

The Price of Weakness

**A One-Round Mid-Rank Adventure for Heroes of
Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido
Month of Doji, 1139 (Summer)**

Part Five of *Legion of the Crow*

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A discrete investigation into a powerful lord uncovers more than expected...

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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 Mid-rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank Three.

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 Two): Reduce the TNs of Social Skill Rolls by 5 at the GM's discretion. The Peasant Rebels have Earth 2 instead of Earth 3.

High End Party (most/all characters Rank Four): Increase the TNs of Social Skill Rolls by 5 at the GM's discretion. Increase Gotoro's Void and Iaijutsu Ranks to 5 and give him the Focus Emphasis; this increases his Insight Rank to 4 and gives him access to the "Speed of Heaven" Technique, allowing him to make attacks as a Simple Action with weapons with the Samurai keyword. The PCs will take 6k2 damage per round if caught in the riot.

Adventure Summary and Background

Unrest among the lower orders has grown to higher levels than seen in almost any point in Rokugan's history. There are many reasons for this, among them the number of veterans from the various wars of the last decade, but the presence of the returned spirits has had a significant effect even among the peasantry. This has culminated in a number of uprisings throughout the Empire. Nine of the ten Imperial Legions have been dispatched to put down larger or more well-organized rebellions, leaving only the First Legion to defend the capital.

This unrest has not gone unnoticed by the Emerald Magistrates. In particular, Doji Oharu has spent the last several months gathering information on the peasant uprisings and trying to determine if there is a connection between them. He is convinced that there is, but has no testimony or proof to offer his superior Kakita Toshiken, who remains unconvinced. However, because the Emerald Champion has grown very wary of late, a number of local provincial daimyo from every Clan in the Empire have been called to Otosan Uchi in

order to establish a method of coordination among the militaries of Rokugan.

However, the business of the Empire continues: Oharu has decided to conduct an investigation into the affairs of an Imperial samurai who governs lands just south of the Phoenix lands. There have long been rumors about Otomo Kuemon, and even a number of complaints made, though none with sufficient samurai backing to warrant an official investigation. Prompted by instinct or paranoia, Oharu has decided that a discrete investigation is in order, and as is his usual wont, will be using his favors and allies to gain assistance with this endeavor.

Character Notes

Check the PCs' character sheets for the following:

- Eyes of the Miya Cert
- Gifts from Yasuki Kumo (Poisoned Gift)
- Hero of the People Advantage
- Forbidden Knowledge: Kolat Advantage
- Allies: any of the listed NPCs in the Court section, Aki, or Doji Oharu.
- A mod cert from "Undefended Border" or "A Hero's Gift". In particular, any notes about their association with the ashigaru Aki.

Introduction

The PCs have been sent by their lords to Honored Treaty City in the Phoenix lands to assist an experienced and renowned Emerald Magistrate that they may be familiar with: Doji Oharu. PCs who have played one of several modules (Stand Against the Waves, Walk Through the Mountains, Under Cover of Night, or Forgotten Tomb) should recall Oharu fairly clearly.

It is highly likely that the PCs' daimyo are themselves in Otosan Uchi, in which case they may have a relatively short distance to travel. A large number of daimyo, from nearly every Clan, have journeyed to the capital to confer with the Emerald Champion; any PC who will be present at the GenCon 2012 Political Interactive, "Raising the Imperial Standard", can be assumed to have accompanied their lord to Otosan Uchi and then been dispatched on this minor errand. In any case, the PCs should be aware of the unrest in the Empire, and even if their daimyo have not responded to Toshiken's invitation, they will have heard that all but the First Imperial Legion are away from the capital dealing with uprisings.

Ronin or monk PCs will have been approached by Oharu directly by letter, with the offer of significant reward or future favors (5 koku for the mercenary-minded). Imperial PCs will likely be very appreciated by Oharu, as the mission takes place in their lands, and he will take some care to use the respect their name lends to greatest effect.

Part One: Striking Sparks

Honored Treaty City is a busy town on the southwestern borders of the Phoenix lands. Relatively close to the Crane and Lion Clans, it also serves as a trade hub with the Dragon and the Imperial holdings around Ootosan Uchi, only four days travel away by the Imperial Roads. More recently, it has been fortified as the first line of defense for the Phoenix Agasha, who anticipate their former Dragon cousins to resume hostilities with the advent of summer.

Your directives from your daimyo lead you to the Tranquil Gardens, a particularly opulent inn where you are to meet the Emerald Magistrate Doji Oharu. Three stories tall and surrounding a justly-famous garden in the courtyard, the inn is the finest establishment of its type in the city, and it can be easily seen that Oharu is sparing little expense with his comfort.

The innkeeper, a stout, serene man by the name of Goren, will gladly greet each PC as they arrive. He will inform them that Oharu is expecting them, and that preparations are being made for their meeting. They will be shown to luxurious rooms to prepare themselves (and assured, if the matter comes up, that the honorable Emerald Magistrate is footing the bill himself). The PCs should have time to introduce themselves to each other while waiting, as it will only be after they all arrive that Oharu will have them summoned. A young servant will lead them up to a spacious private room on the second floor.

The servant leads you down a wide hall to a closed door with a cushion sitting on the floor outside. She slides open the door cautiously, and the gentle sounds of biwa music drift out. Inside, you find a Crane samurai listening to the performance of a pretty young woman who kneels on a cushion to one side. Swaying gently to the music with his eyes closed, the samurai is dressed in fine silks marked with the Doji and Imperial mon. His eyes snap open as you enter, and a friendly smile lights his face a moment later. "Ah, good evening, my friends. Please, make yourselves comfortable. It is good to see you once again; I have been following your careers with great

interest." He claps his hands, and more servants appear, laden with trays of food and drink.

Doji Oharu is a handsome and elegant samurai in his late forties. His face is somewhat more lined than when the PCs first met him, and he has lost a bit of weight, but his attitude remains that of a genial courtier. (Perceptive PCs, particularly those who have played "Under Cover of Night", may note that he has lightly applied cosmetics to cover the facial scars he received from a session under the knife of a torturer.) An ornate walking stick leans on the wall behind him, but as usual, Oharu has taken steps to avoid his infirmity being obvious.

As the PCs settle in, he will engage in light small talk of their journey, allowing the servants to serve refreshments before moving on to business. The inn will provide both a fine, light tea and a somewhat fruity sake as well as rice cakes, various wagashi (sweets made with red bean paste, candied fruits, or other light confectionaries), and sashimi (fish). All of the food and drinks are of the highest quality, and Oharu will sip from his cup with every indication of refined enjoyment. When the servants are done, the Crane will begin to speak of more important matters.

"I have spent the last several months traveling the Empire dealing with a wide variety of issues. I flatter myself to think that my relationship with my lord Toshiken-sama has improved, as he has found it less necessary to dispatch me to deal with the lower orders. Ah, just a moment..." He pauses, removing a small string of coins from his obi and tossing it to the biwa player. "Ai-chan, leave." The girl catches the coins smoothly and bows, rising to leave. After she slides the door shut behind her, she settles onto the cushion in the hall and begins playing once more, loudly enough to prevent anyone outside the room from hearing what is said.

Oharu resumes speaking, his attitude becoming somewhat more businesslike. "Yes, to continue: though Toshiken-sama has not assigned me to investigate the increasing number of peasant uprisings, I have begun to suspect that the incidents are related. I am not alone in these suspicions, but Toshiken-sama has other matters occupying his attention and will not act without some form of proof or sufficient testimony. Nonetheless, he has allowed me to look into the matter, and I have noted a few similarities that help to establish a pattern of sorts. One of the most immediate, and in some respects obvious, factors is the treatment provided the peasants by their samurai superiors. In nearly all cases that I have examined, there are reports of either neglect or,

ah, what one might call a somewhat harsher attitude toward their vassals than is usual. Though it is generally inappropriate for one samurai to involve themselves in how another deals with their vassals, I am beginning to think that it may be possible to predict, if not prevent, these uprisings by determining where unrest may be found.”

Oharu pauses for a moment to take another appreciative sip from his cup. “I have uncovered numerous reports of the lord of a village just south of here that indicate the situation there may be exactly what I am referring to. Since none of these reports come from samurai, there has never been any action taken, but I think that it may be worth looking into. As it happens, this Otomo Kuemon has invited delegates from nearly every Clan to take part in a ceremony and festival being held there, and I have managed to secure the invitation for the Crane.” (If there are any Lion PCs, Oharu will give them a slightly apologetic glance at this point.) *“It would only make sense for my yoriki, even temporary ones, to accompany me and serve as escort to such a function. This will allow you a certain amount of freedom to investigate, discretely, the conditions in the village and among Kuemon-san’s vassals.” He smiles and spreads his hands. “Do you have any questions?”*

Oharu will provide what information he has currently, though he will make clear that he has more questions than answers himself.

- Who is Otomo Kuemon? *“An Imperial samurai of little distinction. Though he once served in the Imperial Court, he was given governance of Aeka Mura shortly after Toturi-heika took the throne. It is an unimportant village on the Phoenix border, surely a significant step down from the Imperial Court for any samurai. However, it is my understanding that he has recently gained some influence in the capital; petitions before the Imperial Court have his sponsorship, there are courtiers who are undertaking projects in his name, that sort of thing. This may indicate he has acquired some powerful friends.”*
- What is the nature of the complaints against Kuemon? *“There are rumors that his peasants are ill-treated or abused. The records I have seen from the local Emerald Magistrate indicate a far higher rate of criminal activity than seems likely given the village’s size and location, and many of the executions are listed with no other crime given than ‘assault upon the honor of an*

Imperial samurai’... another pattern of concern. There are also complaints from merchants about the rate of taxation in such a relatively minor locale, though the magistrate’s revenues do not reflect any increase.”

- What is the festival/ceremony? *“Kuemon-san has a vassal, one Asahina Keiko, who is an artisan of some distinction. It is my understanding that she has nearly completed one thousand origami cranes, and there is to be a ceremony where she presents them to her lord as a display of the culture and artistry of the Imperial Families. There is also a local festival of some sort; the event was likely timed to allow the village to present its best face to Kuemon-san’s guests.”*
- Who else will be there? *“Each of the Clans except for the Lion will have a delegate; as there are a number of powerful samurai in the capital at this point, it is likely that they will all have some form of influence. I also believe that there will be a representative from the Imperial Court, but I do not know the identities of those who have accepted Kuemon’s invitations.”*
- Why are the Lion being excluded? *“I can only speculate that the Otomo are unhappy with the Lion’s recent activities. Perhaps they are using this minor event to send a message.”* PCs who have played “All That Will Be Lost” will have heard some of Kitsu Motso’s current political difficulties, and his Clan will share the fate of their Champion in some measure. Clever players may also speculate that it has something to do with the Lion gaining control over the Empress’ Guard.

When the PCs have no further questions that Oharu can answer, he will provide a caution: *“Bear in mind, my friends, that we have no true testimony to act upon at this point. All the reports I have examined provide at best circumstantial evidence, and there are no accounts from samurai as to conditions in the village. It is possible, even probable, that there are reasonable explanations for what I have heard, and we would do best to avoid causing an innocent man offense without cause. I ask you then to be as discrete as you can, as we engage in our task.”*

With that, he will clap his hands together, rubbing them with an almost gleeful smile. *“But we will not depart until tomorrow. For tonight... I have not been in Honored Treaty City for some time. Would you care to accompany me as I reacquaintance myself with some of the entertainment the city has to offer?”*

If the PCs wish, they may join Oharu for a relaxing evening on the town (see “Oharu’s Outing”, below). Otherwise, they may explore Honored Treaty City themselves or simply turn in early for the night. There are a number of shrines in the city as well as a temple to Fukurokujin and another, still under construction, dedicated to Kaede, Fortune of Noble Sacrifice. They may gain some of the same Rumors as listed below, if they go looking, but will obviously not have the benefit of Oharu’s presence.

Oharu’s Outing

Any interested PCs may accompany the Emerald Magistrate on his excursion. Fortified by their company (and perhaps the contents of his cup), Oharu will encourage the PCs to enjoy themselves, and will provide an example of how best to do so himself. His leg (and *Lame Disadvantage*) will require him to use his walking stick, but he will show little sign of needing other aid. Under his direction, the group will visit a half-dozen different sake houses, geisha houses, and inns, speaking with the denizens and enjoying the variety of nightlife that Honored Treaty City has to offer. While it is a small city in the Phoenix lands, it is something of a trade center, and though its delights cannot compare to a large city like Ryoko Owari or Otosan Uchi, there are numerous places that entertainment can be found. Oharu will not seek out the roughest sort of places, but the evening will be spent in both high-class establishments and somewhat lower-end places. Oharu will pay for everything, and only a PC expressing an interest in something actually illegal (recreational opium, for example) will cause him to balk. “We do have to leave in the morning, my friend, perhaps we can find something else to your taste...” On the other hand, he will have no difficulty in providing them with access to a geisha or other personal entertainment, though his desire to keep moving will be made clear.

Any PC that is accompanying him may make a **Courtier / Awareness** (the Investigation Skill may be substituted if they are specifically watching Oharu’s actions for something more) at a TN of 25 to realize that he is doing something more than simply enjoying himself. Oharu is, in fact, utilizing the guise of a hedonistic, friendly courtier out for a night of pleasure to gather information without seeming like he is doing so. (This is, of course, assisted by the fact that he is a hedonistic, friendly courtier out for a night of pleasure...) He will talk to very nearly everyone as he goes, and any PC who is making a real effort to gather rumors may roll a usual **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll, with a +6 bonus to the total from Oharu’s assistance. (Of course, any PC who is

inebriated will suffer a -10 penalty to actually remember anything of interest; this penalty can be adjusted at the GM’s discretion.)

Rumors

The PCs may roll **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** at TN 10; a successful roll learns one rumor at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN. The following list is larger than normal, and each Clan has a rumor that specifically addresses their concerns; a member of a Clan should receive their Clan’s rumor first. The rumors include:

- Hida O-Ushi, Champion of the Crab, and Hida Tsuneo, the Stone Crab and general responsible for recovering wide swathes of Hiruma territories, have travelled to Otosan Uchi. Rather than being present for Kakita Toshiken’s military conference, they are rumored to be there to confer with Kuni Utagu, the Jade Champion, about the recovered territories and the best ways to provide for their defense. It is uncertain if this is a deliberate slight toward the Emerald Champion. (Crab)
- Following a certain amount of tension that has grown up between their Clans, Kakita Yoshi, the daimyo of the Kakita family, is making overtures to the Unicorn Clan. Members of the Nightingales, a group of artisans and performers from across the Clans that Yoshi has sponsored, have travelled to Shiro Moto to exchange stories and tales of the Empire for ones gathered by the Unicorn in their journeys through the Burning Sands. (Crane)
- The Mirumoto army’s advance on Phoenix lands has apparently stalled, as they have made no effort to further their military gains from last summer. It is rumored that they are encountering difficulties in the Dragon Heart Plain that need resolved first, which indicates that though the Agasha defection may have prompted the war, the Dragon do not seem likely to give up the extra territory they took. It may become necessary for the Dragon to annex the only sizable settlement in the area, the ronin community of Nanashi Mura. (Dragon)
- Lion Clan Champion Kitsu Motso’s reputation has greatly suffered in the courts. His attack on Toshi Meiyō Gisei was executed brilliantly, but at best, many are decrying the opportunistic nature of the assault, and some even place the blame for the illegal materiel on his shoulders. Both the Crane and Unicorn

Clans have brought their concerns before the Imperial Court, and Motso has left the consolidation of the city to his subordinates in order to travel to Otsan Uchi and face his detractors. (Lion)

- Last month, Yoritomo Gusai led a daring attack on the village of Shaiga, a minor Mantis holding taken by the Scorpion last summer. Though the Mantis took few losses, they retreated almost immediately, which drew the Scorpion garrison into a vicious counterattack. Gusai's forces were not able to retake the village, but they did inflict significant losses on the Scorpion defenders. (Mantis)
- The Elemental Masters are rumored to be seeking a consensus on finding a peaceful resolution with the Dragon Clan. Though the Dragon have not yet attacked this summer, there is surely a limit to how much time they're going to spend in the Dragon Heart Plain consolidating their hold. The Phoenix Agasha have become valued members of the Clan, however, and any resolution will need to be handled carefully in order to ensure their continued prosperity. (Phoenix)
- Shosuro Yudoka, daimyo of the Shosuro Family, has announced that he will take the advice of his recently-appointed advisor Shosuro Tsuyoshi, and seek out a bride. A nakodo has been assigned the task, but rumors abound whether the mysterious and sinister daimyo will look to another Clan for political gain, and if so, which one. (Scorpion)
- After a somewhat rocky start, Ide Gokun, the returned spirit and son of the family's founder, appears to have come to terms with his new role as Ide Family daimyo. Moto Gaheris has praised his negotiations with the Lion, and given him the title of "Voice of the Khan". Gokun himself is reported to be more comfortable on the battlefield than in court, but this is undoubtedly a point in his favor in the Khan's eyes. (Unicorn)
- The Empress' Guard has issued a challenge to Isawa Toichi (the daimyo of the Maryoku Province) for certain comments that may have been made during a conference at his castle, concerning the Empress' status as a half-spirit. Matsu Seijuro, third in command of the Guard, has led a unit to the Maryoku province to defend Tsudao's honor and chastise the Phoenix for his incautious words. (Imperial)
- Last spring's harvest was bountiful, and this prosperity in Rokugan is good for business; even peasants are hiring ronin for good prices,

to defend them from the bandits that are plaguing the Empire.. There are whispers of even more money for those willing to teach heimin how to fight and defend themselves. (Ronin)

Additionally, there are some whispers concerning the gokenin of Aeka Mura (the village the PCs are heading to). The village is only a half-day's journey away, but it is relatively unimportant and the following information will only be discovered by those who succeed at the TNs below. These do count toward the number of rumors the Gossip roll uncovers.

- Otomo Kuemon was a member of the Imperial Court during the Clan Wars, and was dismissed from his post shortly after Toturi I took the throne. As he was granted the governing of an Imperial holding, this was likely a punishment for some misdeed that was not actually illegal or could not be proven to be so. (TN 20)
- Otomo Kuemon has several vassals, most of them semi-disgraced Imperial samurai, like himself. The notable exception is Asahina Keiko, a returned spirit artisan of surpassing skill and beauty who was taken into Kuemon's service two years ago. She is spoken of as one of the most skilled artists in the Empire who is not currently working at the Kakita Academy. (TN 25)
- As an Imperial holding, Aeka Mura has a local Emerald Magistrate assigned to handle all legal matters, by the name of Seppun Gotoro. Gotoro is known to be a skilled bushi, which does lead to the question of why he was assigned to such an unimportant outpost five years ago. There are some rumors of the beating of a witness, leading to their death, but these are unconfirmed. Gotoro is known to be extremely diligent about collecting Imperial taxes, however, ensuring that no merchant passes through his town without doing so at least once. (TN 30)
- There are whispers that Otomo Kuemon's near-exile is a result of his nocturnal activities. Whether he was foolish enough to take a more powerful samurai's wife as a lover or if there are worse perversions responsible seems to depend on the teller, but there is a great deal of speculation on Kuemon's appetites. (TN 35)

Finally, an hour or so after midnight, Oharu will suggest returning to the inn. ***"You will have to ride in the morning, after all, and I would not want us to arrive much after mid-day. I hope that you enjoyed***

yourselves as much as I did, but tomorrow we will have work to do.”

With that, he will make his limping way back to the inn and rest for the night.

Part Two: Smoke on the Horizon

The next morning, the PCs will be awakened shortly before dawn by cheerful and helpful servants. Their effects will be put in order and their gear loaded without much requirement for thought on their part (which may be a good thing, depending on how much they indulged in Oharu’s hospitality the night before). If any of the PCs do not have horses of their own, Oharu will have arranged for them to be provided.

As Lord Sun begins his ascent above the horizon, you find yourselves in the courtyard of the inn. The servants have readied your steeds, and your belongings are loaded upon them, ready to go. An ornate palanquin sits to one side, between two gigantic peasant men. Each of them stands over six feet in height, and a jo staff hangs from their belts. Oharu turns from some conference with them, and greets you in a clear, cheerful voice. “Ah, good morning, my friends. These are my bearers, Ichi and Ni. Say hello to the honorable samurai, boys.” The two men bow respectfully, and Oharu continues speaking over anything they might have said. “We should be able to get there before mid-day, as long as we don’t have any difficulties on the road. Let the horses do the work, particularly after last night, eh?” With a slight wink, the Emerald Magistrate clambers into his box, and once you are ready to depart, the two bearers will lift it and trot out into the street.

The trip between Honored Treaty City and Aeka Mura is fairly uneventful. The group will not be traveling along the Imperial Roads, as there are none between Aeka Mura and anywhere else, but along more scenic, rural roads primarily designed for merchant caravans. The countryside is lightly wooded between the two locations, though cultivated farmlands do surround each settlement. After four hours of travel, punctuated only by the occasional snore out of the palanquin, the PCs will be able to tell that they are nearing their destination by the rice paddies that have been built around it. When they might be able to guess that they are about a mile away from the village, the palanquin bearers will abruptly turn off the main road and trot down an unmarked track off to one side.

This will likely take the PCs entirely by surprise, as they will not have been briefed. If they attempt to question the bearers, there will be no response unless they are particularly insistent (bringing their horse directly into the path, for instance), at which point, they will only respond with a terse “Orders, sama.” Once out of sight of the road, they will stop and carefully set the palanquin down. One will step to the door and rap on it carefully.

“Sama?” With no response, he knocks again. “Sama? We’re almost there.” There is a muffled sound from inside the box, and barely-audible murmur, to which the burly peasant responds with a simple, “Yes, sir.” He steps back and waits, and a moment later, the door is flung open and Oharu very nearly falls out onto the road. Clearing his throat, the Crane rises painfully to his feet, stretching and dusting himself off. “Ah, yes. Quite. We are almost there, eh?” Glancing around, he will speak with careful courtesy, though no smile touches his face for once. “Perhaps we could all use this pause as an opportunity to ensure we will arrive in appropriate order?”

The most polite thing for the PCs to do would be to allow Oharu some privacy while he stretches his leg out (turning their backs or making a point to converse with each other instead), though it is by no means required. The place selected by the bearers is well out of sight of the road, but if the PCs wish, they may busy themselves with security instead – any PC who wishes to look around may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** at a TN of 25 to notice a fair amount of smoke on the horizon in the general direction of their travel. As the area is fairly wooded, it is not obvious until now unless they are looking for something out of the ordinary (though it will become completely visible without a roll as they get closer to the village). Should the players ask about the bearers, they will notice that one remains fairly close to Oharu while the other moves down the track a slight distance to ensure that nothing comes upon the group by surprise. Ichi and Ni are both veterans and extremely loyal to Oharu, thus their caution and slightly protective attitude.

After he has worked out the kinks earned by being folded into a small box for several hours, Oharu will thank the PCs for their indulgence and suggest the group gets moving again. *“I should reconsider retirement... The years do not make these travels any easier. Perhaps if I can find a replacement, Toshikensama will be inclined to accept my resignation with honor.”* He will give a speculative look at any PC that has an interest in a magistrate’s position, and then return to his palanquin for the remainder of the journey.

Arriving at Aeka Mura

The village of Aeka Mura is one of several small Imperial holdings in the regions surrounding Ootosan Uchi. Most of these villages are overseen by older, semi-retired Imperial samurai who have chosen to leave the Imperial City for a life of quieter service, but a few (like Aeka Mura) are given instead as punishment to those who have caused shame to their family, or whose actions are judged likely to do so. The village itself is surrounded by rice paddies and outlying houses belonging to the farmers. There is a small “wall” (more of a fence) that surrounds the official boundaries of the village, though there are several homes built outside it. In addition to the housing for the servants, the village has a large sake house and inn near the farmer’s market, and a sizable samurai estate built on a small hill in the middle of town.

As the PCs get closer to the village, they will see a great deal of smoke rising on the horizon, as from a number of fires. Any PC with the **Battle Skill** will be able to determine that it is not from the village (wood smoke from burning buildings, where the structure has been treated with varnishes or other protections, would be black, while this is mostly white). If a PC has any Ranks in **Craft: Farming**, or can succeed at a **Hunting / Intelligence** roll with a TN of 25, they will recognize it as a field-burning (likely intentional), though it is somewhat larger than they would likely have seen before. (If the PCs attempt to investigate the fire before heading to the village, it will be much the same as if they way, detailed below in “Looking into the Fire”, but they will not arrive at the village or Kuemon’s house at the same time as Oharu.)

There are two guards at the gate to the village, though a determined rider could likely just jump over the waist-high “wall” at the village’s border. The guards, a pair of young and earnest Seppun bushi, will examine the papers that Oharu presents with every courtesy, and tell the group that they are expected “up at the castle”, providing them with directions. If asked about the smoke, they will nod sagely. *“Ah, yes, the peasants have it well under control. A wildfire or something of that nature, there is no need for concern. I assure you, Aeka Mura will allow no harm to come to Kuemon-sama’s honored guests.”*

As the group travels through the village, they may roll **Investigation / Awareness** (TN 20) to note that the local peasants give the samurai an extremely wide berth. While the locals are going about what appears to be their normal affairs, the streets mostly clear of peasants as the samurai head toward their destination.

Following the guard’s directions will take the PCs to the samurai manor house in the middle of town; though it is a fairly large house, it is quite obviously not a “castle”, though all of the locals will use that term for it (on Kuemon’s insistence). The house is styled to give the impression of martial splendor, but it is by no means a fortified structure. Surrounded by a six-foot stone wall, the three-story building sprawls on its hill and crowds out the courtyard and gardens that would normally occupy more of the grounds.

When the group arrives in the courtyard, they will be met by an attractive woman in her early thirties, dressed in shining silks marked clearly with the Imperial mon. *“Welcome to the court of Otomo Kuemon, honored guests. I am Seppun Kitoyo, hatamoto to my lord Kuemon-sama, and it my honor to greet such illustrious samurai within our walls.”* Kitoyo will escort the PCs to their rooms while servants bustle about with astonishing efficiency to tend to their belongings and horses. The hatamoto will arrange for the guests to recover from their journey, providing baths and refreshments, and inform them that almost all of the other guests have arrived and are gathering in the main hall. *“You are last to arrive but for the representative of the Imperial Court, Oharu-sama. I am certain that the other guests will be eager to speak with yourself, and your yoriki, when you have recovered from your travels.”* Oharu thanks her profusely, then, almost as an afterthought, asks, *“Oh – and do we know who the Imperial representative will be? The matter was still under discussion when I left the capital several weeks ago.”* Kitoyo nods, and replies with a small smile, *“I understand it will be one of the senior shisha, Miya Rintaro-sama. Do you know him, Oharu-sama? Emerald Magistrates and the Imperial Heralds always seem to be traveling across the Empire on the Empress’ business, surely you have crossed paths before?”* Oharu’s smile falters for a moment upon hearing the name, but he recovers. *“Hai, hai... Rintaro-san and I have crossed... paths... before. He is a remarkable man. I am certain to remember this function quite well if he is present.”* With that, he will thank Kitoyo for her hospitality and head to the baths; the PCs should prepare themselves for the court however they wish, but Oharu will make it clear he wants to speak with them before they go to the main hall.

Once ready, Oharu will speak with his yoriki: *“I wish to remind you that we are here on a discrete investigation; while it may be that we can find testimony of a crime, I do not want to either tip our hand early or take the chance of causing offense needlessly. Your Clan has sent delegates; by all means, speak with them as you would normally, but*

please refrain from discussing the matter lest our host hear of it.” He will give any PC with the “Eyes of the Miya” cert a particularly close look. “Be especially careful with Rintaro-san... he and I have had dealings before. We only have two or three days, but we must be cautious. Keep in close contact.”

The Court of Otomo Kuemon

Through the remainder of the module, the action will be broken down into sections and separated by specific events: the afternoon the PCs arrive in town, they will have some time to acclimatize to the local court. Following that will be the welcoming feast, after which the PCs may spend the evening in court or in the village. After a possible encounter in the night, the PCs will have the morning to do as they choose before the ceremony of presentation at mid-day. Finally, they will have the afternoon to gather what last testimony they can before the possible riot and they are taken to the fire. Each PC should be given a chance to do one thing (speak with an NPC, gather information, examine the village, etc.) in each “section” (Evening, Morning, Afternoon). At the GM’s discretion, smaller tables may be given more opportunities to speak with NPCs, but the idea is to involve each player in some aspect of the investigation.

When the PCs arrive at Court, there are a number of guests already present. Every Great Clan except for the Lion is represented, and there is a good chance the PCs will have encountered these NPCs in previous modules. For the most part, the NPCs can be assumed to have a reasonable entourage (as the PCs are for Oharu), but they will certainly be fairly friendly with any PC of their Clan. As the PCs are already acting as yoriki and escorts to Oharu, however, they will not have any orders for them. (Note that these NPCs are present predominantly to fill out the court and allow the PCs a chance to interact with characters they may have already established relationships with; they are not intended to serve as distractions or red herrings, though they may be able to assist in the investigation to a very limited extent. More information can be found on them in Appendix #2.) The other guests (and the modules in which they have previously appeared) are:

- Crab – Hida Rohiteki (A Day to Mourn, Winter Court: Kyuden Hida)
- Dragon – Kitsuki Yukehime (Walk Through the Mountains)
- Mantis – Yoritomo Tsuboro (Winter Court: Kyuden Hida)
- Phoenix – Asako Norikai (A Time For Vengeance)

- Scorpion – Shosuro Ochiba (Winter Court: Kyuden Gotei)
- Unicorn – Moto Maduhl (Bonds of Fate)

There are also a number of local samurai present; Kuemon has about a dozen vassals, mostly low-ranked Imperial samurai, but his hatamoto is willing to speak with the PCs in order to make her lord’s guests comfortable, and the local Emerald Magistrate will be present with his two yoriki. The majority of Kuemon’s vassals will have little of significance to contribute beyond what a standard Gossip check will glean (see below). The significant local samurai are described below with their first response to being approached by the PCs; the GM should note the sort of impression the PCs make with these characters, as they will prove important later in the module.

Seppun Gotoro

Though he is unlikely to speak directly with the PCs, the local Emerald Magistrate is a burly man in his early thirties. Unless they have at least 3 Ranks of Status, Gotoro will dismiss them as unworthy of attention and send them on their way should they attempt to approach him. Even PCs with higher Status will find him condescending and arrogant; he has little to say about the local conditions, dismissing the peasantry as entirely unimportant and generally giving the worst impression of a martial samurai. The only real way to get anything else out of him is to play upon his greed; an offer of a sizable bribe (however subtle or blunt) will allow the PC to make a **Temptation (Bribery) / Awareness** roll at a TN of 30 to make a strong impression (remembering that Temptation is a Low Skill and applying Honor loss as appropriate). The PC will gain +1kl to this roll due to his Greedy Disadvantage, but will need to offer at least 20 koku (or imply the possibility of more) in order to get his attention. Though he will not immediately turn upon Kuemon, it is necessary to impress him if the PCs wish to secure his testimony later.

Gotoro is little more than a brutal thug with the authority of an Emerald Magistrate. He squeezes the locals for bribes and applies pressure to ronin or merchants travelling through the village as well. He accepts money from Kuemon, both to look the other way from Kuemon’s excesses and to actively support them. Gotoro has a short temper and has literally killed peasants for looking at him the wrong way, to say nothing of those who have shown too much resistance when Kuemon has sent him to gather a peasant woman for the gokenin’s pleasure.

Matsu Hoshiaki

Hoshiaki is a tall, stern-looking Lion woman who would be attractive in a fairly athletic way were it not for the severe look on her face. She will specifically seek out any Lion PC to talk to (high-Honor bushi are her preference, but she is eager enough for the company of her own Clan that she will approach any Lion). If there are no Lion PCs, she will approach the PC bushi with the highest Honor (as long as it is 6.0 or higher). For the most part, she will begin her conversation by looking to compare notes as yoriki to Emerald Magistrates; she is in her early twenties, and has been working to become an Emerald Magistrate for several years. Hoshiaki is a proud Lion, and utterly devoted to bushido; as she converses with the PC, they may make a **Lore: Bushido / Awareness** roll at a TN of 20 will realize that she is a very honorable woman (Honor 7.8), but that she is currently undergoing some crisis relating to it. (**Investigation / Awareness** may be substituted, but the TN becomes 30.) She was assigned to Seppun Gotoro six months ago, and she has started to view it as something of a punishment.

She will not speak directly of the details in her first conversation with any PC, but she has clearly been involved in actions that she does not approve of, and she is contemplating kanshi (seppuku with the intention of protesting the actions of one's lord). If any of the PCs have "Oath of Fealty: Matsu Roshu", she will be eager to speak of home, with a sad, longing expression. As long as the PC is reasonably supportive or willing to offer advice or assistance, she will be willing to speak with them later. (See the "Gathering Testimony" section later.)

Isawa Kijuro

The senior yoriki to the local Emerald Magistrate, Kijuro is in a number of ways a stereotypically arrogant Isawa, though his particular point of personal pride is more intellectual than mystical in nature. While he is an accomplished shugenja, it is his intelligence that he is most proud of; should any PC approach him, they will find him to be very condescending. (The difference between him and his superior, Gotoro, is the fact that they feel separates them from the PCs; Kijuro believes himself to be smarter than anyone else, while Gotoro simply knows himself to be one of the highest-ranked samurai in the area.) He will speak with any PC who approaches him, but will not seek them out for conversation unless they are Isawa-trained shugenja. It should not take the PCs long to determine that he is a very emotionally distant, somewhat socially stunted, yet extremely intelligent man. There is little chance they will impress him with their own intellect; if a PC has Intelligence 5+, he may grudgingly acknowledge them

as an equal, but otherwise, he will simply speak down to them (as he does to essentially everyone).

Kijuro views himself as essential to the actual day-to-day running of the village; he handles all of Gotoro's records and paperwork, and will gladly inform anyone who speaks to him how critical his assistance is, and how efficiently he runs the Emerald Magistrate's office.

Asahina Keiko

Though not present in the main hall, any PC who wants to track down Asahina Keiko may do so – she is meditating in the garden in preparation for tomorrow's ceremony, but she will be happy to speak with any interested guests. She is a beautiful returned spirit (Touched by Yomi) with an almost ethereal quality who gives the general impression of being extremely unworldly; she is a genuine artiste, caring for little beyond her creations. Though a member of the Asahina family, she was born without the ability to speak with the kami during the tenth century, during a period in Rokugan's history when very little of any significance occurred. After she returned through Oblivion's Gate, she spent some time at the Kakita Artisan Academy, but ultimately left in order to pursue her arts in a more public environment. Keiko spent a year in Otosan Uchi seeking a patron, and was eventually taken into service by Kuemon. Any PC who speaks to her about her patron may roll **Investigation / Awareness** at a TN of 40 to catch a well-hidden concern on her part in regard to Kuemon. It will require a well-roleplayed expression of concern about the character of the gokenin and a **Courtier / Awareness** roll at a TN of 30 to cause her to open up to the PC (see the "Gathering Testimony" section for the information Keiko has).

Keiko will speak happily about art with anyone; though she specializes in paper-based works (origami and sumi-e inking, primarily), she is familiar with many other media and will offer pointers or advice to any aspiring artists. In particular, she will be interested in any PC with the "Nightingales" cert. Keiko is not one of Kakita Yoshi's group, as her lord denied her permission to join when the invitation was extended, but she is quite curious to see what the Nightingales are accomplishing.

Seppun Kitoyo

The vast majority of the PCs (and, by extension, the players) should perceive Kitoyo as nothing more than an Imperial courtier – a pretty woman in her early thirties wearing the formal robes of a widow. She is fairly friendly with her lord's guests, doing her best to make them feel welcome, but will avoid any overt discussion of Kuemon's holdings. Any reasonable comfort the PCs may request will be provided while

they are guests at Aeka Mura, though Kitoyo will be somewhat less impressed if their requests are less elegant than the surroundings would imply (sake is understandable, shochu somewhat less so, and opium would likely cause her to refer them to the magistrate). If the PCs can give a good impression of proper behavior (either through roleplay or an **Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness** roll with a TN of 25), they will leave her with a favorable opinion and may be able to approach her when they have more concrete leads in their investigation.

Personal questions will be largely deflected, as she is attempting to present herself as a devoted servant for Kuemon. She has been in the gokenin's service for less than a year, so she knows more than she is necessarily comfortable with, but she will under no circumstances speak of this knowledge with the PCs unless they have already begun to uncover things on their own. It is publicly known (to those that succeed at a **Courtier / Intelligence** roll at a TN of 30, or if she is asked about it; she has no need to hide the fact) that Kitoyo was married to a Unicorn samurai who died during the War Against the Shadow, and returned to her family afterwards. She professes to have no idea why she was assigned to this post, "unless perhaps Kuemon-sama was simply in need of a competent administrator." (This is a lie, though it will require an **Investigation (Interrogation) / Perception** roll at a TN of 45 to determine that fact.)

In truth, Kitoyo is a member of the Kolat and has been sent to Aeka Mura to observe and report on Kuemon's doings – in particular, the recent alliance Kuemon has developed with a high-ranking Imperial is of interest to that part of the conspiracy responsible for keeping tabs on Otosan Uchi. If the players suspect that there is something more to Kitoyo's nature than is immediately obvious, they may roll **Investigation / Awareness** at a TN of 40; however, all this will confirm is that she has an agenda beyond what she is willing to discuss. If a PC has the "Forbidden Knowledge: Kolat" advantage, or has previous positive contact with the Kolat, they may roll **Lore: Kolat / Intelligence** at a TN of 30 to recognize her as a local agent. Needless to say, acting on this information will require a great deal of caution – threatening to publicly denounce her, for example, will result in the PC earning a powerful enemy, and Kitoyo will not rely upon her lord to provide her with a champion, instead sending for one of her cousins (a Kakita-trained duelist). However, if the PCs can convince her that it is in her best interest to see Kuemon charged with the corruption he is responsible for, she may prove to be a valuable ally.

Rumors in Kuemon's Court

If the PCs attempt to hunt for rumors, they may make a **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll to learn the specific information about Kuemon that was available in Honored Treaty City (the GM may also, at their discretion, impart any of the other rumors not previously discovered by the PCs). However, the respective TNs are reduced by 5 for each piece of information (learning of Kuemon's dismissal from the Imperial Court only requires a 15, for example, while the speculation on Kuemon's nocturnal activities is reduced to 30). In addition, there is another rumor that is only whispered in cautious, hushed tones; any PC that can succeed at a TN of 35 will hear from some of Kuemon's other vassals, who appear frightened to be discussing the matter, that Kuemon has an interest in Keiko that is somewhat more physical than appropriate for a liege-lord for his vassal.

In addition, any PC who has paid any attention to the assembly will note that the servants are extremely unobtrusive. While there are a few present to be summoned at need, they invariably accomplish their task with as few words (carefully and respectfully issued) as possible before vanishing immediately as soon as they are no longer needed.

Arrival of the Imperial Representative

After about three hours, word will start to spread that the Imperial representative has arrived, and Rintaro himself will appear in the court about an hour afterwards. Miya Rintaro is a short, slight Imperial samurai with a somewhat weak chin but clad in the finest silks. Shadowed by his taciturn and quietly threatening yojimbo, Seppun Biransei, Rintaro will circulate through the room, speaking with nearly everyone of importance. Any PC with the "Eyes of the Miya" cert will definitely attract his attention, and he will attempt to learn what has brought them to the court. This should cause a conflict of interest – Oharu expressly told them not to tell anyone, and Rintaro will order them to tell him. If the PC wishes to lie to Rintaro, they must make a **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** roll at a TN of 40; failure means that he realizes he is being lied to, but other than one chance to confess, he will leave the matter alone for the moment. If the PC wishes to avoid discussing the matter with Rintaro, they may make a **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** roll with a TN of 30 to avoid giving insult. If successful, Rintaro will accept that they have something going on that does not concern him directly; otherwise, he will be very displeased with his servant.

If, however, a PC is willing to discuss the investigation frankly with Rintaro, he will be very pleased with them.

“It is always best to know these sort of things; I will remember this service.”

Biransei, Rintaro’s yojimbo, will not happily interact with any of the PCs. Even other Imperial PCs will be brushed off with a terse “I am on duty, samurai. Should that change, we can speak later.”

Opening of the Festival

Shortly after Rintaro arrives, the host will put in an appearance and officially welcome his guests to the court.

Three peals from a gong sonorously toll over the court in a deliberate attempt to evoke the air of the Imperial Court. Given the surroundings, it fails to be quite as impressive as it no doubt intended, however, it does call the gathering’s attention to the central dais. A tall, slender samurai in the voluminous robes of full formal court attire marked in the mon of the Otomo family steps up and bows. “Welcome to my Shiro Aeka, honored guests. I am Otomo Kuemon, and it is my privilege to greet you in the name of the Imperial Families. Be at ease within my home. If anything you desire is not provided, you have only to ask, and the servants will make whatever arrangements you require.” Seppun Gotoro chuckles quietly at this, perhaps in some private jest, for Kuemon simply nods at his guest. “For now, my cooks have prepared the finest meal possible this far from the glories of Otosan Uchi. Please, come and enjoy this repast. After the feast, there will be festivities both here in the castle and in the village; you are welcome to find whatever sort of entertainment you find most enjoyable.”

Were it not for the expression of smug self-importance on his face, Kuemon would be a handsome man. He is fine-featured and pale, and his clothes are obviously intended to demonstrate his wealth. Over the course of the meal, he will engage in occasional witticisms with his guests, playing the part of a gracious host with a sort of self-satisfied aplomb. He is particularly prone to give his more attractive female guest (Kitsuki Yukehime, Shosuro Ochiba, and any PC with the Bente’s Blessing or Dangerous Beauty Advantages) genteel, if somewhat heavy-handed, compliments on their beauty.

The food is, as promised, exquisite, in an absolutely traditional Rokugani style. Fish of many varieties, miso soup, tsukemono (various pickled vegetable), and wagashi are prominent, though all of the dishes are styled after meals prepared in the Imperial Capital. A trio of exceptional musicians play quiet music on samisen, biwa, and flute from somewhere out of sight.

After the meal, the PCs are welcome to remain in the “castle” or head into the village to enjoy the local festival taking place there. Either option will give them chances to investigate the situation in Aeka Mura.

Festival in the Castle

The rest of Kuemon’s guests will remain in his home, to partake of his hospitality. Drinks of varying potency will flow freely, there will be performances by musicians, dancers, and a performance of a *kyogen* (a short comedic play, normally presented during *noh* productions as a change of pace and only about ten minutes long). There will be a further chance for the PCs to gather information from the higher-Status locals, either by general Gossip rolls or by interviewing Hoshiaki, Kijuro, or Kitoyo. Shortly after the meal, Gotoro will leave the castle without explanation. After a few hours, any PC who actually has been paying attention to Rintaro and/or Biransei will notice that Biransei is no longer accompanying Rintaro.

Gathering Testimony

Following up on the samurai NPCs is simple enough; if the PCs have already made a good impression, getting them alone to discuss the actual situation in the village is only a matter of asking to do so. (If the PCs had not already approached them, refer to their establishing interactions in the previous section for how they will react to meeting the PCs for the first time.)

The PCs will need the testimony of three samurai of the samurai caste in order for Oharu to bring charges against Gotoro or Kuemon. The exact crimes are less important, as long as they can gather three NPCs to support their charges; Oharu is canny enough to be able to bring the law to bear on the corrupt samurai if he has three individuals who are willing to speak up. The following interactions may take place over the course of the Evening, Morning, or Afternoon sections of the module.

Matsu Hoshiaki

Hoshiaki, as the most gregarious of the NPCs, will likely be the PCs’ first point of contact. If the PCs were at all supportive of her concerns in their first encounter, she will only require a small amount of prompting to disclose the source of her conflict of honor. (Either a well-roleplayed offer of assistance or a simple **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** roll with a TN of 20 will convince her to share her burden; this does require them to be honest with her, but Lion PCs receive a Free Raise to this roll.)

As Gotoro's yoriki, Hoshiaki has been a first-hand witness to several things that are on the border of criminal activity, a few things that are outright violations of the law, and all of them have been highly dishonorable. Among other things, she has seen Gotoro force extra "taxes" out of the merchants and peasants, she has been present when he administered punitive beatings for the scantiest of pretexts, and assisted the magistrate in executing a peasant for essentially no reason other than offending Gotoro. This last, her active participation, weighs heavily on her even though it was technically legal. The worst act she has seen, however, was the regular kidnapping of peasant women to be Otomo Kuemon's "bedwarmers". This, naturally, has resulted on occasion in violence as the husbands, fathers, or brothers of the women involved objected.

Under most circumstances, Hoshiaki might either challenge Gotoro to a duel or commit seppuku in protest. However, she is a vassal of Matsu Roshu, not Gotoro, so either option would by rights require Roshu's permission and delivering an explanation to him for events she would be greatly shamed to discuss. In addition, Hoshiaki is uncertain how much of her distress is due to her personal ambition to become an Emerald Magistrate, and this has caused her to second guess her motivations.

Getting testimony from Hoshiaki should not be terribly difficult. Simply telling her that the other Emerald Magistrate is here to deal with the situation and asking for testimony would be enough, though if the PCs are hinting around it or not making themselves clear enough, they may roll **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** at a TN of 20 to convince her that they can fix the problem. The key element to dealing with Hoshiaki is being willing to find an honorable resolution, and making it clear that the PCs intend to support her in doing so.

Isawa Kijuro

The senior yoriki presents a different sort of challenge than Hoshiaki. Unlike the Lion, Kijuro has suppressed any emotional connection to the deeds that he has been part of, taking comfort in simply following his orders. He will brag about keeping track of every single koku, bu, and zen that Gotoro takes in, "even the special bonuses". Getting him to be willing to speak about what he knows (which is nearly everything; Kijuro actually does keep all of Gotoro's records, from taxes and bribes to arrests and executions) will require forcing him to realize that there is real suffering behind the numbers. In contrast to Hoshiaki, who is likely to respond to additional pressure by committing seppuku, it is necessary to be somewhat aggressive with the

shugenja in order to break him out of his comfortable, numb shell. This will require either a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (for attempts with more subtlety) or an **Intimidation (Control) / Willpower** roll (for more direct methods) at a TN of 25. As always, the GM may grant Free Raises for particularly well-roleplayed interactions.

Successfully gaining Kijuro's testimony will grant a full accounting (literally) of Gotoro's deeds, with the records to support it and additionally implicating Kuemon in significant wrongdoing. This includes substantial "bonuses" whenever Gotoro acts as a procurer for Kuemon. While several of Gotoro's bribes are collected using the excuse of "taxes", he has been meticulous about turning over the appropriate amount to the Imperial authorities (in order to avoid this sort of investigation).

Seppun Kitoyo

Kitoyo is extremely unwilling to do anything so public as provide testimony, however, as long as the PCs have made a good impression with her, she will gladly point them in the direction of the yoriki. If they are absolutely floundering for any other source of testimony, she will only consider speaking out if they can convince her with a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll at a TN of 40; doing so will also require taking a Minor Obligation to her, however. If they fail or are unwilling to provide her with a future favor, she will also point out that there are many ronin in town who see more of Gotoro's actions than any of Kuemon's vassals.

Part of Kitoyo's reluctance to stand up as an official witness is due to her wishing to keep a low profile, but her personal distaste with Kuemon's actions can overcome that if the PCs use that as a tactic. Additionally, she is coming to believe that Kuemon is more of a liability than a potential resource, no matter how highly connected he may be.

Asahina Keiko

The beautiful artisan is not unaware of her patron's true regard, and has no intention of being put in a position where she has to choose between finding a new place or succumbing to Kuemon's blandishments. If she is pressed for more information, she will reluctantly discuss her intentions. *"It is believed that one wish will be granted to someone who has the dedication and determination to fold one thousand paper cranes. My patron believes that I am giving him the wish with the presentation of the cranes. He is wrong."* She will give the PC(s) an unsettlingly direct look. *"We shall see if you are the answer to my wish, or if it must come from another source."*

If the PCs wish to convince her to see her wish (to escape Kuemon's grasp) fulfilled personally, they will need to succeed at a **Courtier (Manipulation)** or **Lore: Theology / Awareness** roll at a TN of 30. She has been a witness to Kuemon's assaults upon his own peasants, and though she does not initially believe that to be sufficient, she can be convinced to provide this testimony if the PCs have arranged other testimony already.

Festival in the Village

The first thing that will be immediately obvious to any PCs who head into the village is that the peasantry seems conditioned to shy away from samurai. Even Lion PCs, whose Clan has a generally deserved reputation for harsh treatment of their peasants, will find the behavior of the peasants unusual. The locals are obsequious and frightened, and it is almost impossible to convince them that the PCs intend them no harm – it is as if the peasants treat any kindness as more worrisome, certain that it means the PC is only biding their time to demonstrate a worse cruelty. Any PC who does treat the peasantry with callousness will find that their most ridiculous demands will be met with every attempt to be filled and cringing apologies if they cannot. In general, the local populace acts like animals that have been beaten too often.

There are many entertainments in the streets of the village – a number of musicians, a puppet show, and several vendors providing food and drink, from sake and sashimi to spun sugar delicacies. However, the samurai will find that their very presence puts something of a damper on the festivities. Unless the revelers have gotten drunk enough to forget, the peasants will continue to give the samurai wide berth.

The Indelicate Jug

The notable exception to the local's reticence is at the sake house, the Indelicate Jug. A large establishment, it has obviously been a popular place for a long time. The common room is half-full with peasants having a good time: a particularly loud and energetic young man is leading them in a sing-along of some bawdy drinking song with what appears to be hundreds of verses. There are also a few ronin in the common room, who are largely being ignored by the locals. One of the ronin may be familiar to the PCs from either "Bonds of Fate" or "Flee From Tomorrow"; Kanjin has hired himself to the sake house temporarily to provide security. He is a rather short, but powerfully built, man with a sardonic expression on his unshaven features. The ronin will

greet any Clan samurai politely enough, or provide a somewhat more genuine welcome to a fellow wave-man, but will not go out of his way to force his company on a PC. If they wish to drink with him, he will prove somewhat welcoming, but it may not be until Seppun Gotoro enters the sake house that he comes to their attention.

The door slides open again, and the music and revelry falter for a moment as Seppun Gotoro enters. Without leaving his sword in the stand by the door, the Emerald Magistrate sweeps into the room and heads directly for the bar. There, the barman pours him a drink from shaking hands. The ronin in the corner shift away, save for one, who looks directly at the Imperial with an ill-disguised look of disgust. "Again, magistrate?" Gotoro turns his gaze to the ronin and snorts, running a hand casually along the hilt of his katana. The ronin inhales carefully and rests his hands on the table, but Gotoro turns away, dismissing the man from his attention to snap at the barman. "Give that here!" He takes a sip of the drink, then spits it out on the floor. "Phah! What foulness are you trying to foist off on me? I should..." He raises a clenched fist, but pauses and lowers his arm. "Just give me what I came for, and I'll leave your fetid pit." The barman fumbles around under the counter and produces a small string of coins, which the magistrate snatches out of his trembling hands before turning to leave. The ronin shakes his head with a grimace as Gotoro passes, but does nothing more.

What happens next depends on whether or not any PC informed Miya Rintaro about Oharu's investigation. If he is unaware that the local samurai are being examined, then Rintaro will have sent Biransei to the village to deliver a small package to Gotoro. Biransei will enter the inn as Gotoro is about to leave, hand over a small, heavy pouch, and walk straight to the bar without exchanging any words with anyone. Gotoro, for his part, will heft the pouch, eyes alight with greed, and then head into the street. Biransei will order one drink, pay for it, and then silently depart after only one sip. The ronin Kanjin will shake his head in confusion and contempt, making no effort again to lower his voice. *"Well, that was odd, and no mistake..."*

If a PC did inform Rintaro about the investigation, then Biransei will not make the delivery in public at all, even in the village. Instead, he will wait in an alley and call Gotoro to turn over the pouch from the shadows. If the PCs follow Gotoro immediately after he leaves the sake house, they may see the delivery occur. (Alternatively, the GM may allow any PCs wandering through the village an opportunity to spot the delivery with an **Investigation / Perception** roll at a TN of 25 – as this

happens either in an alley or essentially the doorway of the sake house, this can be done whether Rintaro is being more careful or not.)

Kanjin

The ronin in the inn will prove to be a quite willing source of information on the goings-on in the village. If he is not known to the PCs, he will introduce himself as Kanjin (“Scoundrel”), and though his manner is somewhat lacking in respect, his anger appears to be directed entirely at Gotoro, and he is not likely to give great offense to the PCs (beyond, perhaps, hanging them with a nickname of some sort). If the PCs take his attitude in good spirits, are willing to drink with him, or are simply inclined to pay for it, he will tell them everything he knows about the corruption of the local Emerald Magistrate.

“I’ve seen some bad samurai in my time, but this is one of the worst places I’ve ever been in. That magistrate, he squeezes every last drop he can out of the people, with his ‘extra taxes’ and outright protection rackets. Any of them object, he beats them down at best or just kills them on some trumped-up charge. It’s gotten so bad, the peasants have hired a few ronin just to hang around some of the more dangerous places. We don’t do much, obviously, we’d be missed little more than a farmer would, but at least we’d be witnesses to violence. Even with us being somewhat of an inhibiting influence, I’ve seen him and his men do some horrible things. They took this one pretty young girl off the street, killed her brother and father right in front of her. I don’t know what happened to her after that, but they were talking about the gokenin...” He pauses to take a drink with a disgusted look. “Turns my stomach. I can understand why the peasants were looking for help.”

Kanjin will relate that he was hired by the village’s headman, a man by the name of Takuma, to serve as a sort of peace-keeper. There have been few incidents with the guards, as they mostly avoid causing issues in front of witnesses, but Kanjin will reluctantly admit to having had to manhandle an overzealous bushi. (He kept the man grappled, and was able to pass the incident off as an accident on both parts, saving face for the guard, but the local law enforcement has been paying more attention to him since.) If the PCs are willing to trust him with the information that they are investigating Gotoro and Kuemon, and have made a good impression with him, he will volunteer his testimony. They can also simply pay him for it if they have not made a good impression; he will accept as little as 5 koku for this service, though he will begin by asking for 10. This is a somewhat dishonorable act, however; any PC lending themselves to this will lose

one point of Honor for every Rank of Honor that they have over 4 (Honor 5 characters lose one point, Honor 8 characters lose 4, for example). Kanjin is also available for hire at more reasonable rates, provided that the PCs do not ask him to do anything that will violate his contract with the village. (This option may be useful if the table is light on bushi, particularly for the “In the Ring of Fire” section.)

Exploring Aeka Mura

Besides the sake house, there are a few other leads that can be followed up on in the village. It will be obvious to anyone who can succeed at an **Investigation / Awareness** roll at a TN of 15 that the peasants are highly wary of any samurai, should that not have been already made clear. The locals will be unwilling to exchange small talk, but they can point the PCs to either the village headman or the local shrine (the two centers of authority that the peasants themselves still trust).

The village headman is a horribly scarred veteran by the name of Takuma. His left hand is mostly gone, three fingers having been bitten off by an oni on the March to Volturum, and the right side of his face is a mass of scar tissue (a shadow-spawn tore most of the flesh away from it with its claws). He will give the impression of being an extremely busy man, but will speak with the PCs with a fair approximation of respect. Unlike most of the rest of the village, his overall emotional tone seems to be one of anger rather than fear. However, there is little that he will be of use for as far as the PCs are concerned. He cannot give testimony against Gotoro or Kuemon, and even getting him to talk about their actions will require a particularly well-roleplayed offer of help and succeeding on a **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** roll with a TN of 45. (A character with the Hero of the People Advantage will receive a Free Raise on this roll.) Even then, he will simply tell them in flat tones about the horrible things Gotoro has done to the villagers and point out that the yoriki are the only real samurai witnesses, apart from the ronin.

It may be possible for a ronin PC (or a Clan samurai passing themselves off as a ronin; this causes a major Honor loss) to attempt to get “hired on” by the village as the other ronin have been. Unless they can succeed at a **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** roll at a TN of 25, however, Takuma will not even consider letting them in on the problems of the village. Doing so will result in him telling them, in broad terms, about the abuses of the local samurai, and “hiring” the PCs to serve as guards to reduce the violence against the peasantry. He will hint that it will likely not be long-term

employment, but offer no more specifics. Under no circumstances will he allow a character to be brought into the secret of the ring of fires without someone he trusts to vouch for them (which will not happen).

The village has a single small shrine where the peasants report a monk called “Tonnoji” tends to their spiritual needs. Unfortunately, Tonnoji is not in the village currently. The shrine is being tended by a young boy of ten or so, named Izo. Izo is an orphan, raised essentially by the entire village. He does odd jobs around town, and in recent years has attached himself to Tonnoji as an assistant, helping with the younger children that the monk teaches, and providing another pair of hands to keep the shrine clean. Izo is as frightened of the samurai as any other local peasant, but can be brought out of his shell by some small kindnesses on the part of the PCs. He will regretfully inform them that Tonnoji is “away”, and that he does not know where. Izo is not hiding anything, but it will not occur to him to tell the PCs about the message that Tonnoji left unless there is a monk PC or he is specifically reminded of it. If that happens, he will pass it along: *“Tonnoji-sensei said that there was a message for any brothers that came. He said it was in the words of the Little Teacher.” The boy screws up his face in concentration. “No, that’s not all... in the words of the Little Teacher above. And that the Young Crow will know his own.”*

Izo does not know what the message means, but if the PCs enter the shrine and look around, they may roll **Lore: Theology / Perception** at a TN of 40 to note that there are quotes from the Tao of Shinsei carved into the roof of the shrine and along the posts that support the roof. (PCs who received the message gain two Free Raises to this roll.) One line in particular, on the northern post, has been recently touched up: “The world is fire, consuming, growing, dying.” A very faint scent of incense will come from that carving, underscoring its importance. This is a reference to the Ring of Fire, and a clue for where the monks who are supporting the peasants to meet.

Looking into the Fire

The fires are located several miles away from the village. Any inquiries among the locals will be met with assurances that the peasants are handling the matter adequately. As far as the samurai are concerned, this is absolutely true and there is nothing more about it – samurai do not concern themselves with the details of agriculture, leaving that to the peasants. Most of the peasants are aware that there is something going on, but even assuming the PCs can find them to talk to them, the peasants do not know what is happening for the

most part. Careful questioning (and a successful **Investigation / Awareness** roll at a TN of 20) will yield nothing more specific than the fact that the fire started nearly a week ago and that the peasants have been spending their time keeping it controlled.

If any PCs wish to physically examine the site, they may do so. During the day, there is no difficulty in finding it, and even at night, it should not be problematic to get close enough to spot the fiery red glow. However, day or night, the boundary is carefully patrolled by peasants wearing soaked scarves across their nose and mouth, and keeping the blaze under control. The PCs can easily see them spreading sand, making firebreaks, and carrying water – all mundane tasks that the samurai should not readily understand. However, attempting to get too close will prompt a confrontation between the peasants and the samurai. Though they will begin as outwardly respectful, the peasants will make it clear that they have the situation well in hand and do not want the samurai to get injured by getting too close. If the PCs have been looking around the village, they will note the complete difference in attitude among these peasants and the rest of the locals – there is no sign of the obsequious manner or cringing fear that categorizes the peasants in the village. The fact that they are willing to attack the PCs can be determined with an **Investigation / Awareness** roll at a TN of 20, but unless the PCs push the issue, they will be all too eager to let the samurai leave. While the PCs may not feel in any danger, it should be made clear that there are several dozen peasants fighting the fire in the immediate area (no matter where that immediate area is), so they will likely find themselves overwhelmed in short order should it come to violence.

If the PCs explore in detail from a safe distance, they may attempt to circle the entire fire. This will take at least two hours, assuming they are mounted, and will allow them to determine that the fire extends in a ring for several miles, surrounding the fields where it originated but now encompassing several dozen acres. On the opposite side of the fires from the village, they will see a point where there is a break and twenty or so peasants tending to the fires there. If they travel entirely around the fires, they may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** at a TN of 40 to spot a place where a culvert passes under a small side-road, that could possibly be used to cross under the fires. Doing so without being noticed requires a **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** roll at a TN of 25, both to enter and to exit. What they find there, should they manage this, is detailed in “In the Ring of Fire”, and will likely short-circuit the rest of the module if they survive to bring back word to Oharu.

Visitors in the Night

Before the PCs retire for the night, Oharu will attempt to gather them together to pool their resources and share what each has learned. Oharu's efforts have been focused on the higher-ranked samurai, Kuemon and Rintaro. *"They know each other in some other fashion, I'm certain. Yet, as much as Rintaro has advanced himself in the last few years... I thin there's something more going on. Kuemon is certainly hiding something."* If the PCs have begun gathering testimony from the NPCs, he will be very pleased. In any event, he will remind the group that they will need testimony to bring any charges against anyone. *"And if we are going after individuals of status like Kuemon-san or Gotoro-san, we will need at least three samurai of lower rank willing to stand before the court and offer their testimony."* With that, he will limp off to bed and suggest the PCs do the same.

If none of the PCs accepted a "special favor" from Yasuki Kumo in the module "Poisoned Gift", then they will all have a pleasant and restful night.

On the other hand, any PC who accepted a gift from Kumo in exchange for not arresting him will be quietly awoken in the middle of the night.

A quiet sound in the darkness brings you awake. Silhouetted against the faint light of the paper window is a crouched form. It raises a hand, cautioning you to silence, and greets you in a polite whisper. "Your pardon, samurai, but I felt it necessary to conduct our business in private. I am certain you will agree. Please, let us discuss this like reasonable people. You would not wish to disturb the rest of the castle's rest, now would you?"

The visitor will suggest quite forcefully (if quietly) that the PC hear them out and not raise an alarm. If the PC insists on calling out for help or attacking the visitor, they will spring out through the paper wall to the hallway, where Seppun Kitoyo is waiting. She will scream, raising the entire household, and claim that the PC was about to attack her. Kuemon's guards will respond appropriately, taking the PC into custody and showing no mercy if they attempt to resist.

Should the PC allow themselves to be captured, they will be escorted to a secure room in the building's basement (the "castle's" dungeon), where they will be left for some time. Oharu will visit them in the morning to discover what happened; see the next section for details.

If the PC hears the visitor out, they will be informed in no uncertain terms that they (the PC) owe a debt. *"You have received certain gifts from an associate of mine, one Yasuki Kumo. Well, the 'late Yasuki Kumo', now... his plotting caught up with him finally, after all. But you still benefitted from his generosity. And you can expect his associates to call upon this obligation."* If the PCs object, the visitor will laugh quietly. *"This is not negotiable, my friend. You can accede to a few simple requests, or the Empire will know that you refuse to live up to your obligations."*

Further bluster or threats will be met with chill humor. *"You do not understand what you face. We were here before the Kami fell. We will be here when you are dead. The Shadow could not destroy us; we emerged from Toturi's pogrom stronger and better-hidden. Much better for you to face up to your obligations."* If the PC's "gift" from Kumo was particularly unique or expensive, the visitor will twist the knife somewhat. *"How did you think that a puffed-up merchant could arrange something as significant as your particular 'gift'? He had to turn to his contacts among us, of course... Consider who died to make your whim yours."* In any case, if the players have not realized, a PC may make a **Lore: Underworld** or **Lore: History / Intelligence** roll at a TN of 25 to realize that they are speaking to a representative of the Kolat. Any PC with actual Ranks in the Lore: Kolat Skill, or the Forbidden Knowledge: Kolat Advantage, will automatically succeed.

Assuming that the PCs will listen to reason, the visitor simply wants the PC to give up whatever they will receive during the ceremony the next day. *"A blind drop will be arranged; you need only give up this token of your own free will. And, of course, we will be in touch later."* With that, the visitor will vanish.

Any PC who received a gift from Yasuki Kumo now gains the "Blackmailed" Disadvantage. If they refuse to turn over the token, there will be further consequences, as detailed in the "Rewards for Completing the Adventure" section.

Part Three: Walk Through the Fire

Whether their night was disturbed or not, the PCs will awaken in the morning and have several hours in which to accomplish further investigations before the ceremony. This should provide them with some time to

further the investigation – they can follow up with NPCs or explore the village as they choose.

Should anyone attempt to speak with Biransei about his excursion into the village the night before, he will be curt and somewhat threatening. ***“I have nothing to speak of, samurai. My deeds are none of your affair.”*** If they push, he will hint that he is willing to challenge them to shut them up, and as he is a highly skilled swordsman, there should be some weight given to his words. It is possible for a bushi who speaks plainly and respectfully to get him to admit that he is nothing more than Rintaro’s servant, and that he neither knows nor cares what was in the delivery. That is, however, as much as he feels he can tell the PCs while remaining loyal to Rintaro, and he is absolutely willing to face them with steel in hand over the issue.

Involving Oharu in the Kolat

If any of the PCs were taken into custody for inciting violence in the castle the night before, Oharu will arrange to speak with them in the morning. ***“I understand that there was some difficulty last night, my friend. Please, explain to me what happened, and I will see what can be done about the situation.”*** If the PC is unwilling to discuss the matter with him, he will urge them once more to come clean (“I can do nothing if you do not give me some information...”), but if they still refuse, he will wash his hands of them. They will gain an additional Rank of Infamy and be confined to the cell for the remainder of the module, being released only when Oharu makes ready to depart.

Whether they were taken into custody or not, if any of the PCs are willing to tell Oharu everything that happened last night, including the original bribe from Yasuki Kumo, he will ponder the matter carefully. ***“You appear to have attracted the attention of a powerful organization, one that was thought by many to be destroyed. There are few who still actively pursue investigations against the Kolat; Shiba Utsuro, one of my Emerald Magistrate colleagues, and Usagi Ozaki, the daimyo of the Hare Clan, are the most prominent that I can recall and even they are generally dismissed in the courts for their obsession.”*** Though he does have other projects on his plate, if the PCs are willing to act as his agents in the matter, he will begin an investigation into the Kolat. He will urge caution and care, as the Kolat are demonstrably very good at avoiding notice and were rumored in their prime to have agents of their own almost everywhere. He will quash any rumors from the violence of the night before (preventing those PCs from gaining Infamy for that but instead giving them a Minor Obligation to Oharu), and suggest that they accede to the demand for

the gift. ***“If nothing else, it will give us a place to begin our investigations. I, however, have no wish to end my days assassinated for disturbing a secret organization of mysterious resources and abilities – so we must start by allowing them to come to you, and determine our pattern from the requests that are made of you.”*** See the “Rewards” section for more information on the effects of this choice.

Ceremony of Presentation

After the PCs have a chance to further the investigation over the course of the morning, the planned ceremony will take place at mid-day.

The assembled guests gather in the main hall with their entourages, kneeling in their places before the dais. You are placed behind Oharu as his escort, roughly in the middle of the hall. Otomo Kuemon and his personal vassals take up positions on the dais. A single gong peals out, indicating the beginning of the ceremony without words. Asahina Keiko, resplendent in a light blue court kimono worked with golden cranes that seem to echo the aura that marks her as a returned spirit, enters from the main entrance. Seven servants follow behind her, bearing trays in which are arranged rows of origami cranes – each perfect and unique, in paper of different designs and varying slightly in size. Keiko kneels before her lord, prostrating herself for a moment as she gathers her composure. No words are spoken as another servant brings her a tray with a single piece of golden paper. Slowly, with movements as precise and ritualized as those one would use for a tea ceremony, Keiko folds the one thousandth paper crane for her lord. When it is done, she bows her head. For a moment, it appears that the shimmering golden crane is only reflecting her own aura, but the cranes in the boxes behind her all take on the same soft glow for a few heartbeats. The aura fades, but murmurs through the court indicate that all eyes took note of it. The artisan slides along the ground on her knees to present the final crane to Kuemon. The Otomo takes the proffered object and raises it to be seen by all. “Let these be distributed to the Clans, that all the Empire may know the artistry and culture of the Imperial families. And may none present ever forget the miracles that we are privileged to witness.”

The servants with the boxes will present them to each delegation; the cranes are intended as gifts for the Clan Champions and family daimyo, and as gifts for those they deem worthy. The delegates themselves, and their escorts (including the PCs present at the ceremony) will also each receive a crane.

After the ceremony, the PCs are free to pursue their investigations once more. It is expected that most of the guests will be leaving that night or the next day, and Oharu would like to have the matter concluded before it becomes necessary to leave (or risk attract attention for not doing so).

If the PCs ask Keiko about the significance of the cranes, she will begin by telling them of the belief that folding one thousand origami cranes grants one wish. Should they press, either because of the luminous display or due to the Kolat interest, she will simply say, *“Any work of art has something of the artist in it. Freely given, these objects may have some minor power, but I am no shugenja, and thus cannot fully waken the spirit within them. I only shape them and impart some of myself.”* She does not know if the items will have any effect, but she has made her own wish, which she will only discuss as noted in the section referring to her testimony.

The Flames Catch

On the afternoon following the ceremony, the tensions in the village will come to a head. After they have accomplished their tasks in the village, PC there may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception**. Those who succeed at a TN of 20 will spot the following scene on their way back to the castle. Those who roll highest should have the first opportunity to react. If they fail, they may roll again at a TN of 15 once the scene has begun to hear Gotoro’s screamed curses.

As you head back toward Kuemon’s residence, you notice Seppun Gotoro striding through the streets, coming down from the “castle” toward the village’s shrine. Suddenly, a young boy comes pelting down a side street, hurrying on some errand or other. As he skids around the corner, he collides with the Emerald Magistrate. The boy’s arms wheel in a futile attempt to catch his balance, and he strikes Gotoro’s saya twice on his way to the ground. Enraged, Gotoro begins to bellow dire imprecations on the child, and punctuates each curse with a kick. The boy huddles into a ball as the Imperial samurai literally begins to kick him down the street.

The boy is Izo, the monk’s “assistant” and the village’s collective orphan. Whether the PCs choose to intervene or not, it will not take long for them to notice that the disturbance has begun to attract attention from the other locals. A roll of **Investigation / Awareness** at a TN of 25 will allow them to realize that the usual cringing attitude of the local peasants is missing; watching the magistrate beat the boy who is essentially the village’s mascot will infuse steel into their spines. Literal steel

will sprout from a few fists as they watch the magistrate vent his anger, and if the PCs do nothing, they will erupt into violence in response. A peasant riot will unfold, and explode with surprising vehemence considering that there are significantly more women than men in the crowd. Anyone caught in the riot will take 4k2 damage; staying to fight it out will cause them to take that damage every Round until they are killed or retreat. Gotoro will draw steel with a snarl and lay about him, slaying a dozen or so of the peasants before he is pulled down and almost literally pulled apart by his frustrated victims.

If the PCs choose to interfere, however, they have a chance to head off the violence. This will first require providing some sort of defense of the boy. Standing up to Gotoro will cause him to snarl at them, *“Stand aside! This peasant filth has offended my honor!”* Gotoro is too contemptuous of the peasants to even notice they are surrounding him, let alone recognize the threat. He will focus on the PCs as long as they are in front of him, and if they refuse to back down, will in fact challenge them to a duel. Accepting this will get Gotoro to head back to the “castle”, but the peasants will not let him depart unless the PCs attempt to calm them down. It will require assurances at the PCs are going to handle the problem, along with a **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** roll with a TN of 25, to defuse the situation enough to get the crowd to disperse. PCs with the “Hero of the People” Advantage receive two Free Raises to this roll, and the GM is encouraged to award Free Raises for particularly well-played appeals. At the GM’s discretion, another Skill like Courtier can be substituted, but should the PCs attempt Intimidation, the peasants will immediately attack, driven to the breaking point by this final assault.

If the PCs disperse the crowd without violence, one peasant will remain behind: *A tall woman with the upper half of her face covered in ash and soot stands before you, her body tense with fear. She bows abruptly, “I am sorry, samas, but you must come with me as soon as you can. I have something you... need to see.”* This is Aki, the ashigaru woman from “Undefended Border” and “A Hero’s Gift”. She will be particularly pleading with those PCs she has previous experience with. She will not be more clear, simply saying that it is something that they have to see for themselves. As there will likely have been a confrontation with Gotoro, the PCs will need to report back to Oharu, but Aki is more than willing to wait for their convenience.

If the PCs were not able to stop the riot, Aki will approach them on their way back to Kuemon’s house, calling to them from an alley. Again, she will try her

best to convince them of the severity of the situation without actually describing it. She will indicate that they may find themselves in danger, and recommend against bringing horses along, but will not at any point give the samurai anything that would be construed as an order.

If the PCs do not have previous experience with Aki, she will introduce herself with all appropriate humility. *"I am Aki, samas. I'm just an ashigaru, now, and I'm not from around here. But I've seen a lot, lately, ever since my village was destroyed a couple years ago. I'm here because I've heard some pretty disturbing things, and I've seen something that I know you'll want to see."* In this case, Aki is approaching the PCs because they are not local samurai, and she is desperate enough to hope that they will be able to handle the situation while remaining reasonable.

As Aki is clearly recently come from the area of the fires (the PCs may roll **Investigation / Intelligence** at a TN of 15 to realize what the soot and ash marks on her face mean), they should likely get Oharu's permission or at least inform him of where they are going before they head out into possible danger. Finding him in the court is not difficult, chatting amiably with Seppun Kitoyo. When the PCs ask to speak with him, he will apologize to the hatamoto and make his way to a private room where he can take their report.

If the riot began in the village, then there will have been some sign of it at the "castle": the noise will have carried that far, and many of the guards have been dispatched to deal with it as they can. Lacking the Emerald Magistrate, however, will make the local samurai's ability to maintain civil order fairly difficult, and Kitoyo will ask the guests to remain in the house for their own safety.

If Gotoro was offended by the PCs (by their seeking to defend Izo, for instance), he will be speaking out against them in the court. If he had not delivered it before, he will be working his way up to issuing a challenge.

Note that if there were no PCs in the village during the afternoon, there will be nothing to prevent the riot. They will hear some of the uproar, and Oharu will ask them to investigate. They will then be approached by Aki immediately upon leaving the "castle"; she will tell them that the riot was caused by Gotoro beating a peasant child, but that there is something more important for them to look into.

Ideally for the PCs, they will have already gathered enough testimony for Oharu to be able to bring charges

against Gotoro. Even if they have not, however, Oharu will prefer to send them out of the "castle" in order to handle the political situation himself. *"Investigate this peasant woman's assertions. Perhaps it is related to this case; it is difficult to imagine this being a coincidence. Do you think this will be dangerous?"* He gives the group a serious, steady look. Should they answer in the affirmative, he will nod slowly, with a serious expression. *"Then, as an Emerald Magistrate in the pursuit of an investigation in this province, I authorize you to bear arms and armor on your assigned duties. Be careful and bring me back word of what you find."*

If any of the PCs wish to remain in the castle, he will demur slightly, as he thinks that he can handle the situation better without their distraction, but if they insist he will not order them out of the house. If their motivation is concern for his protection, he will chuckle slightly. *"I will keep Ichi and Ni close at hand. They are not yojimbo in any actual sense, but I'm fairly confident they can protect me from any eta torturers..."* Either way, unless a bushi who has an Iaijutsu Skill Rank of 5 or higher chooses to stay behind at the castle, Oharu will open a long box and withdraw his katana. Settling it in to place, he will make no comment on it, but will assure any PC who asks that he is competent to defend himself with it. *"I just generally prefer to use words... but given the tone of recent events, there may be no receptive audience."*

In the Ring of Fire

Aki will meet the PCs outside the "castle", anxiously waiting and relieved to see them emerge. If they are in armor or carrying heavy weapons, she will barely even seem to notice. *"It's this way, samas. Out to the fire. Please, you need to understand: this is not how we all feel. Most of us, the bonge, we just want to get by. There are some who are angry, but that's not the majority."* With that uneasy setup, she will lead the PCs through the countryside by a roundabout route to the fires. Aki has obviously familiarized herself with the local terrain and the best way to get there without being observed. As the group gets closer, she will hunker down and attempt to prepare them. *"We will have to move cautiously, samas. They have sentries out, looking for scouts like us. But I don't think they're really paying too close attention – that's what the fires are here for, to keep people from taking too close a look."* With that, she will lead the PCs into the culvert and under the flames.

The PCs will need to make **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** rolls at a TN of 20. If they are wearing armor, the standard penalties for Stealth apply (essentially -5

for light armor and -10 for heavy), but this can be rolled as a Cooperative Roll with Aki's assistance. Doing so allows the PCs to add the Ranks of the character with the highest Rank in Stealth to the total of their roll (if none of the PCs have more Ranks than Aki, this gives them a +3 to their rolls). If the PCs did not stop the riot in the village, the sentries will be distracted and the TN for the entry will be reduced to 15. Failure on this roll will attract the attention of the sentries, provoking the combat below. While this may count as a Low Skill in many PCs' minds, they are functionally acting as scouts in a military capacity (though they are unaware of that fact as yet). If a player believes their character's Honor to be negatively impacted by sneaking into the fire, they may lose Honor per the chart. In general, only the highest-Honor PCs should consider taking a loss (those with 8 or more Ranks).

The fires prove to be only few feet wide, with relatively clear ground behind them. Inside the cleared ground, a huge military camp spreads over nearly a hundred acres. The tents are organized in precise rows, set up like any Clan samurai army (albeit one heavily influenced by the Lion Clan, the undisputed masters of military efficiency). Any PC with the Battle Skill can make a swift calculation of roughly fifty standard legions, or 50,000 troops. What can be seen from the group's vantage indicates that they are predominantly peasants, though ronin and monks can be seen in the camp as well, likely acting as officers and advisors. Everywhere the PCs can see, banners flying the symbol of a crow in flight are visible.

The only possible target for an army of this size is Otosan Uchi, five days march to the southeast. This information should radically change the PCs' priorities; it is obvious that the capital needs warned.

The PCs must make Stealth rolls once again in order to leave the area without being noticed. However, the sentries are more alert inside the fire, and the TN is increased by 5.

If the PCs fail either Stealth roll, they will be spotted by the sentries. Initially, there will be as many "Peasant Sentries" as there are PCs. However, the sentries will give out an alarm immediately, and two more will join the combat in every Reactions Stage. Aki will avoid attacking, generally preferring to use the Guard maneuver on any PC who does not have armor, but will defend herself if it becomes necessary. If he was hired by the PCs, Kanjin will start out using only his bare hands, but will draw his sword once he is wounded and use a mixture of unarmed and armed attacks thereafter. The sentries will fight to the best of their ability,

focusing on the most dangerous PCs and those with the best armor or most damaging weapons.

Peasant Sentries

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 2
Reflexes 3		Agility 3		
Honor 1.5		Status 0.2		Glory 0.5

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

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

Reduction: 1 (ashigaru armor)

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

School/Rank: none / Insight Rank 1

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Craft: Farming 4, Defense 2, Hunting 2, Investigation 2, Jiu-jutsu 1, Spears 4

Mastery Abilities: may ignore 3 points of Reduction when attacking with a spear in the first Round of combat

Aki

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 2
Reflexes 4		Agility 4		
Honor 2.9		Status 0.5		Glory 1.1

Initiative: 6k4 **Attack:** 9k4 (spear, Complex)

Armor TN: 28 (ashigaru armor) **Damage:** 5k2 (spear)

Reduction: 1 (ashigaru armor)

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

School/Rank: none/Insight Rank 2

Skills: Animal Handling 1, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Commerce 2, Craft: Cooking 2, Craft: Farming 3, Craft: Weaving 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Hunting (Survival) 4, Intimidation 3, Investigation 3, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kyujutsu 3, Spears (Yari) 5, Stealth 3

Mastery Abilities: may treat Difficult Terrain as Moderate, no penalty from Moderate Terrain; may keep previous Full Defense Roll, +3 to Armor TN when in Full Defense or Defense Stance; +1k0 to unarmed damage; may string a bow as a Simple Action; may ignore 3 points of Reduction with a spear in the first round of combat

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

After the Reactions Stage of the third Round of combat, a loud bellow will echo over the sounds of fighting. **"HOLD! STOP THE FIGHTING!"** A heavily-armed guntai of ashigaru, bearing the standards of the Crow, will surround the skirmish. Their leader, a handsome man with faint touches of grey in his hair and beard, narrows his eyes at the intruders as the peasants back away on his orders. Any PCs who played "Twisted

Fate” will recognize Nikui, the former headman of the village around Toku Torid-e. Anger twists his features as he looks down at the samurai. ***“And here we have first contact, men. Scouts.”*** He takes a deep breath and shakes his head. ***“Fair enough. We weren’t going to keep the element of surprise. Return, samurai, to your Imperial City and warn them that we are coming. Tell them the Legion of the Crow is coming to claim justice from your Empress.”*** He raises his spear and the troops behind him shout out ***“For the Young Crow!”*** Nikui will incline his head and point away from the camp with his spear, indicating that the PCs should depart while they have the chance.

If any PC attempts to speak with Nikui, they will find him utterly unwilling to listen. ***“Samurai, I have learned what your bushido is worth. You take, and take, and take. My wife, my daughter’s hopes, then my daughter herself. Well, it’s time for us to take it back.”***

If the PCs wish to continue combat at this point, they are literally facing an entire army alone. This is a good death for a samurai, but it still an inevitable death. The players should contact the Admin Staff for a copy of the “Truest Test” cert.

At this point, the PCs ought to return to Aeka Mura in order to report in to Oharu and recover their steeds to bring word of the rebel peasant army to Ootosan Uchi.

Conclusion

If any of the PCs remained in Aeka Mura with Oharu, they will have a chance to observe his confrontation with Gotoro and Kuemon. If Oharu has enough testimony, he will call upon the witnesses to present it in open court. This will allow him to bring charges of corruption, abuse, peculation, and violation of Imperial policies before Gotoro and Kuemon. The PC(s) will get to watch the arguments culminate in a challenge from Kuemon; if Oharu has his katana, he will be compelled to accept, while Kuemon will have Gotoro stand as his champion. Should Gotoro have died in the riots, Kuemon will smirk and ask Rintaro for the use of his yojimbo – but the smug look will vanish when Rintaro denies him, forcing Kuemon to rely upon one of his guards. If the PC who remained behind has 5 Ranks of Iaijutsu, they may stand as Oharu’s yojimbo (since Oharu will not have worn his katana in that instance), but must face one of the NPCs.

If Oharu didn’t have sufficient testimony to bring charges, he will instead be somewhat more straight forward about talking with Kuemon about his village’s

situation – somewhat less than polite, but Oharu will carefully avoid saying anything that will cause a duel.

The PCs are likely to return to the estate in great haste, which will concern the guards. However, exactly how they are greeted will vary slightly depending on what they were able to accomplish in regards to Oharu’s investigation and the unrest in the village. (If the riot broke out in the village, the guards will have retreated to the “castle’s” gates and be actively protecting it.)

Oharu Triumphant

If the PCs gathered enough testimony to allow Oharu to bring charges against Kuemon and Gotoro, then the guards at the gate will give the PCs the impression that something is happening in the main court hall when they arrive. Hastening there, the PCs will see the end of a bloody confrontation. (If Gotoro died in the riot, one of Kuemon’s guards will stand as his champion in Gotoro’s place.)

The doors slam open onto the main hall of Kuemon’s manor house. The entire court turns to face you from where they are assembled to witness what appears to have been a duel. Doji Oharu faces away from the door, standing unsteadily without the aid of his walking stick but his gaze firmly on the Otomo sitting on the dais. Blood drips slowly from the katana in the Crane Emerald Magistrate’s hand, and as you advance into the room, you can see the crumpled form of Seppun Gotoro lying on the floor with a crimson pool spreading under him. Oharu calmly flicks the blood from his blade and sheathes it, turning carefully to the door and inclining his head in greeting. “Yoriki. Report, please.”

This should give the PCs an opportunity to warn not only Oharu but every samurai of standing in the area at once. When the danger is made clear, Oharu’s eyes will close briefly. When he opens them, he gives the PCs a bow of appreciation and murmurs, ***“Well done, my friends”*** before he turns back to the dais.

The Crane points down to the fallen Imperial, his face set in an expression of thunderous anger. “This is what has grown from the seed of your corruption.” The accusing finger rises to point directly at Kuemon. “This is the price of your weakness.” Oharu takes a deep breath, and issues a formal proclamation in heavy, controlled tones. “Otomo Kuemon. In the name of the Emerald Champion, I sentence you to death for your crimes. I will show a measure of mercy, however: if you are willing to take up steel and meet the foes of the Empire on the field of battle, I will

delay your execution. If the Fortunes are kind, you will face your end with a sword in hand.” The Otomo blanches and sinks down in his seat. Oharu holds out his hand, and one of his enormous servants steps forward to place his walking stick in it. “Now, however, I must ride to deliver warning to my lord Toshiken-sama. If we ever meet again, Kuemon, understand that my mercy is exhausted.”

Insufficient Testimony

If the PCs did not arrange enough testimony for Oharu to bring charges into the court, then his confrontation with Kuemon (and Gotoro, if he survived the riot) will be significantly less dramatic and final. The PCs will find Oharu in the main hall, but without the benefit of legal precedent on his side, Oharu will simply have confined his discussion to relatively polite criticism of Kuemon’s governorship. This will obviously cause a great deal of tension between the Emerald Magistrate and Kuemon, but it will not escalate to a duel.

When the PCs enter, Oharu will turn to them as though glad of the distraction and ask them to report. Once they have, Oharu will shake his head. Again, he will bow in appreciation to the PCs and compliment them for the benefit of the court. *“Well done, my friends. Now we must deal with this situation.”*

Turning back to Kuemon, Oharu shakes his head in resignation. “I cannot bring what I know before the Emerald Champion, Kuemon-san. But rest assured it will only be a matter of time, once this new crisis is dealt with. This is the price of your weakness. Fortunes grant that the Empire survives paying it.” With that, he turns away from the Imperial and starts toward the door. “We must ride, my friends. The capital must be warned.”

In either case, the trip back to Otsan Uchi will be uneventful, if hurried. Oharu will commandeer one of Kuemon’s horses and lead the PCs back to the capital with determination (if also a great deal of pain). There, the daimyo with troops in the city will begin to coordinate with the First Imperial Legion to prepare to defend the Imperial City.

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
Uncovering the Corruption in Aeka Mura:	+1XP
Discovering the Rebel Army:	+1XP

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Honor

For uncovering the corruption in Aeka Mura, the PCs will gain +0.1 Honor if they have Honor 6.0+ or +0.2 Honor if they have less.

Particularly Compassionate treatment of the peasants in Aeka Mura should be met with a reward for PCs with low Honor. If they already have 7 or more Ranks of Honor, however, such is to be expected.

Glory

If the investigation into Aeka Mura resulted in bringing charges against Kuemon and Gotoro, Oharu will praise the PCs in open court – they will gain 5 points of Glory, minus one point for each Rank of Glory they already have, to a minimum of one point.

The press of other issues may overshadow that, however; bringing the word of the impending attack by a peasant army to the Imperial Court will earn the PCs 5 points of Glory (with no other modifiers).

Other Awards/Penalties

If the PCs followed through on the investigation (whether they gained enough testimony or not), they gain Oharu as an Ally (Influence 2/Devotion 1). If he was already an Ally, their Devotion increases by 1.

However, if the PC talked about the discrete investigation to anyone (particularly Rintaro), they do not gain this reward.

If a PC has the “Eyes of the Miya” cert and did not tell Rintaro about the investigation, he will be very displeased with them. They may choose to leave his service, losing the benefit of the cert, or they will lose .5 points of Status from the position granted by the cert.

If, on the other hand, a PC did inform Rintaro about the investigation, they gain .1 Status on the position granted by the cert. If a PC does not already have the “Eyes of the Miya” cert and informed to him anyway, they will be invited to join Rintaro’s group. The player should contact the Campaign Admin.

Finally: the players should be asked what they wish to do with the origami cranes. If a PC wishes, they may give it to their daimyo. Otherwise, they may keep it with no loss of honor. (This question should be asked of the players without telling them the effects first.)

If a PC gives the crane to their daimyo, they gain 4 points of Status, minus one for each Rank of Status they already have. (To a maximum of Status 3.9.)

If they keep the crane, they gain a minor blessing – one re-roll of any die roll that may be used at any time. Once used, it is gone, however.

If, however, a PC who was given the ultimatum from the “Visitor in the Night” does not give up their crane to the mysterious visitor, they gain two Ranks of Infamy (as their unwillingness to meet their obligations spreads through the Empire), and “Sworn Enemy: Kolat”. It is not possible for them to avoid gaining the “Blackmailed” Disadvantage, however.

Finally, any PC who agreed to work with Oharu by investigating the Kolat should note that on their sheet as “Hand of Oharu”; while there will be no immediate effect, he will expect them to report to him whenever they come across information on the conspiracy. This has no public effect, however, as the investigation will require a certain amount of secrecy of its own.

GM Reporting

Were any of the PCs visited in the night by the Kolat agent? Did they involve Oharu in the Kolat investigation?

Did Seppun Gotoro die in the riot?

Did Oharu duel a Seppun (Gotoro or one of the guards) in open court?

Did Oharu have enough testimony to bring charges against Kuemon/Gotoro?

Did the PCs encounter Nikui at the fire?

GM must report this information BEFORE (11/25/2012) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

Doji Oharu

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 2 Void 5
 Awareness 6 Willpower 4 Perception 3
 Honor 3.2 (6.2) Status 4.5 Glory
Initiative: 10k4+10 **Attack:** 9k4 (katana, Complex)

Armor TN: 25 (32 **Damage:** 6k2 (katana)
 Defense Stance)

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 1/Doji Courtier 5

Techniques: *The Way of the Crane:* Add twice Iaijutsu Skill Rank to all Initiative rolls. Gains a bonus of +1k1+1 to the total of all attack and Focus rolls while assuming the Center Stance. This bonus also applies during the Combat Round following one in which assumed the Center Stance.

The Soul of Honor: by conversing with another person for a few minutes, can make a Contested Roll of Courtier (Manipulation)/Awareness against the target's Etiquette (Courtesy)/Awareness to learn whether they are in need of any favors or assistance.

Speaking In Silence: Cadence: can roll Courtier / Intelligence at TN 15 to communicate simple ideas with any other Crane who is trained in the Doji Courtier School or who has at least 5 Ranks in the Courtier Skill. More complex ideas can be conveyed with Raises.

The Perfect Gift: Any time in court or in an urban area, can roll Courtier / Awareness at TN 20 to come up with a suitable gift or a helpful political favor for someone else. By calling Raises on this roll, can acquire a rarer or more potent gift or favor. If such a gift or favor is accepted, may immediately take that person as an Ally with 1-point Devotion, without XP cost

Voice of Honor: In any debate or argument, may make a Contested Roll of Courtier (Manipulation)/Awareness against the target's Etiquette (Courtesy)/Awareness to forced them to concede that their position conflicts with Honor, and if they persists in this position they will commit a breach of etiquette. (It is the GM's discretion, based on the circumstances, as to whether it is a minor or major breach.)

The Gift of the Lady: By conversing with someone for a few minutes, may make a Contested Roll of Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness against the target's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower to shift the target's emotions in a favorable direction.. If the target is an Ally, gain a bonus of +5k0 to the total of this roll.

Skills: Artisan: Origami 3, Calligraphy 3, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 6, Defense 4, Etiquette (Courtesy) 6, Games: Go 2, Horsemanship1, Iaijutsu (Focus) 5, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 1,

Lore: Heraldry 4, Lore: Law 2, Medicine 2, Perform: Oratory 4, Sincerity 7, Tea Ceremony 3, Temptation 5.

Mastery Abilities: +1k0 to Contested Rolls using Courtier or Etiquette. +6 Insight. +5 to total of all Contested Rolls using Sincerity or Temptation. Ready sword as a Free Action. +1k0 to damage rolls with swords. Free Raise to Focus Rolls.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Many), Benten's Blessing, Crafty, Perceived Honor (3), Social Position (Emerald Magistrate), Strength of the Earth, Voice / Compulsion: Opium (I), Lame

Seppun Gotoro

Air 2 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 4
 Reflexes 4 Stamina 4 Agility 4 Strength 4
 Honor 3.2 Status 4.5 Glory 3.7

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

Armor TN: 25 **Damage:** 8k2 (katana)

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

School/Rank: Seppun Guardsman 3

Techniques: *Never in Darkness:* +3k0 to resist Social Skill Roll to tempt away from duty; +1k1 to Investigation to detect ambush or surprise attack

The Clouds Part: may spend a Void Point to add +3 to total of attack and damage rolls until next Turn

Sun's Light Reveals: may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to roll Investigation (Notice) / Perception at TN 25 to see through all illusions or disguises, whether magical or mundane. If in presence of Emperor, his immediate family, or high-ranking Imperial officer, does not need to spend the Void

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 4, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: Law 3, Spears 3

Mastery Abilities: +1k0 damage with swords, may ready a sword as a Free Action, +1k0 damage unarmed

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Position (Emerald Magistrate), Wealthy / Brash, Failure of Compassion, Greedy

Otomo Kuemon

Air 3 Earth 2 Fire 3 Water 2 Void 3
 Awareness 4 Perception 3
 Honor 1.7 Status 4.0 Glory 3.0

School/Rank: Otomo Courtier 3

Techniques: *The Voice of Heaven:* does not lose Honor for using Intimidation (Control); may make a Contested Roll of Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness vs

Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness when in conversation with a member of a Clan to provoke disagreement between them and a member of another Clan

Destiny Has No Secrets: (if contacts available) may spend Void to make a Courtier / Awareness roll at TN 25 to learn one piece of critically useful information (GM's discretion)

My Master's Voice: against Honor Rank 1.0+ samurai, may take Complex Action to make Contested Intimidation (Control) / Willpower vs target's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower (target gets Free Raise if they sincerely believe they are acting honorably); success means target cannot take actions that would directly attack, obstruct, or threaten courtier or allies

Skills: Artisan: Ikebana 3, Commerce 3, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 2, Intimidation (Control) 5, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Heraldry 3, Sincerity 4, Temptation 2

Mastery Abilities: +6 Insight; +1k0 to Contested Rolls using Courtier or Etiquette, may keep previous Full Defense roll, +5 to total of Contested Roll using Intimidation

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Position (Imperial gokenin) / Blackmailed, Failure of Duty, Lechery

Kanjin

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3	Void 3
			Strength 4	
Honor 4.1		Status 0		Infamy 1.2
Initiative: 6k3		Attack: 10k4 (unarmed, Complex), 7k4 (katana, Complex)		
Armor TN: 23 (ashigaru armor)		Damage: 5k2 (unarmed), 8k2 (katana)		

Reduction: 1

School/Rank: none/Insight Rank 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 3, Games: Shogi 2, Hunting (Tracking) 3, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu (Grapple, Improvised Weapons) 6, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Lore: Underworld 3, Sincerity 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Crab Hands, Crafty, Hands of Stone, Luck I, Sage, Strength of the Earth / Benten's Curse, Infamous, Social Disadvantage: Ronin

Miya Rintaro

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 2	Void 4
			Perception 3	
Honor 5.3		Status 5.0		Glory 6.0

School/Rank: Miya Herald 4

Techniques: *Voice of the Emperor:* while inside borders of Empire, may spend Void to gain Way of the Land for local province; any Rokugani who reveres the Emperor and knowingly and deliberately attacks will lose (2x School Rank) Honor points

Eyes of the Emperor: +5 to all Etiquette (Courtesy) rolls made to resist others' attempts to influence

Hand of the Emperor: at start of skirmish or at Reactions Step of later rounds, may spend Void Point to prevent any Rokugani who reveres the Emperor from being able to harm before next Reactions step; may not be used if taking part in skirmish or duel

Blessings of the Emperor: 4 times per session, may take Complex Action to make Contested Courtier (Rhetoric) / Awareness vs Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower to prevent everyone who fails (enemy and ally) from taking any aggressive action for one minute or until they take damage or are given permission to fight

Skills: Athletics 3, Calligraphy 4, Courtier (Rhetoric) 5, Defense 4, Etiquette (Courtesy) 6, Horsemanship 4, Investigation 5, Lore: Heraldry 5, Sincerity 5, Tea Ceremony 4

Mastery Abilities: +6 Insight, +1k0 to Contested Courtier or Etiquette rolls, +5 to Sincerity Rolls

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Position (high-ranked shisha), Spy Network / Obligation (Hantei Okucheo), Small

Seppun Biransei

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 4	Void 5
Reflexes 5		Agility 5		
Honor 8.3		Status 4.0		Glory 5.0
Initiative: 10k5+5		Attack: 10k6 (katana, Simple)		

Armor TN: 30 (35 light armor) **Damage:** 8k2 (katana)

Reduction: 3 (light armor)

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

School/Rank: Seppun Guardsman

Techniques: *Never in Darkness:* +5k0 to resist Social Skill Roll to tempt away from duty; +1k1 to Investigation to detect ambush or surprise attack

The Clouds Part: may spend a Void Point to add +8 to total of attack and damage rolls until next Turn

Sun's Light Reveals: may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to roll Investigation (Notice) / Perception at TN 25 to see through all illusions or disguises, whether magical or mundane. If in presence of Emperor, his immediate family, or high-ranking Imperial officer, do not need to spend the Void

Speed of Heaven: make attacks as a Simple Action when using weapons with the Samurai keyword

Heaven Never Falls: any time within 20' of charge, may spend a Void Point to take damage instead of them; if still standing, may immediately take a Simple Action. May be used even if Blinded, Prone, Stunned, Dazed, Entangled, or at Down Wound Rank (but not Grappled or Out)

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 1, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu (Focus) 7,

Intimidation 5, Investigation (Notice) 4, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Kyujutsu 5, Polearms 5

Mastery Abilities: move across Difficult Terrain as though it were Moderate, no penalty from Moderate Terrain; may keep previous Full Defense Roll, add +3 to Armor TN while in Full Defense or Defense Stance; may Full Attack while mounted; Free Raise to Focus Roll while in a duel, gains +2k2 to Focus if win the Assessment roll; +1k0 unarmed damage; +1k0 damage with sword, may ready swords as a Free Action, 9s explode on damage with sword; ready bow as a Simple Action, increase range of bows by 50%; +5 bonus to initiative on first round when using a Polearm, damage against mounted or larger opponents with polearm increased by +1k0

Advantages/Disadvantages: Irreproachable, Large, Luck I, Paragon of Duty, Quick / Failure of Courtesy, Obtuse

Kuemon's Seppun Guards

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 3
Reflexes 3		Agility 3		
Honor 4.5		Status 2.0		Glory 300

Initiative: 5k3

Attack: 7k3 (katana, Complex)

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

Reduction: 3 (light armor)

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

School/Rank: Seppun Guardsman 2

Techniques: *Never in Darkness:* +2k0 to resist Social Skill Roll to tempt away from duty; +1k1 to

Investigation to detect ambush or surprise attack
The Clouds Part: may spend a Void Point to add +4 to total of attack and damage rolls until next Turn

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 3, Spears 2

Mastery Abilities: may keep a previous Full Defense Roll, +1k0 to sword damage, may ready a katana as a Free Action, may string a bow as a Simple Action

Appendix #2: Guests at Kuemon's Court

Hida Rohiteki: The spiritual advisor, hatamoto, and cousin of Crab Clan Champion Hida O-Ushi, Rohiteki is a fairly powerful shugenja, especially given her youth. She is personable and friendly, though somewhat lacking in social graces, and quite popular with most Crab bushi as she is a very militant shugenja who has proven herself in battle time and time again.

Honor: 2.7 **Status:** 6.0 **Glory:** 5.2 **School/Rank:** Kuni Shugenja 4

Kitsuki Yukehime: A beautiful young courtier with conservative dress and ink-stained hands, Yukehime is an artisan who specializes in *ukyo-e* (wood-block print) art. She has recently been assigned to Otosan Uchi as an aide to the Dragon Embassy, leaving her uncle to run her shop in Yamasura.

Honor: 6.3 **Status:** 3.0 **Glory:** 2.2 **School/Rank:** Kitsuki Investigator 2

Yoritomo Tsuboro: Tsuboro is a former ronin who followed Yoritomo during the Clan Wars and was granted fealty in the Mantis Clan when they became a Great Clan. He is very friendly and somewhat more traditional than many Mantis, making him a better choice for this sort of court than many of his more charismatic (and louder) colleagues.

Honor: 6.4 **Status:** 3.0 **Glory:** 3.1 **School/Rank:** Yoritomo Courtier 2

Asako Norikai: Asako Norikai is an older man, approaching retirement age and much of his remaining hair has faded to white at this point. He walks with a cane and wears thick robes to help keep out any possibly chill, giving him a hunched and voluminous appearance. Norikai has a habit of speaking down to people, especially those of lower status since he is used to lecturing young students but will swiftly remember his place if challenged or speaking to one of higher status. He has recently been promoted to serve as the court liaison for Shiba Tsukune, the Phoenix Clan Champion.

Honor: 6.8 **Status:** 5.0 **Glory:** 4.3 **School/Rank:** Asako Loremaster 5

Shosuro Ochiba: Ochiba is a quiet, pretty woman in her late twenties who has travelled across the Empire and has spent time in virtually every significant court. Despite some unpleasantness last winter when she was sent to the Mantis isles, she has performed her duties with distinction and grace, and has begun to have a reputation for keeping a pleasant face on the Scorpion Clan despite the occasional mis-step from her Clansmen.

Honor: 3.4 **Status:** 4.0 **Glory:** 2.4 **School/Rank:** Bayushi Courtier 4

Moto Maduhl: Born in the Burning Sands, Maduhl is one of the Khan's direct representatives in the Empire due in large part to his own personal fascination with Rokugani culture. Unfortunately, he has had little luck in developing the appropriate samurai refinement, but that does not stop him from trying to learn everything he can about the way that "things are done" in the Empire... often quite loudly.

Honor: 2.7 **Status:** 5.0 **Glory:** 4.6 **School/Rank:** Moto Bushi 4