

Winter Court: Otosan Uchi

**A One-Round Low-Rank Adventure for
Heroes of Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido
Month of Hida through Ryoshun, 1140 (Winter)**

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Why would untested and barely-known samurai be invited to the Winter Court of the Imperial Regent?

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

GM's Information

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

Reminder

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a Low rank adventure, and can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank One.

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

The TNs for any Social Skill Roll should be increased by a minimum of 5 for any PC who is Rank Two; more is expected of more accomplished samurai, after all. This is independent of the table makeup, and only applies to those PCs who are higher than Rank One. Particularly experienced Rank One PCs (those who have played more than six modules, for example) should incur similar penalties at the GM's discretion.

Adventure Summary and Background

In the year and a half since Hantei Okucho declared himself the Imperial Regent, ruling in the stead of the young Toturi Tsudao, he has found himself struggling with large numbers of samurai more loyal to the memory of Toturi than to the righteousness of his own Imperial claim and leadership. Rumors of his misdeeds during his rule as Emperor Hantei XVI have poisoned the minds of many in the Empire against him, and the Emerald Champion, Kakita Toshiken, has begun building a network of supporters, aided by the fact that Toshiken controls access to the child Empress from his new stronghold at Kyuden Tonbo in the Dragonfly lands.

While Okucho is a man with a great and terrible temper, he is also capable of a great deal of charm and patience when his needs are best served by calm, long-sighted diplomacy. As a result, he has reacted to the building of Toshiken's alliances by starting some of his own. Among other efforts, he and his agents have singled out a number of young up-and-coming samurai from across the Great Clans as "personal projects," intending to mold them as future leaders of the Empire and securing their loyalty to him before any other factions might snatch them away. Relying on the grandeur and prominence of a Winter Court in Otsosan Uchi to sway these still-impressionable samurai, he plans to court their favor so that they will, in turn, one day court his, when he has returned to his rightful position as Emperor once more. The PCs are among those selected by Okucho for this honor.

When the PCs arrive at the capital, however, they find themselves caught up in events that go beyond simple politics. In point of fact, someone is trying to make the Imperial Regent believe he is being haunted by the spirit of his dead wife, Hime.

Despite what one might expect, however, this is no great intrigue or power play; it is instead the work of a single ronin con artist, a man with a talent for disguise and a knack for spotting – or creating – opportunities. He has no interest in the larger workings of the Empire; the ronin, a man named Gishou, just wants koku – koku the likes of which only a scam pulled on the Imperial Regent himself can achieve. Like most cons, the basic idea is simple, even if the execution is more complicated.

Several months ago, Gishou – then working as an aide to a Miya historian named Ipeei – came across records that revealed much of the personal history of Hantei XVI, including the sordid details of how he imprisoned his wife, Hantei Hime, for years and eventually drove her to commit suicide via hanging (as she was not allowed even a knife in her "private chambers"). Putting this information together with news of a new spiritual advisor to Okucho, a returned spirit monk who had recently formed a monastic order dedicated to the Tenth Kami, Ryoshun, Gishou conceived of a plan to manipulate the Hantei into turning over extremely expensive (and easy to transport and sell) goods to him. The idea was to convince Okucho, through tricks learned throughout several years of work as a con man, that Hime's spirit was haunting him, until eventually Okucho would call upon the monk to perform a rite to lay the spirit to rest. At that point, Gishou would slip in, present a "request for supplies needed for the ritual," collect the rare herbs and oils, and slip away again. When the rite was then performed, the "haunting" would end, with none the wiser for Gishou's intervention and goods worth several hundred koku in his possession. Only the efforts of the PCs might be able to stop him from pulling off this audacious scheme – if they can see through his chicanery in time.

A Note on the Organization of this Adventure

Throughout the course of this adventure, the PCs will have the opportunity to research or investigate a number of topics related to Gishou's plot and Hantei Okucho's history. For ease of reference, the various possible topics of investigation, necessary rolls and TNs (including Raises that are needed) are all found in Appendix #3. It is strongly suggested that the GM

keeps this information handy while proceeding through the adventure, as many of the clues can be found in any order as the PCs chase down one line of inquiry or another. The main body of the adventure only includes the events of the story that move the plot forward, but pointers in the text will give some idea which headers in Appendix #2 are most likely to contain relevant information that the PCs might pursue in the wake of each event.

Introduction

When the adventure begins, the PCs are in the province of their respective daimyo, performing basic duties alongside all the many other samurai who serve their lords. However, on this particular day, the PCs each receive a letter, addressed to them personally and bearing an Imperial seal. A **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** roll, TN 15, notes that the seal is not just that of a generic Imperial, but is in fact the personal seal of Hantei Okuqueo himself, the Imperial Regent! Merely receiving a personal letter from the Regent is enough to grant any PC with personal Status less than Rank 2 one pip of Status. The contents of the letter are available as Player Handout #1. Should the PC not be a Clan samurai, they still receive the letter, delivered to a contact or other location where they usually receive their correspondence; in this case, the letter also includes 2 koku to cover travel expenses.

Assuming the PCs choose to attend the Court – and if they are hesitant, their daimyo order them to go, because no one wants to insult the Regent to that extent – they arrive in Otosan Uchi the day before the official opening of the court.

Otosan Uchi is, as ever, breathtakingly beautiful, filled with grandeur and the subtle thrum of energy that comes with being the most powerful and important city in all of the mortal realm. The coming winter sends a chill breeze into the city from off of Golden Sun Bay, but Lord Sun shines brightly enough to take the worst of the edge from the wind and send shafts of brilliance shooting from the gleaming white walls and jade statues around the Imperial Palace itself. As you approach the gates to the Forbidden City, the Seppun miharu on duty there step forward to politely but firmly request to see your papers; once you present them, however, the guards bow courteously, and one of the group steps away from her fellows to guide you to the rooms you have been granted for the duration of the season.

The rooms are not within the Imperial Palace proper, but you have small cause for complaint with the

spacious and extremely well-appointed quarters. Although decorated with the usual Seppun preference for restraint, the fine fabrics and rich materials of the furnishings perfectly complement the few, carefully chosen pieces of art placed around the walls. Subtle, sweet-smelling incense wafts through the air, and the sunlight through the windows gives the whole room a warm, comforting glow.

Although the court does not officially open until the next day, there is an “unofficial” gathering at the Palace scheduled for that night. While technically this is intended as an informal event, anyone with the slightest familiarity with the court will know that it is in truth the first act of the months-long pageant known as Winter Court. As such, attendance is strongly recommended and proper attire an absolute must. Any PC whose outfit includes “Extravagant Clothing” or similar can be assumed to have a kimono appropriate to the setting, but others will need to seek out the necessary apparel from one of the shops in the city – the bare minimum standard of garb costs roughly 2 koku. (Characters whose school includes the [Monk] tag are exempt from this social requirement, but characters who are simply Ascetic are not.) Of course, Okuqueo’s letter included an offer to supply any of the PCs with some of the finest kimono in the city, costing 7 koku if paid for separately; any PC wearing one will be as finely-dressed as anyone in the court save for the Regent himself and a few of the other truly influential samurai present. (While this is a gift, it might well make the PCs feel obligated to Okuqueo; this is of course the point, but the PCs are not mechanically beholden to him simply for accepting his offer.)

Note: If a player is familiar with the adventure “Fields of the Dead,” they might be aware that court fashion has taken on a role in establishing faction lines between supporters of Okuqueo and supporters of Kakita Toshiken, the Emerald Champion. Okuqueo’s supporters have taken to wearing kimono with sun motifs that also feature images of Amaterasu, while Toshiken’s allies have chosen sun images that feature Hida Yakamo in his new role as Lord Sun. Those who wish to maintain an appearance of neutrality while still participating in the prevailing fashion wear kimono with plain sun patterns that lack either Amaterasu or Yakamo. If they ask, the sun fashion continues, but all the kimono that are readily available in Otosan Uchi are either neutral or feature Amaterasu – and any kimono made by Asahina Benjiro as part of Okuqueo’s gift will definitely include an image of Amaterasu as part of the design.

The event itself lacks a formal agenda, and is really just a chance for the courtiers and other attendees to see and

be seen before the real politicking begins the following day. The PCs can listen to gossip from across the Empire and get a feeling for who all has chosen to attend this particular court. In addition to Okuqueo himself, the major figures include Imperial Chancellor Otomo Mitsuhide; Hida O-Ushi, Champion of the Crab Clan; Hida Tsuneo, Crab Clan general and Okuqueo's yojimbo; Miya Yumi, Seppun Hotaitaka and Otomo Sorai, the heads of the three Imperial Families; Yoritomo Gusai, Defender of Golden Sun Bay; Doji Meihu; and Yasuki Kiromayu, the Imperial Treasurer.

In addition, the court is buzzing about the appearance of a monk calling herself Juubunnoichi, a returned spirit who recently founded something she calls the Order of the Tenth Kami. A **Lore: Theology / Intelligence** roll, TN 10, or simply asking the other attendees fills in some of the background: the Tenth Kami, Ryoshun, has only recently become known in the Empire. He serves as an ally of Emma-O, the Fortune of Death, conducting souls judged to not be suited for reincarnation to the Spirit Realm Emma-O has assigned them, guiding and protecting them on the journey. Revealed during the War Against the Shadow, a number of returned spirits have argued for more recognition of the mysterious Kami, particularly since many of the spirits have actually met him, however briefly, as they were escorted to the Realms they inhabited before returning through Oblivion's Gate. Although his name is now known throughout Rokugan, the monks of the new order only speak of him as the "Tenth Kami," because Hantei I demanded no mortal should sully his divine name with their tongues. In extending the invitation to Juubunnoichi, Hantei Okuqueo has very publically given his support to the Order of the Tenth Kami.

Rumors

As usual, listening to gossip and sorting out the useful and important bits requires a **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll, TN 5; a successful roll learns one rumor at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN. (The importance of this court makes rumors extremely easy to pick up.) The rumors include:

- Though the Imperial Winter Court is the most prestigious event of the season, relatively few samurai of high rank are present as the Regent's guests. Usually, more than one Clan Champion is present or at least sends a representative; this year, however, Hida O-Ushi is the only Champion present and none of the other Clans have sent official delegations. (Yoritomo Gusai is, of course,

entirely willing to speak on behalf of the Mantis, but he does not in fact appear to have sanction for political negotiations.)

- The court is extremely circumspect regarding the whereabouts of the child Empress; though it is common knowledge that the Emerald Champion has taken her to Kyuden Tonbo, the publicly acknowledged tale is that Tsudao is traveling the Empire for her education. The Imperial Regent's control over the Imperial bureaucracy has allowed him to ensure the practical matters of governance continue, but even Okuqueo's strongest supporters realize that it is a sore point that the Empress herself is not in the capital.
- There may be more to Juubunnoichi's presence at the court than first appears. The more historically-minded courtiers recall that Hantei Kusada (Hantei VI) used his authority as the titular head of the Brotherhood of Shinsei to dispatch monks as his personal agents. There are some who whisper, if quietly, that Okuqueo may be seeking to do the same. Juubunnoichi, a naturally reserved and retiring figure, has done little to curb these rumors – although it must be said that she has also done little to reinforce them either.
- Unusually, fighting between the Dragon and Phoenix Clans continued through the autumn. Though it has stopped for the winter, it is understood that there are to be peace talks in Honored Treaty City in the spring. The Imperial General, Seppun Murayasu, is spending the winter there in preparation for overseeing the matter – there are concerns that the conflict between the Clans has begun to overstep the Imperial laws regarding warfare. It is thought that the Crane and Crab Clans may take the opportunity to formalize a cessation of their hostilities there as well.
- A gradual increase in banditry across the Empire has left many in the court baffled. Though Yoritomo Gusai, the Defender of Golden Sun Bay, has loudly proclaimed his successes at dealing with piracy along the coasts, a number of bandit gangs are striking at villages and towns all along the northwestern Empire. As many of these bandits are mounted, most of them have managed to elude capture, but it is hoped that when the Imperial General finishes dealing with the last few peasant rebels, the Imperial Legions will be able to deal with the issue.
- A large number of Crab samurai have come to Otosan Uchi over the last several months. The Crab have been among the Imperial Regent's strongest supporters since his ascension, and the Clan's alliance with the new Tiger Minor Clan has provided them with several prestigious estates in the capital. While they still lack the number of

allies that the Crane have, or the disturbing finesse of the Scorpion, it is difficult to deny that the Crab have become a political force to be reckoned with, after giving their support to the Regent.

- The Imperial families have almost uniformly given their support to the Regent, most likely in the interest of regaining the prestige of their direct bloodline connection to the Imperial line. While those who heed the worst rumors concerning Hantei Okuchoe's previous life whisper that the daimyo of the Imperial families have no doubt been pressured through dishonorable means to support the Regent, it is difficult to deny that the daimyo have given their public approval for his policies since taking his position.
- Perhaps in an effort to dampen the disquieting rumors surrounding him, the Imperial Regent has spared no expense with the Winter Court held in his political stronghold. Guests from across the Empire are present, with feasts, games, and entertainments planned for every day of the season. Based on the sudden affluence displayed by those Agasha who are authorized to deal in hanabi, the fireworks display for the New Year's Festival will be something to remember.

If the PCs make a **Lore: Heraldry** or **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 15, they also notice a few other low-ranking samurai, who look as out of place as do the PCs themselves. There are two such samurai from each of the Great Clans; PCs will, however, "replace" one of the samurai from their Clan, with the exception of the Phoenix Agasha Jinkisu, who will always be present. For the entire list of these samurai, see Appendix #4.

Part One: What is Offered, What is Rejected

The formal opening of the court happens the next day; Hantei Okuchoe makes his first official appearance, and delivers a warm and welcoming speech inviting his guests to partake of the Imperial Palace's hospitality and to engage themselves in diplomacy and alliances "with an honorable soul and a thoughtful mind, and ever with intent to bring greater glory and peace to the Empire and our beloved Empress." Although the PCs are present, they have essentially no role here, and can do basically nothing besides seek out more rumors if they wish to.

The following morning, however, things take a more interesting turn. Shortly after breakfast, a servant appears with a letter addressed personally to each PC.

As before, it is sealed with Okuchoe's personal mon. The letter is presented as Player Handout #2.

Assuming the PCs choose to attend the dinner, they find that they are not the first arrivals, although the host has not arrived either and so they are also not late. The dining room is a private space on the second floor of the palace, deep within a section reserved for Imperial use only. It is not large, and the PCs discover that inside is only a single, large table, with spaces for roughly twenty diners. Already seated around the table are the other young, out-of-place samurai the PCs might have noticed during the previous court events. In addition, four cushions near the head of the table remain empty.

If they are present, Kakita Wesharu, Asahina Fimenko and Ide Wetashi are attempting to make conversation, but the ice is thick in the room and they are having little success so far. Most of the samurai appear slightly nervous and are trying to hide it; anyone trying to get them to speak earns monosyllable answers that do not invite additional attempts.

After several long minutes of strained silence, the door at the opposite end of the room opens and admits a sudden horde of servants, who place plates, bowls of steaming rice, vegetables, fish, and more in front of you, filling the air with the heady scent of fine food prepared by some of the finest cooks in the Empire. All that is largely lost on the samurai present, though, as behind the servants come four more individuals: Hantei Okuchoe, Hida Tsuneo, Yasuki Kiromayu and Juubunnoichi. They take seats at the table's head, and Okuchoe smiles beneficently. "Thank you all for joining us tonight," he begins in smooth tones. "I have looked forward to speaking with all of you for some time; while I am pleased that I now have that chance tonight, I hope that it will not be the last opportunity. For now, I ask that we set aside ceremony and enjoy ourselves, and this wonderful meal, as honored friends." He gestures a blessing, and lifts his chopsticks to begin the meal.

During the first part of the dinner, Okuchoe focuses on wooing the PCs. The conversation is appropriately light, but he will make every effort to compliment them and appear as a pleasant authority figure; the Regent has extensive information about all of them, and makes reference to any adventures or past experiences that might have earned them Glory as the conversation progresses. Eventually, he brings the talk around to his purpose.

"My friends, I have asked you to join me tonight because each of you has come to my attention as a

samurai of promise. It is my hope that I and my allies will help you reach your potential, and guide you away from the perils that would prevent it. I believe that you represent the next generation of leaders in Rokugan; if you will accept our help, together we can build the future the Empire deserves.” He gestures to himself, then to Tsuneo, Juubunnoichi and Kiromayu in turn. “Political influence. Military prowess. Spiritual understanding. Material wealth. We four represent the pinnacle of what samurai can achieve in a mortal lifetime, but our knowledge extends even beyond that limitation. We see much to impress us in you, and we hope that we can guide you in our footsteps as you begin your ascension toward honor and glory in the Empire.”

The offer made, the PCs are free to respond however they wish. Okucheo accepts a noncommittal response calmly and without rancor; he is well aware that his plan will only succeed if his protégés are actively engaged in the process, and he has no time for fools too shortsighted to see the value in what he is offering. Refusing outright, however, is a more difficult matter – PCs who simply tell him no risk giving offense. If they cannot make a TN 20 **Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness** roll, the PC manage to insult Okucheo’s offer (accidentally or otherwise), costing that PC 3 points of Glory and 1 point of Status, as well as causing them to gain 2 points of Infamy. Characters of Honor Rank 8 or higher also lose two points of Honor for the failure of Courtesy. Regardless of the decision the PCs make, however, all of the other young samurai take Okucheo up on his offer.

Once the PCs have agreed or deflected the proposition, Okucheo allows the conversation to take a more generalized course. With the pressure of uncertainty lifted, most of the other samurai are much more at ease, and an unmistakable air of camaraderie begins to build among the group. Juubunnoichi and Tsuneo both make attempts to engage some of the PCs who accepted Okucheo’s offer in conversation, focusing on shugenja or monks and bushi respectively. (If there are no suitable PCs, they do the same with a qualifying NPC.) Kiromayu makes an extremely awkward attempt to do the same with one of the courtiers, but it is immediately clear that social interaction is not his strong suit – other than fiscal policy and complicated mathematics, he seems to have no interests or in fact any ability to discuss other topics whatsoever. Okucheo leans back and watches the scene with a paternal manner; the entire event begins to take on the atmosphere of a congenial family gathering, watched over by a smiling patriarch.

After the meal has gone for perhaps an hour, the pace of the conversation is abruptly disturbed by a change in Okucheo’s demeanor. In the midst of a bite, the Imperial Regent freezes, staring across the room, his chopsticks still lifted halfway to his mouth. His gaze is fixed on a small vase of flowers in one corner, a finely arranged grouping of blue and purple morning glories. Raising a sharp hand like a signal fan, he summons a servant, his face cold and hard, with no trace of the convivial attitude it wore a moment before. “That vase,” he snaps. “Bring it to me, now.” The confused servant obediently collects the flowers, handing them to the Regent with a tremulous bow. Okucheo takes the vase, studying it intensely for only a brief moment...

...before it explodes in his hands.

It is a small explosion, by any standards, no more than what have happened had the Regent merely decided to smash the vase in his hands. Even so, shards of pottery fly across the room, leaving all of you with small scratches and the Regent with large cuts on his hands and face. On the instant, Hida Tsuneo has leapt to his feet, looming protectively over Okucheo, his massive fists clenched and eyes searching for attackers, but there are none to be found. Juubunnoichi leans over to Okucheo and touches him lightly on several key points of ki flow; the cuts in his skin swiftly close, leaving no sign of the injuries. Kiromayu looks shocked, touching the cut on his chin as though not sure what might have caused it, but Okucheo himself simply continues to stare at his hands, where the vase had been moments before.

Several of your fellow samurai open their mouths as though to speak, and a few even start to rise, but Okucheo cuts them off with a sharp movement of his hand, rising angrily to his feet. “This dinner is over!” he declares firmly in little short of a shout, before turning toward the door. “You are to tell no one what occurred here. Leave at once!” He storms out, followed by Tsuneo (almost on his heels), and then less quickly by Kiromayu and finally Juubunnoichi. The rest of you are left to stare at each other and the panicked-looking servants, who quickly begin cleaning up the mess.

An **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** roll, TN 20, confirms (if the PCs need such confirmation) that Okucheo’s reaction was far stronger than the event had any right to provoke. The PCs may do what they wish in the room at this point; most of the other NPCs slowly file out through the door that originally admitted them, but Agasha Jinkisu pauses for a moment,

studying a fragment of the vase she has collected from the floor. If any PC asks her what she has found, she shakes her head. "I do not yet know, but we will speak again once I do," she tells them before following the others out and returning to her rooms. If any PC take the opportunity to examine the shards, an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 15, detects a faint, acrid smell clinging to the pottery. A character with at least 2 Ranks in Craft: Hanabi or Craft: Explosives, or at least 4 Ranks in Craft: Alchemy, recognizes the scent as the leftovers from expended fireworks.

Part Two: Ghost Stories

The next day, Okucheo waits until almost sunset to appear at his court, and he is far more withdrawn than he has been over the previous two days. The court is filled with whispers about what might have caused the Regent's change in mood, but (unless the PCs have violated the command of silence), none of the speculation comes close to the truth.

After dinner, Agasha Jinkisu asks the PCs to speak with her for a moment in one of the private rooms set aside for small conferences off of the main court chamber. She seems nervous and slightly out of her depth, and it takes a moment before she works up the initiative to start speaking.

"Although my training was with the Kitsuki," Jinkisu begins, "I am also familiar with the compounds employed by my family in their hanabi mixtures." She produces a small shard of the vase that exploded the night before. "I noticed a distinct, acrid scent on this shard when I picked it up, and I recognized it as a form of explosive. The scent has faded now, but I give you my word of honor it was present before. I think someone planned the explosion – not to kill Hantei-sama, not with so small a charge, but certainly to threaten him. Unfortunately, his command of silence means I cannot tell the Seppun of this threat, and frankly, among all these samurai of rank, I don't think anyone would listen to me anyway. Will you help me find out what is happening here, and who is behind it?"

Jinkisu has approached some of the other attendees of last night's dinner, but none of the other people she spoke to were confident enough of her theory to go against Okucheo's implied wishes. Jinkisu understands this, but cannot sit idly by while she believes there is someone working against the Empire in this way.

Assuming the PCs agree, Jinkisu lays out the direction she feels the investigation should proceed. *"The key to*

determining who is responsible for any crime comes down to three things: who would have wanted to do it, who was in the right place at the right time to do it, and who had the resources to actually accomplish it. Resources, I think, are the key to this case. Figuring out who has had the resources to perform this feat will lead us to the mind behind it."

Physical examination of a shard, whether it be the one Jinkisu picked up or one collected by a PC, reveals nothing of significance. The vase was one of hundreds of similar vases throughout the Palace, and it does not stand out in any way. Magical examination suffers from three problems: first, the individual who planted the explosive was protected from the notice of the kami via a gaijin amulet (see the write-up for Gishou in Appendix #1), a fact that will continue to shield him against magical investigation throughout the adventure; second, prayers to the kami without the permission of the Seppun Hidden Guard, the Palace's cadre of shugenja tasked with protecting the Empress (and her Regent) is illegal and potentially lethal – although they would grant permission for a simple Commune spell, as long as the spellcasting was observed by a member of the Hidden Guard, it would be impossible to gain that permission without explaining why the PC wanted to cast the spell, and that would violate Okucheo's command of silence; and third, the explosion was sufficient to reshape the very nature of the kami in the vase, turning the one kami into many, each one associated with one of the larger fragments. Thus, no single shard "knows" anything about what happened before the explosion – each sees that moment as the moment of their creation. (If the questioner makes at least 2 Raises for clarity on the Spellcasting roll when they attempt to Commune with the shard, the kami will explain that part of the situation, although in a typically roundabout fashion.)

The First Month (Month of Hida)

While the PCs begin their investigations (see Appendix #2 for topics of research, especially "Flowers," "Explosives" and "Access to the Imperial Quarters,"), the court continues going through its paces. By the second week of the Court, the first snow falls have begun, and the games of intrigue and politics begin in earnest as well. In the third week, a small earthquake rattles the city; while there is no significant damage done and such temblors are quite common, especially near the capital, they are also seen as bad omens and Hantei Okucheo in particular does not seem to take it well. His already dark mood does not lighten for several weeks.

Also during the third week, Otomo Mitsuhide, the Imperial Chancellor, sponsors a sadane contest in the main court chamber. Sadane is a traditional court game, and can be best described as “competitive criticism” – the contestants are presented with a piece of fine art, usually of very high quality, and they must then find some flaw or weakness in the piece to criticize, with as much wittiness as they can scrounge up. (Verbal assaults against one’s opponents, particularly when they are also political foes, tend to creep in as well, but aren’t technically part of the game.) When the contest begins, Mitsuhide announces that the piece will be “The Last Light of the Landbridge” by the renowned Doji Master Painter, Doji Genahi. Mitsuhide pulls off the silk veil that hides the piece as it stands in the midst of the court, and the PCs can see that the painting is large and complicated, showing dozens of warriors in the colors of the Crane and Crab battling a massive army of Shadowlands creatures, while water swirls around them. On one edge, a Crab general lies bleeding, protected by his samurai, while in the center, a man in Crane blue armor raises his katana high and faces off against an oni that looms over him. The man is highlighted by a shaft of sunlight spearing down from amid dark clouds, and in the distance, lightning spears down behind the Kaiu Wall. The whole work is quite impressive and moving, although it also possesses a number of historical inaccuracies (including the Kaiu Wall, which was not built until several decades later, and the katana in the Crane samurai’s hand, which should be a spear); these can be spotted by any PC that makes a **Lore: Crane, Lore: Crab or Lore: History / Intelligence** roll, TN 20.

If the PCs wish to participate in the contest, they are free to do so. As relative unknowns in the court, they are given their turns early, on the assumption that the truly skilled players will outshine them later and make the contest more enjoyable for the audience. The roll is **Games: Sadane / Awareness**; a PC who wishes can instead substitute **Courtier / Awareness**, but is considered unskilled, so their 10s do not explode. Alternatively, a PC who made one of the rolls above to recognize the flaws in the historical representation can focus on those elements in their critique and roll **Lore: History, Lore: Crane or Lore: Crab / Awareness** instead, and is considered skilled for that roll. Any PC that makes at least a TN 30 on the roll receives 1 point of Glory for their sharp and accurate critique on the piece. (Some care should be taken to avoid speaking ill of the setting of the game or the host; should a player be pursuing a line of criticism that could offend the court, the GM should allow them to roll **Etiquette / Intelligence** to realize the consequences of doing so – if they continue, they will suffer a loss of Honor as a

Major Breach of Etiquette and gain up to five points of Infamy depending on the severity of their insult.)

Before the contest can continue much further, though, a gasp sweeps through the crowd. On the surface of the painting, a spectral, bloody handprint slowly fades into existence across the painting. A few moments later, a second one appears next to it. Then a third. Then a fourth. Finally, a row of shaky kanji traces its way down the painting, kanji that read: “WHY, MY HUSBAND?”

On the instant, Okucho – until this point, watching impassively from the dais at the far end of the court – leaps to his feet. His face darkens with rage, and although he maintains the barest control over his face, the tension in his voice is sharp enough to cut steel: “*Enough! This contest is canceled! Court is at an end until tomorrow!*” The Regent exits the chamber at once, returning his rooms upstairs, with most of the rest of the high-ranking samurai following almost immediately after; only Hida O-Ushi does not leave right away, considering the painting and the words written upon it for several moments in silence before turning and departing through a different door than the rest of Okucho’s entourage.

After just a few minutes, the handprints and words fade away in the same order they appeared, so the PCs have only a short window of opportunity if they wish to examine them for clues. An **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 20, spots what look like brushstrokes in the handprints, suggesting they were painted on rather than simply appearing. If asked, Agasha Jinkisu confirms she has heard of some compounds that are initially invisible but appear under certain circumstances, such as the application of heat or the addition of other substances like fruit juice. (A character with 2 Ranks in Lore: Alchemy or 3 Ranks in Calligraphy plus the Cipher Emphasis can likewise confirm the existence of such substances.) In this case, it would probably be heat-based, and timed – if kept cold when applied, natural warming would make it appear and disappear after a certain amount of time, and someone experienced in its use would likely be able to time that appearance fairly precisely.

Less than a minute after the handprints and kanji disappear from the painting’s surface, Seppun miharu appear and carry the painting away to be burned. They brook no delay or exceptions to this, as the burning was ordered by Okucho himself.

After this event, the PCs can investigate the painting (see Appendix #3). It is possible, depending on what they have discovered, that they might wish to speak

with Yasuki Kiromayu at this point. Unfortunately, this is impossible. The second and final of Rokugan's annual rice harvests and tax collections takes place at the end of the month of Shinjo, just before the start of Winter Court, and as such, Kiromayu is not available for anyone short of a Clan Champion until the beginning of the month of Fu Leng. If, on the other hand, a PC wishes to speak with some other luminary of the court, including Okuchoe himself, they can arrange this with an **Etiquette (Bureaucracy) / Awareness** roll, TN 40 (TN 50 to speak with Okuchoe). None of them except Okuchoe and Hida Tsuneo know anything relevant to the investigation, and both of those two will refuse to speak about the topic to the PCs under any circumstances. However, if the PCs seem to be getting stuck and try turning to one of the high-rank characters for aid, you might have one of them offer a "helpful rumor" selected from the investigation topics in Appendix #3 to get them back on track.

A few days after the sadane contest, rumors reach the PCs' ears that describe the explosion in the dining room on the second night of court, linking it to the mysterious, ghostly handprints on the painting. Although these rumors are spread by Gishou to build the proper air of supernatural happenings in the court, one of the other young NPCs who were present at the dinner decides that they must have come from the careless words of one of the PCs. Which PC is up to the GM; it should be based on how the PCs have behaved so far in the adventure. If anyone has in fact spoken out of turn about the exploding vase, they should be the first choice; otherwise, anyone who has drawn unusual attention during their investigations, such as by speaking to the Seppun about something related to the inquiry, arranging a high-profile meeting with one of the important members of the court, and so on. Failing all other reasons to make a choice, pick the least socially-adept character in the group. Once it is decided which PC will be accused, the challenger will be from a politically-opposed Clan. For example, if a Crane PC is challenged, the challenger might be Hiruma Asenki; if a Scorpion PC, it might be Yoritomo Dashi. If the PC is a ronin or a member of a Minor Clan, a traditionalist samurai like Matsu Niwei might be a good choice. (If both members of the chosen NPC's Clan are present, but one is a courtier and the other a bushi, it is appropriate to have the courtier issue the challenge and then have the bushi step in as champion.)

Regardless of who is chosen, the selected NPC approaches the chosen PC near the end of the day's court and publically accuses them of betraying the Regent's confidence and ignoring his commands. The

accuser is careful not to specifically name the subject on which the PC is alleged to have broken their orders, but all of the surrounding listeners can put it together with the current rumors to figure out what is being discussed – this only serves to confirm the whisperings, of course.

The tone of the challenge should be aggressive, but carefully courteous. The PC has several options on how to respond. If they wish to merely smooth over the accusation without necessarily admitting guilt or claiming innocence, they can attempt an **Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness** roll, TN 15; likewise, a heartfelt denial would use **Sincerity (Honesty or Deceit, as appropriate) / Awareness**, TN 15, to persuade the NPC of their error. Of course, they might take enough offense that they wish to accept the challenge as well. In that case, the confrontation moves to the snow-dusted gardens outside. It is a matter appropriate to a duel to first blood (unless the PC has managed to escalate things significantly), and so the duel will take place at once. The opposing samurai is Rank One in their School, and possesses Iaijutsu 3, Awareness 3, Reflexes 3 and Void 2. If they strike, they deal 7k2 damage, but will keep low dice unless they have been greatly provoked to do otherwise. Once the duel is finished, the loser is compelled to admit fault and loses Glory points equal to their current Glory Rank, while the winner of the duel gains 1 point of Glory.

The Second Month (Month of Togashi)

Over the next month, the court remains unsettled and Okuchoe continues to be distinctly out of sorts. Nonetheless, the scheduled events continue. In the first week of Togashi, Otomo Sorai, the daimyo of the Otomo family, sponsors a poetry reading for the entire court. One of the stars of the reading, assuming he is present, is Kakita Wesharu, who presents the first book of his planned epic about the Clan War. The piece is beautiful, stirringly martial and unabashedly worshipful in its tone. The book focuses on the Battle of Beiden Pass, and presents the battle as a titanic struggle between the tactical brilliance of Toturi and the relentless power of Hida Yakamo, with dashes of heroic Unicorn and Dragon samurai depicted as well – the darker elements, such as the use of Shadowlands forces by the Crab armies, go completely unremarked. Some observers might expect this to be a controversial choice, given that Okuchoe is present, but Wesharu has read his audience well: Okuchoe seems extremely pleased with the reading, and appears genuinely appreciative of the depictions of both Toturi and Yakamo.

As with the sadane contest, the PCs are free to participate as well. Any PC who does so may roll **Artisan: Poetry / Awareness**, TN 20; success earns that PC 1 point of Glory.

Three weeks later, Seppun Hotaitaka in turn sponsors an iaijutsu tournament. The prize is an appointment to the First Imperial Legion, charged with the defense of the Imperial Capital, Otosan Uchi. Again, PCs may participate if they wish. Each PC rolls **Iaijutsu / Void**, applying any bonuses they might gain from being in Center Stance. Success on a TN of 20 gains the PC 1 point of Glory – for every increment of 10 by which they exceed the TN, the PC advances one additional round in the tournament and gains an additional point of Glory, to a maximum of 4 points (for reaching TN 50 and the fourth round). The highest-rolling player, if they hit at least a TN 50, earns the right to face Mirumoto Ukira in the final match. (It is possible PCs may have met Ukira before, as he was present at the abortive attempt to restart the Topaz Championship during the events of the adventure “New Beginnings.”)

Ukira rolls 10k3+6 on the Assessment; if he wins this roll by 10 or more, he rolls 10k9+15 (10k6+15 if he does not) on Focus, with the Emphasis; he rolls 10k6+10 on the Strike.

Mirumoto Ukira

Ukira has been a noted prodigy of the Mirumoto dojo since he was a child. Almost four years after he took part in the disastrous Test of the Topaz Champion that saw the death of Empress Kaede, he has become a stern, dedicated bushi in the service of his Clan. More of a duelist than a soldier, he nonetheless has served with distinction on the battlefield against the Phoenix.

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 2 Void 4
Reflexes 4 Agility 4
Honor 5.2 Status 2.0 Glory 2.6

Initiative: 7k4 **Attack:** 10k4 (katana)

Armor TN: 31 (daisho Technique) **Damage:** 6k2(katana)

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 3

Techniques: *Way of the Dragon:* Suffers no penalties of any kind for dual wielding when wielding a katana in main hand and a wakizashi in off hand, and gains +3 to Armor TN (cumulative with the normal bonus for wielding two weapons to +6). When targeted with a spell, may raise or lower the TN of that spell’s Spellcasting Roll by 5.

The Calm In Midst of Thunder: While in Center Stance, gains +6 to Iaijutsu rolls

Strong and Swift: Attacking is a Simple Action while using weapons with the Samurai keyword.

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu (Focus) 7, Investigation 2, Jiujutsu

3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Lore: Bushido 2, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: Shugenja 3, Lore: Theology 2, Meditation 3, Sincerity 2

Advantages/Disadvantages: Prodigy / Idealistic

Victory in the final match not only earns the PC the invitation to join the Imperial Legions, as listed above, but also results in the gain in a full half-Rank of Glory (not cumulative with the result of the previous roll). If no PC chooses to participate in the contest or manages to achieve the TN of 50, Ukira is the winner of the tournament and receives the appointment to the Legions.

The Third Month (Month of Fu Leng)

As smoothly as things have gone over the last few weeks, the calm does not last. A week after the iaijutsu contest, shortly after the start of the month of Fu Leng, the characters awaken to find that the haunting has returned. The court is abuzz with rumors, and even the most socially-awkward character quickly discovers why: according to the stories making their way through the crowds in the main hall, something invisible tried to kill Okuqueo in his private quarters the night before.

If the PCs wish to gain more information, they may roll **Courtier (Gossip)** or **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** at TN 20 (as this is the primary topic of conversation, these rolls take only an hour or two at most, rather than a full week). On a success, the PC learns that Okuqueo was reading in his quarters under a blanket near a foot-warmer just before bed, when the blankets seemingly came to life and grabbed him, trying to drag him into the fire at the center of the foot-warmer. Okuqueo suffered minor burns, but his wounds were healed by the quick action of Seppun Toshiaki, a Hidden Guard shugenja who happened to be close enough to aid him when the event occurred. If the PCs think to ask, the blanket was burned, and the remnants taken to the Palace’s ash heap.

This event, as one might expect, shatters the fragile sense of normalcy the court had managed to reassert over the previous month. Okuqueo essentially disappears from the court, leaving Otomo Mitsuhide to run the court in his absence – Mitsuhide tries heroically to make this seem normal, even going so far as to arrange for a command performance of “The Mask,” the classic play by Shosuro Furuyari about the only Scorpion Champion never to wear a mask, but this only further fans the fires of rumor when Okuqueo does not attend. The court gossips note the absence of not only Okuqueo but also Juubunnoichi, who is said to be

closeted with the Regent offering him spiritual guidance. (Rumors that this “guidance” is of a more personal, pleasurable nature are surprisingly rare; Juubunnoichi’s monastic appearance and bearing make such an image difficult for most people to conceive.)

Part Three: Endgame

Okucheo does not make another formal appearance in court until shortly after the beginning of the month of Ryoshun, four weeks after the events surrounding the fire in his rooms. When he does, the court’s observers all make special note of Juubunnoichi’s new status as a favored advisor – she is usually right by Okucheo’s side, almost as close to him as Hida Tsuneo is. Okucheo himself is a much more withdrawn and introspective figure than he seemed at the Court’s beginning, and while his confidence is not exactly broken, he seems much less active, almost as though he is paralyzed by some contest of emotions within him.

Two weeks after Okucheo at last reappears before his court, the final major event of the court is scheduled to occur: an evening competition of kemari, sponsored by Miya Yumi. All at first appears calm. The center of the great hall is cleared for the contest, and Okucheo watches as keenly as the rest of the court as the contestants take their places.

Once again, the PCs may compete if they wish. Competing contestants should roll **Games: Kemari / Agility. Athletics / Agility** may be substituted, but 10s do not explode (the roll is considered unskilled). If the PC achieves at least a TN 20, they receive one point of Glory. In order to be in the final match, however, they must roll at least 40. The finals consist of Bayushi Shichiro (8k5), Tsi Yoji (7k6), and Juubunnoichi (8k5), plus any PC who hit the TN 40 on their roll. The competing PCs roll again, along with the other competitors; the highest roll wins. If no PC participates in the final match, Juubunnoichi barely overcomes Shichiro and is proclaimed the victor.

When the contest is finished, Okucheo rises to congratulate the winner. If this is a PC, they earn an additional 2 points of Glory (for a total of 3 for the contest). As he returns to his seat, however, the Regent finds a “Princess’ Blush” morning glory has been placed upon it.

Okucheo stares at the flower resting on the Imperial Throne for a long moment, as though he cannot recognize it for what it is. Suddenly, though, he looks up, eyes wildly searching. Almost at once, Okucheo shouts in surprise, paling as he points toward the

doors of the court. “That woman!” he cries. “Guards! Stop her!” Turning to look, you follow his pointing finger to a side door near the back of the hall. There is a samurai-ko, dressed in somewhat torn and old-fashioned court finery, standing in the hallway just beyond the door, framed as though she were an ancient watercolor somehow given life. She is young and pretty, her face covered in thick court makeup, and her pale kimono drags the floor, trailing behind her like a shroud. Her dark eyes gaze steadily back at all of you for an instant before she turns and smoothly, unhurriedly, steps past the door and out of sight.

The PCs may pursue if they wish. If they do not make a TN 30 on an **Athletics (Running) / Strength** roll, they see nothing when they reach the doorway and look out into the hallway except a dropped scarf. Court clothes, especially those worn by kemari players, require a Raise for no purpose on the roll to succeed. If they make the roll, they see the trailing end of a kimono going around a corner.

Turning the corner leads the PCs into a hallway with a number of guest quarters for low-ranking samurai. An **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 15, spots an additional, non-obvious door. The hidden door is intended for servant use, and leads to the servants’ quarters. The presence of the door is a complete red herring – the woman went into one of the samurai quarters’ rooms, then out through a window into the gardens.

If a PC opens a door basically at random, roll 1k1 – on a 12 or more, they have chosen the right room and see the woman jumping out the window. They can pursue and potentially catch the impersonator there. With the woman in clear view, the pursuit is handled with Contested **Athletics (Running) / Water** rolls (the Raise for court garb still applies). The PCs need to beat the woman on two consecutive rolls before five rolls are up in order to catch her before she escapes.

If the PCs try opening the doors methodically, sequentially or actually choose the servants’ quarters door, they automatically lose her.

If the PCs catch the woman, “she” is revealed to be the ronin Gishou (see the Conclusion for the results of this). If they do not, they must return to the throne room, where Okucheo is waiting anxiously. He does not berate them for failing to catch her, despite what they might expect. “One cannot catch a ghost,” he breathes, mostly to himself. If the PCs show him the scarf, he looks visibly shaken, reaching up to rub at his throat uncomfortably. (It is the same design and fabric as the

one used by Hantei Hime to hang herself.) Either way, he turns to Juubunnoichi and publically asks for her assistance:

“The restless dead cannot be allowed to trouble the Imperial Palace; if you can, find a way to set the spirit that plagues Us to ease, that We can rule the Empire in peace and under Heaven’s guidance.” Juubunnoichi considers the matter briefly before murmuring, “Of course, Hantei-sama. But realize that to undertake this task, I may have to ask much of you – including some things you may be loathe to sacrifice.” Okuchoe frowns dangerously, but his words are calm when he speaks at last. “Then so let it be.”

Juubunnoichi bows and withdraws, with Okuchoe retiring almost immediately thereafter. Rumors soon begin to trickle through the assembled court that the monk’s ritual will take place the following day.

If by now the PCs have still not uncovered Gishou, Jinkisu suggests they speak with Juubunnoichi for insight or guidance. *“She was present for the incident with the vase, so we can speak to her without violating the command of the Regent, and she was there today at the kemari competition – we know she is not involved, as she was in the midst of the event and visible the whole time. None of our investigations have suggested we are dealing with a returned spirit, and the evidence of that is hard to hide. So we can safely assume she is not responsible, and perhaps if we warn her of what we suspect, we can prepare her for the possibility that her ritual will not be effective.”*

As mentioned above, getting in to see Juubunnoichi requires an **Etiquette (Bureaucracy) / Awareness** roll, TN 40. However, if the PCs mention any sort of “spiritual crisis” (theirs or Okuchoe’s, either one) or use a similar topic as part of their plea, the TN drops to 15 and also allows them to roll **Lore: Theology / Awareness** instead. Assuming they can meet with her, Juubunnoichi listens politely, intently and thoughtfully to whatever the PCs have to tell her, but offers no opinions until they finish. Assuming they tell her something like the truth, she tilts her head in a considering fashion before replying.

“Your concerns are intriguing, samurai-sans, and I commend you for your initiative in unearthing what you have so far discovered. It is indeed possible that the spirit I seek to lay to rest tomorrow is not a spirit at all, but flesh and blood, with some deceitful purpose. I will consider your words. However, let me assure you of something: regardless of what transpires, the effort will not be wasted. The ritual itself is simple – a

stick of incense, a prayer scroll from the Tao, and some meditation mantras – but the consequences might well be quite potent, even without a spirit at all. The Tao teaches us that all suffering stems from one of the Three Sins: desire, fear, and regret. It seems to me that there is suffering within this palace, and it may well stem from the regrets of the Regent. I will set him to meditating upon them. If there is a spirit feeding upon those regrets, his meditations on those events that trouble his conscience will weaken it, thus allowing my ritual to work. Even if there is no spirit, though, the exercise will strengthen the soul of one who has been chosen by Heaven to lead our Empire. Surely you can see the value in that?”

If the PCs tell her something else, or try to push the matter further, she gently but firmly rebuffs them, refusing to take any actions on their behalf. She instead insists that she needs to meditate herself in preparation for the next day’s ceremony, and politely dismisses them. Jinkisu is disappointed, but tries to put a brave face on it, consoling herself with the idea that the group has done all it could to address the matter.

As the PCs leave, they may make a TN 20 **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll. If they succeed, they catch sight of a small parade of servants, more than half a dozen in all, each carrying a wooden box, stepping out of a “hidden” servants’ door back up the corridor behind them. The servants approach Juubunnoichi’s door and knock politely. After a short pause, during which there is no response, the servants deposit the boxes on the floor outside the monk’s door and begin retreating back into the door again.

If the PCs approach the servants and ask, the servants politely inform the PCs that the boxes contain the special materials “the most honorable monk” requested for the cleansing ritual. The servants do not know what they contain, as the boxes were prepared by the kamijochuu, and the boxes themselves are not labeled in any way. Opening the boxes, however, reveals dozens of bottles of extremely rare oils and specially-crafted incenses, along with jade and gold religious figurines, guardian statues and so forth. All in all, the collection is worth more than a thousand koku – even the least commerce-oriented samurai can recognize the kind of value represented here.

Alternatively, if the PCs ask the kamijochuu, she tells them the same, confessing conspiratorially that she has rarely spent so much money so fast, even as the Imperial Palace’s kamijochuu. If the PCs ask where the woman’s orders came from, she says she was given a message from Juubunnoichi – but further questioning

reveals that the message was delivered by one of the aides of Yasuki Kiromayu, “the ronin boy.”

This can lead to a confrontation (see Act Four: The Unmasking); Jinkisu, however, suggests they wait to see who comes to collect the boxes.

If the PCs just go to bed, the boxes are gone in the morning, and the ritual proceeds as planned. If they stay and watch, though, not long before midnight, Juubunnoichi’s door opens and the monk appears to step out of it, leaning down to begin picking up the boxes. Success on an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 20, reveals an important detail – “Juubunnoichi” is not surrounded by the yellow glow of a returned spirit. If confronted, the monk whispers, “I am sorry, samurai-sans, but I am in the midst of my meditations, and cannot speak with you right now,” and tries to finish getting the boxes and close the door again. The PCs can make **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** rolls, contested by Gishou’s **Acting / Awareness**, to realize it is not the monk’s voice.

If the PCs force a confrontation, the “monk” turns and runs into the room, slamming the door behind “her.” This is another series of chase rolls, as after the kemari game above, but as it happens deep within the Palace, it takes 7 rolls for Gishou to escape.

Gishou first dives out the window, taking 1k1 Wounds from the drop to the ground about 15 feet down; following him causes the same damage to anyone else who makes the same jump. As the PCs run through Juubunnoichi’s room, they see the real monk asleep on her futon – although not harmed, she has been drugged to remain asleep, and cannot be woken for several hours. Again, catching Gishou allows the PCs to uncover his deception – see the Conclusion.

Part Four: The Unmasking

Once the PCs get enough information to identify Gishou (either his name or his appearance), they can locate him with an **Etiquette (Bureaucracy)**, **Courtier (Gossip)**, **Investigation (Interrogation)** or **Lore: Underworld / Awareness** roll, TN 15. Success places him as an aide to Yasuki Kiromayu, the Imperial Treasurer. Calling at least one Raise reveals he joined Kiromayu’s staff about six months previous, impressing the Treasurer with his clever insight and people skills despite having no real experience in a similar position in the past. Two Raises adds that, since Kiromayu isn’t much for social situations himself, he has begun relying

heavily on Gishou to handle Court-related matters in his stead.

If Jinkisu is consulted, she points out that the group has built a strong case of circumstantial evidence, but testimony of actual wrong-doing would be needed to actually bring a charge against him. She recommends keeping him under observation – if they witness him committing a crime, such as penetrating the Imperial quarters without permission, they can inform the miharu and have him arrested. If they learn his identity soon enough, this can allow the PCs to catch him in the act of setting up one of the later hoaxes and seal his fate.

Observing Gishou without tipping him off requires a **Stealth (Shadowing) / Agility** roll, TN 20; the PC may add the total of their Investigation and Courtier Skill Ranks to the result of the roll. Whether successful or not, most weeks the PCs will only see Gishou going about appropriate duties, with nothing incriminating whatsoever about his activities. Only on the weeks where an event is scheduled that he plans to disrupt can the PCs catch him doing anything for which they can provide testimony. In such cases, how hard it is to catch him depends on whether the PCs make the Stealth roll. If they succeed on the roll, they can observe him fairly easily, but Gishou’s innate caution means he usually disguises himself as a servant girl when he sneaks out to set up his tricks. The PCs must overcome his **Acting / Awareness** roll with their **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll in order to keep tabs on him. As long as they do so, however, the PCs will automatically be able to spot him setting up the “haunting” events if they make the TN 20 Stealth roll.

If they fail it, however, Gishou tries to lose them by disappearing into the maze of Palace corridors before he undertakes his illicit tasks. The PCs must still see through Gishou’s disguise, as described above, but must also beat his **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** with their **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** in order to stay with him, while likewise overcoming his **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** with their **Stealth (Shadowing) / Agility**. Only if they win all three contested rolls will Gishou be caught in the act; if they fail the Stealth roll but make the Investigation roll, Gishou will abort his attempt and just wait for the next chance to appear, while if they fail either of the Investigation rolls, Gishou manages to elude them and goes on with his plan without the PCs’ interference.

If, on the other hand, the PCs ignore Jinkisu’s advice or do not ask her, they are likely to either confront Gishou directly or make their case to Yasuki Kiromayu. Confronting Gishou directly is almost impossible; he

flatly refuses to speak to the PCs, and responds to any aggression by calling out for the Seppun miharu, who will side with him (due to his patron) in any dispute unless high-ranking samurai lend their voices to the PCs' cause.

Persuading Kiromayu to help, however, is a high-risk, high-reward option. Once the PCs can get in to see him – as mentioned above, this is impossible until the month of Fu Leng, and requires a TN 40 **Etiquette (Bureaucracy) / Awareness** roll even then – they still must persuade him that their case has any merit. Getting him to believe their charges requires a successful **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** roll, TN 40; good presentation of the evidence the group has so far assembled, or if they can convince Miya Ippai to offer direct testimony about Gishou's "poor work history" (as simple as asking him, if they think to try it), gains the character a Free Raise – these Raises stack if the GM sees fit. If they succeed, Kiromayu orders Gishou held and his quarters searched. The search uncovers costumes (several women's kimono, servant's garb, even a basic Seppun guard's outfit), theatrical makeup and (most damning from Kiromayu's perspective) copies of orders written in Kiromayu's name that Kiromayu did not command. If the search happens before "Hime" appears at the kemari contest, the scarf is found as well.

Failing to convince Kiromayu, however, tips Gishou off; he gathers up his things and leaves the Palace immediately, abandoning his scheme at once. This ends the "haunting," but leaves the matter unresolved in the short term. Jinkisu is particularly frustrated by this outcome, as she believes a criminal has been allowed to escape, even if his plan has been foiled.

Conclusion

If the PCs do not uncover Gishou before the cleansing ritual is performed, the haunting stops and the Winter Court comes to a peaceful conclusion. Jinkisu is disappointed, unhappy with her failure, but thanks the PCs for tolerating her "little theory" even if it went nowhere. Okuchoe seems satisfied with the resolution, although he carries a somewhat contemplative air for the last two weeks of the Court.

Should the PCs reveal Gishou's treachery, however, things go quite differently. Once the PCs have the means to capture Gishou, they can do so without difficulty – Gishou only tries to flee, he never fights. When caught, the ronin confesses his plans entirely and without hesitation, adopting a certain air of gallows humor about his situation. He is well aware that he has

no hope for salvation once caught; lacking the chance to live, he decides instead to at least try to impress his captors with his ingenuity. As a result, he is quite thorough and specific in his confession, which also has the benefit of sparing him the unpleasantness of torture. That is his only mercy, however – Okuchoe orders him hung from the neck, denying him seppuku and perhaps deliberately echoing the means by which Hime herself originally died.

If the PCs catch Gishou before his scheme plays itself all the way out, they may avoid some of the events of this module entirely. In this case, the major court events (the sadane contest, the poetry reading, the iaijutsu tournament, the presentation of the play, and the kemari contest) all occur, but those that happen after Gishou is caught do so without any unusual or spectral characteristics. The GM should modify the descriptions appropriately.

At the last open Court of the season, with the New Year's day festival waiting on the next day, Okuchoe publically recognizes them (although he excludes anyone who offended him at the first dinner of the court): *"If not for the efforts of these inquisitive and honorable samurai, this deceitful cretin would have escaped the deserved punishment of Our Imperial justice. Let all acknowledge their glorious acts on Our behalf."* The recognition earns the PCs each half a Rank of Glory, and the polite respect of most of the attendees of the Regent's Court.

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: | +2XP |
| Capturing Gishou: | +1XP |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Total Possible Experience: | 4XP |
|-----------------------------------|------------|

Honor

If the PCs pursued the investigation with all diligence:

+0.3 Honor for Honor Ranks 0-3

+0.2 Honor for Honor Ranks 4-5

+0.1 Honor for Honor Rank 6

Honor Ranks 7+ get no Honor gain

Glory

+5 Glory if the PCs captured Gishou and were recognized by Hantei Okuchoe

Other Glory gains for participating in the various court events

If a PC was not recognized and earned no other Glory, they lose -4 Glory for inactivity

Other Awards/Penalties

PCs with less than Status Rank 2 receive +0.1 Status for getting Okuchoe's letter

Any PC who agreed to Okuchoe's offer at the dinner receives the Owl cert, along with the accompanying Positional Status

A PC who won the iaijutsu tournament gains the Legions cert and its accompanying Positional Status

A PC who goes out of their way to support Jinkisu during the investigation (making an effort to keep her in the loop, discussing the value of the evidence collected, etc.) may gain her as an Ally at the GM's discretion. Her Devotion and Influence are each only 1, and it is worth noting that if she appears in future modules, she will be renamed "Gennai Jinkisu", as the Phoenix Agasha will have changed their family name.

Other gains and losses as noted in the text

Module Tracking Sheets

Note if the PC was challenged over the rumors about the private dinner, and the name of the NPC who challenged them

GM Reporting

Which NPC challenged the PC, and which PC was challenged? Who won?

Who won the iaijutsu contest?

Did the "cleansing ritual" occur?

What was Gishou's fate?

Did any of the "haunting" events fail to occur, and if so, which ones?

GM must report this information BEFORE (8/10/2013) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

Agasha Jinkisu

Jinkisu was the daughter of Agasha parents with close ties to their Kitsuki cousins. When the Agasha left the Dragon, many of their Kitsuki cousins were sympathetic – Hitomi’s madness was visible to many, not just in the Agasha family. One of these cousins was an influential sensei at the Kitsuki Investigator School, and arranged for Jinkisu to study there when it became clear she could not speak to the kami.

Unfortunately, most of her schoolmates were not as understanding, and Jinkisu was ostracized and bullied for most of her time at school. Now that she has graduated, much of that experience remains with her, and her first instinct in almost any social situation is to look for somewhere to blend in and become unnoticed. Jinkisu is a relatively plain girl who wears kimono just slightly too big for her in the Phoenix colors (she habitually pushes up her sleeves when collecting evidence) and styles her hair in a simple, boyish bowl cut that doesn’t suit her at all.

Air 2 Earth 2 Fire 2 Water 2 Void 2
Honor 5.5 Intelligence 3 Perception 4
Status 1.0 Glory 1.0

Initiative: 3k2 **Attack:** 3k2 (wakizashi, Complex)

Armor TN: 19 **Damage:** 4k2 (wakizashi)

Reduction: 0

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

School/Rank: Kitsuki Investigator 1

Techniques: *Kitsuki’s Method:* Free Raise on all Investigation rolls, adds Perception to Armor TN in skirmish

Skills: Courtier 3, Etiquette (Courtesy) 3, Games: Shogi 1, Investigation (Interrogation, Search) 3, Lore: History 1, Kenjutsu 1, Medicine (Antidotes) 2, Meditation 1, Sincerity 2, Spellcraft 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Clear Thinker, Sage / Antisocial (1 rank)

Gishou

Gishou is a ronin con artist of exceptional skill and daring. While he could make a comfortable living preying off of gullible peasants, his pride has driven him to attempt a big score against the highest samurai authority available. Though he has worked with the Shosuro over the course of his long and checkered career, Gishou is an independent operative and has no loyalty to anyone save himself. He prefers to avoid violence (largely because he’s not terribly good at it), and has a fair amount of contempt for those less intelligent than himself. Physically, he is unassuming, being slight of build and having somewhat androgynous features – over the years he has turned this to an advantage and it makes it easier for him to pull off the various disguises that are his specialty.

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 4 Void 4
Awareness 5
Honor 0.4 Status 0 Glory 1.3

Initiative: 9k4

Armor TN: 25

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

School/Rank: none (True Ronin)/Insight Rank 5

Skills: Acting 5, Athletics 4, Calligraphy 4, Courtier 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Forgery 5, Hunting 2, Investigation (Search) 4, Kenjutsu 2, Knives 4, Lore: History 3, Lore: Theology 2, Lore: Underworld 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 6, Sleight of Hand (Conceal) 4, Stealth 4

Advantages/Disadvantages: Bland, Luck I / Contrary, Greedy, Overconfident

Special Note: Gishou has managed to acquire from a previous mark a gaijin amulet that renders the wearer invisible to the kami. This functionally makes him immune to targeted spells as well as making it impossible to determine his actions with Commune spells. When captured, the Imperial authorities will confiscate and destroy such a blasphemous artifact. PCs attempting to claim it for themselves this may contact the Campaign Admin, but should expect serious consequences from that action – including, but not limited to, losing all of their Honor and possibly acquiring Curses from the Fortunes.

Appendix #2: NPCs

This section is intended to facilitate using the host of NPCs present at a major court. Full stats are unnecessary for most of the characters; the GM is encouraged to use their Insight Rank and School to extrapolate if needed (those rolls required by events in the mod are already provided). These NPCs are here to help flesh out the court, not to provide for major plot points other than those already presented in the module.

Hantei Okuchoe, the Imperial Regent, is a darkly handsome returned spirit who is careful to maintain an attitude of absolute authority. He will make every effort to be genial with his guests, but expects the respect due to his position in the Celestial Order. (Status 9.9, Glory 5.4, Infamy 2.1, Honor 3.2)

Otomo Mitsuhide, the Imperial Chancellor, is another returned spirit in a high position in the Imperial Court. Slightly above average height, he is otherwise physically unremarkable and tends to blend into a crowd despite his status. He is remote and distant, but unfailingly polite even to those who do not realize who he is. (Status 9.0, Glory 2.4, Honor 6.3)

Hida O-Ushi, Champion of the Crab. An attractive woman, she is quiet and contained, though an occasional flash of anger will spark from her eyes when challenged. Whatever regrets she may have, she is determined to lead the Clan to the best of her ability and has little patience for those who attempt to cast aspersions on her for the alliances she has accepted. (Status 8.0, Glory 7.4, Honor 4.2; Hida Bushi 5)

Hida Tsuneo, Rikugunshokan of the Crab armies. Tall and muscular, he is the archetypical Crab bushi: a vaguely threatening figure clad in the dark steel of the Armor of the Shadow Warrior, armed even in the presence of the Regent. He is a man of few words in court, however, and despite the unease his presence causes is careful to never lose a firm grasp on his temper. (Status 7.5, Glory 8.1, Honor 3.7; Hida Bushi 5/Crab Defender of the Wall 1)

Seppun Hotaitaka, daimyo of the Seppun family and commander of the Imperial Guard. A handsome bushi in his mid-twenties, he is young for his position but proved himself as a warrior during the War Against the Shadow. He is, however, somewhat less comfortable in open court. (Status 9.3, Glory 6.4, Honor 7.1; Seppun Guardsman 5)

Otomo Sorai, daimyo of the Otomo family. A brilliant political manipulator, and renowned for his skill as such, Sorai is careful in his interactions to avoid intimidating samurai unintentionally (because he is naturally aware of his reputation). He is an older man, once handsome but giving ground to age with ill grace. (Status 9.3, Glory 4.8, Honor 4.7; Otomo Courtier 5)

Miya Yumi, daimyo of the Miya family and Imperial Herald. Friendly and energetic, Yumi is remarkably approachable for her high station. She is dedicated to the concept of peace in the Empire, but understands the nature of samurai and mostly attempts to ensure that battles are fought for worthy causes as much as possible. While many would be disappointed with how seldom they would be heeded, Yumi manages to keep a positive outlook on life. (Status 9.3, Glory 5.2, Honor 5.4; Miya Herald 5)

Yoritomo Gusai, Defender of Golden Sun Bay(!). A battle-scarred returned spirit with something of a chip on his shoulder, Gusai is quite obviously a proud and ambitious samurai. His position as the “Defender of Golden Sun Bay” was bestowed upon him as a salve to his pride during the peasant attack on the capital, but he has seized the opportunity with both hands. To his credit, he has done a great deal of work on the naval defenses of Ootosan Uchi, but those who complain that his control over the sea routes approaches piracy are not exaggerating that much. (Status 7.5, Glory 6.4, Honor 2.8; Yoritomo Bushi 5)

Doji Meihu, commander of the Regent’s Guard. Though he has been officially declared a ronin by the Crane Clan, Meihu maintains his family name by a dispensation from the Imperial Regent. In return, he has transferred his loyalty entirely to the Hantei, and while there are heavy tensions between him and the many Crab that are allied with the Regent, Meihu is largely content to bide his time. With any other Clan, he is polite and courteous, if somewhat arrogant. (Status 7.0, Glory 4.1, Honor 4.1; Kakita Bushi 4)

Yasuki Kiromayu, Imperial Treasurer. A lean, thin-featured samurai of average height, Kiromayu is a drab courtier whose only real interests are in numbers and economics. He is not truly a merchant, unlike most of his family, but he is a master of finance and is quite proud of his ability to turn ten koku into twenty. Unfortunately, there is very little else to his personality and his (Status 7.0, Glory 1.8, Honor 3.9; Yasuki Courtier 4)

Juubunnoichi, head of the Order of the Tenth Kami, is a returned spirit with a serious, almost grave, manner. She is devoted to increasing the standing of her new order, but is absolutely committed to doing so in a proper and traditional fashion. While she appears to be as ascetic and spiritual as any Brotherhood monk, she also displays a surprising amount of affinity for the courtly graces, and is a particularly adept conversationalist. (Status 1.5, Glory 2.4, Honor 6.6; Four Temples Monk 6)

The following NPCs are all, like the PCs, young samurai who have yet to establish anything in the way of a significant reputation in the Empire. The intention is that there will be two samurai from each Clan, counting the PCs; if there is exactly one PC from a Clan, drop the NPC with the asterisk – if there are two or more PCs from the same Clan, drop them both (with the exception of Agasha Jinkisu, who is always present).

Hiruma Asenki: A skilled hunter, he will generally use the same patience and calm in the court as he would in the field. If pressed, Asenki can be as ruthless as any predator, and is unlikely to back down from any threat. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 2.5, Hiruma Bushi 1)

Kaiu Barishu*: Intelligent and analytical, Barishu is likely to alienate the more refined members of the court with his narrow focus and brusque speech. However, his hobby of making model siege weapons out of found objects is often amusing. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 4.5, Kaiu Engineer 1)

Asahina Fimenko*: An engaging socialite, Fimenko displays somewhat more cunning than her friendly exterior initially indicates. Though a moderately talented shugenja, she enjoys ikebana (despite what might charitably be called a “brown thumb”). (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 6.5, Asahina Shugenja 1)

Kakita Wesharu – Charming, if a little grandiose, Wesharu is a very skilled poet who has already achieved some acclaim for his work. (Status 1.0, Glory 2.0, Honor 6.5, Doji Courtier 1)

Hitomi Sarucho*: While most members of the Hitomi Order avoid the intricacies of court, Sarucho has become quite curious about the constant conflict inherent in Rokugani politics. Unfortunately, she has a tendency to be blunt, and tries too hard to fit in. (Status 1.0, Glory 0.5, Honor 2.5, Tattooed Monk 1)

Mirumoto Renan: An extremely perceptive young bushi, Renan is jaded far beyond his years. He quite enjoys looking at the other male bushi at court, particularly while they practice their martial arts, but has chosen to avoid the complications of dalliance at such a prestigious event. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 4.5, Mirumoto Bushi 1)

Ikoma Arau: Like many Ikoma, Arau is eloquent and forceful in his speech. He also likes to demonstrate his learning by citing obscure precedents from ancient Rokugani history and law for the current situation, no matter how appropriate the conversation is to such a tactic. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 6.5, Ikoma Bard 1)

Matsu Niwei*: Grimly dedicated to maintaining her honor during the Imperial court, Niwei is extremely self-controlled outside of battle. Those who watch her will note that she pops her knuckles when angered. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 6.5, Matsu Berserker 1)

Tsuruchi Mareko: Mareko is pretty, with wide eyes that make her seem perpetually startled. She is highly wary, and gaining her trust is very difficult. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 2.5, Tsuruchi Archer 1)

Yoritomo Dashi*: A typical Mantis soldier-of-fortune, Dashi is brash and uncouth, though manages to be fairly charming in a roguish fashion. He knows dozens of sea chanties, all of them with highly questionable lyrics. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 1.5, Yoritomo Bushi 1)

Agasha Jinkisu (always present, regardless of how many Phoenix PCs there are) (see statblock in Appendix #1)

Shiba Anizu*: While a relatively skilled warrior, Anizu’s sensei has recommended against assigning him as a yojimbo to an active shugenja until he can gain some experience. As pious as any Phoenix, he is unfortunately also quite naïve, though his optimism can make him a pleasant companion. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 5.5, Shiba Bushi 1)

Bayushi Chishu*: Refined and elegant, Chishu is beautiful woman with expensive tastes. Fortunately, she rarely lacks for suitors to provide for her. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 2.5, Bayushi Courtier 1)

Soshi Tsomu: A friendly young man who manages to be slightly threatening even (or especially) with a smile on his face. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 2.5, Soshi Shugenja 1)

Ide Wetashi: An outgoing young courtier, Wetashi is curious about the samurai present in court and regards the season as an opportunity to learn their stories. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 5.5, Ide Emissary 1)

Utaku Derama*: While most Utaku are known for speaking rarely, Derama’s quiet nature gives the impression of caution and poise. Though the court may not be her preferred duty, she approaches it with dignity. (Status 1.0, Glory 1.0, Honor 6.5, Utaku Shiotome 1)

Appendix #3: Investigation

The PCs' general lack of social status means any investigation is likely to go very slowly – they simply lack the standing to get people to stop and answer their questions. For the duration of the entire Court, any roll not based directly on the PCs' own knowledge or observations takes roughly one week of in-game time to learn any information from. This includes gossip-chasing, interrogating witnesses, or consulting outside specialists in necessary lores. Time continues to pass as the rolls are made, and new events may therefore occur before the PCs finish investigating the previous ones. (For the purposes of this mechanic, consider each month to have four weeks exactly in it.) As the rolls last over an extended period of time, PC can (and probably should) spend Void freely on these rolls; if the PC has a Disadvantage that can disrupt their behavior as a result of Void expenditure, particularly Touch of the Void, the public setting costs that PC a point of Glory in lieu of the usual penalties.

The following clues can be found by investigating PCs through outreach to other characters in the court or within Ootosan Uchi. The basic roll is either **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** or **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** to find someone who knows the answer. This roll may be attempted again if failed without increasing the TN; there are enough people to speak within the court that the difficulty is not any greater and all that is lost by a failure is the time. Each line of inquiry has additional information that can be discovered by calling Raises – this represents attempting to find more knowledgeable informants and failure is treated as a normal failure (i.e., no information is learned). Some information is also available through Lore rolls or other sources, often at different TNs – the relevant rolls and TNs are listed in parentheses below. Any given PC may only roll once for themselves on the Lore, to indicate what information they themselves have learned. They may avail themselves of the libraries available in the capital to attempt again; this research allows them to roll again, but grants no additional benefits. However, calling Raises is not necessary for the Lore skills in order to learn additional information; instead, the available data is listed for succeeding at higher TNs is listed with the Raises for the basic roll.

Flowers (Lore: Nature, Flowers, Horticulture, etc., or similar Craft specialty / Intelligence, TN 20)

TN 25: The flowers in the vase that exploded (or found on the Regent's throne during the kemari competition) are an extremely rare morning glory hybrid called "The Princess' Blush."

1 Raise (Lore: 25): That particular hybrid has not been widely cultivated in several centuries.

2 Raises (Lore: 35): Originally created during the reign of Hantei XVI by a Doji artisan as a gift for the Empress, Hantei (Doji) Hime, it was popular for several years during that time, then suddenly and rather unexpectedly went out of favor, with only a few diehard horticulturalists still maintaining breeding stocks into the modern era.

Explosives (Craft: Explosives / Intelligence, TN 15, or Lore: Underworld / Awareness, TN 25)

TN 20: Generally, explosives in Ootosan Uchi are available only from a small number of Agasha (both Dragon and Phoenix) suppliers of fireworks in the city. There are less than half a dozen merchants authorized to handle such dangerous materiel.

1 Raise (Lore: 30): A few Mantis smugglers have recently gotten into the business as well, supplied by a group of Moshi who stole the formulae during the Mantis invasion of the Phoenix lands a decade ago.

2 Raises (Lore: Underworld only, 35): One of the Mantis smugglers, a woman named Moshi Tsurime, recently sold a specially-made-to-specifications batch to a ronin, but no one knows exactly who the ronin was.

Painting

TN 15: The choice of the painting was made shortly after the Winter Court began, weeks before the actual sadane competition. It was sitting in the main hall of the court for the entirety of the previous night with no continual guard – several Seppun passed through the hall every hour, but there were periods of five-ten minutes throughout the night where it was unguarded.

1 Raise: The painting was suggested by Yasuki Kiromayu, who is a patron of the artist, Doji Genahi, although the final selection was approved by Otomo Mitsuhide.

Blanket – only if the PCs discover the heat-sensitive cords woven into it (Acting / Intelligence, TN 20)

TN 25: Although not widely known in the Empire, the Soshi family has been known to use such things in their theatrical displays; it is something of a "trade secret," however.

1 Raise: There is only one possible source for such things in Ootosan Uchi; a Soshi merchant with ties to several Scorpion acting troupes has a shop in the city. This man, Soshi Asheo, has the usual Scorpion discretion, but as is often the case, that discretion might be “negotiable.” If the PCs learn this, they can bribe Asheo with at least 10 koku to learn that his only non-Scorpion sale recently was to a fairly suspicious-seeming ronin. Asheo does not have a name, but can provide a fairly accurate description of Gishou. (As usual, a bribe might cause a minor Honor loss, depending on the character offering it.)

Access to the Imperial Quarters

TN 10: Access to the quarters of the Regent is limited to Okuchoe himself, a small group of Seppun samurai, Okuchoe’s kamijochuu (head of the household servants) and the servants under her direct supervision.

1 Raise: The servants and miharu are mostly new to the palace, as they gained their current positions when Okuchoe moved in a year and a half ago. The miharu don’t actually pay all that much attention to the servants, and it is all too possible that they don’t know all the servants by name or face.

2 Raises: The servants themselves admit that they have seen more traffic through their part of the castle than they are used to. Descriptions vary widely; some mention a young, pretty samurai-ko with no clear Clan identifier, others a wiry-looking, short ronin, and still others reference a variety of new faces among the servants that they thought were temporary help brought in by the kamijochuu. If asked, though, the kamijochuu insists she has hired no one new in more than a year.

Okuchoe’s History (Lore: History / Intelligence, TN 10)

TN 15: Throughout the last year and a half, rumors have begun swirling through the Empire about a “hidden history” from Okuchoe’s first life as a mortal; the rumors have been shocking in their brutality, and many have dismissed them because they seem almost unbelievable. Most who do not think they are true assume they are slanders being spread by Okuchoe’s political enemies, particularly those allied to the Emerald Champion, Kakita Toshiken.

1 Raise (Lore: 15): One of the most persistent rumors suggests that Okuchoe was personally responsible for the deaths of several of his own family members, including his mother and all but one of his siblings; some versions suggest he might have killed his father, Hantei XV, as well. Almost nothing is known of his wife, Hantei (Doji) Hime, however.

2 Raises (Lore: 25): The history of Hantei Hime would only be known to returned spirits from that era (probably only ones who were associated with the Imperial court of that time, in fact), and anyone they chose to speak to. There was a recent census of returned spirits performed by some Miya historians that might contain some information.

Doji Hime – only if the PCs learned about the census or think of it on their own (it was mentioned in All That Will Be Lost and a few other rumors)

TN 15: The census was headed by Miya Ipeei, a young, self-involved archivist with an unsavory reputation – although skilled with documents, he is apparently a man with a wide variety of vices, which made him an odd choice for the survey. (Raises are required to speak personally with Ipeei himself.)

1 Raise: Speaking with Ipeei reveals that his notes regarding the spirits who returned from the era of Hantei XVI’s reign are gone, apparently stolen at some point over the last year or two; he is unable to offer names or details. He is able to recall, though, that some of the spirits suggested that the Empress committed suicide – not by jigai, as would have been traditional, but by hanging herself with a scarf.

2 Raises (only if the PCs have learned about the possible involvement of a ronin): About six months prior, Ipeei lost the services of one of his ronin aides, a man named Gishou. Ipeei is quite happy to have him gone, and bad-mouths the ronin quite viciously; if the PCs make a TN 20 **Investigation (Interrogation)** or **Intimidation (Control)** / **Awareness** roll at this point, they can force Ipeei to admit that his anger at Gishou is the result of Gishou having been blackmailing the Miya over some personal... indiscretions (Ipeei does not admit this outright, but the message is clear). He adamantly insists he did not give the missing documents to Gishou, but is quick to suggest the ronin might have stolen them; he also has not been getting blackmail threats since Gishou disappeared, much to Ipeei’s pleased confusion.

Yasuki Kiromayu (Commerce / Intelligence, TN 10)

TN 15: Yasuki Kiromayu, the Imperial Treasurer, was plucked from obscurity three years ago by the Imperial Chancellor. He has proven to be highly skilled at managing finances, reputedly increasing the size of the Imperial Treasury to a significant degree. As these funds provide for every Imperial institution in the Empire,

from the upkeep of the capital, to the Imperial Legions and both the Emerald and Jade Magistrates, as well as the cost of furnishing the Imperial Court and Imperial families in appropriate styles, he has taken his responsibilities very seriously.

1 Raise (Commerce: 15): Despite the peasant unrest and various conflicts between the Clans, Kiromayu has managed to continue increasing the Imperial revenues. However, as the majority of the Emerald Magistrates (who, among their duties, are responsible for collecting taxes) have indicated their support of the Emerald Champion, there is some concern over how the Imperial Treasury will continue to expand without increasing taxation across the Empire. Kiromayu, though generally publicly quiet about his duties, has stated that he is not concerned about the matter and his confidence appears to be justified so far.

2 Raises (Commerce: 30): Kiromayu is described by many courtiers as “the most boring man in Rokugan”, having evidently inherited the title from the now-deceased Suzume Mukashino. Though he is a high-ranking samurai in the Imperial Capital with both power and wealth that most could only dream about, he has made very little effort to take advantage of his position. He neither attends nor hosts the lavish parties he could easily afford, he spends the vast majority of his time occupied with his duties, and he has no significant social contacts in court – with one exception. The Imperial Regent has expressed his pleasure with Kiromayu’s attention to his duties on several occasions, making the Treasurer another of the Hantei’s significant allies in the Crab Clan.

Juubunnoichi (Lore: Theology or Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence, TN 15)

TN 15: Juubunnoichi is a returned spirit who has founded an Order of the Tenth Kami to honor the spirit of the Kami Ryoshun, who guides the spirits of the dead to the Spirit Realm to which they have been assigned by Emma-O, the Fortune of Death. The Order believes in helping guide the souls of the living to their proper spiritual path in imitation of the guidance Ryoshun provides in the afterlife

1 Raise (Lore: 20): “Juubunnoichi” is more a title than a name – much as Hantei ordered no one should call Ryoshun by his true name, the Order’s members set aside their true names as well, taking up descriptive titles in their place. The ban against speaking Ryoshun’s name was rescinded by Toturi after Ryoshun’s public intervention in the Battle of Oblivion’s Gate (he guided many of the returned spirits to the portal that lead back to Ningen-do), but the monks still hold to the practice.

2 Raises (Lore: 25): Juubunnoichi was actually the head of the Brotherhood during her first life, having reached the position after rising through the hierarchy of the Order of Emma-O. Although the histories are not definitive, many who have studied the matter believe she was actually the younger sister of Hantei XII, who retired upon the ascension of her brother to the throne.

Player Handout #1

Honorable samurai,

I trust this letter finds you well, and that your service to your lord proceeds smoothly. While I would not expect you to set aside your duties without need, it is my understanding that you have not yet made plans to attend any of the winter's formal courts around the Empire. If that is the case, I am honored to extend to you an invitation to be my personal guest at my own court, held in the Imperial Palace in Ootosan Uchi, this winter. If you are able to attend, I am sure we will find much to discuss. When you arrive in the capital, please feel free to visit my friend Asahina Benjiro at his shop, the Windswept Leaves; Benjiro-san is one of the finest tailors in the Empire, and it would please me greatly to offer you a sample of his work as a token of my hospitality.

Sincerely,
Hantei Okucheo
Imperial Regent

Player Handout #2

My honored guest,

It would be my honor if you would join me and a small group of my friends for a private dinner this evening. I feel there is much we might discuss, if you can spare the time. A servant will escort you at the appropriate hour.

Sincerely,
Hantei Okucho