojimbo

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 2
Reflexes		Agility	Strength	
3		3	3	
Honor 2.5		Status 0.0		Glory 0.8

**Initiative:** 4k3

**Attack:** 6k3 (katana, Complex) or 5k3 (unarmed, Complex)

**Armor TN:** 20 (unarmored)

**Damage:** 7k2 (katana) or 3k1 (unarmed)

**Reduction:** 0

**Skills:** Animal Handling 2, Athletics (Climbing) 2, Hunting (Survival) 2, Investigation (Notice) 2, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Underworld 3

**School/Rank:** None (Insight Rank 1)

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** none

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

Regardless, once Shimobukure is dead, the PCs must leave Koeru Mura at once.

## Part Four: The Waterfall at Dawn

After leaving Koeru Mura, the party travels down out of the mountains once more, into the valley of the River of Gold. While the main road travels into the lands of the Scorpion, veering slightly north, the PCs head more southward, along tiny trails and disused peasant paths. The territory is technically the possession of the Monkey Clan, but the small Toku family simply lacks the resources to patrol through this part of their

holdings, leaving it largely abandoned to its own devices.

About a day after leaving the mountains, the PCs reach the River of Gold and take a ferry across it, coming at last to the road to Zakyo Toshi. Late in the morning of the following day, they reach the city.

Zakyo Toshi is another ronin settlement, but it manages to combine the worst parts of Koeru Mura with Ryoko Owari, but has the virtues of neither. Unlike the relative calm of Koeru Mura, Zakyo Toshi's streets are filled with raucous noise and activity, from ronin throwing dice in alleys or on street corners to the prostitutes offering themselves from doorways to any and all passers-by. There are no signs anywhere of samurai in authority; it is clear within moments of entering the city that what little order exists must come from the criminal organizations within it. Almost all the samurai in the streets are ronin; the few Clan samurai braving the crowds look either horrified by every new travesty they lay eyes on or like children offered their run of a sweets shop.

The information the PCs have available does not give the precise location of the Waterfall at Dawn, but a bribe of at least 1 bu or a **Lore: Underworld / Awareness** roll, TN 15, is enough to find fairly reliable directions. The Waterfall at Dawn is about two miles north of the town, situated on a high bluff on the bank of a small river where it spills over the bluff edge to a rocky pool below before meandering off toward the River of Gold. A road leads north from town to the geisha house, sloping up as the bluff itself does. Toturi brushes aside any suggestions of stopping in the city now that he is so close to his goal, aiming the group north as soon as they get the directions.

The trip to the geisha house only takes about half an hour. The view across the valley is spectacular, and the curve of the bluff allows the PCs to see the falls – about thirty feet of sparkling water tumbling down wet black rocks – from some distance away. A dense forest flanks the road opposite the bluff's edge and provides a backdrop for the well-maintained geisha house ahead.

As the PCs get closer to the Waterfall at Dawn, they can see that the road actually crosses the waterway – it is a small river or a large stream, depending on the definition, about 45 feet across – on a narrow, dark wooden bridge. It soon becomes clear, however, that there is a figure standing on the bridge, a lone bushi in unmarked but well-built heavy armor, surrounded by the same soft glow that surrounds Toturi, marking both men as returned spirits.

The samurai is tall and classically handsome, but there is also an unmistakable resemblance to Toturi as well. In many ways, the figure on the bridge resembles nothing so much as the idealized version of Toturi depicted in *The Lion's Triumph*. Toturi's face goes pale as he gets close enough to see the bushi's face clearly, and the other man bows slightly, a mocking expression twisting his features. **“Greetings, brother!”** the man calls out, anger thickening his voice.

**“Arasou,”** whispers Toturi.

## Brother Against Brother

The PCs can make **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** rolls TN 25, to become aware of other figures hiding in the woods. If they inform Toturi of this, he nods, already aware.

On the bridge, Arasou draws his blade.

**“What you did to the Oracle – what you did to your wife – was dishonorable beyond words, Toturi. You have no right to the throne you hold. But today is not the day to address such wrongs. Walk away, and live to know that your rule will soon end, tyrant. But if you attempt to harm the boy, hear me: I will kill you.”**

**Toturi shakes his head, but his hand goes to his blade cautiously. “I have prayed that we might one day meet again in Yomi, brother – my time there before was brief, and I have always regretted that we did not speak then. This was not the kind of meeting I had imagined. I know nothing of the accusations you level against me. My wife was slain by a Seppun assassin, in a plot somehow connected to the boy you are protecting. Sheathe your blade and help me find the truth.”**

**Arasou sneers, “A ‘Seppun assassin?’ When the Seppun never draw their blades save in the service or protection of the Emperor? A strike that you ‘just happened’ to deflect directly into her throat? The truth is plain to see: you ordered her killed, just as you are here to kill the son you sired on that poor geisha. You will kill anyone who threatens your rule.”**

The PCs may speak up if they wish, but Arasou is as dismissive of any defense they offer of Toturi as he is of Toturi's own words; from his perspective, they are Toturi's lackeys, at best fools blinded by idealism and loyalty, at worst the Emperor's chosen thugs, and Arasou says so in as many words. Moreover, Arasou has had the situation “explained” to him by a very persuasive individual, and it is essentially impossible to

change his mind as far as Toturi or what happened to Kaede are concerned.

*Finally, Arasou shakes his head and his expression firms to grim certainty. "No more. It ends now," he says flatly, and gives a short whistle. An arrow arcs out from the trees toward the Emperor. In a flash, Toturi draws his blade and cuts the arrow out of the air. Without turning, his other hand moves in a brief arc, indicating the positions of the ambushers. "Keep them off my back." Arasou and Toturi rush to meet each other, while more attackers come out of the trees at you.*

Most of the attackers are ronin hirelings, brought there to deal with the PCs while Arasou confronts Toturi. There are as many ronin as there are PCs, divided into meleeists and archers (if uneven, the extra is meleeist), plus a shugenja. Anyone who looks at the shugenja recognizes the mysterious figure who told them where to find Shosuro Jima in Ryoko Owari. This shugenja, Soshi Nowaru, is not truly behind the scheme that brought Toturi to the far side of the Empire to face his brother in battle, but nonetheless serves as an instrument of that scheme. Among other things, Nowaru helped persuade Arasou that the Emperor needed to die.

Nowaru begins combat by casting Gift of Wind, using a Void point on the casting roll in hopes of being able to cast it in one round. He then focuses his spells on helping his allies in order to maintain his invisibility. Once he has taken enough damage to fill his +10 Wound Level or when it is clear that the battle has turned decisively against his allies, he attempts to flee. Should he be captured or be knocked to Down but not Out, he has a poison pill similar to the one used by Jima in Ryoko Owari.

#### Soshi Nowaru

Air 4    Earth 2    Fire 3    Water 3    Void 4

Honor 2.2    Status 1.5    Glory 2.1  
**Initiative:** 7k4    **Attack:** 6k3 (tanto, Complex)  
**Armor TN:** 37 (in Defense stance)    **Damage:** 3k1  
**Spellcasting:** 9k4 (Air), 5k2 (Earth), 7k3 (Fire, Water)

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

**School/Rank:** Soshi Shugenja 3

*The Kami's Whisper:* Can spend two spell slots instead of one when casting non-damaging spell to conceal all signs of the spell going off except its effect.

**Spells Known:** *Air:* Call Upon the Wind (ML 2), Gift of Wind (ML 4), Know the Mind (ML 4), Mask of Wind (ML 3), To Seek the Truth (ML 1), Whispering Wind (ML 2); *Fire:* Fires of Purity (ML 1), Never Alone (ML 2); *Water:* Path to Inner Peace (ML 1), Reversal of Fortunes (ML 1), Stand Against the Waves (ML 2)

**Skills:** Acting 2, Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Courtier (Manipulation) 2, Defense 5, Etiquette (Conversation) 2, Investigation 1, Knives 3, Lore: Theology 4, Lore: Scorpion 2, Lore: Underworld 2, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Spellcraft (Importune) 5, Stealth 5

**Mastery Abilities:** need not reroll a Full Defense roll if he maintains the stance for multiple rounds; gains an additional +3 to Armor TN in Defense or Full Defense; may move up to Water x5 feet per Move action while using Stealth; gains +1k0 to all Spell Casting rolls; off-hand penalties do not apply while wielding knives

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Paragon of Duty, Failure of Courage

#### Ronin Hirelings

Air 2    Earth 3    Fire 3    Water 3    Void 2  
Reflexes 3

Honor 1.5    Status 0.5    Glory 2.0  
**Initiative:** 5k3    **Attack:** 8k3 (katana, Complex) or 8k3 (yumi, Complex)

**Armor TN:** 25 (light armor)    **Damage:** 7k2 (katana) or 5k2 (yumi)

**Reduction:** 3

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

**School/Rank:** None (Insight Rank 2)

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Battle 3, Defense 3, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 5, Lore: Underworld 2, Stealth (Ambush) 3

**Mastery Abilities:** May ready a sword as a Free Action; adds +1k0 to damage with swords; can string a bow as a Simple Action; increases maximum range with bows by 50%

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** none

Toturi's battle against Arasou is impacted (and its final result determined) by the actions the PCs take during this battle. Should the PCs take no actions to directly aid Toturi, such as choosing the Guard action, casting a beneficial spell on him, etc., Toturi appears to be losing throughout the fight. (Simply standing between him and the oncoming attackers is not enough.) However, if at least one PC does take such actions, the fight looks to be even – it is not clear which swordsman will prove superior. As the fight goes along, Toturi is able to push Arasou back onto the bridge about 5 feet per round, although if Arasou looks to be winning it seems more

as though he is luring Toturi onto the bridge. Regardless, the end of the fight happens rather abruptly, during the Reactions Stage of the fourth round of the PCs' battle:

*Toturi abruptly jumps forward, jamming the tsuba of his katana against that of Arasou's, locking the two together for a moment. Twisting hard, he forces his brother's blade aside as he spins, raising an elbow to catch Arasou across the jaw. Even from where you stand, you can hear the crack. Arasou's blade flies from his hand as he staggers back and falls over the bridge railing, falling unconscious into the swift-moving water. In an instant, he is gone over the waterfall's edge.*

If, on the other hand, a PC actually succeeds in an attack against Arasou, things end rather differently. In order to meet this requirement, the attack must deal damage (Arasou can be assumed to be spending Void to deal with Toturi, so he takes any damage that exceeds his Reduction 5). Arasou's Armor TN is 40. At the GM's discretion, other actions directed at Arasou that meet a similar TN could also qualify as a successful attack if it results in a weakening of Arasou's position. If the attacker is within melee range of Arasou during the Reactions Stage of the same round, Arasou attacks that PC – he attacks at 10k7+8, dealing 8k2 damage. He declares 5 Raises for damage, but if he should miss the Armor TN after the Raises but would have hit without them, he still hits without benefit of the Raises. He suffers no Wound Penalties during the first Round of combat, but is suffering a +3 during the second and a +5 during the third. He does not have a chance to attack during the fourth Round.

Should a PC make a successful attack, it shifts the balance of the fight significantly. During the Reactions stage of the fourth round, the battle comes to a swift and final end:

*Toturi's blade finally slips through a hole in Arasou's defenses, catching the younger man along his wrist. Suddenly unable to hold the blade as well, Arasou finds his katana dropping without warning. He only has time to widen his eyes in shock before Toturi's sword slices cleanly through his brother's neck, sending the head rolling across the bridge planks.*

(Note: should a traitorous PC attempt a similar attack on Toturi, it provokes a similar response. In this case, however, Toturi uses two Raises to target the attacker's primary hand and the other three for damage. If the attack deals enough Wounds to put the PC into the Injured Wound Level, that PC also receives the Missing

Limb Disadvantage permanently. This does not change the outcome of Toturi's fight with Arasou.)

## A Fateful Reunion

Once he has dealt with Arasou, Toturi turns swiftly to aid the PCs against any remaining enemies. The casual good humor he had occasionally displayed on the trip is gone, replaced with a cold and terrible anger. He dispatches his foes with speed and precision.

Finally, he turns to look back toward the bridge, whether his brother's body still lies upon it or not. With a summoning gesture, he signals the PCs to follow him across the bridge and to the Waterfall at Dawn at last. (While he is wounded – he has taken 40 Wounds – he will only pause for one Round to allow healing.) Marching over to the door, he all but kicks it open and steps inside.

The entry room of the Waterfall at Dawn is finely appointed, with a number of paintings and small sculptures along the walls and a richly-woven rug in the center. Within, only two people are visible: a beautiful woman, around 30 years old, and just behind her, a boy of about seven. Despite his age, the boy holds a bokken in a classic kenjutsu stance, his expression determined; he looks a great deal like Toturi. (The geisha of the house are all hiding upstairs.)

*The woman asks, quavering, "Who are you? What do you want with us?"*

*Toturi stares at the woman, seeming stunned. The anger from just seconds before is gone. After a moment he whispers, "Hatsuko?"*

*As he says her name, Hatsuko frowns. Her face holds no sign of recognition, and Toturi frowns as well. There is a pause, but then an expression of understanding seems to cross his countenance. He glances over his shoulder toward the wooden bridge outside as though connecting Hatsuko's behavior with his brother's.*

*Looking back to Hatsuko and the boy, Toturi sheathes his blade and says gently, "I am... a friend. I am here to take the boy, so that he may be raised as the samurai he is. I will arrange for him to be taught by a friend of mine, Ginawa, so that he can know something of where he comes from."*

*The geisha's frown deepens, and she takes a small step closer to Toturi. The Emperor stiffens, as though*

*keeping himself in check. “You... will take him for training?” Hatsuko asks. Toturi nods, watching her.*

*Her eyes search his face, as though looking for something. “Do I... know you?” she asks, licking her lips, a hesitant smile appearing. One hand raises to her hair, fingering a lock in what seems a habitually flirtatious gesture. “Have you... been to my House before?”*

*Hope appears in Toturi’s eyes, and he reaches to take her hand. “No, not here, but once –”*

*And all at once a knife appears in her hand as though conjured there by maho. Hatsuko slashes at Toturi with shocking speed. He raises his hand to block (it is the same movement that he used at the Topaz Championship, on the day his wife died), but his hand is empty, and a thick line of red appears across his palm.*

*Instantly, Toturi jerks and then is frozen, as Hatsuko leaps on him, stabbing. Red froth begins bubbling through his lips. “Liar!” the geisha screams. “You’re here to kill him! They warned me! I won’t let you hurt him! I won’t!” The bloody knife goes in over and over, and scarlet covers Hatsuko’s hand and beautiful kimono.*

At the same time, the boy rushes forward. He reaches for Toturi’s sword, hoping to turn it on the PCs.

Entering into this scene, a PC may try to protect Toturi, rightly paranoid for his safety. The Emperor will wave such characters back, not wanting to worry a woman he believes will not hurt him, but dutiful PCs may place Toturi’s safety above such concerns. A PC who is Guarding Toturi can partially knock aside Hatsuko’s attack, but it is still effective enough to scratch him – and the poisoned blade needs only a scratch to do its work.

**A Craft: Poisons or Medicine (Antidotes) / Intelligence** roll, TN 25, is enough to determine that Toturi is already a dead man. Only a casting of Peace of the Kami, a Rank 6 Water spell, could help him; otherwise he will be dead in seconds.

The PCs have to deal with Hatsuko and her son somehow. Hatsuko takes no meaningful defensive actions, her drive to protect her son having pushed aside all concerns for her own safety – a PC who wishes to kill her or knock her out can do so without a roll. Similarly, while the boy has a great deal of determination and carries in his veins the blood of a Thunder, he is yet only a 7 year old child, and can be

easily manhandled into submission. If the PCs kill Hatsuko in front of him, he goes into shock, becoming almost comatose. It will be some hours before he recovers.

## Conclusion

A few moments later, Kakita Toshiken bursts in, covered in blood (some of it his). He stares at the tableau for only a brief second before rushing to Toturi’s side.

*The Emperor’s eyes fight to focus on the Emerald Champion. With the last of his strength, Toturi manages to gasp, “Tsudao – still the heir – protect her – take the boy – to Ginawa.”*

*And then Toturi I, Emperor of Rokugan, Master of the Chrysanthemum, Lord of the Seven Hills, and Hero of Rokugan, dies.*

*After a long, long pause, Toshiken looks around. “What happened here?” he demands, his voice ragged with contained emotion.*

Once the PCs give their report, Toshiken tells them, *“There was another group preparing to come at you from behind – I dealt with them. I saw the fight. You did well.”* If Hatsuko or the boy, who is named Kaneka, are still alive, Toshiken takes them into custody.

*“It is time you returned to your lords,” he says. “Should anyone ask, the Emperor battled a returned spirit and was slain. I must see to the Emperor’s body, and begin the arrangements for the crowning of the Empress.*

*“Long live Tsudao, Empress of Rokugan.”*

Toshiken will make all appropriate arrangements for transporting the Emperor’s body back to Otosan Uchi and deciding what the rest of the Empire will be told. Any PC attempting to claim a “souvenir” from the deceased Emperor will receive one warning from the Emerald Champion. Failure to heed this generosity will result in a swift demise.

If the PCs ask about Toshiken’s presence or what he knows about this plot against the Emperor and the Empire, Toshiken pauses before nodding to himself and beginning to explain:

*“Last year, on the night of the Topaz Championship, after Toturi-heika announced Kaede’s pregnancy, a*

*message was delivered to the Emperor from an unknown source, telling him that he had another son, one borne to him by the geisha Hatsuko, and promising information if he would come alone to a spot in the forest, about ten miles outside Tsuma. He summoned me immediately, explained that such a thing was possible, and asked my counsel. I volunteered to take four of my most trusted men and find out what this person knew.*

*“It turned out that whoever sent the letter had expected that response. We were ambushed just before we arrived at the planned meeting, and only I made it out of the attack alive. Before the last ambusher died, however, I was able to persuade him to tell me what he knew. He did not know who had paid him, but was aware that I was the target of the ambush, and it was designed to draw me away from Toturi. He knew little else, save that the attack on Toturi would involve a spirit of some kind. I recalled that only one of the miharu assigned to the Emperor was new, and that he was a returned spirit – I rode as quickly as I could back to the Emperor’s side, but by returning, I gave the assassin the opportunity he sought. You... you know the rest.*

*“Since that day, I have been tracking who suborned the assassin. This past spring I found and killed the man I believed responsible for the plot, but I remained suspicious that even he was working for someone else.*

*“It would seem that I was right.”*

And with that, the PCs are sent back to their daimyo. If Toturi did not kill Arasou, any attempt to find the body at the bottom of the falls turns up nothing. And across the Empire, samurai and peasant alike look toward the future with a three-year-old child at their head, and wonder what destiny might hold for Rokugan.

Any PC who asks their lord for permission to commit seppuku is likely to be granted it, whether or not they explain their reasons. Have any player who wishes to do so contact the Admin staff; while quite probably appropriate for the character, such a decision should not be made without fully considering the consequences.

## **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 Ronin:	+2XP

**Total Possible Experience: 4XP**

### **Honor**

There are no particular gains or losses for this module, but specific actions (as noted in the text and otherwise) should have heightened consequences for Honor gain and loss, given the presence of the Emperor himself.

Speaking of the events of the module require violating an express command from the Emerald Champion, and will cause the character a loss of three points of Honor for every Honor Rank they possess.

### **Glory**

As Toshiken refuses to give details about the Emperor’s death and commands the PCs to do the same, they gain no Glory for their participation, and thus lose one point of Glory from “inactivity.”

A PC who did not disguise him- or herself as a ronin for the journey gains half a Rank of Infamy, as rumors swirl, connecting that PC in an unclear fashion with Toturi’s death.

### **Other Awards/Penalties**

If Kaneka lived and is delivered to Ginawa as commanded, the PCs gain a Favor from the Akodo Family.

If the PCs managed to deliver some kind of justice on Suzume Shimobukure, they gain +1 Devotion for Yotsu Seu.

### **Module Tracking Sheets**

A PC who took the knife that struck down Toturi gains three Ranks of Unlucky as long as they claim ownership of such a misfortunate item. These Ranks stack with any they may already possess, and even if they give up custody of the blade, they retain a

permanent extra Rank of Unlucky. The knife is, itself, merely a normal tanto. For now.

### **GM Reporting**

- What was the result of the party's interactions with Akodo Gashozu?
- Did the PCs arrange justice for Suzume Shimobukure? If so, did they send a message to a Magistrate, involve Manozo, do it themselves or something else?
- What was Arasou's fate?
- What happened to Hatsuko? To Kaneka?

**GM must report this information BEFORE Nov. 15, 2011 for it to have storyline effect**

## Appendix: NPCs

### Toturi I, Emperor of Rokugan

The Splendid Emperor is a tall, lean samurai with pale skin and classically handsome features, though his face shows some sign of his constant cares. He is surrounded by the soft glow of a returned spirit and is normally clad in the finest Imperial silks – not because he cares overmuch for the trappings of his position but because he understands that part of the role of the Emperor is to serve as an icon for his subjects. He is a very intelligent man, and one of the finest tactical minds the Empire has ever known, but his honor and generous nature sometimes prevent him from making the difficult choices that a ruler must. This is his downfall, in fact: though a true hero and literally one of the saviors of the Empire, his determination to do the right thing will prove his undoing.

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 5	Water 5	Void 7
Awareness		Intelligence	Perception	
7		7	7	
Honor 8.9		Status 10		Glory 10

**Initiative:** 10k6+10

**Attack:** 10k6+8

**Armor TN:** 30 (Light Armor)

**Damage:** 9k2

**Reduction:** 3 (Light Armor)

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

**School/Rank:** Akodo Bushi 5/A Samurai's Fury

**Techniques:** *The Way of the Lion:* May either ignore the portion of an opponent's Armor TN derived from Armor, or gain a Free Raise when attacking. (Do not ignore Reduction from the Armor while choosing the first option.) Gains a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all attack rolls on first melee attack against an opponent in a skirmish, or against any opponent who has declared a Raise on an attack against since last turn. Add only a total of 1k0 for an enemy who Raised against you, no matter how many times they actually Raised.

*Strength of Purity:* During a skirmish may add Honor Rank to the total of any single roll during Turn. May not increase damage rolls in this fashion, nor can this be done in the Center Stance.

*Strength of My Ancestors:* May make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while using weapons with the Samurai keyword.

*Triumph Before Battle:* Once per skirmish, may designate an opponent during the Reactions Stage. Ignore any Armor TN bonuses target receives from his Stance during the next Round.

*Akodo's Final Lesson:* When make Raises on any Bugei Skill Roll, if meet or exceed the original TN (before Raises) but fail to meet the Raised TN, still succeed without the benefits of Raises.

*A Samurai's Fury:* When spending a Void Point to add a bonus of +1k1 to any Skill or Trait Roll, also adds Honor Rank to total.

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Battle (Mass Combat) 10, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 6, Defense 7, Etiquette 5, Games: Go 3, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 3, Jujutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History 6, Lore: Law 5, Lore: Theology 6, Mediation 5, Performance: Oratory 5, Polearms 5, Sincerity 5

**Mastery Abilities:** +10 to Initiative, Free Raise to all Battle Rolls; may ready a sword as a Free Action, +1k0 to damage with swords, 9s explode on damage with swords; may retain Full Defense roll in subsequent Rounds, +3 Armor TN in Defense and Full Defense Stances, may take a Simple Action (other than attacks) in Full Defense

**Kata:** Striking As Water

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Leadership, Paragon of Courage, Sage, Tactician, Touch of Yomi: Battle / Lost Love