

A Glimpse Beyond

**A One-Round Mid-High Rank Adventure for
Heroes of Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido
Month of Doji, 1142 (Summer)**

Part Three of *Thwarted Destiny*

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A simple investigation in a backwater of the Empire.

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

Reminder

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

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

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 Three):

- Give the Warriors and the Spellcaster 15 Wounds per Rank instead of 20, and reduce the Spellcaster's Reduction to 5
- The Warriors can only make attacks as Complex Actions.
- The maximum TN for the Spellcaster's Spellcasting ability is 40, its maximum damage is 4k4, and it cannot increase the TN to gain additional dice on Contested Rolls to inflict a Status.
- If none of the PCs are keeping more than 4 dice on their attack, lower the enemies' Armor TN to 30.

High End Party (most/all characters Rank Five):

- Increase the Warriors' Armor TN to 45. Increase their attack roll to 10k6+5, and increase their damage to 9k3+3.
- Increase the maximum damage from the Spellcaster to 8k8 and the activation roll to 10k7+5. It no longer has any maximum TN on its effects.

Adventure Summary and Background

When Toturi Kaede, the Empress and Oracle of Void, was killed by an assassin wielding a nemuranai katana forged from a fragment of the Dragon of Void itself, the results were catastrophic in more than just a political sense. The spiritual chaos that followed that event ripped the very fabric of reality, creating a suppurating wound in the form of a new Spirit Realm. The "wrongness" of the new Realm and the circumstances of its formation created a link between it and another spiritual element of disharmony: the actions of the returned spirits, whose impact on the lives of those around them were not accounted for within the workings of Destiny. The worst impacted were those whose lives were cut short through a spirit's actions, or some consequence of a spirit's actions; deprived of the Destiny they were given to fulfill their Dharma, these spirits were torn from the Wheel of Reincarnation after their deaths and instead found themselves in the recently-forged Realm, a Realm now known as Kousoku no Chigiri, the Realm of Thwarted Destiny. (In truth, these lost souls would have eventually created the Realm anyway – Kaede's death merely exacerbated and accelerated the process a hundredfold.)

The Realm is expanding rapidly, as the ripple effects of the spirits' presence in Ningen-do have had more than a decade to progress across the Empire.

As with most spirit realms, portals can sometimes be created between Ningen-do and Kousoku no Chigiri. These portals tend to be formed either when something of great destined importance happens or when a large number of souls are thrown into Kousoku no Chigiri all at once. It is the latter event that the PCs are fated to encounter in this adventure.

About three years ago, a returned spirit named Akodo Arasou – once the Champion of the Lion and the older brother of Toturi I – founded a ronin otokodate called Tsuko's Heart, in memory of the dead Matsu champion who had been his true love in life, a woman whose death he blames on his brother. Tsuko's Heart is composed entirely of former Lion Clan samurai, each of whom is also a returned spirit. Arasou has a number of goals, many of which have brought him into conflict with the samurai of the Empire at large, but he is nonetheless still a samurai, one who believes he is serving Rokugan. Tsuko's Heart has been pursuing bandit raiders and other criminals across the Empire; while he sees the need as emblematic of Rokugan's increasing corruption, it cannot be denied that his intentions are generally good. Now, however, they have had an intended consequence. When a group of returned spirits slaughter a large ronin band in the space of just a few minutes, the concentrated carnage and loss of destiny creates a new portal to Kousoku no Chigiri, and the PCs are following a trail that will draw them into that Realm themselves.

Before they can make their way out, though, the PCs will have to confront shards of their own destiny, a destiny that they may never see, due to the disruption of the spirit realms – but one that weighs on their fates nonetheless.

Character Notes

Check the PCs' character sheets for the following:

- Touch of Destiny or Great Destiny
- Destiny Points lost in "Personal Sacrifice" and "Twisted Fate"
- Close affiliations with Kakita Toshiken, Hantei Okucheo, or the Imperial Legions
- Shadowlands Taint, Lore: Kolat, or Advantages or Disadvantages relating to the Shadowlands, Kolat or ronin

Introduction

When the adventure begins, the PCs have been sent to Heiwa no Mura by their daimyo at the request of Ikoma

Tenshin, a young Emerald Magistrate. A TN 30 **Lore: Heraldry** or **Lore: Lion / Intelligence** roll reveals that Tenshin has only recently been promoted to Emerald Magistrate, and it's likely that he has requested the PCs' intervention because he has not yet acquired any full-time yoriki; Tenshin has a reputation for mighty ambition, and he's also probably hoping to use this arrangement to build up his political contacts with the PCs' daimyo.

Heiwa no Mura is a settlement of moderate size on the border between the Unicorn and Scorpion lands near the northern end of the Shinomen Forest. The village has been held by both Clans at various points, and the village remains theoretically contested between the Shosuro and Shinjo families even today. In practice, though, the village hasn't felt itself truly tied to either Clan for decades; a series of wily headmen have turned their Imperial taxes over to the nearby Miya family castle while their status remains "in dispute," and the Scorpion and Unicorn haven't been able to force the issue against the Imperials. By and large, the arrangement has worked out well for Heiwa no Mura; the town is prosperous and the peasants generally happy, but recent times have seen a turn for the worse. For several decades, Heiwa no Mura has maintained a band of ronin and peasant militia for its own protection, but the Imperial crackdown on such organizations in the wake of the peasant rebellion two years ago stripped the town of this resource and left the village dangerously unprotected.

When the PCs arrive in Heiwa no Mura, read them the following:

The chill morning rains have finally ended and a wan spring sun is trying to push through the remaining clouds as you enter Heiwa no Mura. All around, hard-working peasants are preparing to bring in the first of the year's two rice harvests, and on the village's far side loggers float wood from the Shinomen Forest – a dark green line on the western horizon – into a bustling lumber mill on a stream almost wide enough to be a river. The town looks busy and well to do at first glance, but a second look shows signs of trouble: scorch marks mar several the roofs and walls of several outbuildings, some of the village men struggle to do their labors despite half-healed wounds, and there are looks of wariness and even fear in all the eyes around you. Ahead, a wheezing elder, likely in his early 50s, pushes through the crowd and prostrates himself in the road before you.

The man is the village headman, Kinkou. With deep breaths interspersed with wracking coughs (Kinkou suffered scars on his lungs from a plague in his youth), Kinkou introduces himself and tremulously asks the

PCs' business in his village. Assuming the PCs mention Ikoma Tenshin, Kinkou brightens at first, but then looks puzzled.

"Ikoma-sama was indeed here, samurai-samas," Kinkou tells you, before breaking into another coughing spell. When it finishes, he goes on, a befuddled expression on his face. "But he left this morning, following the bandits' trail. We were attacked last week, you see, by a group of ruffians and marauders who took much of the stores we had prepared last fall for our spring taxes. We tried to fight them off, but they were experienced, hardened criminals, numbering near a hundred, and we were fortunate that they didn't kill anyone." Another coughing spell interrupts him again, and a young girl – the family resemblance suggests a great granddaughter – brings him a cup of water, which he drinks thankfully. When the new spell ends, he continues, "We sent word to the Palace of the Miya, and yesterday Ikoma-sama arrived to deal with the situation. When he first got here, I thought he was expecting his aides to arrive soon, but this morning... well, we saw that." Kinkou points toward the distant trees to the west, and you can barely make out a large number of dark specks moving in the skies just above the forest line. They swirl slowly about as though spiraling around something, and you realize it is a massive flock of carrion birds circling over something on the ground below them. "That is the direction that the bandits went after they claimed their spoils from us," Kinkou continues. "When Ikoma-sama spotted that, he left at once, and I thought I must have been mistaken – he showed no sign of waiting for anyone."

No one from the village itself has investigated the birds or what they might be flying over, but Kinkou estimates it would take a mounted samurai, like Tenshin was, no more than an hour to cover the distance, and even walking it wouldn't be more than twice that. Tenshin left no message, so it is up to the PCs whether they choose to follow the vanished Emerald Magistrate. If the PCs choose to leave at once, Kinkou assigns one of the loggers, a man named Hisashi, to guide the PCs toward the area where the birds are circling (Ikoma-sama refused a guide). On the other hand, if they wish to stay put and await Tenshin's return, the villagers will put the PCs up for the night; low Honor PCs (Honor 3.9 or less) who elect to help the villagers during the evening, through aiding the wounded or helping make repairs to the village buildings, may earn +0.1 Honor at the GM's discretion. The following morning, though, one of the farmers finds Tenshin's horse, bloodstains on the animal's hide, wandering near the edge of the village's rice paddies in the same direction as the carrion birds, and the PCs' duty demands they try to locate Tenshin.

Regardless, whenever the PCs leave, Hisashi accompanies them unless the PCs insist otherwise. Hisashi is a laconic man whose life among the trees of the Shinomen has left him with broad shoulders and little social skills. He knows the terrain well, though, and quickly and quietly guides the PCs to the spot where the birds are still circling (even if it is the next day). Without Hisashi's assistance, a **Hunting (Trailblazing) / Perception** check, TN 15, accomplishes the same thing – if all the PCs fail the roll, then they all lose -0.1 Glory for not bringing a guide when one was needed, and they must return to the village to ask for Hisashi's aid after all. A PC with the Way of the Land Advantage for either the Shinjo or Shosuro provinces does not need to roll.

The location where the birds are circling turns out to be just inside the forest edge, no more than a quarter mile from where the village's loggers have reached with their diligent axes. It is a broad clearing, most of a hundred paces across, where a sinkhole caused the ancient forest trees to collapse and a small pool to form at the western edge – a tiny rill, barely more than a trickle, slips through the grass and underbrush from the pool toward the village stream to the northeast. Today, though, the rill's water runs thick with blood, and the forest's carpet of green has vanished under a cawing, screaming crowd of feasting ravens.

Bodies are everywhere, left to rot or be eaten where they fell. It is difficult to see any details, but there are dozens at least, and what remains of their weapons and clothes is what one would expect from peasant raiders: patched and threadbare fabrics, finely honed kama and metal-capped staves. Hisashi promptly turns and vomits, and the sight and smell are enough to challenge even a samurai's nerves – together, the grisly image and horrific stench is the equivalent of a non-magical Fear 2 effect.

An **Investigation (Search)** or **Battle (Mass Battle) / Perception** roll made by anyone looking over the scene for clues can reveal several pieces of information (this roll is affected by any Fear the searchers might be suffering from):

- **TN 20** – The dead have been lying out in the elements since the night before the PCs arrived at Heiwa no Mura.
- **TN 25** – The post-mortem feasting of the carrion birds has obscured much of the evidence, but enough remains of the bodies to verify that they were all killed by either flesh-cutter arrows or katana.
- **TN 30** – The attackers were probably mounted for most, if not all, of the battle – there are many, many

hoof prints, and no dead horses among all the dead bodies in the field.

- **TN 35** – The attackers likely numbered about twenty, and the victims close to a hundred, meaning that – if Kinkou was right about the number of raiders that attacked Heiwa no Mura and these are those raiders – few if any of the raiders were allowed to escape.
- **TN 40** – The raid was conducted with tight military discipline and brutally ruthless tactics. A picket of perhaps a dozen archers surrounded the camp in the night while the remaining warriors divided into two squads and swept through the camp, killing several of the bandits in their sleep. When the rest stumbled out of their bedrolls or the few battered tents possessed by the leaders, the archers opened fire, turning the clearing into a killing ground. The entire assault likely took only minutes.
- **TN 45** – On one side of the clearing, there is a cleared space about two paces wide and about half that across, where four square indentations in the churned mud suggest something heavy was allowed to settle there for some time. There are also small flecks of incense ash in the mud near the spot; someone who makes a **Lore: Theology / Intelligence** roll, TN 25, can identify the object as having been a portable battle shrine. A shugenja apparently sanctified the ground and prayed over the dead after the battle, even though no attempt was made to gather the fallen or burn the bodies.
- **TN 50** – Many Clans dye the fletching on their arrows so as to proclaim their allegiance during battle, almost as though “signing” each kill; these arrows do *not* have such dyes, but the fletching is nonetheless a particular style used primarily by Akodo and Ikoma fletchers – but most popular during the eighth century, almost four hundred years ago.

If a player asks specific questions that would justify using a more specific Skill (such as Craft: Bowyer to identify the arrows, or Animal Handling or Hunting to get a sense of the number of horsemen that took part in the attack), the GM is encouraged to approve such requests; if the Skill seems particularly relevant, between one and three Free Raises might be appropriate at GM discretion. Make note of any character who learns the information at the TN 40 level or higher – such characters have the opportunity to gain the favor of the Lion Clan if the information is reported to the Lion at the adventure's conclusion.

Part One: Stepping Out of Reality

Regardless of what else the characters learn in their search, the PC who rolls highest in the search locates a blood trail leading away from the site of the massacre, suggesting the possibility of at least one survivor. The trail leads right to the edge of the clearing, to the steepest part of the “wall” formed at the edge of the basin where the battle took place. There, mostly hidden by scrub and creepers sprawled across the rock, is a small cave – visible from outside as just a crack in the rock. The opening about seven feet high but narrow; it would be an easy fit only for a child and even then only when sliding sideways. Nonetheless, a large blood smear suggests someone pushed through, and more importantly, there is a surprising clue as to who it might be, for on the ground in front of the cave entrance is a bloody saya. It is obviously the sheath for a katana, and marked with the Ikoma mon.

Inside, the cave is actually much larger than it appeared from outside, a sizable chamber of slick, wet rock big enough to hold several people comfortably and with a ceiling close to fifteen feet in height. When a light source is brought in, bloody footprints leading deeper into the cave can be seen on the slightly-damp floor, and occasional red handprints mark the walls as well. At the other side of the cave, only a few steps from the entrance, there is a gap about waist high and a slope covered in loose shale. The blood marks seem to indicate that the wounded individual rolled – or perhaps slipped and fell – down the slope. Shining a light down the slope reveals no body, but what looks like another chamber maybe twelve feet below the floor of this one. Anyone looking down the slope may make an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 25, to see faint shadows suggesting there is another light source somewhere deeper in the cave, within the second chamber and out of sight; if the lights in the cave are extinguished, it is immediately visible to everyone, a shimmering white light reminiscent of moonlight on water.

Descending the slope is not difficult - an **Athletics (Climbing) / Strength** roll, TN 15, handles it easily with no assistance, and no roll is required at all if the PCs happen to have rope. (There are a number of sturdy stalagmites in the upper chamber capable of supporting a line in this way.) Other options, such as having one person lie down and keep hold of another’s arm to lower them down, will work as well. Even if a PC attempts the roll and fails, the subsequent slide-and-tumble down the slope damages only their pride – it costs -0.1 Glory, but nothing more. Likewise, getting up might prove briefly challenging (The Athletics [Climbing] roll uses the same TN), but with a boost from below or a hand down from above, any character should have little trouble climbing back up.

The lower chamber is much larger, with a lower ceiling that just brushes the top of the tallest character’s head, and a shallow, dark pool in the center. In the distance, a dark shape – what appears to be a body, unmoving – slumps against the far wall. A faint light filters down from somewhere above, rippling off of the pool and turning everything misty grey, while a single stalactite feeds the pool from above with a steady drip-drip-drip. Elsewhere, the walls, floor and ceiling are wet-slick and smooth.

At this point, the PCs have crossed the threshold of a passage to Kousoku no Chigiri, the Realm of Thwarted Destiny, although at first they will likely not realize it. The passage was created by the deaths of nearly a hundred bandits at the hands of returned spirits – as their actions changed the destinies of these men, each bandit’s soul was torn from the Wheel of Destiny and thrown into Kousoku no Chigiri instead. The passage is the metaphysical wound left by such massive trauma. It is a temporary thing, one that will fade in time – but it has lasted long enough for the PCs to be caught in it.

As the PCs cross the room toward the body slumped against the far wall, the gray, mist-like quality of the air grows stronger, until the characters appear to be walking through a pale gray mist. The dark shape ahead of them, the one that appears to be a slumped body, is still visible as a vague outline, but remains entirely indistinct for several moments, during which the PCs don’t seem to be getting any closer to it.

(A PC who specifically asks if they can determine what’s going on can make a **Lore: Spirit Realms / Intelligence** roll, TN 25, to recognize that they have passed through a portal between the Realms; getting a TN 40 allows them to identify the correct Realm. This knowledge does little good, however, because the portal is one-way at this point; they cannot simply reverse course to return to Ningen-do.)

After a few moments, though, the mists clear slightly, and they realize the shape they thought they were walking toward is not a nearby slumped body, but a more distant figure approaching them through the shapeless, drifting fog. It slowly resolves itself into a short, slight woman in the orange and red robes of a Phoenix shugenja; not especially beautiful, she nonetheless carries with her an aura of power that seems to draw the eye. Many PCs may recognize her as Isawa Ume, whom they may have encountered in the scenarios “New Beginnings,” “Personal Sacrifice,” “Twisted Fate,” or “Castle of Water.” Even those who recognize her, though, are struck by the change in her bearing – she has traditionally been quiet, retiring and somewhat unsure of

herself, due in large part to her link to the element of Void. All of that is gone now; instead she seems filled with confidence and authority. There are other peculiarities that become evident as she comes to a stop before the PCs as well: most notably, her eyes are simply black spaces, filled with tiny points of light, as though the night sky itself were looking out from within her. She also seems to grow indistinct, blurry – the effect is similar to the doubled vision one might experience after taking a blow to the head, but she is the only one so affected in the PCs’ sight.

“You have come far, samurai,” Ume says, but her voice is a deep rumble, so low as to be almost at the end of hearing, and coming from the air all around you. It sounds nothing like her usual quiet, high-pitched voice. “Further perhaps than you know. “ She blurs again, and in a handful of instants seems to be standing in three different places before you, before suddenly reappearing just where she had been the moment before. “This is Kousoku no Chigiri, the Realm of Thwarted Destiny, and you have arrived here before your time.” Her face twists into something that might be a grimace, or possibly a sardonic smile. It is difficult to tell. “But that is the nature of this place – that which should be is never what is.”

“Ume” does not introduce herself, and if anyone asks her name, she merely replies, “You have met me before.” If the PCs ask for details about the Realm’s existence or nature, she answers in a lecturing fashion, seemingly bored by the topic but also willing to speak of it at length. (See the Adventure Background for that information.) If the PCs ask how they arrived, she makes a vague gesture behind them and says, “There is a portal in the cave through which you passed to this place.” She can also explain, in general terms, how such a portal came to be, but if asked about who killed the bandits or what precisely created the portal, she frowns in anger and replies, “I see only the shadows of where they have been. They are lost to my sight, like all their kind.” (She says “like all your kind” instead, if one of the PCs is a returned spirit.) If the PCs ask why they are here instead of how, “Ume” gives the PC a flat glare and said, “Chaos does not answer to why. If it did, it would not be chaos.” Throughout all these answers, “Ume” continues to flicker, blur and shift position without warning.

Eventually, the PCs will ask how they can return to Ningen-do, or “Ume” will tire of answering their questions and move to the topic on her own.

“Proceed onward, samurai,” the star-eyed woman says, her voice vibrating your bones. “You will find a passage to return you to your Realm. It will not be... easy... and there are choices that you will need to make, but at the

end, you will find yourself returned to Ningen-do. I tell you now, though, you may find it less painful just to stay here. Once you see what lies ahead, you cannot unsee it, and you will ever more bear the weight of the vision.” She flickers again, shaking her head, and then blurs away completely, the word “vision” echoing slightly in the drifting fog. The rippling, shifting light coalesces ahead of you, a beacon to draw you forward.

Part Two: The First Vision

At this point, the PCs each begin to experience a personal vision, although the general shape of their experiences are similar (as the general shape of the Empire’s destiny has an impact on all the samurai who live in it). As the PCs move forward, they lose sight and awareness of each other (even if they were holding hands or otherwise bound together) – they cannot say precisely when they stopped being aware of one another, only that they find themselves alone. PCs with strongly connections to an animal companion such as a mount or trained raptor suddenly realize that they are riding or accompanied by these animals, but they are the only human they can see. Likewise, the fog slowly darkens even as the light ahead of them remains bright, until they are passing through a stone tunnel, the inner gate of a mighty castle. The light ahead is now sunlight shining down onto a courtyard between the castle’s inner and outer walls, and the sounds of battle begin to drift toward them over the outer wall, the clash of steel on steel and the screams of dying men.

You step out into the courtyard, and your armor and weapons weigh heavily on your shoulders and back. The back banner of your unit waves sharply in the bright sunlight as it rises above your head, and you know in your heart that some of the screams you hear beyond the wall belong to samurai wearing that same banner. Ahead, a lone monk kneels on a woven mat; a simple bowl of water rests on a low wooden table next to him. On the outer wall, three closed gates lead from the courtyard out to the field of battle, and over each one is a bright red torii arch. The arch on the left bears kanji reading “Fear,” the one in the center says, “Desire,” and the one on the right is marked “Regret.” The shaven-headed monk looks up at you, smiles slightly, inclines his head and gestures to the bowl of water. “You must cleanse yourself of sin before you go to face death, so you are free of it in the face of your destiny,” he says calmly.

Note that even a normally-pacifistic samurai, including a dedicated courtier or the like, will find themselves in this scene (although a character whose usual fighting style does not involve armor, such as a monk, might have

a slightly different vision). All samurai are expected to be able to take up arms for their Clan when ordered to do so, and whether they wish it or not, their destiny will intersect with one the battles about to sweep through the Empire.

Every samurai is familiar with the basics of the cleansing ritual – the penitent washes their brow and their hands in the water, then passes beneath the torii arch to be spiritually cleansed. The choice of sin, however, is not typical. If the PC asks the monk what to do, he repeats his phrase; if they ask which arch to choose, he answers, “Your sins are yours to name, samurai.” Note that even a character with a Phobia or Failure of Courage is not obligated to choose the “Fear” arch, nor are characters with other similar flaws required to choose the associated arch. This is a choice solely in each PC’s hands. (If time permits, the GM might wish to go through this scene individually, allowing each PC to make their choice alone and in anonymity.) *For the purposes of this scenario’s cert, it is important to keep track of both the PCs’ choice of sin here and their actions in the coming battle.*

If any PC indicates a refusal to cleanse themselves, they lose Honor points equal to their current Honor Rank, and the monk shrugs. “Your sin will mark you regardless,” he says, nodding toward the arches. If the PC refuses to pass through gates, they find there are no other exits from the courtyard (including the way they came in), and both the walls and gates are utterly smooth and unclimbable. Any magic the PCs might try to use to circumvent the wall (Wings of Fire, Embrace of Kenro-Ji-Jin) fails. However, the PC can simply refuse to leave the courtyard. The monk smiles, a little sadly, if the PC makes that choice. “The Maven will be pleased,” he says, sighing. Such a PC has the opportunity to change their mind, but if they do not, they will remain in Chigiri no Kousoku indefinitely – they are out of this adventure and are considered dead for the purposes of the campaign. Report the names of any such PC to the Campaign Administration.

When the PC passes through their chosen gate, they find themselves in the midst of battle. The specifics of the scene depend on the GM’s interpretation of the PC, however. Consider each of the following questions, in order; stop at the first conflict that seems to fit the PC. (The GM should not be overly concerned about getting it “right” – destiny does not always conform to a person’s preferences.)

Battle of Toku Torid-e

- PCs who are deeply involved in acting in opposition to or support of the Kolat
- Member of the Imperial Families

- Member of the Imperial Legions
- Those PCs driven to battle ronin (even specific ronin groups)

Battle of Kyuden Tonbo

- Support for the Regent, Hantei Okucheo, against the Emerald Champion, Kakita Toshiken
- Support for Kakita Toshiken and is more invested in the struggle for the throne than in their own Clan’s successes

Siege of Shinsei’s Last Hope

- Members of the Hiruma, Hida or Kuni families
- Tainted or otherwise have a strong connection to or hatred of the Shadowlands

Siege of Shiro Chuda

- Phoenix or Dragon
- Members of the Toritaka, Yasuki, or Kaiu families

Battle of Toshi Ranbo

- Lion or Crane

If none of the other battles seem to fit, the GM should use their own judgment to determine whether the PC should experience the First Battle of Toku Torid-e or the Battle of Kyuden Tonbo.

Each PC experiences the battle individually, although PCs who are experiencing the same battle and would be allies there (such as two Hiruma at the Siege of Shinsei’s Last Hope) may actually recognize each other’s presence there. Otherwise, though, they just see and hear other allied samurai, typically part of their Clan or family, fighting alongside them. These other samurai, though, are actually the other PCs, who are themselves experiencing their own visions of future battles. Note that the PCs can find themselves on either side of any battle, as long as it makes sense – characters with Taint (or even without it!) might find themselves fighting alongside the Lost, or an Imperial bushi might find herself having joined the forces of the Lost Heir. When in doubt, consult with the player and use your best judgment. This is an opportunity to provide complexity to the PCs’ ongoing story that shouldn’t be missed, but it should add to that story, not disrupt it.

Take each PC briefly aside and read them the following scenes for their battle:

The First Battle of Toku Torid-e

The carefully ordered ranks of the Imperial Legions stand in full battle array around the hill of Toku Torid-e, a precisely-measured ocean of jade and gold washing

upon the shore of the fortress. Across the broad plain that spills away from the castle toward the lands of the Crane and the cliffs overlooking the Umi Yakamo, a similarly-regimented force of somber brown and black faces toward the castle, their back banners snapping in the sea breeze. The sharp movement makes the black wolves on the banners, once the symbol of Toturi the Black, seem to bite and snap at the Imperial forces. It is a well-trained army of hard-faced, dauntless samurai, prepared for war, and only the most foolish courtier would dismiss them simply because they are “mere ronin.” They hardly deserve the term, in truth – after all, each bushi bearing the Black Wolf banner is sworn to the heir of Toturi.

From the ranks of the Black Lions a horseman appears: a handsome young man with a face scarred by battle. He wears heavy armor of flat black, but a golden lion has been painted on his banner. “Samurai of the Legions!” the warrior bellows across the lines. “You have come today to do battle, but there is another path you can take! You are sworn to the line of Toturi, sworn to the heir of his dynasty! You that you march now in spite of those oaths! I am not here as a conqueror! One does not conquer what is already one’s own! No, I merely come to claim what is mine by right of blood and birth! And you stand in my way! You, who should raise your blades only at my command! Hear me now, samurai of the Legions! If you would serve your Emperor with honor, stand beside me and my loyal followers! I honor every warrior who marches with me! But if you defy my rights, then you stand guilty of treason before Heaven, and you will die – by the command of Toturi!”

There is a pause, a weighty silence. Suddenly, a stir rises in the Imperial forces, as two Seppun step grimly out of the emerald ranks. Without looking at each other, they kneel in the space between the two armies. One bows his head, unspeaking; the other calls out, her voice ringing across the plain. “I will not march against my Emperor! Watch now, as I cleanse the shame of my dishonor!” With every eye fixed on the two, they draw their wakizashi and perform the three cuts. Neither cries out before the last motion, and they slump forward almost in unison.

The mounted warrior waits to see if anyone else in the Legions follows suit. No one else steps forward, but the perfect form of the Legions seems to soften, the rigid lines shifting slightly. Something has been lost, something intangible but vital. The army of the Black Lions remains resolute. At their head, the Lost Heir raises his blade – and with a roar, the samurai behind him surge forward. All around you, the samurai of

your unit raise their voices as well, and together you go to match yourselves against the blades of your foes.

The Battle of Kyuden Tonbo

The finest Earth shugenja and battle engineers of the Dragon Clan had worked together for months to construct the new outer wall of Kyuden Tonbo. It took less than five hours for the Kaiu engineers and returned spirit shugenja of Okucheo’s forces to breach them in three different places. No one on either side had truly expected Toshiken to accede to Okucheo’s demand for seppuku, for all that Okucheo had made a point of sending Seppun Biransei to ride alongside Hida Tsuneo at the head of the mixed-unit army; still, it was clear that the defenders were simply unprepared for the sheer might of Tsuneo’s forces. Tsuneo himself was an unstoppable terror, killing men by the dozens with the same, slightly regretful expression; Biransei fought with more finesse and speed, if not quite so high a toll of blood, but his expression was one of tightly-controlled rage. “Toshiken!” he bellowed. “Face me, coward! Meet your death as a samurai should, and end this slaughter!” Kakita Masahiro, commander of the 3rd Imperial Legion, has been fighting fiercely to defend the keep, but it seems clear that his valiant stand will soon be his last.

Now, though, there is a change in momentum – a Dragon shugenja, carrying a fiery katana in each hand, leads a brief countercharge into the mass of Tsuneo’s forces, with three other shugenja hurling balls of flame behind her. The four manage to push into the churning mass of the Regent’s army, but in seconds they are surrounded. In another instant, they will be overwhelmed – but the four suddenly burst into flame, becoming living pyres that grow to fifteen feet in height, vaguely human-like faces that scorch their air with their laughter and arms the size of tree trunks that burn the encroaching samurai with a single touch. They grow brighter and brighter... and then they explode, killing dozens of samurai each and knocking two or three times that to the ground, stunned. Masahiro’s defenders rush into the opening, forcing Tsuneo’s forces back for the first time since the battle started, and giving you and your unit the first chance to meet your enemies on the field. You and your fellow samurai move to reinforce the gap, shouting a cry to your ancestors.

The Siege of Shiro Chuda

When shugenja march to war, the elements themselves are torn asunder at their command. The air burns, the ground moves, water and fire erupt from nothing and

vanish again just as swiftly. For two days, Agasha and Isawa priests have summoned the powers of the kami to hurl at one another, while Mirumoto and Shiba katana have clashed beneath them. In the Phoenix vanguard, Shiba Tsukune herself urges her Clan's forces forward, while Mirumoto Uso stands on the walls of the newly-built Shiro Chuda and gives somber commands to his forces.

The Dragon would likely have held their own or even pushed the Phoenix back as they have done before, but this time, the children of Isawa do not march alone. Crab samurai, mostly members of the Kaiu, Kuni, and Toritaka families, stand alongside them, adding their considerable strength to the power of the Phoenix. Political threats and fears of corruption have turned the Crab against the Dragon, and now tetsubo and dai-tsuchi join katana against the Dragon lines. The Mirumoto have been driven back, step by step, for the last two days. Near the Phoenix command tent on the far side of the field, the massive shape of Hida Tsuneo, the Stone Crab, watches the battle impassively, occasionally issuing a sharp order to a subordinate or raising his war fan with a swift movement.

Now, though, Uso appears at the gate of the keep himself; the Dragon lines stiffen just from his presence on the field, and Tsuneo's eyes narrow. Tsukune turns her unit toward Uso, and the battle surges with new intensity. Waiting impatiently in reserve, you and your unit finally receive the command to advance, and you grip your weapon tightly before hurling yourself into the maelstrom of battle.

Battle of Toshi Ranbo

Toshi Ranbo is no stranger to war. In decades past, Lion and Crane have fought through her streets back and forth like dogs scrabbling for the same bone. Often, both sides have taken care not to unduly damage their prize, knowing that a ruined city is worth far less than an intact one – and today, in this battle, Kitsu Motso has approached his assault on the city from that perspective.

Nonetheless, Toshi Ranbo burns.

The city's Daidoji and Tsume defenders have not had the same concern for their city that the Lion have shown. Knowing they cannot hold it against the Matsu and Akodo armies, the Crane have started fires, built traps, isolated units and launched ambushes. They have made the Lion pay for every step they have taken into the city, and little of it can be said to be honorable combat. It has been ugly, bloody slaughter, and the

Crane are losing... but the confident swagger of the invading Lion has been replaced by caution, wariness, even – whether they want to admit it or not – fear.

Near you, a unit of Lion samurai marching up a muddy street reaches an intersection near a small square. After a moment's consideration, the commander signals the unit forward – and the house next to them seems to collapse inward for an instant before exploding back out in an earth-shaking blossom of flame. Several of the Lion are killed outright, and most of the rest are knocked over. A nearby shout signals hidden Crane to leap out of the surrounding houses. The samurai of your unit, running up the street behind the fallen Lion, grip your blades and shout your fury as you surge into the battle.

The Siege of Shinsei's Last Hope

On the jade-lined walls of Shinsei's Last Hope, the Crab are angry.

They watch the oncoming horde of goblins with disdain; they eye the handful of large oni striding behind them with caution, but not fear. But they look at the flanking force, one army split into two parts to channel the goblins directly toward the walls, and they feel fury rising inside them. Fury, and perhaps a hint of something darker, because that force is made of samurai. The Lost. Samurai from across the Empire, all fallen to the Taint, and in greater numbers than the Crab have ever seen. It is a force equal to any Great Clan's army, and if the walls of Shinsei's Last Hope have any of their namesake left, it is only because the Crab have spent centuries preparing for the possibility of this day.

It is a day that should not have been allowed to come, many are aware. The tacticians and strategists of the Crab never leave so few defenders here, even allowing for the samurai of other Clans who have arrived in recent months to help reinforce the village's forces. But it was not the Crab who made the decision to send the samurai north, and when orders are given, a samurai obeys. Even if obedience means that today might see the end of Shinsei's Last Hope.

The Lost signal a halt, and the goblins eventually slow to a buzzing, cackling stop as well. From the ranks of the Lost two samurai emerge, one mounted on an onikage a full head taller than is typical, the other on foot but carrying a massive banner marked with a blasphemous emblem of Fu Leng. The bannerman is gaunt, almost skeletal, but he wears armor still showing remnants of Lion gold, and what look to be faces – just

the skins, carefully carved off their skulls – hang from his obi. The mounted samurai next to him is a giant, likely a full seven feet tall if he dismounted, in heavy armor that conceals every part of his flesh. He carries a bare nodachi as easily as if it were a wakizashi, and there is a weight to his gaze behind the mempo that strikes like a physical blow, for all that none can see the eyes that drive it.

“Crab of the Hopeless Crow!” shouts the bannerman. “Look now on Kyoden, master of this mighty horde before you! It was he who ended the life of Hiruma Reishado, cousin of Hiruma Chijin, with his bare hands, then animated the corpse to send against his cousin at Lone Candle Keep! It was he who forced Jimen no Oni to bend knee before sending him into your Empire at his Dark Lord’s command! And now he comes for you! You have no escape, little Crabs! Your walls cannot protect you this time! We have among us Kaiu, who helped build those walls! Hida, who stood atop them! Shosuro and Daidoji, who slipped past them! Even Isawa and Kuni, who stand ready to turn them against you! We know your weaknesses! We know your fears! We are your fears! Ready your souls to lay before your new master, our Dark Lord, and know that this is the end of all hope!” Kyoden nods, once – and the horde begins to move again, sweeping around and past him while he watches, impassive.

You grip your weapon, knowing that you will soon be atop those jade-bound walls yourself, and you and your unit will help decide the fate of Shinsei’s Last Hope.

Once the PCs have been introduced to their battle, they roll Initiative. Each PC sees and hears the other PCs as members of their own unit; they understand each other well enough to communicate as a unit, but names, specific references to locations and so on are altered to fit what each character is experiencing.

The PCs experience the battle as a skirmish. The enemies all use the stats listed below, regardless of who they appear to be to each character. If a PC attempts to use an ability that requires a certain kind of target, such as Jade Strike against the Lost, the ability works as long as that PC’s vision makes sense for it to – other PCs will perceive it in a way that fits their own perspective (for example, rather than Jade Strike, the other PCs might see the shugenja cast Earth Becomes Sky). Assume the enemies have typical stats (Honor, Insight, etc.) as appropriate for Rank 2 characters of the faction they appear to be. There is one Warrior for each combat-capable PC at the table, plus a single Spellcaster. The vision ends when the skirmish does.

Warrior

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4
Reflexes 5		Agility 5	

Armor TN: 40

Reduction: 3

Attack: 9k5 (weapon, Simple)

Damage: 8k3 (weapon)

Initiative: 8k5

Wounds: 20 (+0), 40 (+5), 60 (+10), 80 (+15), 100 (Dead)

Powers: *Challenge:* After rolling initiative, the warrior may choose one opponent and roll 1k1 (this die explodes as normal). The warrior’s initiative is replaced by the chosen opponent’s initiative, minus the result of the die roll.

Focus: The warrior may declare up to four Raises on any roll.

Strike: The warrior gains a Free Raise on every attack. It may also reroll any 1s on the attack roll (once only).

Spellcaster

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4
Reflexes 5		Agility 5	

Armor TN: 40

Reduction: 10

Spellcasting: 9k5+5

Damage: (see below)

Initiative: 9k5

Wounds: 20 (+0), 40 (+5), 60 (+10), 80 (+15), 100 (Dead)

Powers: *Spellcasting:* As a Complex Action, the spellcaster can roll 9k5+5 against a TN of 10 to deal 2k2 damage to one target of an appropriate type (GM’s choice – it could be flames, ice, or a swarm of Tainted wasps, among others, based on each PC’s personal vision). It may increase the TN by +10 to increase the damage by +2k2; it may also increase the TN by +10 to have the effect inflict one of the following Statuses: Prone, Dazed or Fatigued; to increase its dice pool for the Contested Roll to inflict a Status by +2k2 (see below); or have the effect target an additional opponent; it may Raise the TN by +20 to have the effect instead inflict one of the following Statuses: Blinded or Stunned. Statuses allow a resistance roll by the target – select a Ring (other than Void) for the target to resist with; the spellcaster must beat the target in a Contested Roll of 4k4 against the chosen Ring. The total TN cannot exceed 50, and damage cannot exceed 6k6, but effects can otherwise be applied multiple times (multiple instances of the same Status have no additional effect, and one resistance roll applies to all Statuses from that effect).

For the purposes of determining which cert elements to award a particular PC, “Protective” means things like the PC taking the Guard action, casting an enhancement spell (especially a protective one) on an ally, etc.; Defensive means that the PC didn’t really attack but took actions that only helped keep that PC alive; and Aggressive is

essentially none of the above. *Record the general stance taken by each PC along with their sin choice from the courtyard for use when filling out the mod cert.*

Part Three: The Second Vision

When the vision of the battle ends, the PCs find themselves fully healed (even if they were killed in the battle), with all penalties and negative Statuses removed. They are still alone, but the scene has returned to the vague gray mist. As before, though, there is a light ahead, and little else to do but move toward it.

This time, the light resolves itself into bright lamps, placed all around the edges of a finely appointed bedroom or guest chamber within what appears to be a daimyo's castle.

You step out from a doorway you are not sure was there a moment before, and it closes soundlessly behind you. Three servants, two young women and one older, approach from the corners of the room, smiling broadly. "Welcome, samurai-sama," the older one says, leading the other two in a bow. "The session is about to begin, and we have been commanded to make certain you are properly presented." She gestures, and you see an array of fine court kimono spread before you in your Clan's colors, but in lieu of School or Family mon, each is marked with the icon of one of the five Elemental Rings. "Choose the one that best suits your taste, sama," the servant says, "and we will ready you for your appearance."

Note that characters not normally given to formal wear even when it is appropriate, such as ascetics, find simple sashes or other accoutrements that are likewise marked with one of the five elements. The servants offer no opinion on which each PC should select, and in fact actively refuse to recommend any one over the others. It is up to the PC, and the PC alone, which element they take. As with the courtyard before the battle, the PCs will not be able to move onward without making a decision, and if they continue to refuse, they are trapped indefinitely in Kousoku no Chigiri.

Once the PC has selected an outfit, the servants dress them (although PCs who insist on doing it themselves can eventually persuade the servants to let them be). When they are dressed, the PCs are free to move through a door (only now visible/extant) on the far side of the room, beyond which is a large court, apparently in an Imperial holding – the walls bear banners of emerald and

gold, and courtiers from every Clan wave fans or murmur to one another around the room.

As the PCs enter, a functionary steps onto a dais, drawing the attention of everyone in the room. What the functionary says depends on which battle the PC experienced in the previous vision, and which side they fought on.

- **The First Battle of Toku Torid-e (Emerald Legion)**

The functionary bows. "We are here to consider the matter of the rebels of the so-called 'Lost Heir.' They have asked for the Empire's mercy, on the grounds that they swore their oaths and took up their arms in the sincere belief that they were serving the Empire and obeying its laws."

- **The First Battle of Toku Torid-e (Black Lions)**

The functionary bows. "We are here to consider the matter of the bushi of the First Imperial Legion, whose commanders have asked for mercy for their soldiers on the grounds that they took up arms against our rightful and divine Emperor in the sincere belief that they were serving the Empire and obeying its laws."

- **The Battle of Kyuden Tonbo (Toshiken)**

The functionary bows. "We are here to consider the matter of the bushi who marched with Hida Tsuneo in an assault on the residence of our divine Empress. Their commanders have asked for mercy for their soldiers in the belief that they took up arms against the Emerald Champion in the sincere belief that they were serving the Empire and obeying its laws."

- **The Battle of Kyuden Tonbo (Okucheo)**

The functionary bows. "We are here to consider the matter of the bushi who battled against the forces of Hida Tsuneo as he attempted to carry out the rightful command of our most honorable Imperial Regent. Their commanders have asked for mercy for their soldiers in the belief that they took up arms against our new Emerald Champion in the sincere belief that they were serving the Empire and obeying its laws."

- **The Siege of Shiro Chuda (Dragon)**

The functionary bows. "We are here to consider a proposal of peace between the Dragon, Phoenix and Crab Clans, and the matter of reparations to be paid to the Dragon by the aggressors against them. The Dragon have made these reparations a condition of peace between the two factions, but the Crab and Phoenix maintain the assault was done in the name of the Empire's security."

- **The Siege of Shiro Chuda (Crab/Phoenix)**

The functionary bows. "We are here to consider a proposal of peace between the Dragon, Phoenix and

Crab Clans, and the matter of reparations to be paid by the Dragon to the other two Clans. The Crab and Phoenix maintain the assault was done in the name of the Empire's security and have made these reparations a condition of peace between the two factions, but the Dragon believe the price they have already paid in territory and lives is high enough."

- **The Battle of Toshi Ranbo (Lion)**

The functionary bows. "We are here to consider a proposal of peace between the Lion and Crane Clans, and the matter of reparations to be paid by the Crane to the Lion. The Lion maintain the defenders violated Imperial law with their tactics and damaged property ultimately belonging to the Empress; they have made these reparations a condition of peace between the two factions, but the Crane believe that the price they have already paid in territory and lives is high enough."

- **The Battle of Toshi Ranbo (Crane)**

The functionary bows. "We are here to consider a proposal of peace between the Lion and Crane Clans, and the matter of reparations to be paid by the Lion to the Crane. The Crane maintain the attackers violated Imperial law with their tactics and damaged property ultimately belonging to the Empress; they have made these reparations a condition of peace between the two factions, but the Lion deny the charges and have argued that the price they have already paid in lives is high enough."

- **The Siege of Shinsei's Last Hope (Both Sides)**

The functionary bows. "We are here to discuss the proposal of peace extended by the Lost of the Shadowlands. They seek recognition as a Great Clan and grants of territory suitable to the followers of one of the Kami, in exchange for peace between the Tainted and the rest of Rokugan and restriction of Jigoku's touch to only those who seek it out."

Once the functionary finishes his speech, he steps aside, and a pair of courtiers replaces him, one on each side of the dais. One is a tall, distinguished-looking man in the mon of the Miya; the other is an elegant woman with a graceful stride wearing the mon of the Otomo.

The Miya begins, bowing to the assembled crowd. "My friends, I understand the urge for vengeance, for justice at any cost. It is in many ways the samurai way, or so our history tells us. But today I am here to suggest that it is not truly in keeping with the highest ideals of bushido. Rather than vengeance, let us turn our hands and minds instead toward mercy. The Empire has seen much of death in recent years, and what it has taught us is that the cycle of vengeance and war feeds on itself, grows strong and sweeps onward to find even more blood on which to feast and grow stronger still. We

must find another way, seek a new path. Each of us can claim wrongs done against us, every Clan knows the taste of injustice and the desire for revenge – but that way brings nothing new, and the bloodlust is not sated. I ask you to take a higher road, above and away from the blood-soaked fields. It is the highest act of honor to show compassion to one's enemies, to shower them with all the courtesy due a respected guest in one's own home. Let us find that act of honor here, and pursue peace over punishment, mercy over revenge. Our Empire will only be the stronger for it."

The Miya bows again and turns toward the Otomo standing across from him, who acknowledges the bow with a tip of her fan. She too then turns and bows to the audience. "I admire my cousin's idealism," she begins, "but I must find objection in his naiveté. Mercy is worthwhile when peace is already at hand, but when enemies remain strong and vital, it demonstrates only weakness. Pardon a murderer, and his next victims will not find your mercy so laudable. We are not an Empire of cowards or lickspittles. We are warriors, and those who stand against us fall and do not rise again. Moreover, we are servants of Imperial justice, and the punishment for the crimes committed here is not simply the law, it is the manifestation of Heaven's will made flesh through the words of the Hantei and Toturi lines. We risk blasphemy by putting our judgment above that of the Celestial design. I say to you then, do not fall into that snare. We are the hand of justice. The hand of honor. Let those who stand against that suffer the painful consequence."

The watching courtiers murmur amongst themselves as the two courtiers step back off the dais and the functionary replaces them. "We thank Miya-sama and Otomo-sama for their wisdoms in this matter. We next ask one of those most involved to offer their views on the question." The functionary looks out across the crowd and finds you. "Please, samurai-sama, join us here and share your perspective."

Each PC has the opportunity to present an argument in favor of mercy or justice, based on the battle they just participated in. (Characters who were Lost in the vision of battle are still Lost now, but are free to argue for whatever position they wish.) There is no roll involved – this is purely a roleplaying opportunity. There is also no "right" answer here; different perspectives on bushido can lead to different answers to questions such as this, and the "right" answer has more to do with which virtues of bushido one emphasizes than some objectively correct pronouncement.

It is probably important to also note that each PC is giving a direct response to the "Imperial" delegates; this

is not an opportunity for the characters (or especially the players) to argue the nuances of their position.

As before, make note of the element chosen by each PC and the position they took in the debate for the mod's cert (Mercy or Justice). If the PC refuses to offer a position in the debate, they will not receive any benefit in that part of the cert, regardless of which elemental choice they made.

Part Four: The Final Vision

As each PC finishes speaking in the debate, courtiers all round seem to be nodding in agreement. While they watch, though, the movement turns into rippling waves of gray fog, and the PCs find themselves together again, in the formless space of Kousoku no Chigiri.

You barely have time to register one another's presence before the fog is once more pierced – but this time by sound, not light. From some distance away (direction is a term without meaning here), you can hear more sounds of battle. This time, however, it is constant, a buzz of upraised voices in fury. There are no interruptions of dying screams, no ringing clash of metal, just voices, hundreds or thousands, perhaps, shouting in unending rage.

The sound suddenly takes on dimension, and you can locate a direction for it. Turning to look that way, you see the fog clearing slightly, and what looks like a rocky outcropping over a dizzying drop comes into focus. Standing on either side, near the precipitous drop, is a pair of white-haired figures.

The PCs are now standing in the mouth of a cave, and the outcropping extends outward from the cavern's opening. The figures gesture for the PCs to approach. One is a young man in his late teens, perhaps, with eyes the golden-yellow of a wolf and a somber expression apparently carved into his face. The other is older, perhaps in her late twenties, with the same yellow-gold eyes; she wears a carefully-arranged kimono and her white hair is bound up in an intricate arrangement over her head. The hair sticks holding the arrangement in place are positioned at unusual, asymmetrical angles. (Anyone who studies the arrangement closely realizes that the sticks form the kanji for "Void.") She stands behind a tall wooden table, a dice cup and wide, polished bowl in front of her. The two look enough alike to be brother and sister.

Behind them, past the edge of the rocky precipice is what seems to be a wide valley between two mountain ranges. The valley is filled with people – many samurai, by their clothing, but many more not – from one edge to the other. They do not number in the hundreds or thousands, but in the hundreds of thousands, and they are tearing into one another with their bare hands and teeth, in a continual, incomprehensibly vast orgy of insanity and violence. The struggle is ceaseless, mindless, and reaches as far as the eye can see. A woman uses her nails to rend the flesh of the man next to her down to the bone, only to have the man on the other side of her wrench her arm completely out of its socket and a second woman gouge into her eyes with her thumbs. A massive man wraps thick fingers around the throat of his neighbor, somehow ignoring the woman who is literally tearing off his jaw, leaving his tongue to wag. And there is more. It stretches to the edge of vision and past, and shows no signs of stopping.

"Horrible, isn't it," murmurs the boy. The woman shrugs slightly, but smiles at the newcomers. If one or more of the PCs have played "Twisted Fate" or "New Beginnings," she greets them by name, adding in a syrupy voice that it's good to see them again. If they don't recognize her, she giggles girlishly and says, "Flatterer," patting her hair.

The boy introduces himself as Sezaru; the woman smiles coquettishly and says, "You can call me the Maven. Everyone does." Beyond that, neither will say more than that they aren't exactly natives of Kousoku no Chigiri, but they have an interest in the Realm's future.

Both are willing to answer the PCs' questions as best they can. They are able to show the PCs the way out, but they have a question to ask first; see below for more on that. Their preference is to put that matter, as well as any questions about the unending slaughter behind them, off until the PCs are finished with any other questions they might want answers to. Like "Ume" before them, both know the nature of the Realm and will explain its origins if asked. They also know – and Sezaru will make a point of saying, if the topic comes up – that the visions of the future seen in the Realm of Thwarted Destiny are, by definition, not guaranteed to come to past. "They are, at best, glimpses of the shape Destiny has taken at this very moment," Sezaru explains, "but every step you take pushes that shape aside, by inches or by leagues. Even Heaven itself cannot see the final shape of the design."

Once the PCs have asked all the questions they wish, Sezaru gives a sigh and turns to look out over the valley with its continual, mindless massacre.

“I cannot look upon them without my heart breaking,” the boy says, although his voice is steady and calm. “Each is one of the souls captured by this Realm, each a destiny thwarted and karma ripped asunder. They destroy themselves, go mad with the sensation of unendurable loss – and every day dozens, sometimes hundreds, more arrive. But Destiny is not a thing that can simply be handed out like rice cakes at a harvest festival. It has a cost, and that cost cannot be paid with words or good intentions.”

The Maven smirks, then breaks in. “What he is trying to say, my dears,” she says in those same honeyed tones, “is that we want to help them, but we lack the basic resources. Resources that you possess.”

“In a word... Destiny,” Sezaru agrees, sighing. “You have what we need to begin. We simply cannot do it alone. And that is what I need to ask you. Can you look on this scene and not want to help? Not want to take action?”

Regardless of how the PCs answer, Sezaru explains that if they are willing to sacrifice their destiny, he can use it to save the souls in Kousoku no Chigiri. The Maven, however, clears her throat and explains the price: they will, themselves, become beings without Destiny, and while they will not notice the lack while they live, when they die, they will be drawn here, and will become like the souls in the valley below.

“Of course, there’s an alternative,” she says, touching the dice cup. “Dice with me, and if you win, I’ll free many of them – not all of them, but as many as I can – from this existence, return them to the Wheel.”

“And if they lose, their Destiny is taken and you do nothing,” Sezaru says tartly. The Maven smiles. “If there are no stakes, dear boy, then there’s not really a game, is there?”

“If you give your Destiny voluntarily, I will free them all,” Sezaru answers. “Even if they all dice with you and win, that’s not something you will promise.”

The Maven shrugs, “I’d get almost all of them.”

At this point, each PC sees all the others disappear, and the Sezaru and the Maven focus all their attention on them. “What will it be, then? Sacrifice or gamble?”

If they choose sacrifice, Sezaru nods in satisfaction, while the Maven sighs. If they choose to gamble, they must make a Contested **Games (PC’s choice)** / **Void** roll against the Maven’s 8k5. The Maven looks distinctly satisfied with any outcome, regardless of whether she

wins or loses. A PC can also choose not to decide; both Sezaru and the Maven look disappointed, then, and the PC receives no benefit from the third vision on their mod cert.

Once each PC has made their choice, the other PCs reappear, and a doorway appears at the cliff’s edge. No matter what happens, the PCs do not feel any different, and those PCs who have experienced a loss of Destiny before (through giving up Destiny Points or Touch of Destiny in a previous mod such as “Personal Sacrifice” or “Twisted Fate”) do not have the same experience this time, nor do characters who have Touch of Destiny or Great Destiny lose that Advantage. Should anyone comment on the fact, the Maven laughs aloud and replies, “Oh, my sweet child, did you think you were finished seeing what is to come?” just before she and Sezaru disappear.

The choice made by each PC has an impact on their mod cert here as well, so be sure to record it. If the PC chooses to sacrifice themselves, they receive one of the Sacrifice benefits; if they gamble with the Maven and win, they receive a Win result, and if they gamble and lose, they gain a Lose result. On the other continuum, if the PC still has either Touch of Destiny (from “New Beginnings”) or the Great Destiny Advantage, they receive the Destiny result (even if, for some reason, they have also given Destiny Points); this does NOT cause them to lose the Advantage. If they have neither Advantage, but also have not sacrificed any Destiny Points (as recorded on the mod certs for the adventures “Personal Sacrifice” and “Twisted Fate”), they receive the Neither result. And finally, if they gave up Destiny Points in either of those mods and do not possess either Touch of Destiny or Great Destiny, they receive the Given result.

Conclusion

Passing through the doorway allows the PCs to return to Ningen-do. As soon as they do, they find themselves in the cavern near the shimmering pool again, standing next to the dead body of a man who can only be Ikoma Tenshin. He has clearly been stabbed – not cleanly – by a short blade like a wakizashi and left to bleed out. He is well past the point of any help, but there is a word written in blood on the wall beside him. The shaky kanji read “Arasou.”

The PCs can return Tenshin’s blades to the Lion. If they also learned something of the tactics used by Arasou and the Tsuko’s Heart ronin against the bandits as noted in that section, that information can be shared with the Lion in order to gain a Lion Clan Favor. (Lion Clan samurai

do not gain this favor, but do gain 2 pips of Status.) If they report the existence of a portal as well, by the time the assigned shugenja arrive, the portal has closed, leaving its mysteries solely in the hands of the PCs.

Did any PC remain behind in Kousoku no Chigiri? Whom?

GM must report this information BEFORE 6/29/2014 for it to have storyline effect

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

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

Experience Points

Surviving the adventure:	1XP
Good roleplaying:	+1XP
Winning the Skirmish:	+1XP
Offering a Speech During the Debate:	+1XP

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Honor

No gain or loss

Glory

Each PC loses 1 Glory point for inactivity.

Other Awards/Penalties

PCs may be able to earn a Favor from the Lion Clan if they can report something about Arasou's tactics to them.

Module Tracking Sheets

See Appendix One for the results of the three visions.

GM Reporting

Did any character make the TN 40 Investigation or Battle roll to learn the tactics of Tsuko's Heart?

Appendix #1: The Destiny Results

Vision One

	Fear	Desire	Regret
Aggressive	Outward Focus	Relentless Drive	Knowledge of Failure
Protective	Jealous Guardian	What is Precious	Never Again
Defensive	Secure in Yourself	Home Fires Waiting	Deepest Scars

- Outward Focus (Aggressive/Fear): You will strive to succeed because you will one day be forced to contemplate your weakness. You may reroll any 1s (once) on a roll you have enhanced with a Void Point, but your 10s do not explode on Meditation rolls.
- Relentless Drive (Aggressive/Desire): You know what it is you want to achieve, and you will one day react without thinking when it is presented to you. You may reroll any 1s (once) on initiative rolls, but your 10s do not explode on Willpower rolls provoked by others (this does not include Fear rolls).
- Knowledge of Failure (Aggressive/Regret): You will one day know the cost of failure, and that knowledge will make you hesitate until you know you are ready. You may reroll 1s (once) on weapon or spell damage roll (choose one when you get this cert), but your 10s do not explode on initiative rolls.
- Jealous Guardian (Protective/Fear): You will one day find something you call your own, and will be sure to always hold a part of yourself in reserve to watch over it. You may reroll 1s (once) on raw Trait Rolls, but your 10s do not explode if you have no Void Points before you make the roll.
- What is Precious (Protective/Desire): You will yearn for something, and will learn to your cost that you will go to any depth to protect it. You may reroll 1s (once) on Social Rolls made against characters that are keeping more dice than you are, but your 10s do not explode on Honor Tests.
- Never Again (Protective/Regret): When your overreach costs you something you swore to keep safe, you will find yourself struggling to understand your limits. You may reroll 1s (once) on rolls with TNs higher than 30 + (5 x Insight Rank), but your 10s do not explode on rolls when you call a number of Raises equal to your Void Rank.
- Secure in Yourself (Defensive/Fear): You will one day learn that to expose yourself is to invite suffering. You may reroll 1s (once) on Full Defense rolls, but your 10s do not explode while you are in the Full Attack Stance.
- Home Fires Waiting (Defensive/Desire): You will one day know that you are too important to someone else to be sacrificed, leaving others to suffer in your place. You may reroll 1s whenever you are suffering TN penalties of +10 or higher to your rolls, but your 10s do not explode on rolls to resist your Disadvantages.
- Deepest Scars (Defensive/Regret): You will one day suffer terribly, and the consequences will be such that your survival will feel at times more like a burden than a blessing. You gain 1 Wound per Wound Rank, but Medicine and healing spells targeting you do not explode 10s.

Vision Two

	Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
Mercy	Soothing Words	Encircling Wall	Understanding and Insight	Rapid Withdrawal	The Path Between
Justice	Cutting Tongue	Resolute	Spark to Flame	Piercing Gaze	Untouched Essence

- Soothing Words (Mercy/Air): You will one day have the opportunity to avert an impending conflict that could change the Empire. You add your Air Rank to the total of any Sincerity roll you make to persuade someone you want peace.
- Encircling Wall (Mercy/Earth): You will learn the need to end battles without taking lives. You add your Earth Rank to the total of any attack roll you make that does not deal damage.
- Understanding and Insight (Mercy/Fire): You will one day find the key to success in reaching out to understand your foes. You may add your Fire Rank to the total of any Lore skill roll made about a person or creature currently threatening you.
- The Path Between (Mercy/Void): You will find that you can stand in the midst of a conflict while the battle moves around you. When you spend Void to increase your Armor TN, you increase the bonus to your Armor TN by your Void Rank; you lose this extra bonus in the Attack or Full Attack Stances.

- **Rapid Withdrawal (Mercy/Water):** You will find reserves of speed when lives are on the line. Add your Water Rank to the distance you can move as a Free Action while in the Defense or Full Defense Stances.
- **Cutting Tongue (Justice/Air):** You will find a way to bring final justice to one who has evaded it. You may add your Air Rank to the total of any Social Roll made to provoke or properly perform a duel.
- **Resolute (Justice/Earth):** Honeyed words will sway others, leaving you alone to do what must be done. You may add your Earth Ring to the total of any Social Roll made to resist attempts to dissuade you from performing your duty.
- **Spark to Flame (Justice/Fire):** You will one day find the will to rise up after a loss to strike down the one who wronged you. You may add your Fire Ring to the total of the first attack roll you make against someone who has already wounded you in this combat (if the Wounds are completely negated, as through Reduction or spending Void, this ability does not trigger).
- **Untouched Essence (Justice/Void):** When outside actions attempt to blunt your purpose, you will find the very core of your being remains undaunted. You may add your Void Rank to any Raw Trait or Ring rolls you make during a skirmish or mass battle.
- **Piercing Gaze (Justice/Water):** You will one day find read the signs of a guilty heart all others miss. You may add your Water Rank to the total of any Investigation rolls you make to provoke or discover someone's feelings of guilt or shame.

Vision Three

	Sacrifice	Gambled and Won	Gambled and Lost
Destiny	The Price is Paid	It Isn't Luck	A Destined Fall
Neither	Unexpected Moment	Balanced on the Edge	Fade to Black
Given	The First Steps	Borrowed Time	Fight to the Last

- **The Price is Paid (Sacrifice/Destiny):** You have a great destiny, but you will one day set it all aside for another. Once per module, you can allow another player to reroll a failed roll they just made.
- **Unexpected Moment (Sacrifice/Neither):** Your destiny is as yet undistinguished, but you sense that something is coming. Once per module, you can roll a skill roll twice and choose which result to use – you must choose to use this ability before making the roll.
- **The First Steps (Sacrifice/Given):** You feel that your destined path may already be set, but you cannot see where it will lead you. A number of times per module equal to the Destiny Points you have given up, you can keep an extra die on a skill roll; this can be done multiple times on the same roll if desired.
- **It Isn't Luck (Win/Destiny):** Whatever form your destiny takes, it will appear to be chance. It won't be. Once per module, when you roll at least three 10s on the same roll, you regain a Void Point.
- **Balanced on the Edge (Win/Neither):** You may not have a destiny at all – or perhaps you alone can forge it. Once per module, when you roll at least three 10s on the same roll, you may set aside one of the dice (losing its benefit from the current roll) and substitute it later for a die in another roll in the same module.
- **Borrowed Time (Win/Given):** You have the feeling your destiny is coming for you, but you've still got a few tricks up your sleeves. A number of times per module equal to the number of Destiny Points you have given up, you can choose to have a 9 on a roll explode as if it were a 10; this can be done multiple times on the same roll if desired (a 9 that explodes into another 9 only explodes again if you use this ability a second time).
- **A Destined Fall (Lose/Destiny):** You may sense your end is coming, but you know it will be glorious when it arrives. Once per module, if you roll at least three 1s on the same roll, you regain a Void Point (this ability only triggers after any 1s have been rerolled from other abilities).
- **Fade to Black (Lose/Neither):** You aren't sure if you have a destiny to speak of, but perhaps a low profile has its benefits. Once per module, if you roll at least three 1s on the same roll, you may treat the result of the roll as being equal to 5x the number of kept dice (i.e., 5k3 becomes 15).
- **Fight to the Last (Lose/Given):** You know your destiny is coming, and it isn't likely to be pretty. When it arrives, though, you are ready to fight it to the last. A number of times per module equal to the number of Destiny Points you have given up, you can change any number on a die you roll to a 5 after you see the roll.