

A Hero's Gift

**A One-Round Low/Mid-Rank Adventure for Heroes of
Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido
Month of the Moon, 1139 (Spring)**

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Is the truest test of a hero the last one, or the first?

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

GM's Information

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

Reminder

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a Low/Mid rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank 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): lower the TNs for the various Social Skill Rolls by 10

High End Party (most/all characters Rank Three): The Bandit Leader has a no-dachi instead of katana, thus his damage becomes 9k3. In the final encounter, Keifuji has Earth and Void both at 4, making him Insight Rank 4 (increasing his Wounds and first-round Initiative to 9k5+10), and may make attacks with his bisento as a Simple Action; additionally, the party must drop twice as many rebels as there are PCs in order to break away. At the GM's discretion, particularly high-ranking or combat-focused tables may face rebels with Earth 3 (and a corresponding increase in their Wounds).

Adventure Summary and Background

Rokugan is a land of heroes. The legends of its samurai have inspired each generation to greater feats of daring, seeking glory or honor for themselves, their families, and their Clans. This drive that so many young samurai share has led some to greatness, and some to despair, as they battle on the field of war or in court.

Iuchi Aseo wants to be a hero. The bold young shugenja could not stand aside while his father's castle was attacked, and perhaps influenced by tales of heroic shugenja like Isawa Tadaka or Iuchi Karasu, he entered the fight against the Lion. Unfortunately, despite his skill as a battlefield healer, he was ultimately captured by a clever group of Lion that remembered his high Status (and role as a shugenja) made him a prime hostage. To his chagrin, he has found himself an "honored guest" of the Lion Clan for the last seven months.

Aseo's father, Iuchi Barashi, is not a hero. The Empire knows him to be a skilled healer, perhaps even the best in Rokugan who does not rely upon the kami, and no one begrudges him the vast network of allies and favors

that he has naturally accrued over the years by bringing relief to the sick and injured. He has been blessed with four bright children, earned fame and fortune for his Clan, and had served as the daimyo of the Shinten province for the better part of two decades. To be sure, there have been tragedies as well (the death of his son during the Clan War and the death of his wife in childbirth shortly thereafter), but Barashi has borne these as stoically as any other samurai. However, Barashi has a dangerous secret: he is the highest-ranking surviving member of the Kolat in the Unicorn Clan, having escaped Shinjo's Purge by not being in the Unicorn lands when she returned. Recently, he has ignored many of his obligations (both as a member of the conspiracy and as a provincial daimyo) to recover his son. Though Aseo is not suited to be a member of the Kolat (a role that Barashi's eldest son was being groomed for before his death in battle against the Shadowlands), the daimyo genuinely loves his son and wants him back at nearly any cost.

The man once known as Bayushi Tange may have been a hero. Once, he wanted to be with all his heart. His drive and motivation stemmed from the desire to serve his Clan and gain glory and honor for his prowess on the battlefield. As the founder of his own Technique, the "Dark Sword of Bitter Lies", he showed great potential despite his brash and oftentimes unthinking nature. The Scorpion Clan, seeking to remove the embarrassment of his less-than-subtle antics, sent him on numerous suicide missions – that he always survived. After the Scorpion were banished to the Burning Sands, he realized that all of his victories were the result of chance and luck rather than skill or superiority on his part.

Through chance, Bayushi Tange acquired a heirloom of the Lion Clan. Now, with his son held captured by the Lion, Iuchi Barashi will send the PCs to reclaim that heirloom and have them return his son to the Unicorn lands. Unfortunately, the growing unrest in the lower orders is building to a head and the PCs will encounter resistance from a surprising quarter on their quest. They will have to make a difficult choice in order to succeed at their task, but it is ultimately their decisions that will decide whether one of Rokugan's heroes returns to the Empire or if the Unicorn will lose one of their bright hopes for the future.

Introduction

The PCs have been sent to Shiro Onsenba by their daimyo to answer the call for assistance that Iuchi Barashi has made. While his previous network of allies

and favors has been strained to the utmost as he makes every effort he can to rescue his son, the PCs' daimyo are among the few left in the Empire that will extend themselves on Barashi's behalf. Though their lords will not explicitly say what Barashi wants, Aseo's predicament is common knowledge in the Empire and it is assumed that the PCs will be asked to assist with it. Even Lion PCs are expected to render all possible aid – Barashi's negotiations for the release of his son have the potential to be of great use to the Clan, after all. (Ronin PCs, of course, will be compensated handsomely for their assistance: Barashi has offered 5 koku for their part in the return of Aseo.)

Shiro Onsenba, the provincial seat of the Shinten Province, nestles comfortably in the foothills of the Spine of the World Mountains in the southern Unicorn lands. Though famous for the healing waters of its hot springs, you have been sent here to assist the lord of the castle, not to take advantage of the facilities that travelers from across the Empire come to enjoy. The castle itself is fairly small, but it has a sizable surrounding village, and the locals seem prosperous and happy. The local lord's herd grazes under the watchful eyes of the herdsman, and it is difficult to credit that this castle was attacked near the end of last summer's fighting.

The PCs will be met by Iuchi Kamiwa, Barashi's hatamoto. She is a middle-aged woman with a welcoming smile and a motherly demeanor. Kamiwa will greet them politely, get them settled into their rooms, and inform them that Barashi is busy but will be eager to speak with them once the rest of the guests arrive. Though she will be reluctant to discuss the unfortunate situation, she is clearly worried about her lord and concerned for the young hostage. She will provide a guide to any of several local bathhouses that specialize in the healing waters of the region. Kamiwa will also make a point of giving an invitation to examine Barashi's herd, and if any of the PCs are interested, will be happy to help them select a steed to take on a ride and explore some of the trails in the area designed for all levels of rider. *“And there are few things as nice as a relaxing soak after a hard day's ride.”* Barashi, as a provincial daimyo, has a respectable herd, and will provide a steed suitable for each PC – the GM should allow the players to describe such a horse, if they do not already have one they feel is superior to a Unicorn riding horse (for example, an Otaku battle steed). Even if they do not take the opportunity, Kamiwa will discretely inquire as to what kind of steed they would like to make use of if they should change their mind (so that Barashi may make an appropriate gift later).

The PCs are not likely to arrive on the same day, but will have some time to explore Shiro Onsenba and partake of some of its luxuries. Those PCs from the furthest away (Mantis, for example) will have the least time, but Barashi's servants are eager to provide a good impression for their lord's allies.

No formal entertainment has been arranged, but the PCs will be given good rooms, and allowed access to any non-secure areas of the castle and village. For the most part, Shiro Onsenba is a quiet little town with numerous hot springs, a thriving medicine industry (characters who wish to stock up on doses for their medicine kit may do so for 1 bu), and several riding trails for the travelers that come for the springs. It is, on the whole, not a particularly exciting place. The PCs should have an opportunity to introduce themselves to each other before the meeting with Barashi.

Rumors

Should the PCs wish to gather information on the local happenings or events from around the Empire, they may roll **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** at a TN of 10; a successful roll learns one rumor at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN. (PCs with “Oath of Fealty: Iuchi Barashi” receive a Free Raise for this roll.) The rumors include:

- Though the Khan is proud of the victories of the Unicorn armies last summer, he has announced that he will be examining ways to restructure the Clan's armies in the coming months. The ways of war known to the Moto for centuries are different enough from the Rokugani traditions of battle that even the masters of war among the Lion will not know what to expect.
- The renowned hero of the War Against the Shadow, Matsu Goemon, has been given command of the recently-recreated Empress' Guard. His second-in-command is the returned spirit Akodo Haranobu, once Doji Haranobu, the original founder of the Guard at the dawn of the Empire. Competition to join the Guard is fierce, but already accusations of politics outweighing aptitude or devotion to the Empress have marred the unit's reputation.
- The Unicorn have attempted to form an alliance with the Crane; the two Clans have a history of relatively amiable relations, and stronger ties open a number of possibilities for both parties. The Unicorn had hoped to take advantage of the Crane's better standing in court, as well as vastly increased mercantile options, but the current Crane conflict with the

Crab has proved troublesome. Recently, the Crane have also shown some disturbing conciliatory attitudes toward the Lion, and this may be at odds with Unicorn interests.

- There are many rumors of a Lion assault upon Toshi no Meiyo Gisei. Forces under the command of Moto Hideyoshi took the city during the fighting last summer, but the Lion are certain to attempt to reclaim it. The Khan has officially announced that they are welcome to try and that he will welcome another challenge.
- News from the capitol: as the Empress continues to grow and starts to near the age when her education is of concern, the Clans are competing for the right to provide Imperial tutors. A more formal competition has been suggested, but Imperial Regent Miya Mashigai is still working on the details.

In addition, any character doing any asking around will hear about Aseo, as it is a matter of significant concern to the locals. The brave young shugenja was captured during the fighting last summer, when Shiro Onsenba was attacked unexpectedly. The local samurai and peasants alike are full of praise for the lord's eldest son: by all accounts he is brave, handsome, and honorable, a skilled healer and fierce leader, having "came into his own after his older brother died during the Clan War." The PCs may have been present at his wedding (at the beginning of SoB02: Bonds of Fate), and his bride is among those most concerned for his safe return. The couple have not yet been blessed with any children, but there are hopes that his return will be able to amend that. Barashi does have two other living children: Himeko, his nineteen-year-old daughter who has recently returned home after studying with the Ide Courtiers, and Jiroji, who is thirteen and away learning the basic ways of the spirits with the Iuchi Shugenja. Himeko's gempukku two years ago was largely unremarked-upon, with the larger implications of Aseo's wedding, and Jiroji is probably at least two years from his own.

Part One: A Father's Love

After all the PCs have arrived and had a chance to meet each other, they will be summoned to an audience with Iuchi Barashi.

The servants respectfully show you to a room on the top floor of the castle. The east wall is open to show a breathtaking view of the plain below, but the room is otherwise plain and largely undecorated. A low table and cushions are the only furnishings, and once the

servants pour tea, they depart. Iuchi Barashi enters as they leave, and he bows politely in greeting. "I thank you for your assistance, my friends. You and your lords have given me hope that there still remains a trace of honor and decency in the Empire." Barashi looks like a man who has aged ten years in the last few months. His once hale frame is now lean, and his face is gaunt behind his white beard. He is dressed as befits a lord, though the purple and white silks show signs of recent tailoring. A polite smile touches his lips for a moment as he takes a seat. "I hope the hospitality of Shiro Onsenba has been to your liking. How was your journey?"

Barashi will engage in strained small talk for a few minutes, making every effort to be a proper host though it should be obvious to any PC with the slightest social sensibilities that he has other things on his mind. Eventually, he will get to the reason that he has asked the PCs' lords for assistance:

"I am certain that you have heard of my son's misfortune. Last summer, forces under the command of Ikoma Ken'o made a surprise assault against this castle. Though my province shares a border with the Lion Clan, it was entirely unexpected for them to attack so deeply into our territory – most likely, that was as much the point as limiting the support I could bring to bear on my Clan's efforts. In any event, my son Aseo rode out to do battle with the Lion forces. Though he fought bravely, he was captured and taken hostage." Barashi pauses for a moment, and though his face does not change it seems to take some time before he can continue. "I am assured that Aseo is being treated well, and I have no reason to doubt this. Nonetheless, I have spent the last several months in negotiations with Ikoma Yachi, the Lion daimyo that has been given his custody. Many of the concessions Yachi-san requested are simply not in my power to provide; he was the governor of the Gisei province until the Unicorn forces took it during the summer. I do not have sufficient influence with my Champion to ask for the return of the city, or to sway any significant dealings between our Clans, but Yachi-san was able to find things to ask that I have been able to provide. All save one."

The Unicorn lord pauses again, looking out across the plain. "Yachi-san has requested that I use any 'Unicorn knowledge or contacts' I may possess across the Burning Sands to recover an artifact that belonged to a Lion samurai who ventured there. It may be because Yachi-san is a returned spirit, and has a certain amount of curiosity as regards more recent historical events in the Empire. It may be a genuine desire for the Lion, to have a storied weapon return to

them. I suppose I cannot speculate upon their motives, though it initially seemed an impossible task. Through much meditation and beseeching the spirits, I was able to locate this item, however, and it has returned to the Empire. I would ask you to retrieve it from the ronin that holds it, deliver it to Ikoma Yachi at Shiranai Toshi, and return here with my son.” Barashi looks away, struggling to keep his composure.

The players will, quite naturally, have a great deal of questions at this point, and Barashi is entirely willing to tell them (at least most) of what they want to know.

- If asked about the Lion artifact, Barashi will go into as much of its history as he understands: *“During the Clan War, the cousin of the Lion Clan Champion rose to some prominence as a ruthless and capable general. This Matsu Gohei, called by many ‘the Butcher’, fought the foes of the Lion with tenacity and vigor. After the war, when the Scorpion Clan were exiled, he followed them into the Burning Sands and never returned. The Scorpion brought back his daisho and said he had died bravely at the hands of the gaijin, but his signature weapon, his megari-yari, was never found.”* (A megari-yari is a Rokugani trident, a weapon not in common use, though there are some Lion who do have a preference for it. Barashi will provide the PCs with the same written description that the Lion gave him.)
- If asked where the spear is, or about the ronin he mentioned, Barashi’s answer will be somewhat less truthful (see below for suspicious players): *“The spirits are never particularly specific, but I am given to understand that a ronin by the name of ‘Shippai’ currently has the spear of Gohei. Shippai lives in the northern Shinomen Forest, near a village called Dokonimo Mura, though I am afraid I cannot give you more exact information than that.”*
- Queries about the village will receive the basic information at Barashi’s disposal, but as he has never been there, he is working entirely on reports from his spies (who is he careful to always refer to as ‘the spirits’). See the section on Dokonimo Mura for specifics.
- If asked how they should recover the spear from the ronin, Barashi will be very careful; he’s not necessarily asking the PCs to go rob a ronin, but if it comes down to it, he does not care how they recover the key to his son’s release. *“I will provide you with gifts to offer in exchange for this heirloom. A hundred*

koku, should he be moved by simple greed. My grandfather had a katana that few in our family have felt a need to wield; I am certain that his spirit would rest easier knowing his descendant was returned home. If this Shippai fellow is looking for employment, I would even be willing to take him into my service, should he wish to leave the hard life of a wave-man behind. Failing that... I trust that you will determine the best course of action when you speak with the man.”

- If asked about the other negotiations he went through with Ikoma Yachi, he will be somewhat uncomfortable, but forthcoming. *“I have spent a great deal of effort to find supplies to assist the displaced Lion samurai from Toshi no Meiyo Gisei. Money, rice, and the medicines that my province is famous for are all en route to Yachi-san already. I have also pledged my word that none of my personal troops will take up arms against the Lion for the next two years. An oath that may cause friction between me and my lord, but there was little else I could do.”*
- And, of course, should the PCs be gauche enough to bring it up, the reason that Barashi is having other Clans send samurai to assist him is because his own forces are either tied up in the defense of the province or are currently on their way to Ikoma Yachi with the shipment of supplies. Barashi knows (all too well) that there are bandits that would attempt to take such a rich shipment were it not well-guarded, but his hope is that a smaller party (the PCs) will not attract such attention.

Barashi is hiding the exact source of his information – rather than having been answered by the spirits, his source is the extensive Kolat spy network. Unfortunately for him, the Kolat Master he reports to has grown impatient with Barashi’s lack of focus on the business of the conspiracy, and refuses to approve any operatives to undertake this mission, leaving Barashi on his own. While this is obviously not something that the PCs will have any means of knowing, if suspicious players ask if the Unicorn lord is hiding anything, they may roll **Investigation / Awareness** at a TN of 40 to determine that Barashi is holding something back, but that it has more to do with the source of the information than the content of it. If questioned, Barashi will fall back on his Status to avoid examination; pressing the issue will offend him significantly, and if the PC will not drop it, they will be asked to leave. This will earn them “Sworn Enemy: Iuchi Barashi”, and they will not be able to continue the module without significant intervention on the part of the other PCs (causing them

to only gain 1 experience point from this module and to lose 1 point of Glory for inactivity).

Once all of the PCs' questions have been answered or avoided, Barashi will thank them for their assistance. *"Words cannot say how much I appreciate your help in this matter, my friends. Perhaps my deeds can demonstrate it instead. I will provide whatever you may require in order to perform this task for me, and I will also give you some of the finest treasures of my Clan: steeds from my personal herd. I know full well that your lords will have provided you what you need for your normal duties, but if you require anything beyond that for this task, simply make it known to my servants, and all possible arrangements will be made. You should be able to depart in the morning." His voice becomes thick with emotion as he rises to leave. "Please. Bring him home."*

Barashi will provide the PCs with any necessary supplies for the mission: in addition to the aforementioned "gifts" for the ronin, they will naturally be given travel papers, provisions, and a map to Dokonimo Mura. Any other reasonable equipment that they request will be given; Barashi's lands are principally known for providing medicines but as a Unicorn daimyo, there are only a few things that would be out of reach. Barashi has no ready source for gaijin equipment, but nearly any normal equipment out of the base book is available. If the PCs ask after mounts, they will be treated to the same questions as to what kind of mount they will want as before; Barashi has already decided to give them steeds as a personal gift (see below).

The Other Heir

While the PCs are making their preparations for the morning's departure, the lord's daughter will make her presence known to some of them. Any PC with an Honor lower than 4.0 (or, if there are no PCs at the table with Honor that low, the single PC with the lowest Honor) will be approached by Himeko. She will not have this conversation with a character who has an Honor of 6.0 or higher, and the Perceived Honor Advantage will apply.

A pretty young woman in the purple kimono of a Unicorn maiden approaches your door and bows politely. "I bid you greetings, worthy samurai. I am Iuchi Himeko, daughter of Barashi. I understand that you are departing tomorrow to return my brother to us?" Cool, dark eyes evaluate you over a brocade fan. "May I trouble you for a few moments before you depart?"

Iuchi Himeko is a pretty young courtier that has largely been ignored by her father all her life. Her elder brothers occupied the majority of Barashi's paternal attention, with Akaki (the deceased eldest) being trained to take over the province and Aseo being the apple of his eye. Ironically, she is in a lot of ways more similar to Barashi than Aseo is; though she does not really wish any harm to Aseo, she is going to attempt to use the PCs (at least the less-than-honorable ones) to keep her brother away so that their father is forced to name her as his heir.

"I must offer my thanks to you, noble samurai, for the service you are performing for our family. My poor brother's plight has been a sore trial for my father. Why, should Aseo not be returned, the future of the province would be in doubt. My lord father would have to turn elsewhere to find a suitable heir."

Himeko will be very circumspect in her recruiting – she has no intention of being denounced, and if it seems as though the PC is uninterested or likely to cause a scene, she will apologize for the "misunderstanding" and withdraw. If the player has any question as to her intent, they may roll **Courtier / Awareness** at a TN of 20 to fully grasp her meaning.

This conversation should be somewhat tailored to the interests of the PC involved. Himeko has no qualms about offering future favors, such as the sort of gifts a provincial daimyo can command or support for social positions. While she may flirt with an attractive male PC, she has no intention of attempting outright seduction (a handsome or persuasive PC may attempt to woo her with a **Temptation (Seduction) / Awareness** roll, but as a trained courtier with a certain amount of wariness, the TN is 40). She may mention to an unwed PC that she has yet to enter into marriage negotiations, but this would be entirely an attempt to lead them on a false path – she is highly unlikely to wish to wed a PC, or any character with a Status of less than 5.

Before she leaves, Himeko will wish the PCs well, no matter how they responded to her insinuations. *"I wish you a safe journey, samurai. Your attempt to help my lord father will be remembered, and I am certain that even if your task should come to naught, it would be through no fault of your own. Rest assured that no stigma would attach itself to you for that result; the offer alone stands as a testament to your honor and courage."*

Should the PC(s) attempt to denounce Himeko for her plotting, it is fairly unlikely they will have much impact. Bringing the matter privately to Barashi will earn them his gratitude and his assurance that he will

“keep an eye on her” to ensure that there are no further problems (entirely true on his part). If they attempt to force the issue publicly, Himeko will deny their claim and demand a champion to defend her honor. As the daimyo’s daughter, she will have the best bushi her father can command at her disposal. If the PC does not back down, they will have to face Shinjo Mitoshi, the captain of Barashi’s guard, in an iaijutsu duel to first blood. Failure will result in the loss of half a Rank of Glory and being socially constrained to offer a formal apology to Himeko. Not apologizing after losing will cost the PC another half a Rank of Glory and an Honor loss as a Major Breach of Etiquette (2 points for Honor Rank 1-6, 6 points for Honor Rank 7+). Winning the duel against Mitoshi will earn the PC four points of Glory and force Himeko to offer an apology for the misunderstanding publicly. This will also earn the PC Iuchi Barashi as a Sworn Enemy (though he appreciates being informed, making his daughter’s plotting public does not endear the PC to him at all).

Shinjo Mitoshi is a Rank 4 Shinjo Bushi with Iaijutsu (Focus) 5, Void 4, Reflexes 5, Agility 4, and Awareness 4. If it moves to skirmish, he has Earth 3, Defense 5, Kenjutsu (katana) 5, and Horsemanship 6 (as his School Techniques largely focus around attacking while in the Full Defense Stance or gaining a benefit from the Horsemanship Skill even when not mounted). If any other traits become necessary, the GM is encouraged to remember that Mitoshi is the captain of a provincial daimyo’s guards, and therefore quite skilled.

Leaving Shiro Onsenba

The next morning, the PCs should gather in the courtyard, ready to depart; the grooms are readying steeds for each of them and a pack horse loaded with supplies and a strongbox. Iuchi Barashi addresses them as the servants finish putting things in order.

“I cannot adequately express my gratitude for your assistance in this matter, my friends. Please forgive an old man his shame in letting emotion touch him so. I have made as much available to you as I could, and I would have you take something more.” He pauses for a moment as the grooms position the steeds in front of you. “The steeds of the Unicorn are considered by many of our Clan to be as our children. As you prepare to depart on a quest to return my own child to me, I give to your care these other children of the Clan. May they bear you with honor and dignity, and may you guide and guard them better than I have.” If any the PCs already has a high-quality steed, he will add, “And since you are not in need of this gift, I have instead had my saddler fit your steed with gear tailored to both of you.”

If the players do not recognize this as a gift (and one of significant value), they may roll **Etiquette / Intelligence** at a TN of 10 to realize that they should make two refusals to avoid giving offense. However, as they are being given the gifts as a group, they only need to make two refusals for the group (rather than requiring two refusals from each PC). Allow whichever PC is most comfortable with speaking make the refusals (or, if the players are uncomfortable with the concept, they may simply make an **Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness** roll at TN 15; the point of this is to demonstrate proper regard for the code of courtesy, not to drag the players through a trying social ordeal). Failure to recognize the social mores in some fashion, however, will cause each PC to lose a point of Honor for their lack of Courtesy.

Each of the PCs will receive a steed from Barashi’s personal herd. These will be the horses they rode before, if they availed themselves of the opportunity, or another horse specifically chosen for them. These steeds will complement the PCs as much as possible – martial characters will get horses that are trained for war, while courtiers will get visually-appealing steeds. Similarly, Large characters will specifically be given animals that can handle their bulk, or Small characters will receive steeds more suited to their stature. Any PC who already has a quality steed will instead receive personalized saddle and tack, custom-fitted to both horse and rider. (Each PC should receive a cert, either “Unicorn Steed” or “Unicorn Tack”.)

Once the niceties have been observed, Barashi will give a small smile of relief (or if the players did not observe proper manners, a scowl of frustration) and continue. “I sincerely believe that your journey will prove to be of the utmost importance to the future of the Unicorn, and not just the folly of an old man who misses his son.” He raises his arms to the skies and faces each direction as he calls upon the spirits in a blessing. “I ask the Northern Wind to lead you unerringly to your goal; may the Western Wind to bear you swiftly with your burden to its destination; I call upon the Southern Wind to return you safely to my lands. And, as always, I humbly entreat the Eastern Wind, that first touches the Imperial City and the Blessed Empress that makes it her home, to bless your ride with honor.” Barashi lowers his arms and turns to face you once more. “I will see you when you return. Fare well, my friends.”

Part Two: Blessing of the Northern Wind

Whether due to Barashi's blessing or simple good fortune, the journey south proves to be easy. The southern Unicorn lands are covered in gently rolling hills that present no significant impediment to travel. Once the PCs turn onto the Imperial road that heads through the small but well-traveled Seikitsu Pass, they will make even better time as the road has been carefully maintained for the benefit of the Unicorn merchant caravans. Seikitsu Pass is not one of the larger thoroughfares of the Empire at this point in Rokugan's history – there is only a small village on either side of the pass, which is large enough for a small party to cross the Spine of the World Mountains in relative comfort and safety but by no means wide enough to allow an army on the march. Once across the mountains, the PCs must depart the Imperial road at the southern village (a Unicorn holding called simply "Seikitsu") and travel cross-country to the Shinomen.

Even this stage of the journey is fairly simple. The plains south of the mountains are uncultivated currently, but despite the lack of roads, prove easy to travel. Though Barashi's directions are somewhat vague, he has provided the PCs with a map that will lead them to the village of Dokonimo Mura. He has also told them that the ronin they seek lives somewhere within a day's journey of the village, so if they wish to explore the Shinomen on their own, they may do so.

The only issue the PCs may face is that they are traveling through what is technically Imperial lands. Barashi could allow them to wear armor in his own province, but he has no authority to do so outside it. If any PC wishes to wear their armor, they may do so, but at the cost of Honor for their violation of Courtesy. (This is a Major Breach of Etiquette – no Honor loss for characters with 0 Honor, 6 points for those with Honor of 7 or higher, and 2 points for all others.)

Dokonimo Mura

It is most likely that the PCs will attempt to use the nearby village as a source of information, as it is the nearest landmark and the closest thing resembling civilization for them. Dokonimo Mura is a sizable village with a population of nearly a thousand people. It is surrounded by artificial rice paddies and largely subsists on farming and forestry, eking a living out of the Shinomen. If the PCs inquired at Shiro Onsenba, or if they succeed at a **Lore: History / Intelligence** (Unicorn PCs receive a Free Raise and members of the Toritaka family receive two), they will know that the village was once claimed by the Falcon Clan. In the years leading up to the Clan Wars, there was some minor skirmishes between the Falcon and the Unicorn;

the village was taken by the Unicorn for about two years before being reclaimed by the Falcon fifteen years ago. During the Clan Wars, however, the Falcon pulled their forces away from their borders before being overwhelmed by the Shuten Doji. When the Falcon joined the Crab as the Toritaka family, they never reasserted their claim to their northern holdings (quite possibly due to the losses they sustained during those years). The village has essentially been unaligned for the last ten years.

There are a number of opportunities for the PCs to learn what they wish through roleplay with the appropriate sources of information. They will, however, be forced to deal with the local peasants in some fashion – it should be noted that violence or the threat of it is an extremely bad idea. If they are accosted or intimidated, the peasants will prove to be intractable. They have no samurai to call upon to defend them from strangers, and they will do their best to avoid anyone that acts like they are going to cause trouble – even to the point of deserting the streets until the PCs leave. If the PCs force the issue to open fighting, the monk Houkaku will attempt to intervene. He will initially attempt speaking reasonably with the offenders, but if they prove set upon violence, he will respond in kind (attempting non-lethal measures first and only doing enough damage to kill if the PCs seem intent on forcing him to it).

As the party nears, read the following description:

You follow a rough country road west along the northern border of the Shinomen Forest. Gigantic trees loom to the south, and rolling plains stretch to the north. According to Barashi's map, you are nearing the village of Dokonimo Mura, and the first indication that you are close to your destination is the rice paddies that have been built into the hills. Peasants tend the fields and eye you warily as you pass; though they show every appropriate sign of deference, they also seem to have some mind to their defense, as they all appear to have a farming implement that could be used as a weapon close to hand. A few even have spears nearby, worn remnants of former battles that have turned up far from their original fields. Coming over the line of hills, you see the village itself before you. It is a large community, more of a town than a village, and it is surrounded by a rough-hewn wooden wall. Several large structures are visible within the walls, including what may be a temple or small monastery. The gates are open, and there is movement at the entrance that indicates your approach has been noted and reported.

The peasants are wary, not overtly hostile. They have lived without a samurai presence for a long time, and

they are not eager to attract the attention of any Clan, let alone the likely group of multiple Clans represented by the PCs. The apparent leader of the cluster of peasants is a large, one-armed man in dusty clothes. He bobs an awkward bow to the samurai and speaks in a gravelly voice. ***“Ah, welcome to Dokonimo Mura, samas. What can we do for you?”*** This is Paru, the foreman of the sawmill. He is not the village headman, which he will make clear as soon as he realizes the error if the PCs assume he is. He will tell them that Jotaro, the actual headman, is away hunting and is not expected to return for several days. While this is entirely true, his nerves and inability to tell a convincing lie to a group of samurai should make it clear that he’s not telling the entire truth. If asked, he will admit that Jotaro is hunting bandits, not animals. This should essentially set the tone for much of the PCs’ interactions – most of the peasants are more worried about getting into trouble than in necessarily being of assistance. Paru knows only a little about the ronin; ***“He comes to town four, five times a year. Heads to the sake house, gets drunk, stocks up on supplies, and heads back out to his house in the forest.”*** He does not know where Shippai lives or what he does for money, just that he never seems short of cash – but Paru will say that Jotaro knows more about Shippai, and that there may be others in town that do as well. Paru will direct the PCs to the sake house and inn, as the best places to ask after the ronin.

If the PCs are unable to get anywhere in the village, Jotaro will return four days after they arrive and will be willing to give them directions to Shippai’s hut (the better to get them out of his town). Alternately, if they decide to go looking for the headman in the forest, they will simply face the bandit encounter below.

Nowhere Inn

The village inn is a fairly large building, obviously accustomed to serving traveling merchants that bring caravans for the town’s lumber trade. The innkeeper, a portly, profusely sweating man by the name of Zopu, will be very nervous at seeing samurai in town. He will freely explain his behavior as due to the unusual activity; he is worried that troubles like the wars may be coming again and will talk freely of the bandits that have been seen in the area. He will not mention the headman’s hunting party unless pressured, but will admit that Jotaro is out looking to deal with the criminals. Zopu does not know much about Shippai – the ronin does not stay at the inn, preferring to take lodgings at the sake house (***“And glad I am of it!”***) on his infrequent trips into town. He will also tentatively offer having seen the ronin on his way to the monastery on one occasion. Apart from that, all Zopu has to offer

is reasonably-priced lodgings and food, and a stable where the party’s horses can be secured.

Summer’s Shade Sake House

The village’s sake house is located at the center of town across from the inn; it is not a terribly rough sort of place, but it is obvious that it principally caters to the caravan guards that attend the merchants who frequent the village. There are a number of small rooms upstairs and in back that the proprietor rents out for those who are too inebriated to stagger back to the inn; currently, however, there are only a few strangers in town apart from the PCs, so the sake house is fairly empty. Upon entering, the PCs will note that there are no swords on the rack by the entrance; there is, however, a spear leaned against the corner. Upon entering the common room, they will find it mostly deserted. The only inhabitants are a young, skittish serving girl, an alcoholic farmer passed out in a corner, and two peasants engaged in a low-voiced but heated discussion. One of them, a plain-faced woman who appears to be in her mid-twenties, may be familiar to them – if they played SoB02: Undefined Border, they may recognize the peasant woman Aki, who took up her dead husband’s spear to avenge him. She is listening to a strange young man dressed in the rough garments of a field laborer but surrounded by the golden glow of a returned spirit. As the PCs enter, he makes a final point, slapping the table for emphasis, before glancing up and seeing the samurai. He mutters something and departs, offering a brief bow to the PCs on his way out the door. (Attempting to follow will be fruitless; he will actively avoid the samurai and knows the village’s layout well enough to lose the PCs fairly quickly.)

Aki, by contrast, seems more pleasantly surprised. If she had previous positive experience with the PCs, she will enthusiastically jump in to help by serving as a sort of liaison with the local peasants. (If there are no PCs present who assisted her in claiming her vengeance in Undefined Border, she will still be polite and helpful as she’s glad to see some samurai in the area and she will assume they are here to help.) The answers to several of their questions will be forthcoming, either from Aki herself or from the serving girl, who Aki will bring over to serve drinks and talk. The PCs should be able to readily learn the following information:

- The headman is out hunting for bandits; a small group of Forest Killers came north last winter after the main gang was eradicated by the Imperial Legion (under the command of Seppun Muruyasu, as the PCs may have seen in SoB17: Flee From Tomorrow). They have been a problem for several months, but Jotaro only recently decided to do something about it.

Aki had heard of it and came to offer her assistance, but only arrived yesterday, after the hunting party had left.

- The ronin Shippai has been living in the forest near the village for the last four years. He comes into town when the merchant caravans are passing through, spends some time dicing with the guards (which he always wins at) and drinks a lot of sake before heading back to his home with a fresh load of supplies. He has almost never cause an issue, though the serving girl will admit there was an incident two years ago where Shippai and a half-dozen of the guards got into a serious fight. There were no deaths, but she will speak of it with hushed wonder as evidently the ronin fought all six guards alone and prevailed without injury.
- The serving girl will also recount how Shippai is a noted drinker. He is quiet and keeps to himself (with a few exceptions), but seems to drink to forget. He does also spend some time with the monks when he comes to town, but almost always before he begins his drinking.
- There are a fair number of rumors as to where Shippai gets his money – he almost never hires himself out as a guard and he does no work in the village, but he never has any problem paying his (sometimes exorbitant) bar tab. His dice games with the merchant guards might explain some of it, and some of the local merchants have reported him selling curios and trinkets to them, but it's still a mystery as far as most of the town is concerned.

If asked about her own doings, Aki will be fairly noncommittal. She has been traveling the Empire and talking among the peasants, doing “what needs doing” and helping them where needed, whether with spear or rake. (There is something more going on, but she will absolutely refuse to speak of it until she knows more – she will not countenance harm coming to the wrong people, and she is afraid there will be lethal consequences.) Though she is reluctant to speak of it in those terms, so as not to cause offense, she thinks of her actions as something of a warrior pilgrimage.

Once the PCs have a direction, Aki will cheerfully wish them well on their quest. Under no circumstance will she accompany them, as she has matters of her own to tend to.

Merchants

There are a number of local merchants in the village; a community of this size requires a variety of different

trades. If the PCs ask around, most of the basic vendors have sold goods like food and tools to Shippai off and on over the course of the last few years. Some of them have likewise bought or traded things from him that they thought they might be able to sell. None of them know where exactly his house is in the forest, as he always makes his purchases and carries it away himself. The smith will show the PCs some of the strange bronze and steel objects the ronin sold to him (PCs may make **Lore: Gaijin / Intelligence** rolls at TN 20 to recognize Senpet spearheads, knives, and jewelry). Similarly, the village weaver will proudly display an intricate silk scarf (similarly of gaijin origin).

Monastery

Dokonimo Mura is home to a small monastery that houses a dozen or so members of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. Normally, the monks simply use the monastery to coordinate their efforts to see to the spiritual needs of the various isolated people scattered through this section of the Empire. Of late, however, the monks have busied themselves with various matters of more secular (and controversial) importance. The abbot, an experienced administrator named Moriharu, is but one of several leaders of the Brotherhood across the Empire who are using their resources to assist the peasantry. Unfortunately, the widespread unrest among the lower orders has led to this assistance becoming in effect support for numerous rebellions and uprisings. Like most of his colleagues, Moriharu is uncertain as to the best way to resolve the situation but above all does not want to aggravate the samurai into unfortunate (and lethal) repercussions.

When the PCs arrive at the monastery, they will find the courtyard occupied by the typical torii arch and a pair of serene trees. However, there are also two wagons incongruously sitting underneath the shade of one of the trees and a pair of monks engaged in a quiet debate nearby. The elder, a plump older man in meticulously-kept saffron robes, turns to greet the samurai when they enter, almost seeming relieved at the interruption.

“Greetings, noble travelers. May the blessings of the Little Teacher be with you this day. I am Moriharu, the abbot of this sanctuary. What brings you here, and how may we be of assistance?”

Moriharu will waste no time in escorting the samurai out of the courtyard, whether to “answer their questions in what comfort the monastery can offer” or to lead them to the main hall where several altars are located for meditation and offerings. Suspicious PCs may roll **Courtier / Awareness** at a TN of 25 to realize that he is

trying to get their attention away from the courtyard, and those who exceed a 40 on the roll will see that it is the wagons specifically that he wants to get them away from. The other monk hangs back and will not directly interact with the PCs unless approached. He will instead direct a deep frown at the wagons and wait for the samurai to finish their business.

The interior of the monastery is fairly simple; it houses a dozen members of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and can accommodate perhaps twice that many. Most of these monks are wandering priests who simply travel from village to village, tending to those that do not have local spiritual guidance. (This also allows them to gather information across a fairly wide range of territory.) The monks are polite and respectful of the samurai, and will mostly leave them to their own devices. There are three altars in the main hall; though the monks mostly take after Moriharu in that their primary devotion is to Shinsei, they do have appropriate places to offer prayers to both the Fortunes and ancestors.

Once inside, Moriharu will be very nearly as cooperative as the PCs may wish. He will answer any question asked about the village, and even knows a fair amount about the ronin Shippai that he will gladly share. The monk knows that the peasants have had some difficult times of late, including the bandit attacks and some trade issues with the merchants that usually purchase the village's lumber, but he is hesitant to say anything against them. *"They struggle, as is their lot; those who toil below allow those above to seek greatness. And if they perform their duties well in this life, the next turn of the Wheel will see them rewarded."* Moriharu is an experienced leader in the Brotherhood, and simply will not admit to anything that will cause a group of samurai to have cause for violence or criminal investigations.

On the subject of Shippai, however, he will be extremely helpful (and eager to get the PCs on their way). *"I know the man as well as anyone, I suppose. He lives alone in the forest, in a house he built himself. I understand from things he has said that he was a Clan samurai once, though he has never made the claim to me outright and I could not guess what name he once bore. Shippai is a troubled soul, and I have done what I could to give him some simple spiritual guidance, but he is not by nature a patient man, I judge. The name he chose means 'failure', and I cannot think that to be happenstance, but he has never told me why he calls himself that. He is not a threat to the community, no matter what Jotaro – the village headman – may suspect. There have been an incident or two, but I honestly think that Shippai is*

here seeking some sort of peace. Many samurai were, through no fault of their own of course, overwhelmed by the horrors of the Clan Wars or the War Against the Shadow, and found whatever way they could to deal with the damage this caused to their spirits." Moriharu knows where Shippai's house is, and will give the PCs directions to get there if asked. *"Follow the forest east for about ten miles, then head south once you find a stream flowing from the woods. He has built his, ah, 'house', near a stone ridge on the west bank. You will not be able to mistake it, I promise."*

Should the PCs decide to investigate the wagons outside, they will find that they contain a number of bound cloth object, tightly-wound to poles of various lengths. PCs who succeed on a **Battle / Intelligence** roll at TN 20 will recognize these on sight at war banners – both sashimono (small personal banners) and larger hata-jirushi (larger unit designators). If the PCs open the banners, they will see they are all marked with a crow mon. Success on a **Lore: History, Heraldry or War / Intelligence** roll at a TN of 20 will allow them to recognize the mon used by the Brotherhood of Shinsei during the Clan War and the War Against the Shadow when the monks were forced to take the field of battle. The younger monk will simply shake his head in resignation as he watches the samurai poking around. (If the PCs all go inside with Moriharu immediately, several acolytes will emerge quietly and move the wagons around behind the dormitories in an attempt to hide them. It should not take much exploration for interested PCs to find them afterwards.)

Speaking with the younger monk does take some minor effort on the part of the PCs – he is not rude or antisocial, but he simply will not approach the samurai on his own. If the PCs wish to speak with him, he will introduce himself as Houkaku, "a simple wandering monk seeking guidance" – a true enough description, if somewhat incomplete. Houkaku has recently had a significant religious experience, and has been profoundly affected. He came to the monastery seeking advice from Moriharu, but upon discovering the banners he is very concerned about what they mean for the Brotherhood. Any shugenja or monk PC speaking with Houkaku may roll **Spellcraft / Perception** at a TN of 20 to sense a faint aftereffect of the Heavens upon him. This manifests as the smell of the air on a stormy day (they detect a faint odor of ozone surrounding him) – an impression that fades almost immediately, but should give them a distinct sense that there is something more to the monk than meets the eye. Houkaku has recently spent a fair amount of time on the Dragon Heart Plain (it was there that he was visited by the Thunder Dragon, though he will not speak directly

of the vision), and will be somewhat more open with Dragon or Phoenix PCs. Houkaku does not approve of the Brotherhood supporting the peasant uprisings but is unwilling to turn over any of his brothers to the samurai for their indiscretions. He is afraid that the Brotherhood will not be able to avoid major consequences.

If the PCs speak with any of the monks about the banners, they will claim that they are remnants from the Clan Wars and War Against the Shadow (which is entirely true) and that they are being gathered up to be stored (which is not). Realizing that the latter is false depends on whom the PC is asking – it requires an **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** roll at a TN of 15 for any of the acolytes or Houkaku (who are either too nervous to lie well or too irritated to care, respectively) or TN 35 for Moriharu. Confronting them on it will prove fruitless, however; the monks will simply apologize and move on, seeking to avoid direct confrontation. Threatening violence or other unpleasantness will result in the monks asking the PC to leave (and the offender losing a point of Honor for each Honor Rank they have), with Houkaku being willing to use more direct methods if they are warranted.

Houkaku

Houkaku is a fit, athletic man in his late twenties. He is, in a lot of ways, the model of a martial monk, having joined the order during the War Against the Shadow and fought to defend the Brotherhood against the Goju and Shadowlands. He is not primarily a warrior, however, despite his skills – he has been chosen by the Thunder Dragon for other reasons.

Air 4 Earth 4 Fire 4 Water 4 Void 4

Honor 6.3 Status 0 Glory 2.0
Initiative: 7k4 **Attack:** 10k4 (unarmed, Simple)

Armor TN: 32 **Damage:** 5k3 (unarmed)

Reduction: 8

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

School/Rank: Thousand Fortunes Monk 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 5, Heavy Weapons 5, Hunting 2, Jiu-jitsu 7, Lore: History 3, Lore: Theology (Fortunes) 4, Lore: War 3, Meditation 4, Polearms 3

Mastery Abilities: +1k1 unarmed damage, Free Raise to initiate Grapple

Advantages/Disadvantages: Blood of Osano-Wo, Chosen by the Oracles: Thunder (when spending a Void Point on any roll, add Honor to total), Hands of Stone, Strength of the Earth / Ascetic, Bad Fortune: Unknown Enemy, Idealistic

Active Kiho: Soul of Four Winds (+7 Armor TN), Embrace the Stone (Reduction 8 for 4 rounds), Dance of Flames (may make unarmed attacks as Simple Actions)

Exploring the Forest

Though it is far more likely that the PCs will choose to investigate the village and look for answers there, they may choose to head out on their own to try to find the ronin. This will allow them a chance to circumvent the village and dealing with the peasants there, but the forest is a dangerous place in its own right.

The Shinomen Mori is the largest forest in Rokugan, with trees that are literally older than the Empire itself. Attempting to navigate it without precise directions is difficult at best. It will take the PCs a few days of searching to narrow down the correct direction, but as long as they can make a **Hunting / Perception** roll against a TN of 15 on the first two days, they will make progress and be able to be in the right area. On the third day, they will need to make another roll against a TN of 25 – success will allow them to spot the signs of a camp before they stumble upon it. If they fail, they may still roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** at a TN of 25 to spot the impending ambush.

The bandits have set up a haphazard camp with little regard for security or even comfort. If the PCs simply blithely enter, the first indication they will have that there is a threat will likely be a cruel laugh and a harsh cry of “Get ‘em, boys!” Should the PCs attempt to enter cautiously and speak with the camp (perhaps thinking, reasonably enough, it to be related to the ronin they are searching for), the Forest Killer leader, a burly, scarred brute by the name of Gotetsu, will openly mock them as fools and fair game before ordering his men to attack. In any event, the bandits fully believe that they can kill the PCs for their gear and will make every attempt to do so.

The PCs must face Gotetsu and one bandit per combat-capable PC (evenly distributed between archers and swordsmen). At the end of the third round of combat, more bandits will begin to emerge from the tents, but will be struck down by arrows fired from the treeline.

Gotetsu, Bandit Leader

Air 2 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 4 Void 2
 Reflexes 4 Stamina 5 Agility 4
 Honor 0.0 Status 0 Infamy 3.0

Initiative: 7k4 **Attack:** 9k4 (katana)

Armor TN: 30 (light armor) **Damage:** 8k2 (katana)

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 20 (+0), 31 (+3), 42 (+5), 53 (+10), 64 (+15), 75 (+20), 86 (Down, +40), 97 (Dead)

School/Rank: Forest Killers / Insight Rank 3

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 4, Hunting 4, Intimidation 5, Investigation 2, Jujutsu 3, Kyujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Underworld 3, Stealth 5,

Mastery Abilities: +5 to total of Contested Intimidation Rolls, +1k0 unarmed damage, +1k0 damage with swords, may ready sword as a Free Action

Advantages/Disadvantages: Large / Benten's Curse

Bandit

| | | | | |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|--------|
| Air 2 | Earth 2 | Fire 2 | Water 2 | Void 1 |
| Reflexes 3 | Stamina 3 | Agility 3 | Strength 3 | |
| Honor 0.0 | | Status 0 | Infamy 1.5 | |

Initiative: 4k3

Attack: 7k3 (bow or katana)

Armor TN: 23 (ashigaru armor) **Damage:** 7k2+3 (katana) or 5k2 (bow)

Reduction: 1

Wounds: 13 (+0), 20 (+3), 27 (+5), 34 (+10), 41 (+15), 48 (+20), 55 (Down, +40), 62 (Dead)

School/Rank: Forest Killer/Insight Rank 1

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 1, Defense 2, Hunting 3, Intimidation 1, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Underworld 2, Stealth 3

Mastery Abilities: +1k0 damage with swords

After the fighting is over, the archers from the woods will reveal themselves as a peasant hunting party about a dozen strong. The obvious leader is a surly man who will cautiously approach the samurai and introduce himself as Jotaro, the headman of Dokonimo Mura. He will do his best to convince the PCs that his group is simply out in the woods hunting. As the "hunters" are well-armed with bows, spears, and assorted peasant weapons, and a few of them are even wearing some pieces of battered armor, this is likely to be difficult for the PCs to believe (if there are any questions, an **Investigation / Awareness** roll with a TN of 15 will, indeed, confirm that Jotaro is being less than forthcoming). If pressed at all, the headman will admit that his group was hunting for the bandits. *"They've been a blight ever since they came up here from the south. Understand they got the rest of their merry band killed real good, and thought they'd try their luck up here. Took some doing, but finally convinced my boys here to do something about it. Was even gonna ask that ronin for some help, figured he'd caused enough problems over the years, but we decided to handle it ourselves."* As Dokonimo Mura currently has no Clan oversight, and the nearest Imperial authority is Kyuden Miya, the village has had no samurai presence or protection for many years. Jotaro is trying to be somewhat cautious around strange samurai, but is ill-prepared to conceal his feelings (in

essence, he has enjoyed his village's independence and has no real wish to come to the attention of his betters).

Presumably, the PCs will ask about the ronin, and Jotaro will confirm that he is talking about Shippai. Jotaro does not know Shippai all that well, as he only sees the ronin when he comes to the village. However, as the ronin is a potential hazard to his community, he has made some effort to discover where Shippai lives. Jotaro and the other woodsmen can give the PCs accurate directions to where the ronin has built his crude domicile. They will, in fact, be quite glad to do so and see the PCs leave. If the PCs took prisoners during the fight, the peasants will happily offer to deal with them. (Permanently.)

Part Three: Blessing of the Western Wind

One way or another, the PCs should be able to locate the hut belonging to the ronin Shippai (whether given directions by the headman or the monk). It is perhaps four hours away from the village (and a similar distance from the bandit camp), and it can be assumed they will be arriving in the late morning or around mid-day. (Setting out immediately upon receiving directions will result in them traveling the Shinomen Forest at night – not a pleasant prospect.)

You follow the stream south for a short while, and it leads you to a clearing around a low rise in the forest. Squatted precariously atop the rise is a ramshackle hut constructed of poorly-cut wooden beams. It creaks ominously in the gentle breeze. The structure is strangely reminiscent of home, however; though the builder obviously knew nothing of proper craftsmanship, they also seemed to naturally attempt to build in the style of a Clan samurai's house.

How the meeting proceeds will depend entirely on the PCs. Whether they approach the house openly or by stealth, Shippai will open the door before they step onto the rough porch.

The door slides open abruptly, almost flying clear of its track but stopped at the last moment by a swift movement from the man standing in the opening. He is a little over average height, leanly muscled and heavily scarred. He is not wearing a kimono and is holding his hakama up with the hand not on the door, but appears not at all discomfited by the sudden appearance of guests. Dark eyes flicker across your group in calm appraisal, and he shrugs one shoulder in a gesture of acceptance. "Hmph. Well, let me get

my swords...” The ronin then turns to head back into the house, evidently preparing to defend himself with no sign of concern.

Unless the PCs wish to fight the ronin, they should make an attempt to dissuade him at this point. This will take no real effort; Shippai is simply assuming that a group of armed samurai arriving at his doorstep wishes to extract revenge for something he did during his service as a Clan samurai and can readily be convinced otherwise. When corrected, he will politely invite them in for some sake and to see what they want.

The PCs may roll **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** at a TN of 35 to recognize Shippai as once having been known as Bayushi Tangen. (His Glory and Infamy were once much higher, but years of living apart from the Empire and no longer wearing his mask do make him harder to recognize.) Characters may substitute the “Lore: Scorpion” (or other appropriate) Skill at the same TN; Scorpion PCs or those trained in the Bayushi Bushi School receive a Free Raise. If this roll is failed, make note of what the PCs did roll for future clues.

PCs who recognize Tangen will remember much of his story: he was a promising warrior of the Scorpion Clan who showed a great deal of promise from an early age. Unfortunately, he was arrogant and brash, with no sign of the sort of subtle thinking most prized by the Clan of Secrets. The Scorpion sent him on a number of suicide missions, from which he always returned victorious and which caused his ego to grow. He was one of the first Scorpion to free himself when they were taken prisoner by the Senpet during their exile to the Burning Sands and helped secure his Clan’s freedom. After the Scorpion returned to Rokugan, however, he disappeared.

If the PCs decide to fight instead, Shippai/Tangen will emerge with a katana in hand and a wakizashi thrust into his now more-secured pants. He will show no mercy, but allow the PCs to come to him, retreating into his house where he knows the terrain. Any fighting inside the structure will cause it to collapse upon the combatants, doing 4k2 damage and giving Tangen the time to make his escape. The PCs will have to roll **Investigation (Search) / Perception** at a TN of 25 to locate the spear they were sent to recover, and obviously Tangen will not be accompanying them. (Similar consequences will befall them should they decide to initiate hostilities once inside the house.)

Once inside, the PCs will discover that the interior is no better-constructed than the outside, but is significantly more interestingly decorated: weapons and armor of a wide variety are mounted on the walls. There appear to

be samples from nearly every Clan (Lion, Crane, and Crab being most prominent) and even a few Senpet artifacts. The PCs may roll **Investigation / Perception** to locate the spear they are seeking; if they roll a 20, they will spot it in a place of honor. Rolling 25 allows them to see a mask hanging near it – a fairly simple ceramic mask in dusty red hues, it is obviously a Scorpion mask and also the only artifact in the room from that Clan. If the PCs rolled a 25 on their earlier attempt to recognize Shippai as Tangen, seeing the mask will allow them to do so.

Shippai will serve the PCs sake and make a rough attempt to be a good host. Unfortunately, he never expected to be entertaining and only owns three cups – the other PCs will have to make do with bowls, while Shippai drinks directly from a different bottle.

Shippai/Tangen is curious about the PCs, but not extremely enthusiastic about their presence. While curious about their quest, convincing him to turn over the spear to them will take more effort than simply offering him Barashi’s gifts. He has no real need for Barashi’s money, is not interested in the sword (as he has enough already), and is not seeking a new master – the life of a wave-man is not precisely comfortable, he will admit, but he left his lord’s service for reasons of his own and would not feel comfortable in taking another’s name. When asked about the spear, Shippai will say that it was a gift from an ally, and he is loathe to give it up as the ally in question is no longer alive. *“It is a reminder of one of the few relatively unsullied deeds I can claim. I should prefer to keep it.”* Note that if the PCs lie about their goal, they have very little chance of actually convincing Tangen to part with the relic.

For his own part, the ronin will seek to learn what he can about the PCs’ mission, asking questions about the hostage to be recovered, the lord that they’re turning him over to, and the situation between the Lion and Unicorn. He will also express some interest in the happenings of the Empire over the last few years. He knows that Toturi is dead, but very little other news has made its way to the remote area he has chosen to hide in.

If asked what he wants, Shippai will grow quiet for a minute. *“There is nothing that I want that can be given to me. I have been cursed by the Fortunes, and my life has been wasted as a result. I wait now to die, and take my curse out of the world with me.”*

If asked about this curse (or, really, anything about his background – Shippai has not had another samurai to speak to for several years, and is on some level wanting

to share his story), Shippai will recount the following tale:

“Once, I was a bushi in the service of a Clan. I showed great promise as a warrior, and I thirsted for glory as a dying man thirsts for water. There was no risk I was unwilling to take for my Clan, for I knew that I would prove victorious in any battle. And I was right, though I did not know the true reason why.” He shakes his head with a sigh. “I even developed my own technique, a thing I pretentiously called ‘the Dark Sword of Bitter Lies’, and when all those that I tried to teach died, I attributed it to their ineptitude. But the fault was mine.” (PCs who rolled a 20 on the earlier roll to identify Tangen will now recognize him upon hearing the name of his Technique.) *“In truth, I had no great skill, no inherent worth that gave me victory over my less-worthy foes. My victories came to me as a result of luck, not through anything I had earned. And so they were hollow, for the pride I took in them was false.”*

This may seem like a paltry sort of curse to most players, but Tangen’s feelings are genuine. He truly believes that he is cursed by the Fortunes with luck that he cannot control, and that brings him victory whether it is earned or not. There is nothing that the PCs can do to convince him otherwise. They can, however, use it to their advantage in other ways.

Talking Tangen into giving them the spear requires the PCs to take one of several different tactics. These can be combined, which may reduce the difficulty, but each will require a roll of some form. Various courtier Techs may help make this more clear to the PCs, or if they are completely at a loss, they may roll **Courtier / Awareness** at a TN of 30 to realize what sort of pressure to bring to bear on Tangen.

The PCs can convince him to help them by:

- Speaking well of Iuchi Aseo and explaining that the spear will ultimately go to help return him to his home and lord. As they have likely heard a fair amount about Aseo when they were at Barashi’s home, but their interaction with Aseo have been very limited, they are at something of a disadvantage. This requires a roll of **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** at a TN of 40.
- They may think to offer him help with his curse. If they are lying, this requires a **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** roll at a TN of 35 (as Tangen is suspicious but desperately wants to believe them). If, however, the PCs have played through certain modules, they may honestly believe that there is a chance his

curse can be lifted by the forces they have seen that seem to defy fate. This requires instead a **Theology / Awareness** roll at a TN of 30.

- The PCs may attempt to describe the problems in the Empire at large, and claim that Rokugan (and, possibly, the Scorpion Clan) needs its heroes once more. This is somewhat less likely, but a sufficient appeal to his ego using **Courtier (Rhetoric) / Awareness** against a TN of 45 will convince him to return to the Empire once more.
- Other tactics may work at the GM’s discretion; remember that Tangen is extremely confident, though not as arrogant as he used to be. He is certain that he can take the entire party if necessary and is for all practical intents and purposes fearless.

The rules for Cooperative Skill Rolls may apply if the entire party is attempting the same tactic (one individual makes the roll and adds the total Ranks of Skill among all PCs assisting them to their total). Alternately, if the party is explicitly trying multiple tactics, they may choose one primary angle to work and use the other arguments in support of it. One PC will be selected for the primary tactic; other PCs may make support rolls as above (though at a TN of 20 instead of the one listed) to give the primary PC a Free Raise for each successful support roll.

If the PCs succeed at any of the above methods to manipulate him, Tangen will rise with a thoughtful expression. *“I think I have been away from the Empire for too long. Perhaps there is something more that I can do, in spite of my curse. If you will allow it, I will accompany you to retrieve this boy. I am intrigued, and will return the spear to the Lion myself.”*

If the PCs refuse to allow him to accompany them, or if they simply cannot make any of the previous rolls, Tangen will eventually lose patience with them and ask them to leave. At this point, they may make one last attempt to persuade him (at a +5 to the TN) or resort to violence, with the consequences as outlined above. If they do not fight and simply leave, they can return to Barashi and report having seen the spear. The daimyo will thank them coldly for what help they offered, and dismiss them. They will gain two experience points, lose half a Rank (5 pips) of Glory, and gain Iuchi Barashi as a Sworn Enemy (worth 5 points).

Shiranai Toshi

Assuming the PCs recovered the spear, their next task is to travel to Shiranai Toshi, where Ikoma Yachi, the

daimyo of the Unicorn-held Gisei province, keeps a court-in-exile and makes preparations to return to his city. Yachi is the lord to whom custody of Iuchi Aseo has fallen, and the one who has made the demands for his return that the PCs are fulfilling.

The journey east from the Shinomen Forest is, much like the trip south was, pleasant and uneventful. If he is along, Tange (who will respond to either name, but will gradually show greater sign of appreciating his original more) will help guide the PCs around the perils of the forest. Tange will troop along for the first day with no issues, carrying a standard travel pack, his daisho, the spear, and a box for his armor without complaint. During the first day's travel, the party will come across a horse wandering alone across the plain. It is saddled (with Unicorn tack) and essentially looking for a rider. Tange will shake his head with a sigh but nonetheless mount up and take advantage of what his luck has once more brought him.

As a traveling companion, Tange is surprisingly pleasant. Though he retains the unshakable confidence that was his hallmark, it is now tempered by some humility from understanding how much of his success was due to nothing but luck. He will practice in the mornings, and is fairly willing to spar or work with other bushi (though he will be absolutely silent about his Technique, even if pressed). He will also play Fortunes and Winds with any interested PCs, though his luck is so outstanding that there is very little chance that the PCs would win. (The exception is any returned spirit PCs; his luck is still good against them, but to a marked lesser degree.)

The easiest route for the PCs to take leads them once more through the Seikitsu Pass and then east to cross the Firefly River. The closest ford to Shiranai Toshi is the site of a new bridge, built by the Unicorn to facilitate their merchant traffic after they claimed the ford from the Lion during last summer's fighting. The Unicorn garrison (two dozen Ide and Shinjo bushi, with a Moto commander), will wish the PCs well on their mission, giving their travel papers only cursory examination and leaving the PCs with the impression that they have been expected.

Further east, Shiranai Toshi spreads under the shadow of a single enormous mountain, located miles from the nearest range. Shiranai Toshi is a fairly large city by Lion standards, though it has always been distant from the central concerns of the Clan. The recent fighting between the Unicorn and Lion, however, have begun to change this. Shiranai Toshi was itself attacked by an elite force of Otaku Battlemaids last summer, and fought off the assault with grim determination. It is

here that most of the Lion from the lost Gisei province have spent the winter and have begun to ready themselves for their inevitable counterattack.

Under normal circumstances, Shiranai Toshi has a ban in effect against Unicorn samurai entering the city walls. However, because the PCs are explicitly there on the invitation of Ikoma Yachi in order to deal with matters between the Clans, any Unicorn PCs will be allowed entry. This is a violation of the city's usual tradition, however, and it should be noted by everyone who sees them. Upon presenting their papers to the guards at the gate, the PCs will be given a guide to a large samurai estate on the edge of the Noble Quarter. It is here that Ikoma Yachi has been holding court.

The shadow of Lookout Mountain looms over the city, making its name ("Darkness City") all too easy to understand. The stoic guard leads you through the narrow streets to a high-walled estate on the edge of town. Across the street, a large building with vast grounds has a sign that proclaims it the "Warden Stables of Shiranai Toshi", and mounted Lion troops can be seen riding in formation on the parade grounds. The guards on the gate bow sharply at your approach, and the doors are flung wide – once again, your presence and mission are obviously known.

Ikoma Sho, the daimyo of the Shiranai Province, has given Yachi the use of this estate while Toshi no Meiyo Gisei remains under Unicorn control as a gesture of solidarity not just for a fellow Lion daimyo, but for another returned spirit who has taken up the burden of responsibility for a fief. The main house is a sprawling, four-story affair surrounded on one side by a sizable stable and on the other by a simple garden. Despite the size of the estate, the complex still gives the impression of being crowded, as nearly a hundred Lion samurai fill the grounds.

The guards will escort the PCs to a large room where a dozen Lion samurai and one Unicorn wait. A large map of the Gisei province is displayed openly on the far wall, though no actual battle plans are visible. The Lion in the middle, a stern-faced man in a fine bronze kimono and surrounded by the glow of a returned spirit, speaks in a deep, well-modulated voice. *"I bid you welcome, worthy samurai. Please do not take it amiss that I have chosen to dispense with certain protocol in this meeting; you are here to provide an escort for our guest, and I feel that we have perhaps taken enough of his time. But first, I understand that you bear a gift from his lord?"* The Unicorn samurai, a tall, dark man in his middle twenties that the PCs may recall seeing at his wedding, is none other than Iuchi Aseo. He looks to

be in good health, if not really in good spirits, but the appearance of the PCs has given him a bit of hope.

The gift Yachi is referring to is, of course, the spear of Matsu Gohei. Tangen will suggest giving it to Aseo to allow the Unicorn to turn it over to the Lion, but will otherwise hand it over to the PCs to do with as they wish. The PCs may make as much or as little ceremony over it as they wish; Yachi will make it clear, however, that the customary refusals have already been done and this is simply the final bit of business. PCs who wish to roll **Courtier / Awareness** at a TN of 20 may gauge the daimyo's mood as somewhat tense; he is not going out of his way to be rude, but he wants this matter over and done with. If they exceed a 30 on the roll, they will note that he did not really expect the Unicorn to accomplish this task and would perhaps have preferred if they had not. (As long as Aseo is a hostage in the Lion lands, Barashi would not have been willing to provide support for the Unicorn armies.) Having made the agreement, however, the Lion are far too honorable to go back on it now.

When the spear has been given to Yachi, the Lion daimyo will examine it with a sigh before turning a somewhat sardonic expression to Aseo. *"Aseo-san. You have been the model of an honorable guest, and I am loathe to bid you depart, but I understand your lord once again has need of your services. I trust that your time here has been educational. I look forward to our next meeting."* He makes a short gesture, and a pair of servants scurry forward with a traveling pack, a wooden case, and a set of reins. *"These are your things, as best we could find them following our relocation. Your sword and armor are there, and your horse has been well-tended, but unfortunately your scroll satchel was lost at some point during the retreat from Toshi no Meiyo Gisei. You have my profoundest apologies; I have issued an order that if it is located, it is to be returned to you unharmed. With that, I bid you farewell. I suggest you make all due speed home; there may be those who would misunderstand your presence out of the city."*

Aseo bows deeply in acknowledgement, and clears his throat. *"I thank you for your many kindnesses, Yachi-sama. Truly, I have learned a great deal in these past few months and I assure you that I will forget nothing. I, too, look forward to seeing you again, whether it be on the battlefield or in the court."*

Yachi dismisses the group with a grim smile. Again, if any PC wishes to roll **Courtier / Awareness** to determine the daimyo's mood, they may do so at a TN of 20 (they may also wish to roll **Investigation / Perception** to determine if he is lying about the scrolls;

it has the same TN) to determine that he is quite genuinely unhappy about not being able to return the shugenja's scroll satchel, and that he has no idea what happened to it. Yachi is also fairly pleased with Aseo; evidently the Unicorn was a polite and appropriate guest. He is also not delivering a threat to the party, but a genuine warning so as to avoid unpleasant mishaps.

Aseo is able to recover his horse without incident, and suggests that the group depart immediately.

Part Four: Blessing of the Southern Wind

Once the group turns north, the last leg of their journey will start out much the same as the other stages. They should, in fact, follow the same path out of Shiranai Toshi that they took coming in. This will lead them back to the Firefly River Bridge, where unfortunately there is a serious obstacle to their progress in the form of a large group of armed and unfriendly peasant rebels.

As you crest a low line of hills just before the river, you see a sizable group of men standing in formation on the road. There appear to be sixty or seventy of them, dressed in ashigaru armor and carrying a mix of spears and bows. Their leader, a tall, lean man with battered ashigaru armor, a long, notched bisento, and the glow of a returned spirit, steps forward and gives you an abbreviated bow. At a small hand signal, the troops behind him come to the ready. The leader shows no expression on his face as he raises a hand to point at the laden pack-horse. "Greetings, samurai. I believe your animal is over-burdened. As one who knows a bit of such things, allow me to relieve the poor beast." Though his words are polite enough, they are delivered in an ice-cold, emotionless tone that leaves no doubt as to his criminal intentions. Ominously, there is no sign of the Unicorn garrison that should have been guarding this bridge.

This is, on the face of it, a simple bandit attack. The PCs have a lot of money from Barashi, and the peasants want to take it from them. However, any PC who is paying attention will note that these men are far more disciplined than simple bandits would be. (If the above description is not enough, they may roll **Battle / Perception** at a TN of 15 to confirm that these men have trained together as a military unit. It will also confirm that the PCs are hopelessly outnumbered.) The peasants are, in fact, members of a widespread uprising who hope to make use of the wealth the PCs are carrying for their cause (any serious military effort requires resources).

The leader will not bluster or brag. He knows full well that he has enough men to kill the PCs, and would prefer not to lose any of his troops. He will, however, not back down from a fight with a group of samurai and will refuse essentially any smaller bribery attempts. (If the PCs think to ask why they want the money, the leader will say *“The people are hungry. They need food. Medicine. Hope. While you samurai squabble and they die for your pride, they need someone to care for them.”*) Threatening him or his men or moving to attack, of course, will instantly result in combat. He does understand what it requires for a samurai to admit defeat, however, and is willing to give the party a chance to discuss the situation before attacking himself. If they take advantage of this opportunity, they have a few more options.

The tactical situation is fairly poor for the PCs. They are seriously outnumbered, they should not be wearing armor (unless they are taking Honor losses), and the opposition is prepared and in place. The enemy has taken the field in formation right in front of the bridge – if the PCs were to push hard, they might be able to fight through them to the bridge, where it would be more difficult for the rebels to make use of their greater numbers. Even using the bridge to their advantage, however, it would be only a matter of time before they were overwhelmed – the rebels do have bows, and the bridge is on a ford; it would take much longer, but an extended engagement will result in the enemy crossing the river to attack from both sides. Fleeing the enemy will cause an Honor loss no matter the odds, but as long as the PCs fight, it will be lessened.

If he is with the party, Tange of course believes that he can defeat the enemy himself. He is wise enough now to understand that the PCs may not survive, but the concept that he could die himself is simply not something he is accustomed to considering. He is more than willing to fight a rear-guard action to allow the PCs time to get away.

Aseo will endorse Tange’s plan, as he is not eager to see anyone die for his sake. If Tange is not present, he will propose something similar – he is not at all confident that he will survive, but he feels a need to make up for some failing during the summer’s fighting and would rather die than ride away while those who freed him fell. In either case, one of the few spells he can cast without his scrolls is “Ebb and Flow of Battle”, which will give the PCs a significant boost to their speed and enable them to escape (whoever remains behind to guard the retreat).

The PCs can, of course, just give the peasants the money and flee. This will result in a significant loss of Honor and Glory, but it is in a lot of ways the simplest and easiest. They will have to move quickly before the enemy troops can be organized to pursue them, but they should be able to escape without difficulty.

The PCs cannot talk the rebels out of their course of action, however, if they choose to give the money to the peasants and make a display of compassion, they may make a **Courtier (Rhetoric) / Awareness** roll at a TN of 50 to give a hopeful speech about working together with the peasantry. This will allow them to avoid being attacked and halve the Honor loss. They may instead roll **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** at the same TN if they intend to bring the authorities down on the peasants; this option will result in the full Honor loss for fleeing battle (plus an extra loss equal to for lying).

The other immediate option is just to go back the way they came and seek out the nearest Lion watchtower – this close to the border, there are likely to be several. The peasants will pursue the entire way, but this will allow the PCs to have Lion reinforcements to turn and face their foes on more even footing. This will cause a loss of Honor and a significant loss of Glory. (The PCs should face two squads themselves in this instance, and the NPCs can be assumed to handle the rest of the enemy.)

If battle is joined, the enemy leader Keifuji will spend a point of Void at the start of the first Round to increase his Armor TN, take the Defense Stance (taking his Armor TN to 51 for the first round) and issue orders to his troops; the rebels will unfurl their unit banners (sashimono with the mon of the Crow) and attack. They will use their Technique on the first Round, but as the PCs ride through their formation, their discipline will crack and they will have a harder time using it in successive rounds. (This is at the GM’s discretion; as long as the PCs are attempting to retreat, the goal is to threaten them, not to overwhelm them. If the PCs stay to fight, they are putting up the sort of resistance the enemy has trained for, and the rebels should have an easier time adjusting.)

If the PCs attempt to break through and run, they must drop at least one of the enemy to Crippled (+20) for every PC in the group in order to thin the enemy ranks enough to charge through. Tange will toss his satchel into the lap of either a Scorpion bushi, another PC who has impressed him, or Aseo, and stay behind to guard their retreat; if a PC falls, Tange will toss him into their saddle and tell the rest to leave. It can be assumed that unless he is disturbed, Aseo will successfully cast Ebb and Flow of Battle to allow for a rapid departure;

Tangen will keep the rebels off of the shugenja as much as possible. If any PC falls, or if Aseo is disturbed in his first casting, then Tangen will remain behind to ensure the party escapes. The last sight the PCs will see of him is him cutting his way through a dozen of the rebels toward the leader, taking a spear-thrust from each of them. He will wound the leader, but the bisento of the enemy will cleave his head from its shoulders. If Aseo is the one to cover the retreat, he will take his ancestor's sword up to hold the bridge and give the PCs their chance to flee. The last the PCs will see of him, he will cut down two of the enemy, then summon the spirit of the river in a vast display of magical power to wash the bridge and those standing upon it away (himself included).

There are a total of 71 of the enemy. They are organized into ten squads of six rebels each, with one leader per squad, plus Keifuji. The rebels absolutely will not break as long as any officer is standing – it is not absolutely impossible to drive them off, but it should be an epic undertaking that will result in multiple dead PCs. However, it should be made clear to the players that if they stay to fight, they will probably be losing their character.

Keifuji, Returned Spirit Rebel

| | | | | |
|------------|---------|-----------|---------|------------|
| Air 3 | Earth 4 | Fire 3 | Water 3 | Void 3 |
| Reflexes 5 | | Agility 4 | | |
| Honor 0.5 | | Status 0 | | Infamy 2.0 |

Initiative: 8k5+10 (-5 after first Turn) **Attack:** 10k5 (bisento, Complex)

Armor TN: 33 (ashigaru armor) **Damage:** 6k3 (bisento)

Reduction: 1

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

School/Rank: People's Legionnaire/Insight Rank 3

Technique: *Unity of Purpose:* May delay Initiative to same as any ally with this Tech. May gain additional rolled die on attack per number of allies (up to +6k0) when attacking same opponent as an ally on same Initiative Score.

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 5, Craft: Farming 3, Defense 5, Hunting 2, Jiu-jutsu 4, Kenjutsu 3, Knives 3, Lore: Underworld 4, Polearm (Bisento) 8, Spears (Yari) 5, Stealth 2

Mastery Abilities: May ignore 3 points of Reduction with spears in first round of combat. Add 5 to Initiative for first round, +1k0 damage against mounted targets, may ready polearm as a Free Action.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Heart of Vengeance: samurai, Luck I, Leadership, Touch of Toshigoku / Driven: Power to the People, Lost Love

Peasant Rebel Officer

| | | | | |
|------------|---------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Air 2 | Earth 3 | Fire 2 | Water 2 | Void 2 |
| Reflexes 3 | | Agility 4 | Strength 4 | |
| Honor 0.5 | | Status 0 | | Infamy 1.0 |

Initiative: 5k3 **Attack:** 9k4 (spear, Complex)

Armor TN: 23 (ashigaru armor) **Damage:** 6k2 (spear)

Reduction: 1

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

School/Rank: People's Legionnaire/Insight Rank 2

Technique: *Unity of Purpose:* May delay Initiative to same as any ally with this Tech. May gain additional rolled die on attack per number of allies (up to +4k0) when attacking same opponent as an ally on same Initiative Score.

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Craft: Farming 3, Defense 3, Hunting 2, Jiu-jutsu 2, Knives 2, Kyujutsu 3, Spears (Yari) 5, Stealth 2

Mastery Abilities: May ignore 3 points of Reduction with spears in first round of combat.

Peasant Rebel

| | | | | |
|------------|---------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Air 2 | Earth 2 | Fire 2 | Water 2 | Void 2 |
| Reflexes 3 | | Agility 3 | Strength 3 | |
| Honor 0.5 | | Status 0 | | Infamy 1.0 |

Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** 7k3 (spear, Complex)
5k3 (bow, Complex)

Armor TN: 23 (ashigaru armor) **Damage:** 5k2 (spear or bow)

Reduction: 1

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

School/Rank: People's Legionnaire/Insight Rank 1

Technique: *Unity of Purpose:* May delay Initiative to same as any ally with this Tech. May gain additional rolled die on attack per number of allies (up to +2k0) when attacking same opponent as an ally on same Initiative Score.

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Craft: Farming 3, Defense 2, Hunting 2, Jiu-jutsu 1, Knives 2, Kyujutsu 2, Spears (Yari) 4, Stealth 2

Mastery Abilities: May ignore 3 points of Reduction with spears in first round of combat.

Assuming the PCs retreat, they will have the opportunity to report the incident to proper authorities (doing so will earn them an Honor loss if they told the peasants that they would not). However, by the time the Unicorn can mobilize a force to handle the situation, the rebels will have dispersed and scattered into the villages. The remainder of their journey to Shiro Onsenba will be utterly without incident.

Conclusion

If the PCs return with Aseo, Barashi will be very glad to have his son back. He will shower them with praise, throw a grand feast in their honor, and pledge undying friendship. However, when the PCs return home, they will learn that Barashi has announced he plans to retire and leave the province to his son as soon as Aseo has been given a chance to recover from his ordeal.

If, however, they fail to recover Aseo – either due to not getting the spear from Tangen or by Aseo dying in the encounter with the bandits – then Barashi will be beside himself with anger. Himeko will provide some cover for them, allowing them to escape his wrath, but there will still be repercussions for offending even a daimyo with as few resources as Barashi has remaining. Perhaps fortunately, when the PCs return home, they will hear that Barashi has died, leaving Iuchi Himeko to take up the reins of power as provincial daimyo. If she approached any PC with her request for assistance, she will write them a kind letter thanking them for all they tried to do, and to be certain she will not forget them.

If Tangen did not survive, his satchel proves to contain sketches and diagrams. These are all his notes on his Technique, the final gift he could give to the Empire.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

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

Experience Points

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Surviving the adventure: | 1XP |
| Good roleplaying: | +1XP |
| Getting the Spear from Tangen: | +1XP |
| Returning Aseo to Barashi: | +1XP |

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Honor

If the PCs flee from the fight with the peasant rebels, they will lose Honor equal to their Honor Rank. This

loss is reduced by half (rounded down) if they fought the rebels before they fled, or if they led the rebels to the Lion and fought them there.

Additionally, if they returned Aseo to his home, they gain two pips if their Honor Rank is less than 6.0, or one if it is 6.0 or higher

Glory

If the PCs fled to the Lion, they will lose five points of Glory per Insight Rank they have. Bushi characters have this loss doubled, as the Lion have high standards and will speak poorly of them no matter how well they do in the combat.

If the PCs return Aseo to his home, they gain five points of Glory, minus one for every Glory Rank they already have, to a minimum of one point.

Other Awards/Penalties

Returning Aseo to his home gains the PCs a Unicorn Favor and Iuchi Aseo as an Ally (with 1 Influence and 2 Devotion).

If Tangen survives, they gain him as an Ally (1 Inf/1 Dev).

If the PCs do not betray Himeko to her father, they gain her as Ally (1 Inf/1 Dev)

Regardless of whether they succeed or not, Barashi's gifts of the Unicorn steeds or saddle are theirs; these are certed items and not part of their Outfit. If they wish to keep the Iuchi sword for themselves, they must contact the Campaign Admin.

Module Tracking Sheets

Was the PC responsible for violence in the village?

If the PC is a Scorpion bushi, did Tangen give them the scrolls containing his Technique?

GM Reporting

Were the Forest Killers killed by the PCs?

Did the PCs recover Aseo?

Did Tangen survive? If not, did he give his notes on his Technique to a PC or to Aseo?

Did the peasant rebels get the money or the sword?

Did Keifuji survive?

Did Himeko convince the pcs to remove her brother?

GM must report this information BEFORE (10/9/12) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

Bayushi Tange

“Shippai” (meaning “Failure”) is a lean man in his middle thirties, somewhat over average height and in prime physical condition. He does not claim the Bayushi name and will not wear his mask any longer, but he wears black kimono as a reminder of his heritage.

Air 3 Earth 4 Fire 3 Water 2 Void 3
Reflexes 5 Agility 4 Strength 4
Honor 2.6 Status 0 Glory/Infamy 5.0

Initiative: 10k6 **Attack:** 10k4 (katana, Simple)

Armor TN: 30 **Damage:** 8k2 (katana)

Reduction: 0

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

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 4/Master of the Dark Sword of Bitter Lies

Techniques: *Way of the Scorpion:* +1k1 to Initiative Roll, +5 Armor TN vs lower Initiative

Pincers and Tail: May Feint for one Raise

Strike at the Tail: May choose target at start of Turn: if hit them this turn, they are Fatigued (Earth TN 25 to recover during Reactions Stage, auto-recover next round)

Strike from Above, Strike from Below: Simple Melee attacks

Master of the Dark Sword of Bitter Lies: may spend a Void Point once per Round to re-roll; additionally, mastery of the Technique gives him +3k3 on all rolls made when taking actions that should logically result in failure

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 2, Courtier (Manipulation) 2, Craft: Poison 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 1, Games: Fortunes and Winds 2, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 5, Intimidation 3, Investigation 1, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu 7, Kyujutsu 2, Medicine (Antidotes) 2, Sincerity 1, Stealth 1

Mastery Abilities: +1k0 damage with swords, may ready a sword as a Free Action, 9s explode on damage with swords; +1k0 unarmed damage; Athletics, Iaijutsu
Advantages/Disadvantages: Daredevil, Great Destiny, Luck III / Antisocial I, Bad Fortune (Egregious Luck)

Iuchi Aseo

Barashi’s eldest son and heir is a handsome man in his early twenties, about average height and slightly bowlegged from riding. He is open and cheerful despite his recent situation, and eager to return home to his father and wife. Aseo holds no grudge against the Lion for their actions or for holding him captive, understanding that the life of a samurai is sometimes fraught with complications like that.

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 4 Void 4
Intelligence 4
Honor 5.5 Status 4.0 Glory 2.5

Initiative: 8k4 **Attack:** 6k3 (wakizashi)

Armor TN: 36 (Defense Stance) **Damage:** 7k2 (wakizashi)

Reduction: 0

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

School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 4

Spirit of the Wind: As a Complex Action, you may sacrifice one spell slot of any element to grant one target individual an additional Simple Move Action. This Simple Action is in addition to the target’s normal Actions per Round. The additional Action must be used on the target’s next Turn or it is lost. You also gain a Free Raise on any spell with the Travel keyword

Spells Known: (note that with no scrolls, he can only cast the following spells that he has memorized) *Earth* (8k3): Jurojin’s Balm (ML1); *Water* (10k4): Path to Inner Peace (ML1), Regrow the Wound (ML3), Ebb and Flow of Battle (ML4), Heart of the Water Dragon (ML4)

Skills: Battle 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 5, Defense 4, Horsemanship 4, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Theology 4, Meditation 3, Medicine 5, Spellcraft 5

Mastery Abilities: +1k0 to Spellcasting Rolls, may keep Full Defense Roll in successive rounds

Advantages/Disadvantages: Luck I, Paragon of Compassion / Idealistic, Obligation (Lion)