

Deadly Ground

**A One-Round Low-Mid Rank Adventure for Heroes of
Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido
Month of Shinjo, 1141 (Late Fall/Early Winter)**

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As winter closes in to cover the land, an unexpected delay threatens to ensnare a group of samurai hurrying to Winter Court.

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

GM's Information

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

Reminder

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a low-mid rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank 2.

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

Low End Party (most/all characters Rank 1 and there are no rank 3 PCs): In sections where 2 or 3 TNs are listed, use the lowest one.

High End Party (At least 2 combat capable characters Rank 3): Increase the TN for spotting the Ambush and traps, resisting the weather, and all Athletics rolls by 5. Use the high end stat block for the killer.

Adventure Summary and Background

It is the end of Fall, very nearly the official start of winter, and samurai everywhere are being sent to represent their daimyo at various Winter Courts around Rokugan. With the recent confusion and turmoil in the Empire, some samurai were kept on fall assignments longer than others and are only just now hurrying to reach their court destination.

The PCs are passing through southern Scorpion lands to take the most direct route to their destination, the Vigilant Keep of the Monkey. Unfortunately, south-eastern Scorpion lands are also known for having early and bitter winters, and this year will be no exception. The roads around the village of Chiyuki Mura are well-maintained, however, and quite direct as it is built along a trade route.

Chiyuki Mura was fairly recently rebuilt, as it was razed to the ground by the Imperial Legions in the aftermath of the Scorpion Clan Coup. For many years, the land remained barren and empty until the last surviving descendent of the previous gokenin married, and his wife brought in a sufficient dowry to have the village rebuilt. In short order, it has become a wealthy and prosperous village – though one that does contain its share of secrets. As the current gokenin is not entirely trusted by either the Scorpion Clan or by his superiors in the Owls, there are many watchers keeping an eye on the village. This has mercifully kept the village out of trouble so far, as problems are nipped in

the bud quickly; it does mean that there is a sense of paranoia and tension among the people at all times, however. Hence the villagers have acquired a sense of reticence among the populace about talking to samurai, (or any outsiders, for that matter).

And where there is wealth and prosperity, so too are those who would take advantage of such things. There was once a man who was a notable officer within the Forest Killers bandit gang, until he was cast out for being too cruel and unreliable even for that brutal group. He might have had a name once, but that has been long lost in favor of his vocation – he is now nothing more than a killer. Having survived the destruction of his former band, he now creeps along the land; he has murdered several Scorpion and claimed their masks for himself as trophies, staying one step ahead of the authorities as he moves onwards.

His path will soon take him to Chiyuki Mura, but there is one last group of victims coming his way first...

A Note on Weather Effects

The weather has considerable effect on this module, thus the Blood of Osano-Wo Advantage and the Yoritomo Shugenja Technique have the potential to be quite potent. The former, while effective at reducing damage (and therefore some of the possible Fatigue penalties), will do nothing to alleviate the obscuring effects of the snow; the Yoritomo Technique will require the shifting the weather status by three degrees (using three spell slots) to prevent the blizzard.

Character Notes

Check the PCs' character sheets for the following:

- Nightingales Cert
- Owls Cert
- Mark of the Cat

Introduction

The PCs are following orders to report to Winter Court at the Vigilant Keep of the Monkey after finishing your last assignment, which unfortunately took a bit longer than anticipated. They will need to hurry to reach your destination before the snows start to fall.

It is most likely that the PCs were involved in some of the negotiations and discussions brought up in the aftermath of the Empire's invasion of the Ivory Kingdoms this summer. This subject has been broached in several locations, and meetings between numerous other Clans have thrust the Mantis into greater political prominence than usual due to their

familiarity with the Ivindi people. It is highly possible that the PCs were all in the Tsuruchi lands, representing their Clans for some of these discussions. If not, then the PCs have met on the road through the south-eastern Scorpion lands.

Unfortunately, the weather patterns in this part of the Empire are somewhat harsh, as the winter winds blow across the Spine of the World Mountains and meet the wet air above the two large lakes of Aka Mizu-Umi and Mizu-Umi no Fuko. While the winter is rarely much worse than in most of the Empire, it does come much earlier, a fact that the PCs will discover in short order as the biting wind chills them in their travels.

The GM should determine which PCs are wearing armor on their journey – as they do not have the permission of the local lord, doing so is a Major Breach of Etiquette, even if they are Scorpion themselves, and is likely to cause problems should they encounter any locals.

(Due to the potential overlap for Rank 3 characters, it is possible that a PC will play both this module and the Winter Court release for the campaign year of 1141. This may be difficult to justify, but it can be assumed for the sake of convenience that the PC was able to make their way to the other location in time to participate.)

Part One: Wolf Scents Blood

Apart from the biting wind coming over the mountains, your journey through the Scorpion lands has been uneventful thus far – a welcome relief since your last mission took longer to complete than expected. You are due at Winter Court in a week, and you have about five days of travel awaiting you. This has led you to the southern Scorpion lands, where you have been told a shortcut may be available to help speed you to your destination. The weather is less than pleasant, however, and it has not taken long to determine that winter traditionally comes early in these provinces due to the proximity of the Spine of the World Mountains. Reflection on the difficulty of your travels is interrupted, however, shortly before mid-day as you hear the shouts ring out from just over the rise ahead of you on the road. Over the terrified voices of men, the sound of bestial howls come to your ears.

Anyone interested in acting should roll Initiative. (PCs with ranks in the Hunting Skill will recognize the sound

of wolves howling.) The rise is about sixty feet ahead of the group. As soon as someone reaches the rise, they will be able to see the following scene:

About forty feet ahead of you, several grey shapes dart and leap at a procession stopped at a small roadside shrine. There are about a dozen ashigaru, though a few of them are down on the ground, and one figure in the red and black of the Scorpion Clan who is barking orders and trying to form the group into a defensive perimeter. The central point of the attack seems to be two wounded men on litters, and a clump of men in shackles. It does not take long to determine that the grey shapes are a pack of hungry wolves.

There is one wolf for every combat-capable PC present, as well as the one Alpha Wolf, and the group is about 40' beyond the rise. Of the dozen ashigaru present, about five of them are down and three more are wounded. The wolves will not attack the PCs until attacked themselves, and will flee once at least half of them are dispatched or all of them are wounded. The ashigaru will adopt a defensive position and mostly guard themselves as well as the litters which holds two of the downed ashigaru. If at least four wolves are not engaged by PCs, they will bring down a wounded ashigaru and wound a healthy one; if three wolves or fewer are unengaged, they will bring down a wounded ashigaru or wound a healthy one (though if all of the wolves are engaged, they will attack the PCs in defense rather than going after the easy meat). Enkei will take part in combat alongside the PCs, using his sword at first (though he will likely wind up shifting to his trusty bar, as he is more comfortable with it as an Improvised Weapon).

Wolves, Hungry Native Wildlife

Air 1	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3
Reflexes 3		Agility 3	Perception 4
Initiative: 4k3		Attack: 4k3 (Bite, Complex)	
Armor TN: 20		Damage: 5k2 (Bite)	
Reduction: 3			
Wounds: 18 (+10), 36 (Dead)			
Skills: Hunting (Tracking) 4, Stealth 2			
Special Abilities:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Swift</i> 2 • <i>Scent:</i> +2k1 to any scent-based Perception rolls. 			

Alpha Wolf, Pack Leader

This wolf is more massive than the rest, its form swollen with fury and ready to bowl over its prey.

Air 1	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 4
Reflexes 3		Agility 4	
Initiative: 5k3		Attack: 6k4 (Bite,	

Armor TN: 20
Reduction: 3
Wounds: 18 (+10), 36 (Dead)
Skills: Hunting (Tracking) 5, Stealth 3
Special Abilities:

- *Swift 2*
- *Scent:* +2k1 to any scent-based Perception rolls.
- *Knockdown:* After successfully making an attack on any two-legged target, the Alpha Wolf may make a Contested Strength Roll to knock them Prone.

Rokugo Enkei, the “Collections” Agent

Bayushi Enkei is a stocky, bull-necked man in Scorpion colors. His face is covered in a full face mempo of a snarling oni which has several irregular teeth embedded in it (anyone with at least 2 ranks of Medicine or Lore: Anatomy will recognize these as being human teeth). Enkei has large hands with thick callouses on each knuckle. Though he carries a daisho on his hips, he also wears a small steel bar tucked into obi, the surface pitted and nicked (this is wielded as an Improvised Weapon, using the Jiujutsu Skill – it deals 0k2 damage as a weapon, but Enkei’s Hands of Stone Advantage does not apply when using it).

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 3
Reflexes 3		Agility 3	Strength 4	
Honor: 1.8	Status: 2.0		Glory: 1.5	
			Infamy: 1.0	

Initiative: 5k3 **Attack:** 10k3 (Jiujutsu, Complex), or 7k3 (Katana, Complex)

Armor TN: 25 (Light Armor) **Damage:** 6k3 (Jiujutsu), 8k2 (Katana)

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 0-15 (+0), 16-21 (+3), 22-27 (+5), 28-33 (+10), 34-39 (+15), 40-45 (+20), 46-51 (Down, +40), 52+ (Dead)

School/Rank: Soshi Magistrate 2

Techniques: *The Face of Justice:* +1k0 to Intimidation (+2k0 against characters with lower Status); +1k0 melee damage

Rise to Meet the Challenge: Free Action, Athletics / Agility TN20 to recover from Prone; +1k1 to control Grapple

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Games: Fortunes and Winds 3, Hunting 2, Intimidation (Bullying) 4, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 7 (Grapple), Kenjutsu 4 (Katana), Sincerity 2.

Mastery Abilities: Reduce terrain movement penalties by 1. May keep the results of a Defense roll for Full Defense for the next round. +1k0 sword damage. Gain a Free Raise to be used to initiate a grapple. +1k1 unarmed damage.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Hands of Stone, Heartless, Social Position (Yoriki) / Compulsion (Collect Teeth), Failure of Compassion, Infamy

Once the fighting is over, Enkei will approach the PCs and bow in gratitude for their assistance. *“Seems my wounded drew some hungry dogs in. We ran into a small group of thieves earlier but they’ve been dealt with. They put an arrow into two of my men before we found them and took them.” Though his fearsome mask conceals his features, a friendly smile can be heard in his voice as he asks, “What brings you out to these parts? If you’re not in a hurry, I could stand to buy you a drink.”*

Though he functions as the village yoriki, Enkei is primarily a debt-collector for the Scorpion, one who takes great joy in brutalizing those who have crossed the Scorpion. He came to work here as a yoriki as a favor to the village lord, and he is content for now but would much prefer to be in Ryoko Owari or Zakyo Toshi, dealing with those who owe gambling debts. If questioned about his bandit encounter, Enkei will mention finding a group of four men armed with knives and clubs about two miles north on the road. Should anyone point out the inconsistency of the arrow wounds and no foe left with a bow, he will give them a long look and mutter something about ‘cowards fleeing a proper fight.’ As a show of courtesy, he will insist on escorting the group onwards to Chiyuki Mura. *“It would only be polite for samurai to inform the landowner of their passage.”*

Should any PC be wearing armor within Scorpion lands without due authority (Emerald Magistrate or an Emerald Yoriki on assignment, or an appropriate Social Position within the Scorpion Clan), then his invitation will be more insistent and less cordial. “Finding a group of you traveling our lands like this, I will properly review your travel papers in the village.” Anyone who passes a **TN 10 Courtier / Intelligence** roll will realize this means he intends to politely detain them until someone higher ranking can attend to the situation. Thankfully, if they intervened on the Scorpion’s behalf during the fight, a promise to remove their armor and cooperate fully will mean that Enkei is willing to forget the encounter and allow them to pass.

The ashigaru gather after the fight and make some offerings to the shrine; if questioned, Enkei explains that it is a ritual they frequently engage in to honor the previous village landlord, Soshi Koda. Should he be asked by a Scorpion, or someone who has gone out of their way to impress him or win his trust, then he will mention something further:

“Soshi Koda, never met the man myself, but I’ve heard quite a bit about him from the people who live here. He was some sort of rising star in the Scorpion Army until the Coup happened. He didn’t die in the siege, but he managed to flee here ahead of the Imperial Legions and warn the people to flee. Got his wife and son out before he stayed behind to stall the Legions. Don’t know for myself if the Legions would have purged the peasants here too with their masters, but I do know that when the son returned to rebuild these lands many of the old families returned out of loyalty to the man they believe saved them.”

After a few minutes devotion, the ashigaru are ready to proceed and everyone is able to travel to Chiyuki Mura in peace.

Part Two: Forewarned is Forearmed

Peasants in the fields stop working as you come within sight of the village at mid-day. Chiyuki Mura, village of a Thousand Snows, seems to be home to somewhere around three hundred people and your arrival alongside Bayushi Enkei and his men has drawn all eyes. The peasants are all careful to avoid staring as you draw closer, though they bow respectfully as you pass, making furtive glances your way when they suspect you aren’t looking. If Enkei has noticed the looks, he doesn’t show any sign of caring.

“The master of this village isn’t in right now, but his wife should be around.” He points to a few of the sturdier-looking buildings in the village. “Marketplace is over there if you want to pick up any supplies for your journey, and there’s an inn if you decide you want to rest the night, but you probably don’t have time for that. The snows come early in this region. You get caught out in them and we won’t find your body until spring.”

A peasant doshin emerges from one of the larger buildings, the inn that Enkei had indicated moments earlier, and runs towards you. As he kneels before your group he speaks quickly, “Soshi-sama would wish to invite your guests to meet with her as the Inn of the Smiling Monk.” Enkei grunts, looks around the village at the crowd which is now starting to disperse and return to their business. “Well, might as well head on in, Ichiko’ll want to be asking me how many people I killed today.”

Enkei will escort them directly to the Inn of the Smiling Monk, but afterwards the PCs may wish to visit other locations within the village. Though Chiyuki Mura is fairly small, there are a few places that may be of interest: the marketplace, the Inn of the Smiling Monk, a rather sizeable library, a stable, and the Magistrate’s Station.

The Inn of the Smiling Monk

This modest inn features thick walls and manages to remain warm despite the chill air. Several finely made paintings of warm vistas from the Unicorn and Crane lands dominate the walls, along with a strange depiction of a wasteland and a line of red bodies moving through it with the inscription ‘Never Forget’. Warm tea and sake are easily available, and some hearty broths and soups to help fend off the worst of winter. A few of the farmers are playing Fortunes and Winds over in the corner, there is a monk with a basket hat playing a biwa near the doorway, and several of the tables are occupied by other locals.

At the largest table, speaking with the proprietor, is an attractive and quite pregnant Scorpion woman with a thin silk mask framing blue eyes. A handmaiden stands attentively near her, fussing over a young girl, perhaps two years old, who turns and watches the entering samurai with large unblinking eyes. Enkei moves directly towards that table and bows respectfully.

Soshi Sayoko is a notable poet of the Scorpion Clan, trained in the Kakita Artisan Academy, who is frequently invited to visit Winter Courts through the Empire. (Her pregnancy will prevent such a trip this year, a fact that she is not terribly happy about.) If asked if she is attending Winter Court, she will state that she is awaiting the return of her husband before they discuss travel arrangements. She is also a member of the Nightingales, Kakita Yoshi’s group of artisans and artists. Any other members present will be aware of that fact, though she does not advertise it or wear a badge to signify it. When she notices the arrival of samurai, she will smile warmly and dismiss the proprietor.

“Greetings travelers, and be welcomed to Chiyuki Mura. I must admit we receive so few visitors this time of year that your presence is much like an early spring. I am Soshi Sayoko; my husband Soshi Setsuo is the gokenin of this village. This is our daughter, Ichiko-chan.” She gestures towards the young girl who bows dutifully before resuming watching intently. “You’ve already met Enkei-san who ensures taxes are paid promptly and no trouble arises in this region. If you do not mind resting your feet a while and

enjoying the warmth of this inn, I would like to speak with you.”

Sayoko is well aware of the state of the region and is curious for any news the PCs may be bringing. She will begin by asking for any tales of recent events that may have occurred, and that they may be capable of sharing. And if it seems as though the samurai are more than willing to boast about some of their deeds she will listen with quiet delight; she hides her smile behind her fan but her reaction is genuine enough to reveal how much she wants to hear that sort of thing. If any of the PCs mention Soshi Setsuo or Soshi Kinkinsen to her, she will sit forward a bit more and pull at what information they have regarding either or both. She will also be curious to pull out any political leanings, if the PCs’ clothing choices do not make it obvious. (Sayoko is a supporter of Toshiken, but is aware that making such an obvious declaration could go over poorly when she is married to a member of the Owls.)

Should the PCs seem ready to spend a bit of time in the inn, she will inquire if they would indulge her in a game of poetry. Should at least two PCs agree, Sayoko will suggest the topic of ‘Change’. Poems are composed with **Performance: Poetry / Awareness**, and to craft an adequate poem is a TN of **20**. Any player who actually writes a poem on the spot receives a Free Raise. Failing to beat the TN will earn a soft smile and a shake of the head, “You have not yet faced sufficient inspiration on this topic. But fret not, the snows are coming soon and you will know what winter is truly like with its white blanket.” The PC with the highest number of successful Raises will produce the best poem; if Raises are tied then the highest roll wins. Successful participation and victory can earn Glory awards.

PCs may also have a few questions for Sayoko, and some sample answers are as follows:

- What state is the road in? *“It should be quite clear. Enkei-san just took a patrol out there a few days ago to clear the area, so no... unwelcome guests would settle in for the winter. Most everyone knows that the season in this part of Scorpion lands tends to be quite bitter, but so long as you beat the first snows you should be fine. By the time you reach Kanemura, the next village, you should have clear weather and roads”*
- Where is your husband? *“Setsuo is currently taking care of a matter for Lord Hotaka. I believe he had to travel to Kyuden Bayushi to be with his unit. Though he did assure me last week he would be returning soon. You did not encounter him on the road did you? No? A pity then, I was*

hoping he would come to see me before winter begins.”

- Are you a member of the Nightingales? *“Yes, though it has been some time since I was graced with the company of others of the organization. My... duties here have prevented me from traveling much, and Chiyuki Mura does not see many samurai passing through.”*
- Because of the wolves/other possible threat, would it be permissible for us to wear armor on our journey through these lands? *“My authority extends only within the village grounds. You are asking me to grant a group of people that I have only just met the right to march aggressively in our lands. You seem like honorable samurai, but what you ask is outside of my authority.”*
- I notice you have a stables, would it be possible for us to borrow your horses? *“Those horses are part of an important service that Chiyuki Mura maintains. To lose these horses would be a grave loss to our village, one that is not easily replaced. I could only part with them to one whom I could trust completely, and that I know could offer recompense if the worst was to happen.”* Mechanically, to convince her to allow the PCs to borrow horses requires a **Courtier** or **Sincerity / Awareness** roll against a TN of **35**, along with the understanding that should the PC fail to return the horse alive then, it would mean they would be in the debt of the Scorpion Clan. (Mechanically, this would be represented by the loss of eight Favors, or for PCs who cannot provide the Favors taking a **Minor Obligation** to the Scorpion Clan.)

Sayoko proves a gracious hostess, though she is mostly bored by the lack of things to do and will seize upon any chance to carefully elicit an unguarded response from the PCs. Should lower Status PCs be rude to her, she will be certain to reply with scathing criticism and the PC in question can expect no help from Chiyuki Mura.

The girl, for her part, mostly watches the PCs quietly before laughing and twirling her way off away from the group. Following this she drifts quietly back in, staring at any PC who seems to obviously be a bushi. If prompted why she’s looking she will point timidly at their daisho. (Ichiko is very young, but is fascinated with the concept of the warrior – her father is a chui in the Scorpion armies.)

Before the audience is over, Sayoko will ask a favor of the PC she believes is most trustworthy. She prefers to put her trust in a member of the Nightingales first, the PC with the highest Honor Rank second, and a member of the Crane or Scorpion Clan third. Should there be no

PC who is a Nightingale, Honor Rank of 4 or higher, or from the Crane or Scorpion Clan, then she will not trust anyone from this group. Under no circumstances will she trust a member of the Owls.

“(Clan)-sama, a request if you will. I was hoping to send on this box of poems to my cousin Kakita Seizuka but I did not finish it until a few days ago. I know that she is a staunch ally of the Monkey Clan Champion, and will be spending the winter at the same Winter Court where you are heading. Would you mind relaying this item to her?”

If the PC accepts, she will produce a box adorned with images of birds in flight. Several folded papers are contained within, and if the PC checks they will prove to be well made poems. A more detailed examination of the box (**Investigation (Search) / Perception** at a **TN of 25**) will reveal there is a false bottom in the box with another missive that seems to be written in a cipher of some sort. Curious (or paranoid) PCs may attempt to read further into Sayoko’s words; they may roll **Investigation / Awareness** against her **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (9k5, with the Emphasis) but even success only lets them know that she is very interested in the box and its contents reaching her cousin without being interfered with, or examined too closely.

As a final token, Sayoko will offer a poem to her visitors. At the same time she is activating her Rank 2 Kakita Artisan Technique to instill feelings of relief and contentment into everyone who hears her poetry. Those who cannot best her **10k5 Performance: Poetry** roll with an **Etiquette (Courtesies) / Willpower** roll will feel happiness for the next hour:

*Cold breezes lurking
Flickering lights beckoning
The Road leads home*

As Sayoko recites her poem there is a clear ripple of contentment and relief through the room as the effects of her poem spread through the peasantry. There are no mechanical penalties for those PCs affected by her work, though they are likely to have a little more spring in their step than their companions as they get on the road.

The PCs may wish to stay for the night, if they took significant Wounds or spent too many Void Points or spell slots in the encounter with the wolves. Doing so will run the risk of forcing them to travel through more severe weather, and the locals will do their best to make sure the PCs are aware of that fact. If they choose to remain through the day and night anyway (it being a

little after noon when they arrive in the village), they will recover as normal, but all TNs for the various weather-based effects in the rest of the module should be increased by 5. No other significant changes should be necessary to the module (the Killer will wait for the next group of samurai, that day or the next), but the GM is encouraged to provide the players with a clear picture of the environmental difficulties as they travel.

Marketplace

A location to both pick up both supplies and rumors, this place looks like it might be a busy location during the warmer months. It is nearly abandoned today, though some merchants can be found willing to sell food and supplies for travelers. They will admit to some measure of surprise at an arrival so close to the first snows of winter. Aside from that, they will be fairly close-tongued and guarded about anything they say. Anyone who passes a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll at **TN 25** will notice that the peasants here are surprisingly adept at avoiding making any definitive statements, particularly to members of the samurai caste.

Most common wares can be found, but there are also a surprising number of exotic items that seem to have come out of Unicorn lands (nothing completely gaijin but with some definite Unicorn style and the gaijin influences that come from that).

The Library

This long building stretches along the outside of the eastern side of the village, and features shelves stacked high with not only scrolls but also books on a variety of topics ranging from battle tactics, history, and medicine, to Rokugani law, exotic flora and fauna, and even the gaijin lands. Several works of art featuring delicate calligraphy and beautiful paintings adorn the walls.

The Library is tended by an aging peasant named Jiken, who walks with the assistance of a gnarled cane. He approaches samurai guests with reverent care and bow deeply, nearly toppling over as his balance wavers.

“Greetings, samurai, please excuse this old one and his clumsiness. I am Jiken, the caretaker for the master’s library. All of these scrolls and books were gathered from across the Empire and beyond by the careful diligence of the master.” He jabs a finger at the shelves. “If you understand the difficulty of this task, then you will also understand my devotion towards keeping these tomes safe and well-cared for. Now, is there some way I can help you?”

Jiken is highly educated for a peasant, and can reveal much of the contents of the library. While the library is publicly available for consultation, he will hover like an overprotective hen over any of the scrolls or books. Should any samurai wish to take one of the scrolls from the library he will move laboriously to block their way, *“My apologies, but I am under strict instructions not to allow damage or departure of the works under my care. Should you wish to do either, then I must offer up my life for I must either fail my master or cause offense to you. Do as you will.”* Violence against Jiken will ultimately result in the PCs being asked to leave the village as soon as Enkei discovers it. Killing Jiken will possibly have further-reaching consequences; the player should contact the Campaign Admin for further information. (Note, however, that doing so does not necessarily prevent the PC from taking part in the rest of the module.)

Thanks in part to the many books on the subject present, Jiken is proficient enough to restore 2k1 Wounds via the Medicine skill and will gladly do so if he is aware of the situation. Any questions about the village will also reveal that Jiken knows much about the surrounding area as well, though he shares the Chiyuki Mura reserve for talking about Setsuo, Sayoko, or Enkei (he is quite frightened of the first and last, and deeply respectful and loyal to the second). *“Ah, yes, I know the way to Kanemura quite well. I had an old friend who used to maintain a small house out along the road. An odd sort, she did not care much for people but we had our... understanding of sorts. I haven’t seen her in years though, so I don’t know if her house is still out that way. It is only a mile or so from Kanemura, you could feel free to stop in.”*

Of course, if the PCs do eventually stop at Hoshiko’s house, they will find a much different picture from what Jiken paints.

The Magistrate’s Station

Technically more a doshin’s station, as for all the scrutiny, Chiyuki Mura does not have an active magistrate assigned to it. Whenever Enkei is not in the office, there is an elderly peasant scribe going over town records kept here (mostly taxation reports, with accounts of the few local crimes meticulously recorded). He will answer questions to the best of his ability, but will try to defer towards Enkei’s judgement if any opinions are requested of him. After presenting the PCs to Soshi Sayoko he can be found here if the PCs desire.

Stables

Perhaps a bit surprising for a Scorpion village, there is a rather extensive stable at Chiyuki Mura. About a dozen

ponies are kept here under the care of a deeply tanned and rough-voiced peasant named Hogai. There are also a few extra stalls, including a pair of larger ones for Unicorn steeds. In fact, there is one present in the stables: a pale white mare named Uzume (“Dance”) which belongs to Soshi Sayoko.

Hogai is willing to tend and care for any horses that the PCs may have brought with them (he can restore 1k1 wounds via Medicine if asked) but will not allow the borrowing of any of the horses within the stables. A suitably large bribe or threat (at least 20 koku or a **TN 30 Intimidation (Bullying) / Awareness** roll) can convince him to part with one, though he will need an assurance that he will be kept safe from reprisals. “Enkei-sama will kill me, and if Soshi-sama comes back, they’ll kill me twice!”

Convincing Sayoko to part with some of the horses is a somewhat more likely matter, though she is in no great hurry to risk some valuable assets for the Scorpion like this (the horses are used to ferry messengers about). But if the PCs speak to her and manage to convince her, then she is willing to loan the horses as described in the scene with her.

Leaving the Village

Once the PCs have done enough within the village and are ready to head out again, they can depart. Before they get out of town, however, they will be stopped by Enkei.

The stocky Bayushi yoriki trots up to your group as you prepare to leave, waving a hand once to catch your attention. After bowing politely, he gestures towards the road ahead. “My friends, it is a shame that you have to head onwards so quickly but let me give you a bit of advice. There is a deadfall in the road some ways ahead. I suspect it was the work of that last group of bandits we cleared out up there. But don’t worry, they won’t be giving anyone else any problems.” He chuckles meaningfully and cracks his knuckles. “You should nearly be able to make it to old Hoshiko’s house by the time night falls. Hoshiko’s an odd bird, but utterly harmless. If you don’t make it to her home by dark, don’t try to force your way on. It’s unusual to get wolf attacks out here, and traveling during night in the winter is a great way to get lost. If you happened to die out there, I wouldn’t find your body until spring.” He shrugs, and gestures towards the road again. “Well, safe travels!”

Rumors

PCs who wish to learn a bit about local news, or happenings in the Empire at large, may make a

Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness roll, TN 10; a successful roll learns one rumor at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN. (PCs with Oath of Fealty: Bayushi Hotaka get one Free Raise for this roll.) The rumors include:

- This summer, forces from the Empire made a pre-emptive strike against the Rafiq family of the Ivory Kingdoms in order to prevent the gaijin from attempting an invasion of their own. Rokguan's samurai were victorious, and eliminated both the Rafiq's leadership and the majority of their high-ranking vassals, allowing the Empire to claim the port city of Balishnimpur and its vast wealth. Both the Mantis Clan Champion Yoritomo Aramasu and Scorpion Champion Bayushi Yojiro have been involved in negotiations with the other gaijin noble families, but all reports indicate that the Ivindi people are not yet willing to start a full-scale war with the Empire.
- A particularly tenacious group of bandits have plagued the northwest provinces of the Empire in recent months. Originally thought to be several smaller gangs, the group has proven to be organized and dangerous – as much because they are a highly-mobile, mounted force. There are those among the Scorpion and Lion who have accused the Unicorn of being involved in some fashion, but the Khan has yet to respond to these allegations.
- A disturbing series of arsons have spread through the central Scorpion lands over the last few months. Travelers are being detained by the Scorpion authorities, as the Clan's magistrates attempt to find any leads that will let them find the culprit. The fact that these fires appear to be a continuation of similar crimes in the Lion lands earlier in the year is of little consolation, and the Scorpion are not pleased at their loss of face.
- There have been a series of murders in northern Scorpion lands, mostly of travelers but almost exclusively members of the Scorpion Clan. The Scorpion have vowed vengeance and a few Clan magistrates have decided to focus their attentions on this particular case.
- Rumors concerning the rebuilt Shiro Chuda have spread through the Empire. Though the Dragon claim that the castle is free from any malign supernatural influences, there are many (particularly among the Crab and Phoenix Clans) that are uncertain how much credence to lend this story. In a rare public proclamation, Dragon Clan Champion Togashi Hoshi has invited any concerned samurai to spend the winter season there for his official Winter Court.

- The child Empress has begun training at the prestigious Akodo Bushi School dojo at Shiro sano Ken Hayai, under the watchful eye of her Emerald Champion. This has caused a certain amount of tension, as Kakita Toshiken is not particularly popular among the Lion Clan, but the Clan of Akodo are fully aware of the importance of their duty and take great pride in providing the Empress' education.

Part Three: Many Meetings, One Monster

Through the rest of the module, the GM is encouraged to have the PCs make regular **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** rolls, in order to increase the paranoia of the players through the following encounters. Success at a TN of 40 should allow them to spot an indirect sign of their pursuit – perhaps a broken tree-branch, or a blood-stained rock where a rabbit was butchered. In any case, after the first encounter, the PCs should consistently feel like they are being watched by unseen eyes.

The road slopes downwards through an area of rolling hills. The grey sky overhead is full of fat clouds ready to open up, making it more difficult to see the path ahead. Your progress abruptly halts when you reach an area where a tree has fallen over across the path, the dead branches hanging off into space over a sharp drop off into a stream. As you look at the obstacle a few fat snowflakes begin to fall down from the sky.

The tree itself is not all that large, with a trunk perhaps a foot in diameter and limbs covering an area roughly ten feet to either side. Crossing it on foot should not be terribly difficult if one is willing to take time and effort, though getting horses through the deadfall will take more doing.

An examination of the area (and an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception**) roll may reveal more information. Anyone who can pass at least a TN of 20 can find that the tree was cut down deliberately; there are marks of an axe blade across the trunk. Should anyone pass a TN of 40 they will notice that there is someone waiting about 400' away from the tree. Crossing the fallen tree requires an **Athletics (Climbing) / Strength** check at TN 15 (the TN is increased by 5 if the person is wearing armor), and requires a **Complex** action. If a PC wishes to call two Raises they can attempt to cross it as a **Simple** action, and if they have **Athletics 3+** and call the two Raises,

they can cross it as a **Free** action as part of movement. Failing a crossing means the PC is stuck on the far side of the log for that Round. If a PC who has already crossed wishes to help another then they can spend a **Complex** action granting them a **Free Raise** to their Athletics roll. Up to two PCs can assist another in crossing. Horses have a bit more trouble trying to get across, they need to pass a **TN** of **25** on **Athletics / Strength** or the horse slips and takes **2k1** wounds. If the horse is being ridden the rider can add their ranks in Horsemanship to the horse's roll. (Rokugani Ponies have a Strength of 4, Unicorn Riding Horses have a Strength of 5, and for these purposes, both have Athletics 1.)

When the fourth PC crosses the log, the man lurking up ahead takes his shot. (After all, four is the number of death, what better place to start?) Normal range for his bow is 375', thus imposing a -1k0 attack roll penalty on him until PCs close the distance. Once he has fired his first shot, everyone will be aware of him, though they must still make **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** rolls to determine his location – the TN is lowered by 5 for every attack he makes; if a PC who has spotted him spends a Simple Action communicating that information to the rest of the group, they may give the other PCs two Free Raises. Every Round, the Killer will fire another arrow, picking a new target and starting with any PC who seems more threatening to him: shugenja, archers, mounted samurai, warriors on foot, in that order. Once everyone has been shot at once, he takes more than 24 wounds from arrow fire, he is targeted with a spell, or a PC gets within 200' then he will retreat into the woods and disappear. While he is within his hiding place, he gains a +10 bonus to Armor TN and +5 Reduction due to tree cover.

Those who get close enough to his hiding place will see the Killer himself: a hulking brute, swathed in brown and gray clothing, battered ashigaru armor, and several masks tied to his knees, elbows, and shoulders. His breath rasps out in billowing wisps of steam and his eyes stare out coldly from under the brim of his hat. His weapons are worn and used, a blood-stained masakari and a heavy wooden staff as well as the bow.

For those who do arrive at his hiding place, there is a hidden Pit Trap with stakes: this requires a raw **Perception** roll with a TN of **10/15/20** (Low-table/Standard/High-table) to detect. Failure indicates discovering the trap by falling within, taking **1k1/3k3/4k4** Wounds. Otherwise, all they will discover is a well-established hunting blind with a tatami mat and a single wooden mask left behind. It is obvious that the attacker was waiting here for some time, but was prepared to leave immediately (as he did).

The mask has a small amount of blood on the inside surface, indicating that it was not taken willingly from its former owner.

PCs interested in trying to track their attacker may attempt a **TN 25 Hunting (Tracking) / Perception** roll. Success indicates he is moving parallel to the road and they are able to follow him for another half-mile before his trail disappears just as the first flakes of snow appear.

In any event, the PCs will need to continue to move on if they intend to reach their destination.

First Snows

It has been perhaps an hour since the inexplicable ambush, and you have pressed on with haste. Snowflakes have started falling harder and frost the road when your ears catch the sound of movement from up ahead. It is not the sound of an attack, but rather the sound of a flowing stream. Moving forward, you see a small, simple bridge crossing a stream perhaps eight feet wide. A few rocks jut upwards from the water, a light dusting of snow already starting to be cover them. And stretched across the path is a silken mask, the ends frayed to tie it like a spider's web between the posts at the foot of the bridge. At the crest of the bridge's gentle arc, a pale white ceramic mask rests on the left railing, a line of dried blood running down the right cheek like a tear.

There are two options for crossing the stream without getting wet: one is to walk across the bridge and the other is to leap across either with the stones or trying to leap the stream entirely.

Crossing the Bridge, requires no roll. It will stand upright just fine and despite the appearance of the masks it is not trapped in the slightest. Examining the masks will reveal, like the one in the hunter's stand, that they were taken by force from their owners. The silk mask is torn, and hanging at head-height in the path. The ceramic mask is of fine quality, though the blood splashed across the inside surface is likely to make characters familiar with the battlefield think that the former owner took an arrow through the 'weeping' eye-hole.

Any attempt to Commune with the masks or discover their purpose will reveal that they used to belong to Scorpion travelers, struck down by an unseen and unknown force. They were then brought here to the bridge and affixed in place. The kami are a bit confused and a little distressed.

There is no trap on the bridge, but the PCs should be asked to make **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** rolls anyway. Again, there is nothing else to see, but the white snow should make most samurai uneasy as the world is gently being blanketed in the color of death.

Leaping across the Steam requires either **Athletics / Agility** to leap stone to stone or **Athletics / Strength** to make one running long jump to cross the stream (both rolls at a TN of 20). Failure indicates the character getting soaked. Alternatively, a PC can just walk through the stream, the water is about three feet deep at the deepest.

Being soaked does nothing on its own, but as the PCs continue to march along the road the early winter chill will combine to numb the body. At this point all PCs should roll raw **Stamina** at a **TN of 5, 15** for those who were soaked, to avoid being chilled and taking **2k1 Wounds** (ignoring any Reduction). Any PC with **Blood of Osano-Wo** is exempt.

From Dusk Until Dawn

As the PCs continue, their pace will become slowed by the snowfall and night is starting to fall in earnest. They have two options, to camp for the night or to press onwards through the night. If they elect to press onwards, have all PCs make a **Stamina** roll **TN 20 (25 if wearing armor)** to avoid being Fatigued and proceed to Storm on the Hills. If they press on, they may make **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** rolls at a TN of 25 to spot Hoshiko's house on the road – if they choose to stop there, this encounter will proceed largely as follows, though they may still be Fatigued.

Without too much trouble, they are able to find an area with some overhanging tree cover where the ground is mostly dry and they have the option to build a fire using some loose branches. Presumably the PCs will set up an order of watches, have each watch roll their own **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll to keep a watch out. Regardless of results, the watch just before dawn is the one that will be attacked. The Killer has a **Stealth / Agility** of **10k4** with the Sneaking Emphasis, and if he beats their rolls he will be within 20' of the campsite when Initiative is rolled. For every person who beats his roll, he will be a further 20' away when Initiative is rolled. Anyone surprised takes a -10 penalty to their Initiative, anyone who wasn't on watch takes a -20 as they are asleep (and must be woken in order to take actions – a **Perception** roll at a TN of 10 will accomplish this, if the PCs on watch do not make any effort to rouse their companions). Anyone who chooses to sleep in armor must make a **Stamina** roll or

they will be Fatigued – the TN for this roll is equal to 10 + the armor's maximum bonus to Armor TN.

Once again, the Killer is primarily attempting to cause fear and pain in his prey before he finally decides when to finish them off. With the start of the snow-fall, he has begun to wear a traveler's cloak, dyed white to blend into the scenery easier, but if this is the first time the PCs have seen him up close, they should be given his description to help drive home the threat: a hulking brute, swathed in brown and gray clothing, battered ashigaru armor, and several masks tied to his knees, elbows, and shoulders. His breath rasps out in billowing wisps of steam and his eyes stare out coldly from under the brim of his hat. His weapons are worn and used, a blood-stained masakari and a heavy wooden staff.

The Killer's strategy is to string the group out: he will move in to strike one of the sentries, attempting a Knockdown. He will then move 40' back into the woods (as a Simple Action). He will continue to race back away from the group in Defense stance until they either catch him, or no one is within line of sight of him anymore (effectively 50' in the darkness). To make matters worse, while they were resting, he set up a few snare traps along his escape route. There are two snares, roughly 100' and 200' from the camp. It is a **TN 25** raw **Perception** (15 if the PC can see in darkness or thought to bring a light) to spot the trap before stepping on it. When someone steps on the trap they can make a **TN 30** raw **Reflex** roll to pull their foot out of the way in time, but on a failure they are pulled up into the air and are considered helpless until someone cuts them down. Furthermore any items carried in their hand will be dropped. Roughly cutting the rope will cause **1k1** wounds (ignoring reduction, but the die will not explode) as the character falls roughly to the ground. If the PCs catch up, he will engage in a fighting retreat, but if he gets away he will hide (make a new stealth roll) and circle back around to the camp. Should he catch any PC alone he will attempt to injure them, hopefully drawing in allies with their cries while he moves on to another location. As noted in his writeup in the Appendix, the Killer is less interested in making clean or merciful kills and more interested in giving pain to his victims.

Should the Killer make it into the camp when no one is guarding it, he will start throwing people's traveling packs into the campfire, requiring a simple action for each. He will also make a point of dropping a cracked and warped steel mask behind. Once he is driven off or successfully burns all the traveling packs, he will leave, and the PCs will have to spend the night possibly without blankets or bedding. This will require a

Stamina roll of TN **15** (25 if the character was soaked by the water during the stream crossing). Failing the roll will cause the character to take **2k1** Wounds from exposure.

The events of the night will also make recovering Void more difficult: resting only heals half the normal number of Wounds and only regains one Void Point. Shugenja whose rest was interrupted may make a **Meditation / Void** roll at a TN of 25; success means that they recover all of their spell slots, failure means that they only recover half of them.

Black Cat Crossing

The day dawns to a dim grey light, with Lord Sun's face hidden by the cloud cover. Perhaps an hour after breaking camp, while you are slogging away from your campsite and the poor night's rest, you notice a blur of motion across the road. A pair of luminescent green eyes peer out from a small shape near the edge of the brush.

Should any PC have the **Mark of the Cat** note from “**A Time For Vengeance**” or “**Killing Grounds**”, then the black cat makes a note to stare at them and then yowl plaintively. Should any PC make a sudden or threatening move, the cat immediately bolts into the bushes. It stops atop a short mound of snow and looks at the PCs before it flops onto its side and cries piteously.

Closer inspection of the snowbank will reveal several roughly dressed bodies of men stacked together and covered in the freshly fallen snow. Many of them show the signs of a violent death, and more than a few are missing teeth and have broken jaws. This location is where Enkei and his men encountered a group of bandits and dispatched them. Not wanting to drag corpses back, they left them here to wait for spring to send the eta out. It has nothing to do with the Killer stalking them, but may buy some time for him to close in again depending on how long the PCs spend. Should the PCs make any official report at the conclusion of the module regarding this location the Scorpion, and Enkei will deny all knowledge and blame the Killer.

After the bodies are revealed, the cat will hiss and dart over towards the PCs, attempting to take shelter behind one of the PCs with **Mark of the Cat**. Should there be multiple or no PCs with the Mark, then it will hide behind the PC who has the lowest honor. Unless chased away the cat will attempt to follow that PC for the remainder of the module. The cat's presence will confer one rank of **Unluck** upon the Killer during the final encounter. Whether it sticks with the PC beyond this module depends on the actions they take, but it

exhibits no further unusual properties for the time being.

Hoshiko's Home

Shortly after Black Cat Crossing, the PCs will notice a house hidden away from the road. If any of them happened to inquire about habitation out this way, both Jiken and Enkei would have mentioned Hoshiko's residence and this does seem to be about the right place for it.

A decent sized peasant home is constructed out here in a rough but functional fashion. At first you believe the building to be abandoned, but then you notice that there is a thin trickle of smoke rising from the roof.

Rolling **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** at a TN of 15 will allow the PCs to see that the door is slightly ajar, with a fitful light flickering inside. Those who succeed with a 30 or higher spot a lacquered mask broken in two and fixed to the posts leading up to the house's porch by rude nails through the eyes. (Approaching the house will give them the same information without the roll; the difficulty is only in spotting these clues from the road.)

If they choose to enter, they will see a sight of savagery:

Furniture has been tossed about and smashed, leaving the room in chaotic disarray. The shoji screens inside are torn, looking like a decaying skeleton with the flesh peeled away. Your first step into the room quickly becomes a shuffle to the side as you find yourself nearly stepping on the broken body of a cat. The room is almost as littered with cats as it is with wreckage. A faint flicker of movement catches your attention, and you spot a slumped form in the corner, shallow breathing coming from it.

This is Hoshiko, an elderly peasant woman who has been foraging on her own in this remote location ever since the death of most of her family during the aftermath of the Scorpion Clan Coup. Lately she has been living here by herself with a dozen or so cats she has found out in the wilderness. Unfortunately, she came to the attention of the Killer and he stormed into her residence and brutally beat her and her pets before looting what food supplies she had. Hoshiko is astonishingly still alive, though without warm clothing and some immediate healing (a single Path to Inner Peace or a **TN 25 Medicine (Wound Treatment) / Intelligence** roll will save her life) she will perish soon. She does manage to look up at the PCs and rasp out a warning:

The old peasant woman reaches out a hand towards you, “He killed them... he killed them all like he was crushing a bug. I should have joined them, but it isn’t the killing that he likes. It’s the pain and suffering. He will be back when he thinks he can get more pain out of me.” A fierce light shines in the woman’s eyes for a moment and she clenches her fist. “Do not let him leave this place alive!” Then she shudders and slumps back, her remaining strength fleeing her quickly.

The black cat from Black Cat Crossing was one of her cats that fled the Killer’s assault. It will approach and nuzzle up against Hoshiko if present, and yowl plaintively at the PCs as it stares up at them expectantly. Regardless of their decision about the peasant woman, the cat will continue to follow them. Nothing useable has been left within the house, and the dead bodies will likely make it unpalatable to the samurai to remain further. Cleaning up the bodies will require an hour or so of work, and reduce those who engage in such labor to Honor Rank 0 until they can be cleansed at a torii arch.

Storm on the Hills

Roughly a mile further down the road, you come to a rising hill. Somewhere over it waits the town of Kanemura, all you have to do is march a few more miles to reach its warmth and safety. Looking up also draws your attention to drifting movement in the air, several fat snowflakes drift down from above before the wind rips and pulls at you. Behind you, you spot a wall of white approaching: the first winter blizzard is beginning.

Hustling up the hill is tiring, but not particularly demanding. Though the GM should ask for **Athletics (Running) / Stamina** tests as a way of determining roughly where people are relative to each other. At the crest of the hill, the lead PC will see another mask, hanging on a stick driven into the road. As the blizzard washes over the PCs, the Killer sees an opportunity and strikes, closing in from behind with deadly purpose.

Traveling in the blizzard counts as **Difficult Terrain** due to both the snow and from the fading visibility. This poor visibility also imposes a **-1k0** penalty to all melee attacks and a **-1k1** penalty to all ranged attacks. The Killer attacks the person who rolled lowest on their **Athletics / Stamina** roll, as they are at the back of the group. He attempts to knock them Prone and use their cries of distress to alarm the rest of the group. Due to the blizzard, he can attempt to use Stealth as a Simple action, even if he is being observed. PCs can also attempt to do the same, requiring a Complex action to hide if they have less than 3 ranks of Stealth, Simple if

they have 3-6 ranks of Stealth, or Free if they have Stealth 7+. The encounter ends when the Killer either loses track of the PCs and they escape, or when he dies; it is possible he might retreat if he is taken to Crippled (the +20 Wound Penalty), but as this will impact his ability to move quickly, it will likely be possible for the PCs to chase after him.

When the battle ends, one way or another, the PCs reach Kanemura.

It has been a long hard journey but you have managed to reach the gates of Kanemura. Not the most pleasant trip that you’ve had, but from here on it should be clear and easy until you’re at Winter Court.

Conclusion

The Scorpion are quite grateful to the PCs for either the death of the Killer, or information regarding his location and activities. Should he have escaped them, they will be detailing one of their Emerald Magistrates to hunting him down. They are given a warm reception in Kanemura and from here, travel to their Winter Court proceeds without further incident. A few days later, they receive a bit of correspondence, bearing the seal of a Chui of the 3rd Scorpion Legion:

“To my honored guests,

I have been informed of your passage within my personal lands and of the ‘events’ to which you have borne witness. I must offer my most sincere apologies that you encountered such an interesting reception, and would be pleased to host you again in Chiyuki Mura. A smile spreads across my face as I think of the reception and hospitality you have earned by your actions. Until this becomes reality, you are in my thoughts.

Soshi Setsuo”

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.

-Did anyone report the presence of the bodies in the forest?

Experience Points

Surviving the adventure:	1XP
Good roleplaying:	+1XP
Reaching Kanemura:	+1XP
Slaying the Killer:	+1XP

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Honor

Fleeing from the Killer in the final encounter is an act of cowardice, causing the listed Honor loss.

A PC who takes anything from Sayoko's box loses Honor as per 'Using False Courtesy to gain an advantage over an enemy'

Saving the peasant is worth Honor as per 'Showing kindness to one beneath your station'

Glory

Due to the Killer's notoriety, anyone in a group that brings in the Killer's head will gain 0.3 Glory. Anyone who must report that their possessions were destroyed will lose 0.2 Glory per Rank of Status they possess as they show up to Winter Court in less than the glory they deserve.

Other Awards/Penalties

All PCs receive a Scorpion Clan Favor if they arrive in Kanemura with the head of the Killer. Any PC who made a favorable impression on Bayushi Enkei, particularly if they assisted him, and chose not to raise a big fuss about the bodies in the forest should they be discovered, will gain him as an Ally with 1 Influence and 1 Devotion.

If a PC chose to take the black cat with them, note on their sheet: Black Cat from Chiyuki Mori.

If a PC delivered Sayoko's box without looking within it, they will receive a Crane Favor.

GM Reporting

-What was the fate of the Killer?

-Was Sayoko's box delivered? Did the PCs look within it?

GM must report this information BEFORE (1/11/2014) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

Presented here are two versions of the Killer, one suitable for low to average end parties and the other suitable for high end parties. He has no name, and will not speak: examination will reveal his tongue has been cut out. Once he was a member of the Forest Killers, but was thrown out for being too violent and disturbing for even that hardened group. Since then he has wandered around Rokugan preying on travelers before he decided to settle within the lands of the Scorpion. He likes collecting masks, they remind him of the faces of his victims. In either case he is armed with a bo staff, a masakari, a yumi, and twenty arrows, and wears ashigaru armor. His motivation is to cause as much suffering as possible before it is time to kill his quarry. To that end, he prefers Knockdown attacks and will generally only keep enough dice to outright kill a PC once he has incapacitated the majority of the group. (He should only be used to maim PCs permanently if they are making an effort to use Raises for that sort of Maneuver themselves. Once that line has been crossed by the players, however, he will have no compunction about removing limbs or eyes...)

The Killer, (Low-Mid End Party)

Air 2	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 4	Void 3
Reflexes 4		Agility 4		
Honor 0.5		Status 0.0		Infamy -2.0

Initiative: 8k4 **Attack:** 10k4 Bo Staff (Simple), 9k4 Masakari (Simple), 9k4 Yumi (Complex)

Armor TN: 28 (ashigaru armor) **Damage:** 6k2+4 (Bo Staff), 6k3+4 (Masakari), 5k2 (Arrow)

Reduction: 1

Wounds: 32 (+0), 44 (+2), 52 (+7), 64 (+12), 76 (+17), 88 (Down, +37), 100 (Dead)

School/Rank: Insight Rank 4 Ronin; Forest Killer

Techniques: *Strength of the Forest:* Gains additional Wounds per Wound Rank equal to Stamina, +4 to melee damage

Vicious Brute: Simple Action Melee attacks

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 3, Hunting (Traps) 6, Investigation (Notice) 4, Heavy Weapons (Masakari) 5, Jiujutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Knives 3, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 5, Staves (Bo) 7, Stealth (Sneaking) 5.

Mastery Abilities: Ignore Terrain penalties for Movement; may keep the result of a Full Defense roll in successive Rounds; reduce opponent's Reduction by 2 when using Heavy Weapons, Free Raise to Knockdown with Heavy Weapons; +1k0 to Stealth in natural surroundings; +1k0 unarmed damage, Free Raise on Grapple rolls; +1k0 sword damage; off-hand penalties do not apply with a knife; stringing a bow is a Simple Action, maximum range of any bow is increased by 50%; opponents do not double armor bonuses against staff attacks, Free Raise for Knockdown with staves, may ready Large staves as a Free Action, +1k0 damage with small staves; may move 40' as a Simple action while sneaking.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Blood of Osano-Wo, Large, Silent, Strength of the Earth / Anti-Social (4), Social Disadvantage (Ronin).

Special: The Killer stole from one of his victims a mysterious amulet that renders him invisible to the kami. Spells simply cannot target him, the kami can derive no images of him, and even area effect spells seem to divert away from him (granting him +10 to appropriate resistance rolls and/or Reduction 10 for damage done by area-effect magic).

The Killer, (High End Party)

Air 2	Earth 5	Fire 3	Water 4	Void 4
Reflexes 5		Agility 4		
Honor 0.5		Status 0.0		Infamy -2.0

Initiative: 10k5 **Attack:** 10k4 Bo Staff (Simple), 10k4 Masakari (Simple), 9k4 Yumi (Complex)

Armor TN: 33 (ashigaru armor) **Damage:** 6k2+5 (Bo Staff), 6k3+5* (Masakari), 5k2 (Arrow)

Reduction: 1

Wounds: 30 (+0), 45 (+0), 60 (+2), 75 (+7), 90 (+12), 105 (+17), 120 (Down, +37), 135 (Dead)

School/Rank: Insight Rank 5 Ronin; Forest Killer, Silent Blades

Techniques: *Strength of the Forest:* Gains additional Wounds per Wound Rank equal to Stamina, +4 to melee damage

Vicious Brute: Simple Action Melee attacks

Black Hearts, Red Blades: If attacking a foe who is unaware of his presence, may add Stealth rank to all attack and damage rolls against them for the duration of the skirmish

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 3, Hunting (Traps) 6, Investigation (Notice) 4, Heavy Weapons (Masakari) 7, Jiujutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Knives 3, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 5, Staves (Bo) 7, Stealth (Sneaking) 5.

Mastery Abilities: Ignore Terrain penalties for Movement; may keep the result of a Full Defense roll in successive Rounds; reduce opponent's Reduction by 2 when using Heavy Weapons, Free Raise to Knockdown

with Heavy Weapons, 9s explode on damage with Heavy Weapons; +1k0 to Stealth in natural surroundings; +1k0 unarmed damage, Free Raise on Grapple rolls; +1k0 sword damage; off-hand penalties do not apply with a knife; stringing a bow is a Simple Action, maximum range of any bow is increased by 50%; opponents do not double armor bonuses against staff attacks, Free Raise for Knockdown with staves, may ready Large staves as a Free Action, +1k0 damage with small staves; may move 40' as a Simple action while sneaking.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Blood of Osano-Wo, Large, Silent, Strength of the Earth / Anti-Social (4), Social Disadvantage (Ronin).

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