

Knife in the Darkness

**A One-Round Low-Rank Adventure for
Heroes of Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido
Month of Bayushi, 1140 (Fall)**

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Even a villain can be a hero when they bring justice to one who thought themselves above retribution.

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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.

Adventure Summary and Background

The PCs are in the province of Beiden to observe the premiere of the latest in a series of Kabuki plays by a famous Lion playwright, hosted in the Scorpion lands to ease tensions between the Clans. While at the party, they learn of the local daimyo's eldest son's infamy and malevolent exploits in the City of Lies – he is a despicable young man, evil and selfish in every way, and is set to take the daimyo position after his father's eminent retirement; nothing good can come of this.

After the introductory court, the PCs then put their character sheets down and pick up NPC assassin characters – men and women whom the son, Yogo Taro, has wounded, scarred, or destroyed, or who are acting in the interests of those who he has tortured. These ninja and shinobi are on a mission to kill the evil son, but must first infiltrate the estate to do so. The estate is full of guards from the two delegations, but a window of opportunity is available while the guests are viewing the premiere. With all the attention on the guests, there will be less attention on the son...

As there are divisions among the ranks of the Scorpion clan, the question arises as to who organized the assassins. In fact, knowing the true nature of his son, the daimyo himself will make the arrangements (in an appropriately deniable fashion) so that his legacy for the Clan is not one of shame and selfish cruelty.

Introduction

The summer months have passed with their typical violence, though much of the Empire is still focused on putting down the widespread peasant unrest. The peasant rebels from the year before are being hunted by the Imperial Legions, and there is little doubt that the Imperial General will deal with them all eventually. Though bitter fighting continues between the Dragon and Phoenix, most of the other conflicts gripping the Empire appear to be on the decline, and the Scorpion have spent some time over the last year mending fences with many of their neighbors. Though there is still a great deal of antipathy between the Clan of Secrets and their most recent nemeses in the Mantis, the Scorpion have put specifically forth some effort to reduce tensions between themselves and the Lion Clan.

Toward that end, Yogo Tobusa, daimyo of the Beiden Province which borders on the Lion Clan has decided to host a light, easy court event before the Empire begins to gather for Winter Court.

Part One: Courtly Introductions

The court of the Yogo is warm and bright, awash in rich reds, deep blacks, and stunning gold. Lanterns push back the shadows and hearth fires keep the early spring chill at bay. Hot soup and sake strengthen the body as the soothing melodies of biwa and flute fill the soul. The court itself is not particularly large, but it is happy. Scorpion parties such as these are opportune times to let slip one's On, if even just for a little while.

The garden behind the main hall is well-lit and beautiful; many guests brave the crisp air to view the artistry the lord's Shosuro gardeners have wrought in defiance of winter's advance.

Tobusa's "city estate" in Beiden is fairly opulent, presumably to best entertain high-ranking guests travelling through Beiden Pass. The daimyo's main home is in Kagoki, the province's capitol. Keep track of the PCs' actions here, if anything is notable, for later use in the module. The PCs are introduced to the NPCs by the hatamoto of the house, Yogo Kinnosuke:

- **Yogo Kinnosuke:** Hatamoto to Yogo Tobusa, he is a dedicated and polite servitor of his lord. Kinnosuke wears a white mask painted with red cherry blossoms which covers the bottom half of his face. Like many of Tobusa's vassals, he walks with a cane to help mask his lord's need for one – his is a stick of simple birch.
- **Yogo Tobusa:** Daimyo of the Beiden province. An elderly man who walks with a lacquered black cane, he has a quick, amicable smile and a strong passion for the game of Go. Tobusa-sama wears a black iron mempo etched with rough carvings of roses, and has a small, barely visible scar on his forehead – a reminder of his life as a bushi in the Clan's service during his youth.
- **Yogo Taro:** The only son and heir-presumptive of Yogo Tobusa, he is a handsome young man with a reputation for cunning and ruthlessness. Taro wears a mask of fine golden gossamer.
- **Ikoma Seiho:** Daimyo of the Gunsho Province. Seiho is a somewhat portly samurai in his middle years who manages a friendlier demeanor than many of his Clan. As Hoshiyo's daimyo, he is present to observe his vassal's success.

- **Ikoma Hoshiyo:** Hoshiyo is an accomplished playwright, best known for the “The Many Tales of Akutoneko” series of kabuki plays involving the misadventures of Akutoneko (Rascal Cat), a bakeneko (cat spirit), which are greatly popular with heimin and samurai children. Hoshiyo is a stunning beauty and has vivid emerald green eyes.
- **Matsu Akane:** Daimyo of the Lion Yama province, Akane is a cold, calculating warrior who reserves her Matsu rage for the battlefield. In the refined court setting, she is reserved and distant, allowing the Scorpion to make their overtures without committing herself to anything.
- **Matsu Hataki:** One of Akane’s aides, Hataki is an earnest young man recently appointed to a magistrate position for the Lion Clan. He is naturally suspicious of the Scorpion, but is doing his duty and presenting a courteous face for his daimyo.
- **Doji Juichi:** A noted expert on Rokugani theater, PCs may have met him at Kyuden Hida for Winter Court two years ago. Classically handsome and reputed to be indifferent to feminine blandishments, he has recently distanced himself from the disgraced Doji Meihu, and is present solely to observe the play. (While the Crane are concerned about the relationship between two of their traditional enemies, Juichi has no desire to cause problems while surrounded by said enemies...)
- **Bayushi Shamate:** A graceful Scorpion courtier, Shamate has something of a reputation among her Clan as a talented actress. She wears a full mask reminiscent of a Kabuki face, and she is one of the Scorpion who is most welcoming of the Lion.

Rumors

Those wishing to know about recent events in the Empire, and what people are saying about them, may roll **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll, at a TN of 10; a successful roll learns one of the following rumors at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN. The rumors include:

- Yogo Tobusa is well past the age of retirement, and is expect to announce his successor soon; many assume it will be his eldest son, Yogo Taro. Both men are wearing Amaterasu kimono, openly displaying their allegiance to the Regent, Hantei Okucheo.
- Last year, the local magistrate was found guilty of attempting to poison the daimyo’s son in a duel. The province has had some difficulty replacing the villain, but the current magistrate, Bayushi Manzo (called “the Hawk”) has demonstrated himself a skilled and dedicated agent of the law. He has gained a reputation on both sides of the Pass by cracking down on the inevitable smuggling that takes place across the border between two Clans, and even the Lion are quite respectful of his abilities.
- Dark rumors circle regarding Yogo Taro: he is known to abuse his status greatly, living a life of decadence and indolence in Ryoko Owari. There are numerous tales of his violent and capricious nature, though most are quite cautious when speaking of them. Curious courtiers may learn more, if they are careful in their queries...
- The current welcoming attitude among the Scorpion toward their Lion neighbors has been essentially ordered by Champion Bayushi Yojiro, over the objections of some of the daimyo holding provinces along the border. Shosuro Yudoka has expressed some displeasure with placation as a strategy, though with the lands of the Shosuro family sharing essentially no border with the Lion, there are those who point out that he has nothing to lose by antagonizing them.
- There are two competing Imperial Winter Courts scheduled for this year. Both the Emerald Champion and Imperial Regent have announced official courts (to be held in Kyuden Tonbo and Otosan Uchi, respectively). A great deal of speculation on which the highest-ranking samurai of the Empire will attend has spread through the intervening courts, though none of the Clan Champions have given any indication as to their plans for the season.
- Fighting against the Mantis has died down, though the Clans remain on opposite sides of many issues in the Imperial Court and tensions between them remain high. Yoritomo Gusai, the Defender of Golden Sun Bay, has performed searches and outright seizures of a disproportionate number of vessels carrying Scorpion passengers or goods. The Scorpion have called upon the Regent to put an end to this obvious partisan abuse of power, but Okucheo has yet to issue a ruling in the matter.

PCs who wish to look further into the dark rumors about the daimyo’s son may make another **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll, this time at a TN of 20, to learn one of the following tales, plus an additional one for every 5 points they exceed the TN by. Scorpion PCs receive a Free Raise on this roll (at the GM’s discretion, Scorpion characters may receive some of this as part of the standard Gossip check).

- Yogo Taro once murdered the family of a geisha who refused to submit to his sadistic whims. Though he paid the customary fines, he is now banned from many of the more reputable houses in Ryoko Owari. Her fate is unknown.

- Taro is thought to have mutilated an entire family of eta just to see what cutting into a living person felt like.
- Whispers surround a duel in which Taro faced Bayushi Matsuan, a magistrate who charged him with corruption. Matsuan, known for his impeccable honor, apparently poisoned his own blade; a move which almost killed Taro after only a superficial wound was delivered. Once the poison was discovered, Matsuan was hanged for his crime and his family's assets seized. Taro made a surprisingly speedy recovery.
- Many of the other families of the Scorpion do not look favorably upon Taro and believe him to be a great liability. However, the decision of heir is Tobusa's alone, and all must respect it.
- Taro has been banned from many of the finer geisha houses in Ryoko Owari due to an obsession involving a blonde, green-eyed geisha named Imeko who worked at the House of Celestial Beauties. He courted her for a full year and she still refused his patronage. There was a bloody incident involving her family but while rumor pins it on him, none know what actually happened and there is no actual testimony to convict him.
- A quiet rumor has it that Yogo Taro has incurred an incredible amount of debt while in Otsan Uchi after losing heavily to a Mantis sea captain, and that this is why he skipped the Autumn Moon court at Otomo Yoshinaka's estate. More specifically, he was forced to flee the Capitol and there is a price on his head.

Court Events

As the guests are mingling and meeting one another before dinner, there will an hour or so for them to get to know one another and to display their own talents or artistry. There will only be time for each PC to complete one event, but every PC should be given the opportunity to do so.

All PCs should be encouraged to do *something* here, as to do nothing means a loss of XP at the end of the module.

There are a variety of options, and the GM is encouraged to be flexible with the players; as long as they are making an attempt to be pleasant and polite, the exact mechanics are less important. However, they have been sent here explicitly to mingle with the court, and remaining apart from the gathering is definitely not what was intended.

Play go with Yogo Tobusa: Contested **Games: Go / Intelligence** roll (Tobusa rolls 9k5); PCs who roll higher than 20 will be commended for their good effort.

Defeating the daimyo gains the PC 2 points of Glory, and winning amicably gains him as a 1 Devotion, 3 Influence Ally, as he wishes to continue playing against the PC via correspondence.

Discuss literature with Ikoma Seiho: **Lore: Literature / Awareness**, TN 20. The daimyo is particularly interested in stories of heroes, even those from the other Clans, and will look with greater favor on those who can provide a quote from a famous hero (calling two Raises on the above roll). This will give them Seiho as an Ally with Devotion 1 and Influence 3.

Discuss military history with Matsu Akane and Yogo Kinnosuke: the two powerful samurai are politely debating the differences in records of the many battles between their Clans over Beiden Pass through the history of the Empire. PCs may roll either **Battle** or **Lore: History** (paired with either Intelligence or Awareness) at a TN of 20 to add something cogent to their discussion. Doing so with two Raises earns them grudging approval from both samurai, and a Favor from both the Scorpion and Lion Clans.

Discussing politics with anyone: **Etiquette (Conversation) / Awareness** TN 20. All answers regarding the Regent and the Emerald Champion are artfully dodged with polite nothings, except by Taro who openly praises Hantei Okucheo's leadership.

Discuss the law with Matsu Hataki: **Lore: Law / Intelligence** TN 15. Hataki is earnest and well-meaning, and very interested in any PC who has experience with the law or working with magistrates. Those speaking with him may roll **Investigation / Awareness** at a TN of 20 to notice that his attention is somewhat abstracted however – his gaze is continually drawn to study Bayushi Shamate. When neither are speaking with anyone else, the same roll will allow the PC to catch glimpses of the two speaking quietly together, with Hataki seeming fascinated against his own better judgment.

Perform in a slapstick draw-lot play with Ikoma Hoshiyo: **Perform: Acting / Agility** TN 15. The impromptu play is titled *Hida Goes A-Courtin'*, by the famed playwright Yasuki Hobaru. Calling two Raises gains the PC a Favor from the Lion Clan for their skillful interpretation of the clumsy but well-meaning characters.

Perform the music that accompanies a more traditional play with Doji Juichi: **Perform: (any musical) / Awareness** TN 15. Success with two Raises earns the PC a Favor from the Crane Clan for demonstrating a more refined example of the theatrical arts.

Performances of whatever kind the PCs wish should be encouraged, including martial demonstrations, with a general TN of 15. Calling a Raise on any roll gives the PC a point of Glory.

Characters who are making an effort to keep an eye on the general activity of the court may make **Investigation / Awareness** rolls. Those succeeding at a TN of 15 will notice Yogo Taro watching Hoshiyo a little too closely. (A **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll TN 20 can be made to know why: Taro has “a thing” for women with green eyes.) Those who succeed at a TN of 25 will notice Matsu Hataki and Bayushi Shamate flirting in a very circumspect manner.

Yogo Taro is a dashing handsome young man with an eye for equally beautiful ladies. Though it should be discouraged *given his sadistic reputation*, those wishing to seduce him roll **Temptation (Seduction) / Awareness** TN 20. Taro has numerous Social Disadvantages that can be taken advantage of during this roll. He will actively pursue any female character with green eyes.

Dinner in the Estate of Yogo Tobusa is a fantastic affair, and it is clear that the Scorpion have spared no expense. Artfully prepared fresh sushi, from simple tuna to delicate fugu, graces the tables beneath a wide spread of regional delicacies from the two guest clans. The artisan chefs of the Scorpion have once again outdone themselves.

The music quiets for a moment as Yogo Tobusa stands, lifting his sake cup and looking at each of the guests. After a long pause, he smiles widely, “To the glory and culture of Rokugan! May it last a thousand years more!”

“KAMPEI!” responds the crowd as the music returns with a joyous crescendo.

After dinner, the whole retinue ventures out to watch Ikoma Hoshiyo’s newest play, “Akutoneko and the Name Eater”, which debuts at the Golden Fox theatre. The road into town is lined with bright lanterns and joyous streamers, led by the playwright, the daimyo, the court musicians, and an enormous honor guard to escort the procession.

Part Two: A Dastardly Plot!

At this point, the players turn their character sheets face down. The NPC character sheets (from the appendix) are given to the players; the GM should make some effort to distribute characters the players wish to play, and allow them to trade if they wish. The intention is to pull them out of their comfort zone as players, but they should still have fun. (This module is written specifically for six players, but if there are only five, leave out Nazo and either Moyotoshi or Yoriko. If there are seven, use all of the characters, and increase the number of guards as necessary.) These characters are the sort that are not generally allowed in the campaign, and should by no means be taken as inspirations for player characters; however, this module does present an opportunity to play a kind of character that is otherwise generally very difficult to work into a living campaign.

The Assassins’ Introduction

The inside of the Lonely Blossom sake house is dim and smoky, with a lingering haze of old grease. The proprietor, Ho, polishes the wooden bar in small, lazy circles, working around the drunks with practiced, calloused hands, going through his morning routine. Nearby, a blind, deaf monk plucks slow notes from an ill-tuned samisen.

At a private booth, the hard-bitten old ronin who brought you here pours another cup of sake before leaning back into a comfortable shadow. “Thank you all for coming to see me. As my letter said, I need a well dug for someone, and there is a fortuitous window of opportunity available. Tonight, Yogo Taro will die.

“This is our common goal, one to which each of you has committed fully, and I have gathered you together to see this thing to its end. For the sake of unity, please feel free to make each other’s acquaintances.” The ronin bows lightly. “I am Nomen. Taro, that villain, disgraced my granddaughters, and for his crimes I will see him punished.”

The PCs will now have a moment to introduce their new characters and to ask questions of Nomen:

- We do not work for free, Nomen-san. What of payment? *“Given the target, I do believe each of you would do this thing for free, but I would not presume to impose upon your good will. There will be 20 koku for each of you now, 20 upon completion, and another 20 if it can be done quietly.”*
- What do you mean by “a window of opportunity”? *“There is an event tomorrow, a party for a*

playwright's new creation. During the evening the guests and the target will leave the estate to watch the performance, and with them will go the majority of the guardsmen. This creates an opportunity for you to get into the estate and be in place when he returns."

- Can you elaborate on "keeping it quiet?" *"There should be a minimum of collateral damage, and if possible do not disturb the guests; the Scorpion Clan will be enough to deal with without getting the Emerald Magistrates involved. If it is quiet, they can brush it under the rug, but if it becomes a matter of Face... nowhere will be safe."*
- Aren't you coming? *"I am sorry to say that I cannot join you, as much as I would wish to strike him down myself."* Nomen says, lifting a worn bamboo cane from under the table. *"I would only slow you down."*
- What of the estate? *"It has low walls and the standard defenses, but by no means is it a castle. My source says Taro's residence is in the northeast corner of the estate, overlooking the gardens. I cannot say what the rest of the estate looks like, but those of your skill should find an opening."*
- What if the defenses are too great? *"You will find a way. This isn't a Lion castle, friends; it is a minor estate of a minor family and in no way a defensible holding. That someone would sneak into a Scorpion estate is all but unthinkable, and I am confident of your success; otherwise I would not have asked you here."*

Should a PC become curious regarding Nomen and his intentions, they may make an **Investigation / Perception** roll. He is not lying, that the PC can tell. A result of 25 will allow the PC to see that Nomen very likely wears a mask; a roll of 35 will show them a very faint scar on his forehead. Should a PC wish to haggle, Nomen will concede another 10 koku per person upon completion if it can be made to look like an accident or suicide.

The door of the Lonely Blossom slides open as the blind monk plucks one final discordant note; a man in the bright crimson armor of the Scorpion stands backlit by the early afternoon sun. The proprietor steps out from behind the bar to take the man's swords, but the stranger stares him down. He bows quickly, and with a shaky hand points roughly toward your table.

As the stranger in red armor approaches, you are able to get a better look at him; he is a thick-necked man with wide forearms, wearing a full-faced oni mask with an impossibly wide smile, filled with too many teeth and crooked tusks. Upon closer inspection, it is

obvious that many of these are human – one is even gold. As he closes the distance, the mon on his shoulder becomes clear: Rokugo – the enforcers of the Bayushi.

Nomen quietly draws his hands beneath the table.

The stranger passes, paying no mind to you, moving to the door just down the hall, behind where you are sitting. As it slides open, a teacup is dropped, followed by a stammering "Uh-uh-uh Enkei-sama! Such ah-an unexpected honor it is." The door slides shut as he steps in, muting the conversation. Furniture crashes, dishes break, and dull impacts on flesh and the sharp crack of teeth punctuate the silence. Muted sobs seep through the wall behind you.

The door slides open and Rokugo Enkei steps out, clutching a pitted metal bar, its surface bloody and gleaming, as he tucks a frog-embroidered purse into his belt. As he leaves, a single gold coin is flipped to the bartender.

"Sorry 'bout the mess."

Nomen's hands return to the top of the table as he stands to leave. "I believe we have tarried too long. Carry the Fortunes, friends." There is a purse on his seat cushion, in it the down-payment, as he limps quickly out the door leaning heavily on his bamboo cane.

The players may wish to investigate or intervene, but they should be reminded that at the moment they are playing ronin assassins, and that not only are such things none of their business, it would bring unwanted attention to them and their mission.

PCs who wish to tail Nomen must make a contested **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** against his **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** (10k5-10 with the Emphasis) to follow him successfully, and a **Stealth (Shadowing) / Agility** roll against his **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** (9k4, again, with the Emphasis) to not be spotted. Failure means Nomen stops, stares at the PC and shakes his head. *"Don't you have better things to do, samurai-san?"* Success will allow them to watch Nomen duck into an alley and emerge wearing a bright scarlet Bayushi kimono and matching full-faced silk mask, before heading to an upscale geisha house named *Benten's Whispers* (one which without invitation the PC cannot access).

Asking around at the noodle shop across the street with a **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll (TN 15) will inform the PC that some of the visiting guests were

there last night, including the provincial daimyo (“*Good tippers, the lot of ‘em; many blessings upon their families!*”). Rolling a 25 or higher will inform them that the parties are still there, and indeed should they stay and wait, Yogo Tobusa and the Lion delegation will leave after an hour or so under heavy guard (Tobusa and a number of his retainers have canes). While many other samurai will come and go from the geisha house, Nomen is not one of them. Should the PCs find a way to ask, no employee of *Benten’s Whispers* will divulge information about their client list. Too much pursuit along these lines will get the PC nothing but a visit from the local magistrate, Bayushi “The Hawk” Manzo, who will sternly warn them to not cause trouble in his town or they will be asked to leave.

Part Three: The Hunt

The rest of the module is an open-ended “sandbox” style of adventure, as opposed to the usual scripted, linear adventure. There are any number of ways the PCs can approach the task of killing Taro, not all of which will be presented here, but this module covers most normal encounters and gives the GM enough guidelines and examples to work with; anything else the PCs wish to do should be given a generic TN of 15-20 at the GM’s discretion, but *please be aware of time constraints if the players become too distracted*.

The Weather

The weather is chilly and dry as the first breath of winter has begun to blow. The sun goes down early and breathing creates fog at night, and prayers for no early snow appear likely to go unanswered for much longer.

There are no clouds, nor is there a moon. The day’s sky is a pure winter blue; the sunset a wash of pastels. The night sky is full of stars and the *Ginga*, the Silver River of Heaven (the Milky Way), is clearly visible. Hearth fire smoke curls from all the residences.

There are enough stars out at night to create “*Low-Light*” conditions, which give -2k0 penalties to all sight-based perception and ranged attack rolls.

The Town of Beiden

The city of Beiden in the Beiden province is located just south of Beiden Pass, and has seen more war than possibly any other single site in Rokugan north of the Carpenter Wall. Every conflict between the Lion and Scorpion Clan has made Beiden suffer; fighting during the Clan War, the Return of the Ki-Rin, and countless

other skirmishes over the centuries have taken place here.

The city itself is not large, but it is by no means small; it sits on a major cross-road of the Empire and sees more than its fair share of trade. As a trade hub, the city is known for its merchant and entertainment districts (with famous tea, sake, gambling, and geisha houses a-plenty), breweries, pottery (especially cups, given the Scorpion tradition of “bring your own cup”), and so on. Go is also a popular pastime here, largely because of the daimyo, Yogo Tobusa, and at least one game can be found in progress at any tea or sake house in the city.

There is a modest temple district, including a temple to Tengen, the Fortune of Literature, along with a large temple to Jurojin, the Fortune of Longevity.

The daimyo’s estate is a on the eastern side of the city, in the nobles district, and the main roads are currently being decorated with paper lanterns and banners to celebrate their lord’s guests.

Gathering Information:

Collecting gossip in Beiden requires a **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll, which will reveal the following (one piece of information for every 5 rolled):

- The daimyo, Yogo Tobusa-sama is hosting a party for high-ranking members of the Lion Clan. The clan is sparing no expense, and there are decorations everywhere.
- There will be a play, free to the public, as the party’s main entertainment: *Akutoneko and the Name Eater*, which will be put on by the author, Ikoma Hoshiyo, at the Golden Fox outdoor theatre. She has written a series of plays surrounding Rascal Cat and is *very* popular among the populace for it.
- Though it has the normal defenses one would find in any city of this size, the majority of the Scorpion’s defense against the Lion are considered “hidden”: shutters on *all* the houses have arrow slits, for example. According to some, the larger buildings in town are collapsible and that there is a wide tunnel network beneath the city, but these are just whispered rumors of drunkards.
- The Lion delegation is staying at the famed *Silver Cloud Inn*, known for its fine selection of teas. The other Clans delegations are staying at the popular *Lucky Rat*, an inn and bar noted for its expansive local sake offerings.
- Yogo Taro is not known to treat the peasantry of Beiden kindly. Families are careful to hide their daughters and wives when he comes around. Many

consider him and his friends to be spoiled tyrants, but none will say that openly for fear of retribution.

- Yogo Taro often spends time with two of his friends; Bayushi Mago and Isawa Akira. All are bastardly young men, but Taro is the worst (the others follow in his high-status shadow). Wherever he is, they're usually not far behind.
- Rumor has it that a Mantis sea captain, Yoritomo Hyun, put a substantial bounty on Taro's head. According to one of the caravan guards in from Otsan Uchi, Taro tried to gamble for the captain's boat and lost, but skipped out of town in the middle of the night to avoid payment.

Gathering information about Mago and Akira requires simply asking any bartender in town about the two miscreants (and generously tipping): Bayushi Mago is a huge, greasy man with a thin mustache and a weak chin, who does Taro's dirty work when it comes to handling the lower classes, favoring a cane for abusing peasants due to his general ineptitude with a blade. Isawa Akira is a fire shugenja of the Phoenix whose aggressive demeanor overcompensates for his diminutive height and lack of respectable status back home. Both are despised by the populace of Beiden and are universally mocked (behind their backs) with the nicknames *The Scrub* and *The Squab*, respectively.

A **Lore: Underworld / Awareness** roll will get the PC the following illicit gossip (one piece of information for every 5 points rolled, with a Free Raise per koku spent):

- The magistrates and city guard are out in force for the festivities. Keep your nose clean, friend!
- The local magistrate is a sharp-eyed, stocky, salt-and-pepper-haired man named Bayushi "The Hawk" Manzo. He has a single-minded zeal for law and order, and no one escapes the grasp of his man-catcher. Manzo replaced Bayushi Matsuan last year, another no-nonsense magistrate who was killed for cheating in a duel against Yogo Taro (the local merchants all mourn his loss, but the Hawk is a solid replacement and honors Matsuan's true legacy).
- There is only one main Yakuza gang in the city, the *Sons of Koga* Otokodate, who maintain order when Manzo the Hawk should not be bothered. The ronin group is considered local heroes by the heimin, mainly due to their policy that to join, new members must in some way defend a peasant from an unruly samurai.
- The *Sons'* oyabun (boss) is Junzo, a gregarious middle-aged returned spirit with a gold tooth, who owns the very popular *Lucky Rat* bar and inn.
- Illicit materials, like lock-picking tools and thieves' lanterns, can be obtained at the less than reputable

Three Knocks store from the indomitable patron, Kakine. Opium can be obtained from Kuto, a shady merchant who operates out of the *Lonely Blossom* bar.

- When in town, Yogo Taro and his friends normally spend their time at a very disreputable brothel and opium den called *Yagyu's* on the far edge of the warehouse district, however it has been recently closed by Manzo the Hawk.
- Yogo Taro does indeed have a large bounty on his head, placed there by the Mantis clan: 300 koku. He's heavily guarded, though, as well as a noted duelist. He hasn't been seen lately, so it is likely that he is under house arrest, here or in Kayoki, the province's capitol.
- A quiet rumor has it that the *Three Knocks* operates under Shosuro patronage.

Shopping

Any normal supplies can be obtained in the market district for the prices listed in the core rulebook, from ladders to lanterns to kimono (5 koku for the latest styles from Ryoko Owari and to get them in time for the party, should the PCs find a way to attend).

The Three Knocks

Kakine is a thoroughly no-nonsense older peasant businesswoman, operating the *Three Knocks* supply store on the peasant side of the merchant district, supplying the farmers and "hunters" in the area. Simple peasant tools and weapons (like knives, kama, staves, masakari, etc) and inexpensive hankyu and willow leaf arrows are openly available, while more stealth-specific equipment (kusarigama, kyoketsu-shogi, ninja weapons, lock-picks, etc) can be obtained if the PC passes a simple **Honor Test**, rolling under 20. (A **Lore: Scorpion / Intelligence** roll, TN 20, will show the PC that this is a Shosuro-maintained store.)

Also available is a "night hunter's lantern": a regular lantern fitted with dark red paper, which emits just enough light for the user but is not visible from more than 20' away in the dark. These are available for one koku each.

Should Moyotoshi or Yoshiko wish reveal themselves fully to Kakine as agents of the Shosuro, they may do so by making a **Ninjutsu / Awareness** roll at TN 15 to give her a proper signal. Her demeanor will not change, but she will give Moyotoshi a vial of "Scarlet Nightshade" powder (white, odorless, tastes sweet): ingesting or inhaling the poison creates dangerously high fever similar to Dripping Poison (found on page 332 of the base book), though it only reduces the

victim's Stamina by 1 for every failed roll. There are 2 doses. Yoshiko will receive a detailed map of the city, including the daimyo's residence, though the guard positions are not marked on it.

The Lion and the Silver Cloud

The *Silver Cloud* is a quiet, modest inn and tea house just down the road from Tobusa's estate (toward the temple district), run by a bald peasant name Fusho. There are many varieties of tea available, but with the imminent play, the Lion contingent is generally too busy to entertain ronin guests.

Opium and the Lonely Blossom

Though it is illegal, the best opium (for addicts and not for medicinal use) can be found by speaking to Kuto in the back room of the *Lonely Blossom*. Kuto is a normally unassuming merchant, but today his face is a pile of bruises and missing teeth, though he is trying very hard to maintain his *On* about the matter involving Rokugo Enkei from earlier (a **Courtier / Awareness** TN 5 roll will remind the PC to ignore it). He has premium "Dragon's Tail" opium, which can be had for 2 bu, sold in a midnight-blue pouch.

Though Kuto will not wish to speak of it, asking Ho, the bartender, about the incident (and tipping generously) will get the full story from this morning:

"I am sincerely sorry that you had to witness that, sama. After Yagyu's closed, Kuto became the main source for such 'medicine' in town, but I suppose the additional taxes for such things slipped his mind, what with that offer from the Kaeru and all. Can you believe that; a ronin family? We live in strange times, sama, if you don't mind me saying."

Ho knows nothing of the Kaeru, aside that they were a ronin family and are now a Minor Clan, and Kuto will politely decline any questions regarding it.

Both Ho and Kuto can inform the PC that Taro's cronies come here every few days for their opium, in the late afternoon; carrying it back to the governor's estate for their boss. Though their bu are as good as any, neither men have any love for Mago nor Akira, but they will not risk themselves to do anything about it—such is the life of the under-classes. Any suggestions regarding poisoning Taro's opium will mean they alert the authorities—no amount of koku will sway either of them from this.

The Temple District

The temple to Tengen, the Fortune of Literature, is essentially a large library in which scrolls and books

can be checked out. A **Lore: History / Intelligence** roll TN 25 or **Lore: Scorpion / Intelligence** TN 20 will inform the PC that the fortune Tengen was once Bayushi Tengen, the author of the famed courtier handbook, *Lies*.

Spending time in the Temple to Jurojin will allow the PC to overhear that the jolly head abbot, Shen, and a handful of the other senior monks discussing the event and their invitation.

Monk PCs, or those dressed as monks, who spend some time with Shen may make a **Sincerity (Honesty or Deceit) / Awareness** roll TN 25 to be invited to the party as part of his entourage, however should Shen-san's suspicion be aroused (i.e. a PC with less than two ranks of Lore: Theology disguised as a monk), this will require a contested **Perform: Acting / Awareness** roll vs his **Lore: Theology / Perception** (8k3) or he will quietly alert the authorities.

Should a PC wish to steal Shen's invitation, it is in his office at the Temple of Daikoku, in a drawer in the desk. Sneaking in while the monks are performing their normal duties requires a **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** roll TN 25 (with a Free Raise if the PC is dressed as a monk). If necessary, an **Intelligence** roll of TN 10 will remind the PCs that Shen and his monks are very popular in town and it will draw suspicion if they cannot attend (either via a missing invitation or otherwise). Once taken, the invitation will need to be returned before the party or the authorities will be alerted. It is addressed to Shen, so it cannot be used directly to get through the front gate.

The Yakuza Gang and the Lucky Rat

Speaking to the *Sons of Koga* involves finding their leader, Junzo, at the Lucky Rat. He is a cheerful fellow, busily entertaining his esteemed guests from the Crab (and their guards), but will take time to speak to the PCs if they're paying customers. During the evening before the premiere, the *Rat* will be a hopping, lively joint, full of drinking, singing, and partying; beating the ronin in a drinking contest of their **Earth** vs his (4k4) will get the PCs in the man's good graces.

If asked about Manzo the Hawk, many a *Son* has spent the night in the Hawk's jail, but they have a very respectful, if officially antagonistic, relationship with him and his yoriki.

Junzo and the *Sons* have no love for Taro and his punk friends; the louts take too many liberties with the peasants, but they are too protected by Taro's status to risk confrontation. Should the PCs inform Junzo about

the mission and the noble reasons behind it, which requires a **Sincerity (Honesty or Deceit) / Awareness** roll TN 25, he will offer to have his crew help take care of Bayushi Mago and Isawa Akira if an opportunity can be found to catch them out of the estate (e.g. when they are on an opium run). If Kichiemon displays his sailor tattoos to the gang, he will get a Free Raise on the roll. Failure means he will not alert the authorities (Junzo's no snitch), but that he will not help them nor discuss this further.

Calling two Raises on the Sincerity roll will get Junzo to admit his personal history – in his previous life, he lived in a village named Koga (long since destroyed) and was responsible for killing a number of men who took advantage of the peasantry; the results of which are the basis for modern ninja legends (he finds this morbidly amusing, but will flatly deny any connection to the taint or the shadow). He feels that he has paid for his crimes against the celestial order in Toshigoku, however, and is happily rebuilding an “honest” life.

Under no circumstance will Junzo put the Otokodate in danger nor will they help the PCs infiltrate the estate.

Forging Invitations

Copying Shen's invitation requires a **Lore: Underworld / Perception** roll TN 25 to find (plus 2 koku to obtain) the proper materials, and a **Forgery (Documents) / Intelligence** roll to commit the deed. Record the total on the Forgery roll, as it is contested against the future guards' Investigation / Perception (6k3).

Watching the Estate's Entrances

The PCs may decide to watch the estate to see who is coming and going, or to look for servants or Mago or Akira, etc.

The large main gate is heavily guarded and busy. This entrance is mostly used by samurai and visiting dignitaries. The main gate can be watched safely from *The Morning Sparrow*, a busy noodle shop. One of the peasants at the noodle stand is excitedly talking about the fireworks display after the play, but to be quiet about it: it's supposed to be a surprise.

A **Battle / Intelligence** roll TN 15 will let the PCs see that two sets of guards that patrol outside the wall, which pass in five-minute intervals (who travel in groups of two).

There is one servant entrance on the north side; a small door in the side of the outer wall for kitchen staff

access, used for accepting deliveries, taking out garbage, and other needs. This door sits in a 20' wide alley (opposite of which are the outer walls of nobles' houses, and to the rear opens into a field); there are always a few vagrants waiting, begging for scraps after meals.

Blending in as a beggar (monk or peasant) in the alley requires a proper costume and an **Acting / Awareness** roll TN 20: failing the roll (staying dressed as ronin samurai is an auto-fail) will mean they will be ejected via the armed guards that patrol the estate. Talking to the vagrants will inform the PC that Tobusa-sama is a generous lord, and the kitchen staff always invites the poor in to enjoy the leftovers after dinner (out of sight of the samurai, of course). They are all looking forward to this after the party (it's rumored to be extra fancy), but that they must come into the alley from the rear so as to not disturb the guests.

Sometime in the afternoon (but well before dinner), Mago and Akira will leave via the side door, heading out to get opium, booze, and whores for tonight, while treating anyone in their way (except the guards) rather poorly.

Mago and Akira

Trailing Mago and Akira from the estate's side door requires a **Stealth (Shadowing) / Agility** roll vs their **Investigation / Perception** (5k2).

Neither are exceptionally bright, but they know that Yogo Taro is their meal ticket and thus will not knowingly put him in danger. Pulling one over on the two mooks isn't hard with a convincing lie, requiring a **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** vs their **Investigation / Perception** (5k2), with two Free Raises for Irime because of her beauty. There are opportunities for the PCs to convince them they're working for Kuto, that Irime is a “freelance” ronin courtesan they can invite home (with up to one ronin bodyguard), or whatever the PCs might think of. “Beating up” some *Sons of Koga* thugs will give the PCs a Free Raise on a future Sincerity roll against Taro, too. It should be noted that Haraise and Irime will be recognized by Taro, though Mago and Akira do not know them.

They have 5 koku on them to buy a few bags of opium, a few bottles of shochu, and some whores for the night of the party, to share after Taro returns. Accordingly, they will stop at the *Lonely Blossom* (for the opium and booze), and a nameless flophouse (picking up three rather plain prostitutes) before returning to the estate's servant entrance.

Confrontation with Bayushi Mago and Isawa Akira isn't hard: they are crass, rude, insulting and belligerent (and hung over) if the PCs do not look like legitimate threats, but if combat is initiated and starts to go south they will run to Manzo the Hawk's magistrate's office to alert the authorities.

The Forest

The immediate forest surrounding the estate is a large cultivated grove of towering *kaya* (deciduous conifers) trees. Small shrines dot the landscape, and at night, soft wind makes the bare branches whisper quietly. Between the estate's rear eastern wall and the grove is about 40' of bare ground and a road, on which the guards patrol. A thin stream meanders through the grove, past a very low, wide, gap under the wall, and into the estate (it is too low for a man to crawl under and cannot be used as an access point).

Climbing a tree to peer into the estate requires an **Athletics (Climbing) / Agility** (with a Free Raise for climbing gear), TN 25 (roll to go up or down). Failure means falling for 3k3 damage. Success will give the PC the general layout of the estate and spot the guard on the rear balcony, noting that the easiest point of access *over* the wall is at the southeast corner due to the rise in the interior landscaping (a guard will occasionally stand on the hill and look over the wall, backlit by a lantern at night). From here, one can see that the closest interior building is still about 10' away from the exterior wall, on the southern side.

Beyond the groves, the terrain rises into a standard forest in the foothills of the mountains. During the day the PCs will spot a peasant hunter (named Shu) out placing game traps. The PCs may hide using **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** vs Shu's **Investigation / Perception** (4k2) to avoid him, but if this fails, and the PCs cannot convince him that they're out in a forest for a good reason (ronin don't usually hunt game, nor do hunters travel in large groups) with a **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** roll (with Free Raises for a believable excuse, peasant disguise, etc) vs his **Investigation / Perception** (4k2), Shu will alert the authorities when he goes home (because he's not stupid). If confronted, Shu will run away.

Shu, Peasant Hunter

Shu is a dirty peasant hunter carrying a yumi, a sack of game, and wrapped warmly for the winter weather.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2	Void 2
Reflexes 3				
Honor 5	Status 0	Glory 0		
Initiative: 3k3	Attack: 5k3 (yumi), 4k2 (tanto)			

Armor TN: 20

Damage: 4k2 (arrow), 3k1 (tanto)

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

Skills: Athletics 2, Investigation 2, Kyujutsu 2, Hunting (Survival) 3, Traps 3, Knives 2

PCs that travel through the forest at night must make a **Hunting / Perception** roll TN 25. Failure means the PC is lost in a cold winter forest, which requires another Hunting roll per hour to get back on track. Getting lost also adds more guards per hour to the estate's patrols, at GM discretion, as dinner concludes and the NPCs return from the play. Scouting the forest during the day gives two free raises, as does Way of the Land (Beiden province). The "*Low Light*" condition creates a -2k0 penalty, unless the PC has a lantern.

Accessing the Estate

The estate itself is a picturesque example of Scorpion architecture, with red timber beams, white stucco walls, black tile roofs, and golden accents, covering about a dozen acres on the far eastern edge of town, deep in the noble district. As the highest-elevation point in the town, it is easily visible from most roads, framed nicely by the highlands and mountains behind. The main house itself is a sprawling two-story mansion, and there are a number of outlier buildings in the complex- a guest house, a gate house, a tea house, a stable, storage buildings, etc., all connected by a network of covered and raised verandas. Every inch of the grounds is landscaped to perfection. At night, warm light and cheerful music pour from the windows of the estate as the guests enjoy the evening's entertainment. Colorful lanterns hang from the eaves, cheerful banners wave lazily in the soft air. There are no colorful lanterns on the outside of the back or alley walls.

The outside wall is seven feet tall, surrounded on all sides by about 20 feet of clear space (neighboring noble's houses on the sides; the grove of trees at the rear). It is a standard white stucco wall with a black tile cap.

The guests for the party begin arriving an hour before dusk, filling in large groups. The Lion delegation arrive first, followed by the contingents from other Clans, escorted by a large honor guard of Scorpion bushi (to complement their own guards). Along their paths, peasants cheer for each, bowing deeply and wishing them luck.

The dramatic lighting of the estate is beautiful, but it creates a large number of deep shadows for infiltrators to exploit.

The Guards

The guards at the estate work in pairs (inside and outside); one with a lantern, which provides a 15' light radius to push back the "*Low-Light*" condition (-2k0 perception/ranged attack). Moving closer than 15' to the guards, or exposing oneself to a light within 100' in front of them (which includes using a standard lantern), requires a contested **Stealth (Sneaking, Ambush) / Agility** vs the guards' **Investigation / Perception** (6k3) – failure means those particular guards will run to investigate further, creating the need for a second roll (7k4 – the guard spends a Void Point). Failing the second roll means combat and the alarm is sounded, which means two guards arrive at the location every other round, while success means the guards linger for a minute before blaming it on a dog, the wind, etc. before moving on with their patrol.

Distracting guards can be done by a number of ways, including throwing tsubute with a **Ninjutsu / Agility** roll (TN 15). While this will count as failing the first Stealth roll, it will make the second stealth roll unnecessary, assuming no one is actually where the guard is looking (Use GM discretion regarding effectiveness if this is done more than once to the same guard).

Sounding the estate's alarm requires banging rapidly on a woodblock as a Simple Action, which every guard possesses.

Leaving items around (either as distractions or via laziness) that should not be there will be considered failing the first Stealth roll, depending on the item left (a grappling hook left on the wall is an immediate second alarm, for example).

Scaling the Wall

Scaling the wall outside the castle requires a few steps: observing the wall to determine where a good spot to go over it is, avoiding the patrol inside, and avoiding the patrol outside.

Observing the outside of the walls behind the estate will let the PC see that there is a rise on the inside of the southeast corner (there is a tree rising above the wall, illuminated by a lamp at night). There are also vagrants, both peasants and ascetic monks, coming toward the northeast corner from the field, heading down the alley to the servants' entrance on the northern wall. The closest building to the wall is part of the main building on the south side, 10' away.

A **Battle / Intelligence** roll (TN 15) will let the PCs recognize that two sets of guards that patrol outside the

wall, traveling along a well-worn path (with a lantern at night), pass in five-minute intervals. A roll of 20 will spot the patrolling guards on the inside, walking up the southeastern hill and peeking over the wall every ten minutes.

Climbing up the wall itself requires assistance of some kind; getting a boost from another PC (**Strength**, TN 15 by the lifter), using a grappling hook and rope (**Athletics (Throwing) / Strength** TN 20), or a ladder (must hide the ladder); as well as an **Athletics (Climbing) / Agility** roll (TN 20, with a Free Raise for a rope and three Free Raises for the ladder).

The Front Gate

The front gate house is imposing and strong, but its tall gate is thrown wide and well-lit, decorated for the party with lanterns and banners, on the western (city) side of the estate. Guards in ceremonial armor are checking the guests' invitations thoroughly and looking for any discrepancies, so any Stealth roll to slip by them without an invitation will fail automatically and the PC will be arrested.

PCs that enter the front gate must be properly dressed and make an **Acting / Awareness** roll TN 20. Traveling as part of Shen's retinue, or as a guest of another Clan, gives the PC a Free Raise. Calling a Raise on the Acting roll will give the PC a Free Raise on the Sleight of Hand roll if they are concealing small weapons.

PCs entering with forged papers will be up against the guards' **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll (6k3), using their previous forgery roll, with a -5 penalty for every PC beyond the second per forged document (a group of six new guests would stand out too much).

Though the samurai and yojimbo of the guests wear their daisho, if a PC tries to slip a weapon through (if, for example, dressed as a monk), they will need to make a contested **Sleight of Hand (Conceal) / Agility** roll against the guards' **Investigation / Perception** roll (6k3) to get past. Failure means public arrest.

The Servant's Entrance

Near the middle of the northern wall, a small burbling stream exits the estate through a low, narrow, grated arch in the wall near the servants' entrance, leading across the alley to the neighboring estate. A wide, simple bridge crosses it, and the hole in the walls are too small to be used as a point of access.

The servant's entrance on the northern wall is rather busy, but very quiet. There are about twenty homeless peasants and monks waiting patiently in the cold. Josei,

the blind, deaf monk, from the *Lonely Blossom* is here also, carrying his samisen. Hidden within the crowd are two armed shinobi guardsmen. Blending in with this crowd requires dressing appropriately and an **Acting / Awareness** roll vs the shinobi's **Investigation / Perception** (6k3); spotting the shinobi in the crowd requires the same roll, but reversed. Failing this roll means the shinobi alert the guard on their next pass, who will then roughly search the PCs for weapons and probably arrest them.

Should the player slip at any time while roleplaying a peasant while dealing with a samurai (not groveling, failing to say *-sama*, etc), demand another **Acting / Awareness** roll (TN 15). Regardless of the outcome, the other vagrants will step away from the PC and keep their distance, while failure on this roll means the PC is beaten by a guard with a cudgel (2k2 damage), and is sent to the back of the line (the guard will not draw blood tonight if necessary lest they insult the kami); any further outburst means the PC is arrested and sent to Manzo the Hawk (escalate as necessary if the missteps are continuous).

After dinner is over and the guests leave for the play, the crowd of vagrants will become more animated and enthusiastic, especially once they are let in for their dinner. They are let in by O'Tsui, Yogo Tobusa's head peasant retainer, down busy back hallways to a large, unused meeting room lined with tables and set for dinner (no fancy dinnerware here). Aside from the two shinobi, there are six other guards on duty as the vagrants wash up, make prayers, and eat (the food praised by all as exceptional, of course).

PCs who wish to escape from dinner must make a **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** roll against the guards' **Investigation / Perception** (6k3) and the vagrants' collective **Investigation / Perception** 5k4 (they're all exceptionally loyal to Tobusa and aren't afraid to call anyone out). Creating a distraction of some kind will give the PCs 1-3 Free Raises, depending on the distraction (getting Josei to play his samisen is one free raise, a group song is two, starting a brawl is three). PCs asking for the bathroom will get escorted by one of the servants (it's attached to the bath house) and though there is a window where the PC could escape, that requires its own **Stealth** roll (the PC may add their Athletics rank to this roll). *There is only a five minute window of opportunity before the servant comes in to retrieve the PC ("C'mon pal, quit stalling. You fall in?")*

Inside the Estate

The dinner party introduction should be repeated, but from the PCs new perspective (which includes seeing the players' normal PCs interacting with other NPCs. The GM should make a point of mentioning anything specific that the normal characters did earlier in the mod), except that there should be however many courtly rolls as necessary (with TNs ranging from 15-25, depending on with whom the characters interact) to create dramatic tension.

Interacting with Yogo Taro requires a **Willpower** roll (TN 20) to not confront him or to maintain a the player's roll beyond the Etiquette and Acting rolls above. Failure means interception by the guard and an interview with the hatamoto, Yogo Kinnosuke (listed below).

If Irime is at the dinner party, Yogo Taro will be drawn to her beauty (as he is to any green-eyed, dangerous-beauty female character). If she does not have a decent mask, she will be recognized and questioned by him ("*What are you doing here, Imeko-kun?*") and escorted away by a guard to Taro's suite. Note, however, that it takes very little effort to convince Taro that Irime is there for him – **Temptation (Seduction) / Awareness** (with all appropriate bonuses for Irime and penalties for Taro) at a TN of 15. If Irime has a mask, she may make an **Etiquette / Reflexes** roll (TN 20) to stay out of his line of sight. Similarly, Taro will recognize Hiraide if he does not have a mask or a false name (even if he's dressed as a monk), but he will be quietly arrested instead.

Attacking Taro in the party is a **Bad Plan**, but should that happen, there are 3k3 house guards on hand to prevent it (coordinating with their commander and on their home turf, they can be assumed to roll 10k5 on any **Investigation / Awareness** to spot assassination-related **Stealth** rolls – failure by a PC means interception and arrest). If Taro is not killed in the surprise round: take the attacking assassin character sheets back from the players and let all the players use their normal PCs to fight the assassins. Killing an assassin in open court gains the PC 5 points of Glory and a Scorpion Clan Favor for their willing assistance; those who heal Taro gain an additional Favor.

PCs watching or interacting with Yogo Tobusa may make an **Investigation / Awareness** roll (TN 30) to notice that he is uncomfortable about something. Talking to him directly (presenting a gift, for example) allows the PC to make the roll again but with a Free Raise, and an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** TN 35 will show them a very faint scar on his forehead. Should the *player* figure out that Tobusa is Nomen, the

PC must make a **Courtier / Willpower** roll TN 25 to conceal a look of shock.

Failing *any* of the above rolls above means creating some sort of faux pas and drawing attention to the PC from the crowd, which creates a +5TN penalty against any attempt to sneak away from the party. Failing more than *three* rolls means the PC is taken aside by the Hatamoto, Yogo Kinnosuke, “to see if everything is all right.” Ditching *him* first requires an **Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness** roll against his **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (9k3), with a Free Raise for proper abasement and clever roleplay, to avoid him using the Bayushi Rank 3 technique upon the PC – should this happen, he will ferret out that the PC has the Driven flaw regarding Yogo Taro (but not specifically that the PC is an assassin sent to kill him), and he will use that knowledge as “Blackmail” to cow the PC into submission, quietly ejecting him from the party:

“I don’t know what you expect to accomplish here, but you WILL NOT dishonor Tobusa-sama’s home or his guests. Guard, our guest here has clearly had too much to drink. Please escort him out.”

Failure means the PC is escorted “back to the inn” (dropping him at the first available if the PC cannot quickly name one); while success allows the PC to slip from his grasp in some manner appropriate to the excuse. If the PC is spotted again by the guards, he will be arrested by Manzo.

Sneaking away from the party

Slipping away from the party can only happen *after* dinner and requires some sort of excuse (checking out the garden, going to the bath house, etc) and whatever type of roll is appropriate to the situation, either **Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness** or **Stealth / Awareness** (TN 15), plus any penalties for roll failures above. PCs who came in with Shen or another guest must call two Raises. Failure means the PC is found *by their normal character* (“*Come, come! We’re leaving for the play!*”). The player should provide guidelines for their normal character’s reactions. The assassin must find a way to escape, through cunning (another **Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness** vs the normal character’s **Investigation / Awareness**) or extremely careful violence: a well-placed sucker-punch or blunt-weapon strike to the back of the head (the pommel of a weapon counts for this), filling one wound box, will knock the character out, regardless of the PCs Advantages (the normal PC cannot spend void to soak the damage). If they cannot, the assassin will be taken to see the *Akutoneko* and the *Name Eater* by his normal character, which of course is an amazing and fun event.

The (assassin) PC will even win a porcelain *Akutoneko*-themed “beckoning cat” statue from the seat raffle. The fireworks at the end of the play are spectacular, and the circuit of sake and geisha houses afterward lasts until the wee hours of the night, but Yogo Taro is not among those revelers.

If the ninja PC knocked out the normal PC, something must be done with the unconscious body to either make it look like an accident (which will cost the normal PC between 1-3 points of Glory due to their clumsiness or drunkenness) or to hide the body somewhere it cannot be found until the mission is over (in a closet, in a bush, under the porch, etc). Doing so requires a **Strength** roll (TN equal to the target’s Earth Ring x3; +5 if the unconscious PC is Large, -5 if Small). Failure means the PC is spotted by a servant. The player must make a **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** roll TN 25, with a Free Raise for good roleplaying, which will convince the servant to take the unconscious PC somewhere so he can rest (or whatever is appropriate to the assassin’s lie). Failing this roll means the servant immediately alerts the guard.

Attacking the PC and failing to do enough damage to knock him out in one round means the wounded PC shouts for the guards and in all likelihood attacks the PC. At that point, the GM should take the ninja PC away and let the player have their normal PC back, rolling initiative and engaging in combat. Guards will arrive after the first round to back up the player, at which point the assassins will attempt to flee. Killing the assassin gains the PC Favor: Scorpion Clan *or* 5 points of glory, depending on whether they stay quiet about it.

The Gardens

The garden behind the house is a beautiful example of Scorpion landscaping. A medium-sized pond sits in a nest of black stone pebbles, fed by a stream that meanders from under the wall and which exits the pond under a veranda toward the kitchen. To the southeast of the estate is a hill that butts against the outer wall, providing a bit of height for a great old camellia tree, wrapped in hemp rope, and a dramatic dry waterfall of mossy stone. A gravel path winds through the garden, crossing the stream via large, flat stones. Graceful camellia shrubs and trees dot the landscape tastefully, their large blossoms a variety of white, pink, and red. At night, a handful of stone lanterns provide dramatic spotlighting on the garden’s main features. The garden is overlooked by the main estate (and its balconies) to the west, a rustic tea house hidden behind an enormous willow to the south, the bath house to the north (roughly near the kitchen), and a guest house to the

northeast. The whole garden is framed by a network of covered verandas and porches.

The crest of the southeast hill is slightly away from the wall and veiled in soft shadows- not enough to hide in at close distance, but enough to provide cover when the guard is not within lantern range (the stone lantern on the hill is on the front, illuminating the tree's branches but not the wall) and a small shrine at its base. The inside height of the wall is about four feet.

There are four guards in the garden: three (in ceremonial armor, for the party) with a lantern making a clockwise circuitous route along the path, which takes about ten minutes, the fourth hidden on the second-story balcony. Spotting the guard on the balcony is an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll vs the guard's **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** (6k3), with a -2k0 penalty for Low Light.

Moving throughout the garden requires a contested **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** vs the guards' **Investigation / Perception** 6k3 (with the -2k0 *Low Light* penalty as applicable, and a Free Raise if the player says specifically that they're trying to avoid the hidden guard's gaze). Failure means a patrolling guardsman will run to investigate further and/or the guard readies his bow, creating the need for a second roll (7k4; the guard spends a void point). Failing the second roll means combat and the alarm is sounded, which means two guards arrive at the location every other round; success means the guard lingers for a minute before blaming it on the wind, dancing shadows, etc. before moving on with his patrol.

There is a gardener's tool shed (with a ladder leaning against its base) behind the rustic tea house, which is just east of the hill – it is not connected to the veranda network and slightly hidden among the foliage.

There is no cover behind the pond and the area is relatively well-lit (notably from the light streaming through the windows), so the best way to get to Taro's room is to follow the guard's path. This takes them from the shadow of the hill to the tool shed, then to the tea house, and finally under the veranda network.

Doing so require a **Stealth (Sneaking)/ Agility** roll (as mentioned before) to not be spotted (the roll from the tool shed to the tea house gives a free raise because of foliage cover). If there is some sort of distraction, however, this can give the PC 1-3 Free Raises. The garden is empty because the guests have left for the play (if the assassins arrived early, the garden has about a dozen people in it), and the servants make a steady stream from the kitchens to the bath house to use the

restroom (allowing for a free distraction Raise if the PC specifically says their timing their movements with the servants' travels).

Crawling underneath the veranda requires two **Stealth (Sneaking) / Willpower** rolls (TN 20), and another at TN 25 when under the Bath house veranda because of the servants.

Climbing onto the roof

PCs may wish to access the roof of the estate somehow. This requires using a grappling hook and rope (**Athletics (Throwing) / Strength** TN 20), or a ladder (must hide the ladder); as well as an **Athletics (Climbing) / Agility** roll TN 25 (with a Free Raise for a rope and three Free Raises for the ladder).

Once on the roof, the PCs must make only two contested **Stealth** rolls (as above) to not be spotted by the guards.

Part Four: The Trap Springs

The details of the encounter in Taro's residence will be greatly dependent on the actions taken by the PCs during the module. There are no set paths to accomplish this task, so it will be up to the GM to invent the necessary encounter details to continue the PCs chosen narrative.

The rolls involved during this encounter will vary as the GM sees fit to create dramatic tension, with TNs varying between 0 and 25. For example, waiting in the attic while Taro and his companions party below may be a **Stealth (Ambush) / Willpower** roll TN 20 to remain quiet.

Drunk NPCs have a -2k0 penalty to all actions, and Stoned NPCs have a -2k1 penalty to all actions, assuming they're awake. Screaming for a guard is a Free Action, unless they're too stoned. The "Low Light" penalty is -2k0 for perception and ranged attack rolls; use the rules for "Blindness" if a total "Darkness" condition is present.

Taro's Residence

Taro's residence is a medium-sized single story house, surrounded by a wide veranda of dark wood and a beautiful garden. The main door opens toward the pond, while a second, smaller entrance opens toward the bath house. There are a number of windows as

well, but they are all closed for the season. The doors are not locked.

The servants' entrance leads to a small, dark kitchen. An **Investigation / Perception** roll (TN 15, with the -2k0 *Low Light* penalty) will allow the PC to spot a small attic access panel should they choose to do so. On the other side of the kitchen, a door leads to a formal dining room, and from there the main room.

The main doors lead directly to the central entertaining area. Opposite the dining room is a study (with Taro's armor, naginata, sword stand, etc), and to the rear are three bedroom chambers.

If the PCs did not intercept Mago and Akira, they will be entertaining themselves and three prostitutes in the main room with song, sake, and food. All are rather drunk, but they are waiting for Taro to return before smoking the opium obtained earlier. All five are singing poorly but happily, their drunkenness giving them a -2k0 penalty on all rolls.

Navigating through the attic's crawl space requires a **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** roll TN 20. The attic is a dusty maze of posts supporting the roof; pitch black except for small streams of light peeking through cracks in the wooden plank ceiling, allowing the PC to peer into the rooms and to observe the scenes below that they may get into place and wait until the right time to strike. Breaking through the ceiling and landing safely are an **Athletics/ Strength** roll (TN 20); failure means 2k2 damage as the PC lands roughly on the floor. Making a hole quietly is a **Stealth / Strength** roll (TN 30 or possibly a contested roll if the room is occupied).

Yogo Taro Returns Home

Yogo Taro will return after 30 minutes after the fireworks at the end of the show. What he does in the residence will greatly depend on who is in with him. If the PCs do not intercept Mago and Akira, Taro will get drunk with them, smoke some opium, and then take one of the prostitutes to his bed, passing out about an hour afterward (the prostitutes leave shortly after, quietly exiting via the servants' entrance).

As stated above, the actual encounter here will vary depending on the PCs previous actions.

If there is an fight between the NPCs and the PCs, the guards outside will have to make an **Investigation / Perception** roll (6k3) vs. a TN of 10-50, depending on the actions taken (the more obvious the fight and screaming, the lower the TN).

If the PCs take the time to search the house, specifically the study, they may make an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** TN 25: There is a false panel behind the bookcase hides Yogo Taro's personal journal, which contains admissions to a large number of crimes, from extortion of merchants, to poisoning his own blade in the duel against Bayushi Matsuan, to murdering wandering monks, defiling peasant families, among other intolerable blasphemies.

Once Yogo Taro is dead, in whatever manner chosen by the PCs, they will still need to escape (ideally unseen).

Assuming the PCs get away, the ones who survive should meet at the *Lonely Blossom* the next morning.

The inside of the Lonely Blossom sake house remains dim and smoky, with a lingering haze of old grease. The proprietor, Ho, polishes the wooden bar in small, lazy circles, working around the drunks with practiced, calloused hands, going through his morning routine. Nearby, a blind, deaf monk plucks slow notes from an ill-tuned samisen. As you enter, Ho looks up from his rag. "You just missed your friend, samas. He left a package for you."

Inside a small wooden box sit (six) plain silk pouches-pouches heavy with coin.

Conclusion

The PCs should return the assassin characters to the GM and take up their regular characters.

Akutoneko and the Name-Eater is as funny and cheerful as expected: Action! Adventure! Risqué comedy! Demon cats! The play is a roaring success.

The fireworks afterward are nothing short of spectacular, and the after-party at the town's most popular inn, The Lucky Rat, is every bit as boisterous and fun.

The next morning greets everyone far too early, but it does so with a cup of hot, strong tea. At noon the guests prepare to depart Yogo Tobusa's estate.

Depending on the assassin PCs actions, rumors may be flying about regarding the events last night. (Because of the wide variety of options and tactics the assassins may have taken, the GM is encouraged to use their own creativity in describing the events of the night for the benefit of the players' normal PCs.)

Success?

If the PCs were successful in killing Taro quietly, should anyone ask, Tobusa will regretfully inform them that his son took ill last night.

“Such is the duty of the Yogo, my friend. We take on the bad karma so that others do not.”

If the assassins were not quite so subtle, the Yogo will make as much of an attempt to hush over the incident as possible. The PCs may gain a Scorpion Clan Favor by making a point of politely overlooking the incident. Or, if they are openly mocking or insulting, they will earn Sworn Enemy: Yogo Tobusa (4 pts).

Failure?

If Yogo Taro survived, he will be waiting quietly beside his father to see their guests off, but his normally outgoing demeanor will be severely dampened and chastised. Tobusa, of course, will put on his best smile, as always. The rumors, however, abound once the party is out of town.

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
Participating in the evening’s festivities:	+2XP

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Honor

Nope!

Glory

PCs gain Glory as noted for participation in the evening’s festivities.

Other Awards/Penalties

Favors and Allies are noted in the appropriate sections, though as always, the GM is encouraged to reward meaningful roleplay (whether that be through granting Allies or Sworn Enemies not otherwise listed).

Module Tracking Sheets

Was the villain killed?

Did the party get disturbed?

Kharmic Tie: Your Assassin (if he survived)

GM Reporting

Was the Villain killed?

Which of the assassins survived?

GM must report this information BEFORE (7/29/2013) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

Yogo House Guards

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 2

Honor 2.5 Status Glory

Initiative: 6k4 **Attack:** 7k3 (katana, Complex) or 6k3 (naginata, Complex)

Armor TN: 25 (light armor) **Damage:** 7k2 (katana) or 5k3 (nagimaki)

Reduction: 3

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

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 2

Techniques: *The Way of the Scorpion:* +1k1 to Initiative Rolls. +5 to Armor TN against any opponent with lower Initiative.

Pincers and Tail: May make the Feint Maneuver for one Raise instead of two.

Skills: Athletics 2, Courtier (Manipulation) 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: Shugenja 2, Polearms 3, Sincerity 3, Stealth 3

Mastery Abilities: Courtier 3 (+3 Insight); Defense 3 (may retain a previous Full Defense roll in successive Rounds); Etiquette 3 (+3 Insight); Iaijutsu 3 (may ready a katana as a Free Action); Kenjutsu 4 (+1k0 damage with swords); Kyujutsu 3 (may ready a bow as a Simple Action), Polearms 3 (+5 to Initiative Score on first Round of skirmish while using Polearm); Stealth 3 (may move 15' as a Simple Action while using Stealth)

Outfit: Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, nagimaki, Traveling Pack, 5 koku.

Bayushi "The Scrub" Mago

A greasy bully with a weak chin, he washed out of the Bayushi bushi school, attaching himself to Taro.

Air 2 Earth 4 Fire 3 Water 2 Void 2

Reflexes 3 Strength 5

Honor 1.2 Status 1.0 Glory 1.0 Infamy 3.0

Initiative: 6k4 **Attack:** 7k3 (cane)

Armor TN: 20(+5 Tech) **Damage:** 6k2 (cane)

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

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 1 (Insight Rank 2)

Technique: *The Way of the Scorpion:* +1k1 to Initiative Rolls. +5 to Armor TN against any opponent with lower Initiative.

Skills: Athletics 2, Courtier (Manipulation) 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Iaijutsu 1, Intimidation (Bullying) 4, Kenjutsu 1, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: Underworld 2, Polearms 3, Sincerity 1, Staves (cane) 4, Stealth 3

Mastery Abilities: may retain a previous Full Defense Roll in successive Rounds; ignores armor bonus with staves

Disadvantages: Compulsion: Drinking; Compulsion: Opium; Black Sheep; Infamous; Lechery; Doubt: Kenjutsu; Weakness: Intelligence

Isawa "The Squab" Akira

A short fire shugenja with a very bad temper, he is not welcome at home due to a bad habit of knocking peasants over with Tempest of Air.

Air 3 Earth 2 Fire 3 Water 2 Void 3

Honor 1.4 Status 1.0 Glory 1.3 Infamy 3.0

Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:**

Armor TN: 20 **Damage:**

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

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 1 (Fire)

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 1, Investigation 3, Medicine, Lore: Theology 1, Lore: Underworld 3, Intimidation (Bullying, Control) 4, Meditation 1, Spellcraft 3

Mastery Abilities:

Disadvantages: Compulsion: Drinking; Compulsion: Opium; Brash; Contrary; Short; Black Sheep; Obtuse

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon; Fire (5k3); Envious Flames (ML1); Fury of Osano-Wo (ML1); Never Alone (ML1); Air (4k3); Tempest of Air (ML1); Earth (3k2) Jurojin's Balm (ML1); Water (3k2) Path to Inner Peace (ML1); Reversal of Fortunes (ML1)

Yogo Taro, the villain

A pretty shell reflects a rotten core...

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 2 Void 3

Honor 0.2 (6.2) Status 4.9 Glory 3 Infamy 6

Initiative: 9k5 **Attack:** 10k3 (Katana)

Armor TN: 25(+5 Tech) **Damage:** 6k2 (katana)

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

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 4

Techniques: *The Way of the Scorpion:* +1k1 to Initiative Rolls. +5 to Armor TN against any opponent with lower Initiative.

Pincers and Tail: May make the Feint Maneuver for one Raise instead of two.

Strike at the Tail: When you assuming a Stance at the start of Turn, may choose a target within 30'. If successfully hit them during that Turn, the target is Fatigued as if he had gone without rest for 24 hours. During the Reactions Stage, an affected opponent may

attempt an Earth Ring roll against a TN of 25 to negate the effects of this Technique. If he fails, the effects of this Technique end during the next Reactions Stage (the second Reactions Stage after he was struck).

Strike From Above, Strike From Below: May make melee attacks as a Simple Action.

Skills: Courtier (Manipulation) 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 5, Intimidation (Bullying, Control, Torture) 4, Investigation 4, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Lore: Underworld 3, Polearms 2, Sincerity (Honesty, Deceit) 3, Temptation 3

Mastery Abilities: Etiquette 3 (+3 Insight); Iaijutsu 5 (readying a katana is a Free Action, Free Raise to Focus

Rolls in Iaijutsu Duel); Investigation 3 (may make a second Search roll without increasing the TN); Jiu-jutsu 3 (+1k0 to unarmed damage); Kenjutsu 7 (+1k0 damage with swords, may ready a sword as a Free Action, 9s and 10s explode on damage with swords)

Advantages/Disadvantages: Dangerous Beauty; Gentry; Blackmail; Luck I; Perceived Honor x6 / Dark Secrets; Lechery; Insensitive; Greedy; Compulsion: Opium; Compulsion: Drinking; Cast Out; Fascination: Green-eyed women; Sworn Enemies (many)

Bao

You are Bao, an elderly monk from the Shrine of Bishamon in the Lion lands. You have spent the last ten years caring for a brutally mutilated eta family – the handiwork of a young Yogo Taro. After succumbing to years of suffering, the father begged you with his dying breath to take revenge on the samurai responsible for their misery. This promise has made the restless spirits of his daughters follow you as they once followed him.

You have heard their wordless, tongueless weeping every night since. You don't sleep much.

Though you are a gentle soul, who turned from the path of the warrior three decades ago when you fled the field of battle, you cannot deny the spirits their rest. Taro must die, that they can find peace and that he may find justice in the turning of the Celestial Wheel.

In your early fifties, you have an unprepossessing appearance: shaven head and saffron robes, there is little to set you apart from any other itinerant monk, but you have maintained your physique as part of your monastic discipline, and you hope your mission may come to an end soon so that you may return to the Temple.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 4
Honor 5.4		Status 1.0		Glory 0.5
Initiative: 6k3		Attack: 8k3 (Staff, Complex) or 7k3 (unarmed, Complex)		
Armor TN: 20 (25 with kiho)		Damage: 4k2 (bo or nunchaku) or 4k1 (unarmed)		
Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)				
School/Rank: Temple of the Thousand Fortunes 3				
Techniques: <i>The Thousand Forms</i> : starts with 4 kiho				
Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 1, Defense 2, Etiquette 1, Hunting 1, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu (Grappling) 4, Lore: Bushido 2, Lore: History 2, Lore: Theology (Fortunes) 3, Meditation 2, Medicine (Wound Treatment) 3, Spears 1, Staves (Nunchaku, Bo) 5				
Mastery Abilities: Jiujutsu 3 (+1k0 to unarmed damage), Staves 5 (ignore normal Staves Armor TN penalty, gain a Free Raise to Knockdown)				
Advantages/Disadvantages: Balance, Bishamon's Blessing, Paragon of Compassion / Dark Secret: Lion army deserter, Driven: Kill Yogo Taro, Haunted: Sakiko, Umeko, Ukiko, Soft-Hearted				
Outfit: Bo staff, nunchaku, coarse and plain Traveling Clothing, a Scroll Satchel with Bishamon's Sutra, 2 zeni				
Kiho: The full rules for Kiho can be found on page 262 of the core rulebook. In general, only one each of Kharmic, Internal, or Mystical kiho can be active at once; activating a kiho requires spending a Void Point (though counts as activating a Technique and therefore does not count for the one Void Point that can be spent each Round), rolling Meditation / Void at a TN of 15 as a Complex Action or 30 as a Simple Action; Atemi strikes require spending a Void Point or Meditation / Void at TN 15 as a Free Action, as well as a successful unarmed attack.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">As the Breakers (Water 5, Kharmic; With a successful Atemi Strike, the target loses one Simple Action this Round. You may only target opponents who have not yet acted this Round, and an opponent may not be affected by this Kiho more than once per skirmish.)Cleansing Spirit (Earth 4, Internal; While this Kiho is active, you roll +1k0 to any roll to resist the effects of poison or disease.)Eight Direction Awareness (Void 5, Mystical; While this Kiho is active, you are aware of all living things or deliberately concealed objects within 40'.)Riding the Clouds (Air 3, Mystical; While this Kiho is active, you may make a Simple Move Action to leap 20'. This effect lasts until you have made such a leap once, then is expended)Silent Solace (Void 5 (Atemi), Kharmic; An opponent struck by this Kiho's activating strike must expend two spell slots to cast a single spell. This effect lasts four Rounds.)Song of the World (Void 3, Kharmic; You must target an opponent within 50' when activating this Kiho and succeed at a Contested Void Roll. If successful, reduce his Initiative Score by 5 and increase yours by 5.)Soul of the Four Winds (Air 4, Internal; While this Kiho is active, add 5 to your Armor TN.)To the Last Breath (Void 3, Kharmic; Any selected person within 20' when this Kiho is activated gains a Void Point on their next Turn. No target may benefit from this kiho more than twice per day.)				

Haraise

Once, you were Bayushi Haraise, a respected vassal of Yogo Tobusa. Then your son, the magistrate Bayushi Matsuan, charged Yogo Taro with corruption and challenged him to a duel... and cheated. You know your son would never have poisoned his blade in a fair fight, but the poison was there. Matsuan confessed under torture, was stripped of his position as magistrate, and hanged for his crime. Your family assets were seized, you were cast out of the Clan, and your wife died of grief.

On that day, you swore revenge.

Taking on the role of town drunk, you have convinced the entire community that you are nothing more than a disgraced and discarded ronin. They have nothing to fear from a broken man, and they have let their guard down. Finally, an opportunity for revenge has arisen. You're dying anyway; all that remains is to ensure Yogo Taro accompanies you to Toshigoku.

You present the image of a dissipated, slovenly ronin, but you have remained in training and your blade is sharp. Though your filthy, matted hair and unshaven face are hardly outward signs of the samurai you still know yourself to be, the disguise has been necessary.

It's almost over.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 2	Void 3
	Willpower 4		Strength 3	
Honor 2.7		Status 0		Infamy 2.8

Initiative: 7k4
Armor TN: 20 (25 in armor), +5 (Technique)
Reduction: 3 (in armor)
Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 26 (+15), 30 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Dead)
School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 3
Techniques: *The Way of the Scorpion:* +1k1 to Initiative Rolls. +5 to Armor TN against any opponent with lower Initiative.
Pincers and Tail: May make the Feint Maneuver for one Raise instead of two.
Strike at the Tail: When you assume a Stance at the start of Turn, you may choose a target within 30'. If you successfully hit them during that Turn, the target is Fatigued as if he had gone without rest for 24 hours. During the Reactions Stage, an affected opponent may attempt an Earth Ring roll against a TN of 25 to negate the effects of this Technique. If he fails, the effects of this Technique end during the next Reactions Stage (the second Reactions Stage after he was struck).
Skills: Acting 3, Athletics 3, Calligraphy 2, Courtier (Manipulation) 3, Defense 3, Etiquette (Conversation) 3, Horsemanship 1, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu (Assessment, Focus) 4, Investigation (Interrogation) 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Stealth (Sneaking) 3
Mastery Abilities: Athletics 3 (reduce Terrain penalties for movement), Courtier 3 (+3 Insight), Defense 3 (may retain previous Full Defense rolls in successive Rounds), Etiquette 3 (+3 Insight), Iaijutsu 4 (may ready a katana as a Free Action), Kenjutsu 5 (+1k0 damage with swords, may ready any sword as a Free Action), Stealth 3 (may move 10' as a Simple Action while using Stealth)
Advantages/Disadvantages: Clear Thinker, Wary, Way of the Land: Beiden Province / Bad Health (Liver Cancer), Driven: Kill Yogo Taro, Infamous: Town Drunk, Social Position: Ronin
Outfit: Light Armor, Battered and Sake-Soaked Clothing, Daisho, Bottle of Sake, 4 bu.

You were once known by the name of “Imeko”, when you were the premiere geisha of the “House of Celestial Beauty” in Ryoko Owari. Your exotic appearance, blond hair and green eyes, drew many admirers in the City of Lies, including Yogo Taro. You refused his advances, and the Oka-san fortunately refused to sell your contract, but in a fit of rage, Taro found and killed your family, burning them alive in their house after claiming a few souvenirs as trophies. You swore revenge and fled the House, dying your hair black and using what you learned there to pass as a ronin. After spending some time in Zakyo Toshi, training and preparing yourself to claim Taro’s life, you have begun hiring yourself out as an assassin – mainly targeting wayward husbands.

There is nothing you will not do to avenge them.

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You are Yoritomo Kichiemon, the quintessential Mantis pirate, covered with scars and sailor's tattoos, from the "foreign lands swallow" to the "Twenty Strongest" on the backs of your hands. Your strength and prowess have earned you respect from your fellow Mantis, and when Yogo Taro lost a massive bet with your captain, you volunteered to collect from the fool. You are traveling disguised as a monk, though your rough edges remain more than a little visible, but Taro will not know who you are until your hands are at his throat.

Nothing matters more than destroying the Traitor; if Taro is a stepping-stone on that path, then so be it.

Knife in the Darkness

Nazo

You are Nazo, the enigma. No one knows your true name, no one knows your past. Secrets hold power, and none will have power over you again.

Yogo Taro thought he held power over you once. He will learn otherwise.

It will be the last thing he learns.

Swathed in black robes, with a jingasa pulled low over your features, you are never seen without some form of disguise. Man or woman, Clan samurai or true ronin; no one knows who you are. Sometimes even you think you have forgotten.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 3
Honor 0.3		Status 0		Glory 0
Initiative: 6k3			Attack: 6k3 (unarmed, complex)	
Armor TN: 20 (31 in Defense Stance)			Damage: 4k1 (unarmed)	
Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)				
School/Rank: Self-Taught Shugenja 3				
Techniques: <i>The Kami's Gift:</i> When spending a Void Point on a Spellcasting Roll, gains +2k2 instead of +1k1				
Affinity / Deficiencies: Air / Earth and Fire				
Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon; Air (8k3): By the Light of the Moon (ML1), To Seek the Truth (ML1), Secrets on the Wind (ML2), Mask of Wind (ML3, Illusion), Gift of Wind (ML4, Illusion) ; Earth (6k3): Earth's Stagnation (ML1), Hands of Clay (ML2), Inari's Blessing (ML2); Fire (6k3): Extinguish (ML1); Water (7k3): Path to Inner Peace (ML1), Reversal of Fortunes (ML1), Stand Against the Waves (ML2)				
Skills: Acting 2, Athletics 2, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Forgery (Documents) 3, Hunting 2, Intimidation 2, Jiu-jutsu 3, Lore: Theology 2, Lore: Underworld 3, Meditation 2, Spellcraft 5, Stealth (Spellcasting) 4				
Mastery Abilities: Courtier 3 (+3 Insight); Defense 5 (may retain a previous Full Defense roll for successive Rounds, +3 Armor TN in Defense or Full Defense Stance); Etiquette 3 (+3 Insight); Jiu-jutsu 3 (+1k0 unarmed damage); Spellcraft 5 (+1k0 to all Spell Casting Rolls); Stealth 4 (may move 15' as a Simple Action while using Stealth)				
Advantages/Disadvantages: Luck I, Precise Memory / Dark Secret, Disbeliever, Driven: Kill Yogo Taro				
Outfit: Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 5 koku.				

Moyotoshi

You are Bayushi Ansei, a Scorpion agent with a cover story as a ronin for hire. In order to maintain security, you do not know your superiors, and receive all of your orders through blind drops – you cannot betray what you do not know, and even your unshakeable loyalty could be compromised with torture or magic. Your current orders bring you to Beiden to assist in the removal of an embarrassment to the Clan – Yogo Taro. You are to present yourself as a ronin, seeking revenge for the death of your wife, abused and dishonored in Ryoko Owari and driven ultimately to jigai (based on an actual event in Taro’s background, and one of many reasons the Clan has decided he can best serve from the grave). You have worked with the ronin using the name “Yoriko” in the past, when a somewhat more delicate touch was needed for a mission, and you know that her situation is similar to yours.

You appear as a fit, rugged ronin for hire, and your affinity with many weapons has assisted in your cover. Your true strength lies in crafting poisons, however, though it is unlikely your current mission will allow you opportunity (or ingredients or suitable location) to make any new. Your respect for your craft demands absolute caution in dealing with the dangerous solutions; and, lest you offend the Fortune of Longevity, you habitually leave offerings at every shrine or temple to Jurojin you come across.

Air 2
Reflexes 4

Earth 3

Fire 3

Water 3

Void 3

Honor 0.9

Status 0

Glory 1.2

Initiative: 7k4

Attack: 8k3 (katana, Complex) or 8k4 (yumi, Complex) or 7k4 (shuriken, Simple)

Armor TN: 25

Damage: 7k2 (katana) or 5k2 (yumi) or 2k1 (shuriken)

Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+0), 27 (+2), 33 (+7), 39 (+12), 45 (+17), 51 (Down, +37), 57 (Dead)

School/Rank: Shosuro Infiltrator 3

Techniques: *The Path of the Shadows:* Lose no Honor for use of Low Skills or Ninjutsu Weapons in the service of the Scorpion Clan (subject to GM approval). Gain a bonus of +2k0 to the total of all Stealth Skill Rolls.

Strike From Darkness: When attacking an opponent who is unaware of presence until, Raises are not limited by Void and roll additional dice equal to School Rank on the attack roll. Roll half this number of additional unkept dice on an attack roll made against an opponent who is suffering from a Condition effect (such as Stunned or Fatigued). These two effects are not cumulative.

Steel Within Silk: When attacking from ambush as described above, or when using ninjutsu weapons (including any weapons with the Ninja keyword), may make attacks as a Simple Action.

Skills: Acting 2, Athletics 3, Battle 2, Craft: Poison 5, Defense 3, Hunting 3, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 4, Lore: Underworld 3, Medicine (Antidotes) 4, Ninjutsu (Shuriken) 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth (Sneaking) 3

Mastery Abilities: Athletics 3 (reduce movement penalties from Terrain), Defense 3 (may retain a previous Full Defense roll in successive Rounds), Kenjutsu 5 (+1k0 to sword damage, may ready any sword as a Free Action), Kyujutsu 4 (may string a bow as a Simple Action), Ninjutsu 3 (+1k0 to ninjutsu damage), Stealth 3 (may move 15’ as a Simple Move action while using Stealth)

Advantages/Disadvantages: Crab Hands, Strength of the Earth / Dark Secret: Scorpion Agent, Compulsion: support Temples of Jurojin (3), Failure of Honor

Outfit: Rugged Clothing, Light Armor, Sturdy Black Clothing, Daisho, Yumi and 20 arrows, 10 shuriken, 3 doses of Venom, 1 dose of Night Milk, Traveling Pack, 5 koku.

Poison: Moyotoshi has the following poison available for the mission, though it is unlikely that it will suffice to remove Taro (as he will have access to proper treatment). Applying the poison to a weapon requires a Complex Action.

Venom: Introduction of venom into the bloodstream reduces the target’s Agility, Reflexes, Stamina, and Strength by 1 each hour. At the beginning of the second and each subsequent hour, the target may make a Stamina Roll (TN 25) to prevent additional penalties for that hour. Otherwise, these penalties continue to accrue until the target succeeds on three consecutive rolls, the poison is treated, 24 hours pass, or the target has an uninterrupted eight hour period to rest. If Stamina is reduced to 0 by the poison, Earth and Wounds become 0 as well, and the victim dies. Reduced Traits return at the end of 24 hours if the victim survives.

Yoriko

You are Shosuro Mizota, a Scorpion agent with a cover story as a traveling acrobat. Though your troupe is from the lower orders, this has allowed you access to courts across the Empire, and there are few palaces you have not sought secrets from. In order to maintain security, you do not know your superiors, and receive all of your orders through blind drops – you cannot betray what you do not know, and even your unshakeable loyalty could be compromised with torture or magic.

Your current orders bring you to Beiden to assist in the removal of an embarrassment to the Clan – Yogo Taro. You are to present yourself as a ronin, seeking revenge for the death of your brother Daisuke, drowned in Ryoko Owari over a dice-game (based on an actual event in Taro's background, and one of many reasons the Clan has decided he can best serve from the grave). You have worked with the ronin using the name "Moyotoshi" in the past, when extra muscle was needed for a mission, and you know that his situation is similar to yours.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 3
		Agility 4		
		Status 0		
	Honor 3.2			Glory 3.4

Initiative: 6k3
Armor TN: 20
Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)
School/Rank: Shosuro Infiltrator 3
Techniques: *The Path of the Shadows:* Lose no Honor for use of Low Skills or Ninjutsu Weapons in the service of the Scorpion Clan (subject to GM approval). Gain a bonus of +2k0 to the total of all Stealth Skill Rolls.
Strike From Darkness: When attacking an opponent who is unaware of presence, your Raises are not limited by Void and you roll three additional dice on the attack roll. Roll two additional unkept dice on an attack roll made against an opponent who is suffering from a Condition effect (such as Stunned or Fatigued). These two effects are not cumulative.
Steel Within Silk: When attacking from ambush as described above, or when using ninjutsu weapons (including any weapons with the Ninja keyword), you may make attacks as a Simple Action.
Skills: Acting 2, Athletics (Climbing) 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 1, Investigation 3, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Ninja-to) 4, Ninjutsu 4, Perform: Acrobatics 4, Sincerity 2, Stealth (Sneaking) 5,
Mastery Abilities: Athletics 5 (ignore movement penalties from Terrain), Defense 4 (may retain a previous Full Defense Roll in successive Rounds), Jiu-jutsu 3 (+1k0 to unarmed damage), Kenjutsu 4 (+1k0 to sword damage), Ninjutsu 4 (+1k0 to damage with ninjutsu weapons)
Advantages/Disadvantages: Quick, Silent / Antisocial I, Dark Secret: Scorpion Agent, Small
Outfit: Acrobat Costume, Ashigaru Armor, Sturdy Black Clothing, Daisho, Ninja-to, 5 Shuriken, Traveling Pack, 5 koku.