

Laughter of the Flames

**A One-Round Mid/High-Rank Adventure for
Heroes of Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido
Month of the Sun, 1143 (Spring)**

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A match has been thrown, and soon all of Rokugan will burn.

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

GM's Information

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

Reminder

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a Mid-rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank 3.

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 3): There is one less Enraged Fukurou-no-Kami, and two less Arsonists. Reduce the TN of any non-combat roll with a TN of 40 or more by 5.

High End Party (most/all characters Rank 5): There are two additional Enraged Fukurou-no-Kami. The Arsonists may make attacks as a Simple Action

Adventure Summary and Background

The PCs are hot on the trail of an arsonist, tracking him through Scorpion and Mantis lands. That arsonist is Hoshi Hitofu, a man wrestling with his demons who the PCs met in SOB06: *Walk Through the Mountains* and told him (in one form or another) to “re-think his vows.” Thus, his compulsion to burn things has taken over, sending him back to his old ways as a mad fire shugenja and arsonist. Recently, his madness deepened when he was ordered by a returned spirit disguised as Kakita Toshiken to “Enlighten the Kitsune.” On his way south, he has started fires in a large number of Lion cities and caused a great deal of destruction.

The spirit responsible for manipulating the mad monk is Bayushi Azuma, himself being used as a pawn by a shadowy organization. They orchestrated sending the PCs in the pursuit of Hitofu and, trusting that they will catch Azuma as well, have instructed the remorseful puppet to inform them that he was instead blackmailed by Hantei Okuchoe.

Upon hearing of the significant damage caused by Hitofu in Lion lands, Azuma, filled with regret for his actions, attempted to stop the madman. However, Hitofu was joined by agents of the conspiracy, and they intercepted Azuma before he could inform the magistrate of his actions. Azuma was framed for arson in cities belonging to the Scorpion and Mantis to re-ignite conflict between those clans. The arson squad’s intention is to sow strife within the Empire, dividing alliances and igniting wars

within between the clans, which will begin with the destruction of Shiro Kitsune and the Kitsune Mura. The plan is multi-layered and complex, with many potential outcomes, all designed to advance the conspiracy’s aims and punish their unsuspecting enemies. Unknown to them, Azuma survived.

Following the trail of fires, the PCs will have to decide which to save: the body of the Fox Clan, or its soul.

Character Notes

The GM should check the PCs’ character sheets for the following:

- Any Advantage or Disadvantage that relates to animals, such as Touched/Cursed by the Realm: Chikushudo, Fascination, or Compulsion, etc.
- Pets, horses, or other animals that *travel with* the PC, including the Unicorn Steed cert; write down the names of the pet for future use.
- Any PC who carries Sorinpu the Hellrazor (from SoB29: *Fields of the Dead*).
- Lecherous, Insensitive, or Failure of Compassion

Additionally, the following information from the player’s cert from SoB06: *Walk Through the Mountains* will be referenced:

- What did the PC tell Hoshi Hitofu, the passive monk, at the end of the module? This should be noted specifically for use during the final combat of the module in the Kyuden Kitsune confrontation. (The campaign’s canonical response was something similar to: “go home and rethink your vows.”)

Introduction

The city surrounding Shiro Matsu is a burned husk, with entire neighborhoods reduced to ashes and blackened, skeletal timbers. Haze obscures the castle above as you ride through the charred eastern gate. The guards, soot-stained and weary but alert, check your travel papers with sharp eyes.

“The magistrates are waiting for you, samas, at The Empty Cup.” His voice is hoarse as he returns your papers with a respectful bow. “Please find who did this.”

Peasants and laborers work to clear away the ruins throughout the remnants of the merchant quarter as a massive funeral procession crosses your path.

The PCs have been sent to Shiro Matsu to assist an Emerald Magistrate with an investigation into a series of

arsons that have run rampant through the central Lion lands recently. They are expected, and their letters from Kitsuki Otojiro (with whom they may have worked in the past, either in SoB06: *Walk Through the Mountains* or SoB42: *Winter Court: Shiro Chuda*) tell them where to meet but give very few details apart from the importance of the matter.

PCs from Shiro Matsu will undoubtedly be very concerned over the fate of their house and family. Ultimately, such “off-screen” events are up to the player to decide; Appendix #2: A Life in Ashes contains information on dealing with PCs local to any of the locations that have been devastated.

Your directions take you to an inn located in one of the relatively few undamaged areas of the city. The Empty Cup is, like most Lion architecture, unremarkable in every way, except for an enormous white-blossomed cherry tree shading the street. The proprietor greets you at the door, “Ah, you must be the yoriki the magistrates mentioned! I am Ho, please let me take your horses; Akodo Matsumoto-sama is waiting for you in the North Room. This way, please.”

The main room is bustling with local families – samurai, peasants, husbands, wives, children. Many of them are openly weeping, while others are stunned by their grief, finding consolation only in the bottle.

Any Dragon PCs will feel every eye in the room watching them. If there is a tattooed monk at the table, it will be the pressure of pure hatred boiling just under the surface.

Ho’s plump wife, Akio, will smile quietly and lead the PCs to the North Room.

Akio kneels and taps lightly on the frame, quietly sliding the bare wooden door open; inside two men sit behind a wide table. The older of the pair, a robust Lion magistrate with full sideburns and the soft glow of a returned spirit, introduces himself as Akodo Matsumoto and gives the name of his companion as Kitsuki Otojiro. The Dragon is a younger man in green, wearing the vibrant sash of an Emerald Magistrate and the mon of a Kitsuki Justicar.

A map of the central Lion lands is open on the table; a series of small black stones are placed on a number of cities, forming an unmistakable line down the middle. To the south, a red stone marks the Scorpion city of Beiden.

Any PCs with Status over 3.0 or Glory over 9.0 is addressed directly by name and thanked for coming so quickly.

“I apologize for the unseemly haste of this meeting, but necessity demands action,” Matsumoto says, pouring tea into simple brown cups. “I have been on the trail of an arsonist, one whose work you have undoubtedly noticed, but now I must leave the pursuit to the Emerald Magistrates. Kitsuki Otojiro-sama, with your permission, I shall explain the details to your yoriki.” The Dragon nods silently, his gaze examining each of you in cool appraisal as the Lion begins to speak.

“Two years ago, several villages and holdings through the central Lion lands were devastated by a series of arsons. My colleague, Matsu Hataki, made an arrest, extracted a confession, and the fires stopped. Perhaps the criminal had a student, perhaps Hataki-san captured the wrong man, perhaps it is nothing but coincidence... but shortly after the start of the year, more Lion cities have been burned.” The Akodo’s jaw clenches, and his voice becomes pained. “Whatever the case, this time the fires have been far more extensive; more lives have been lost, and more damage has been done. I have followed the trail from Shiro sano Ken Hayai, and finally caught a break here at Shiro Matsu where an eyewitness was able to provide a description of the man who set the fires. Unfortunately, the perpetrator was seen travelling south into the Scorpion lands, making this an Imperial matter and therefore outside of my jurisdiction...”

Matsumoto is not pleased to be turning the investigation over to the Emerald Magistrates, but he knows the law; he will give every bit of cooperation he can at this point, since that is all he can do to ensure the arsonist is brought to justice.

- What is known about the arsonist?
“The witness report describes him as a bald, tattooed man who raved about ‘the enlightenment of fire’; there are reports of a tattooed man at two of the other Lion settlements, but the witness here is the only one that has survived. It appears he may be a Dragon, as we think he came to Shiro sano Ken Hayai from the north.”
- What other places have been burned?
“Shiro sano Ken Hayai, Rugashi, Foshi, Tonfajutsen, and Kaeru Toshi have all been damaged significantly.” His voice is grim. “Much of the residential and merchant districts have been destroyed, and many lives lost.”
- The Empress is at Shiro sano Ken Hayai!

“Her Imperial Highness is safe, I assure you; this conversation would be somewhat different if she or the Emerald Champion had come to harm.”

- When did all this occur?
“The fire here occurred two weeks ago. Otojiro-sama arrived last night, and you will be leaving for Beiden with him in the morning. Hopefully, the trail has not grown cold.”
- Have you spoken to everyone?
“I have left no stone unturned and have many eyewitness reports from every city. Everything is in the file.”
- Are there any reports of arson from Beiden?
“No there are not, which makes it all the more curious of a case.” Matsumoto says, (politely not looking at any Scorpion in the room). “Every caravan that comes through says the city is in good health. The tattooed man was seen in Beiden Pass, however, which is why that should be your first destination.”

Any other questions the PCs have will be answered to the best of Matsumoto’s ability. Once the PCs are done, Matsumoto will take his leave, handing everything over to Kitsuki Otojiro, who will recommend a very early start the next morning. (The PCs all have rooms available as Status dictates.)

The magistrate’s casefile contains accounts from witnesses, descriptions of the fires and a list of the affected cities and provinces. The paperwork is complete, and perusing it will give no better leads than the mysterious tattooed man. A rough sketch of him, and a more detailed verbal description, is included.

The locations of the fires in Lion lands are listed here, with the name of the province and the provincial daimyo. Lion PCs who are from these areas may be interested in the fate of their hometowns, but it will not be possible to wait for word before the group has to leave.

- **Shiro sano Ken Hayai (Castle of the Swift Sword)** – Hayai province; Kitsu Kyuwa
- **Rugashi** – Rugashi province; Kitsu Honami
- **Foshi** – Foshi province; Kitsu Mito
- **Tonfajutsen** – Tonfajutsen province; Matsu Takako
- **Kaeru Toshi (Captured City)** – Kaeru province, Matsu Katsu
- **Shiro Matsu** – Yama province, Matsu Akane

A **Courtier / Intelligence roll** (TN 20) will inform the PC that these are mostly “neutral” daimyo in the conflict between the Regent and the Emerald Champion; Matsu Akane is a supporter of the Emerald Champion, and Matsu Takako has recently spoken on Hantei Okucheo’s

behalf in court. A roll of 30 or better will inform the PC that Otojiro is here because the Lion are giving their Dragon allies a chance to save face before they move forward, even though there are likely other Emerald Magistrates stationed closer to Shiro Matsu than he. PCs who are themselves Emerald Magistrates have obviously been sent to assist (and observe) the new Magistrate; they are under his command but are granted the authority to take over the investigation if he appears in over his head.

PCs may wish to speak to the survivors, but none can provide more information than Matsumoto already has. The local witnesses will wearily repeat the information provided in the file. There are peasant burn victims in all the local temples, and any PC willing to spend the night healing the wounded will receive a point of Honor. There are many homeless too, and even the common room in the inn is filled to the brim. Should a PC wish to forego their room (for as many peasant families as they can stuff into it), they gain points of Honor equal to their Status Rank, but lose that much in Glory for sleeping in the common room.

Part One: The Ashes Cool...

Early the next morning, before dawn, Kitsuki Otojiro will meet the PCs in front of the *Empty Cup*, ready to ride. He is not wearing armor, and will not be happy if the PCs choose to without his express order (doing so causes a loss of Honor as per a Minor Breach of Etiquette). Otojiro will encourage the PCs not to dawdle – *time is of the essence*.

Any PCs on foot will be given the following warning:

“My friend, we have two weeks of pursuit to make up, so we will be riding hard and fast over very long distances. I am sorry to say that if you fall behind, we cannot wait for you.”

Obviously it is highly suggested that the PC borrow a horse from the proprietor of the inn; Otojiro will make any necessary arrangements somewhat impatiently. Riding to Beiden requires no roll, but running does: a PC on foot must succeed at an **Athletics (Running) / Stamina** (TN 25) roll. Any spells or Techniques that speed travel time give a Free Raise to this roll, at the GM’s discretion. Success means they arrive too late to participate in the investigation in Beiden – they are Fatigued and gain no Void Point or spell slot recovery; failure means the PC is Exhausted, doubling the penalty from Fatigued and preventing them from spending Void

Points until they get a chance to rest. (At this point, it should be made obvious that the character needs to make arrangements for a mount, or they will likely find themselves out of the adventure.)

Beiden

Travel to Beiden is fast and hard. The road through the Pass is clogged with merchants and travelers, but Otojuro's Emerald Magistrate back-banner parts the traffic, making what might otherwise be a few days' journey take most of one, and the mounted PCs arrive just after dark.

As the report stated, there are no significant issues in the city of Beiden; it is, in fact, enjoying a prosperous spring. Merchants sell souvenir sake cups and popular *Akutoneko vs The Name Eater* (a popular play that opened here late last year) ukiyo-e prints to anyone who pauses. The guards, upon seeing the magistrate's banner, direct them to the popular *Lucky Rat Inn* for dinner, sake, and baths and a messenger is sent to the local magistrate, Bayushi Manzo.

The proprietor of the *Lucky Rat* is a returned spirit named Junzo who welcomes the PCs warmly and graciously, personally directing them to their suite of rooms and its private bath house. Dinner, bowls of spicy noodles with peanuts, tofu, and vegetables, await them in the common room, which is very full, mostly of returned spirits.

Rumors

PCs who wish to gather information before meeting with Manzo may roll **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** at a TN of 10; a successful roll learns one of the following rumors at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN. Returned spirits or those openly supporting the Regent receive a Free Raise on this roll. The rumors include:

- **10:** The local provincial daimyo's son, Yogo Taro, died a few years ago, but no one mourns his loss. There are many wild rumors regarding his death, but the official line is an accidental fire in his residence.
- **15:** There was a great fire in Kyuden Bayushi a week and a half ago. Rumor blames it on an enraged Scorpion shugenja in a steel mempo.
- **20:** Vocal support of the Regent by the local daimyo, Yogo Tobusa, has brought many returned spirits to Beiden, particularly after the massive insult given to the Scorpion Champion by Kakita Toshiken. The inns in town are constantly busy, especially the *Lucky Rat*.
- **25:** About two weeks ago, Tobusa began a new annual tradition in Beiden, that of the *Taimatsu*

Akashi, the Bonfire Festival, to appease the local fire spirits. Many say this was to placate the spirits that took his son, while others whisper it was so Taro did not come back as a vengeful spirit himself. The practical side of it is to safely clear underbrush so that no uncontrolled fires occur.

- **30:** Visitors from all over came to watch and participate in the spectacle; among them were a tattooed man and a group of wandering monks. The *ise zumi*'s fire-breathing displays were nothing short of amazing, and the monks performed a Noh play called *Twilight Embers*. Many are still talking about the event, and the owner of the *Morning Sparrow* noodle bar claims his extra-spicy "Enlightenment Udon" helped fuel the display.
- **35:** The Scorpion Clan's alliance with the Phoenix has never been particularly strong, but recent events have put it under increasing strain. Specifically, the Phoenix have entered into an alliance with the Crab and even opened their borders to the Scorpion's recurrent enemies, the Mantis. Some in the court of the Scorpion Champion wonder if the Phoenix are worth trying to work with in the future.
- **40:** The Scorpion are not particularly concerned with the conflict brewing to the north between the Dragon and Phoenix. However, hard questions have been quietly circulating about the Dragon Heart Plain, and many have begun asking about what the Dragon meant at Kyuden Miya two years ago when they said "*Shiro Chuda is clean.*"
- **45:** Improving relations between the Lion and Scorpion have led to closer ties between some of the Scorpion allies and the Lion Clan as well. Toku, Champion of the Monkey, has been a regular visitor to Lion lands in the last year, making stops at both Shiro Akodo and Shiro sano Ken Hayai.

Speaking quietly with the proprietor of the *Lucky Rat*, Junzo, allows a PC to make a **Sincerity (Conversation) / Awareness** (TN 25) with a Free Raise per koku spent at the bar to gain some extra information. (PCs who carry Sorinpu the Hell Razor have a +5TN penalty when talking to Junzo and a few of the other returned spirits because he is a returned spirit from Toshigoku, and *something* about that sword makes him nervous.) Junzo remembers that Bayushi Azuma, the accused arsonist from Kyuden Bayushi, traveled south from the Dragon lands about two months ago; he recalls the incident specifically because Azuma didn't drink at the bar even though he looked like he really could use one – something was obviously heavy on his mind.

After an hour or so, the local magistrate arrives to speak with the PCs. Bayushi "The Hawk" Manzo is a brick of a man with a salty hair and an iron-grey mustache, wearing a dark crimson mask across his eyes and nose.

He will politely join the PCs in a private room after dinner. He has heard rumor of fires in Lion lands and more recently in Kyuden Bayushi, but nothing of the sort has happened here. He does remember the tattooed monk because he made quite a spectacle at the Bonfire Festival but did not otherwise cause trouble.

If the PCs ask around, and succeed at an **Etiquette (Bureaucracy) / Awareness** roll (TN 20), they will discover that a tattooed monk by the name of Hoshi Hitofu recently had a meeting with Yogo Tobusa. Success with a 30 indicates that the monk was full of praise for the daimyo's festival; success with a 40 allows the PCs to learn that Tobusa only met with the monk in public and afterwards remarked that the Hoshi was "overly enthusiastic." Tobusa is not available for the PCs (or the Emerald Magistrate) to interview.

The *Morning Sparrow* noodle bar is not difficult to find—there is an exceptionally well-made sign outside showing a bald tattooed monk breathing fire while eating a bowl of noodles. PCs who enquire about the monk's tattoos may make an **Artisan: Tattooing / Perception** roll to determine what they are: TN 5- Dragon; 10- Hawk; 20- Bamboo; 30- Blaze. Tattooed Monks gain three Free Raises on this roll.

The proprietor's name is Jao, and he will happily offer the PCs a bowl of Enlightenment Udon for a zeni (eating them requires a raw **Earth Ring** roll, TN 25, or the PC will lose a point of Glory for openly crying). Jao will proudly tell the PCs that he got the idea from a tattooed monk who stopped to talk to him, a polite if eccentric fellow named Hoshi Hitofu, and that his fire-breathing display at the Bonfire Festival was partially fueled by Jao's special blend of Red Dragon Peppers. More thorough questioning with an **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** (TN 40) will help Jao remember that Hitofu mentioned something about a "special mission for the Emerald Champion", but that the monk said nothing specific about that mission.

With the highly accurate picture and the name, PCs who played SoB06: *Walk Through the Mountains* may make a raw **Intelligence** roll (TN 20) to remember Hoshi Hitofu: he was the tattooed monk traveling with the bandits, with vows of silence and inaction.

If asked, Jao did not paint the sign; a monk from the Brotherhood of Shinsei did it for him in exchange for dinner, the day after the festival. He did not catch the man's name, but he was not a member of the group that performed the play.

Part Two: The Fires of Kyuden Bayushi

In the morning, PCs who ran from Shiro Matsu to Beiden successfully will earn a concerned gaze from Kitsuki Otojiro, who is impatient because time is of the essence. *"I am impressed that you made it, samurai-san, but you really must acquire a horse."* Making arrangements for a mount in Beiden is not terribly difficult, though potentially costly – burning a Scorpion Favor or reducing Yogo Tobusa's Devotion (if the PC has him as an Ally) will do so, as will simply spending five koku to rent a steed. Otojiro will make the arrangements if the PC cannot, though it will affect his regard for them (reducing the amount of his Devotion as an Ally, if they have him as one, or preventing him from becoming an Ally at the end of the module).

Riding to Kyuden Bayushi takes two days of fast travel and one **Horsemanship / Agility** roll (TN 20); failure means the PC does not recover Void Points. Running requires one **Athletics (Running) / Stamina** (TN 30) roll. Success once again means they arrive too late to sleep through the night (Fatigued, and no Void Point recovery), and failure means the PC is out of the adventure.

Dark fingers of smoke rise above the Scorpion plains ahead as you near the city surrounding Kyuden Bayushi. The guard at the gate gives your papers a cursory glance before pointing you to the castle itself; there are no inns available. The city's Merchant and Noble Districts are simply gone, razed to the ground. Survivors pick through the remains, weeping openly and looking for their lost relatives, as the distinctive black pillars of cremation pyres rise from the eta district.

Rooms for you are found at the Scorpion Clan's palace, though quarters are tight. Two hours after you arrive, you are invited to dinner with the local daimyo, Bayushi Makoto and his wife, Atsuko. The dinner is as elegant and proper as one could hope, but somber. After the meal, you find yourselves on a veranda overlooking the wondrous gardens of Kyuden Bayushi, observing a beautiful sunset, when you are joined by Bayushi Yojiro, Daimyo of the Bayushi family and Champion of the Scorpion.

"We are pleased you could join us for dinner, Kitsuki-san, and are happy to welcome you and your yoriki into our home," Yojiro says, "though I do wish this visit could have been under better circumstances. If I might I ask, what brings you here?"

“We are pursuing an arsonist, Bayushi-sama,” Otojiro says, bowing deeply to the Scorpion Champion. “An ise zumi burned his way through Lion lands before coming through Beiden Pass. The fire here cannot be a coincidence.”

Yojiro thinks for a moment, then replies softly behind his fierce, demonic mask. “At the moment we consider this to be an internal matter, Kitsuki-san, as we have significant testimony against one of our own, Bayushi Azuma. However, if you find any additional information regarding this matter, please bring it to my attention.”

Yojiro bows and apologizes before taking his leave- he has other pressing business and therefore cannot stay to chat with the PCs.

A **Courtier / Intelligence** roll (TN 20) will inform the PC that Makoto and Atsuko are supporters of the Emerald Champion, Kakita Toshiken (vassals of Matoko and Atsuko automatically know this). Scorpion PCs who succeed know the daimyo support Yojiro in the “internal debate regarding modernism vs. traditionalism” as well. Success at a 30 allows them to know that Yojiro has begun to lend his support quietly to the Imperial Regent.

There will be time after dinner to investigate the city, though there are fewer people out and about than usual. The remaining sake houses and inns are full, but quiet, and the smell of charred wood lingers everywhere. Asking around town or the castle allows the PCs to roll **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** to gain the following information. (Scorpion PCs gain a Free Raise on this roll.)

- **TN 10** – A drunken Bayushi Azuma was seen atop *The Crimson Iris* inn with a bottle of booze, yelling about the fidelity of his wife and blasting the town with lightning and fire spells. He disappeared in the smoke and confusion. Azuma’s wife, Bayushi Myami refuted the accusations and committed jigai in Yojiro’s court the next morning.
- **TN 15** - Many rumors say Azuma also leveled the town of Shimoura in the Chuouou province, a few days south of here. Bayushi Yojiro sent troops there, but no word has returned.
- **TN 20** – There are a large number of wounded from the fires, but only one surviving witness from *The Crimson Iris*, a peasant who was badly, badly burned. It is uncertain if he is lucky or unlucky, but he is just one of many at the Temple of Jurojin.
- **TN 25** – There was a tattooed man seen a week and a half ago, but his current whereabouts are unknown; he is assumed to have perished in the fire.

- **TN 30** – A Miya Herald arrived in town a few days ago, with promises from the Throne to help rebuild the city on behalf of the Empress and the Regent, Hantei Okucheo. Though not overtly offensive, his comments about the fire have called the Emerald Champion’s competence into question.
- **TN 35** – The PCs catch one of Azuma’s friends, Bayushi Okuro, in the *Muddy Waters* bar drinking heavily. Azuma, a returned spirit, was an accomplished Air Shugenja with a happy home life, who normally abstained from drunkenness. His actions are inexplicable. He can also tell the PCs that Azuma’s mask is a brightly polished steel mempo, and that’s how he was recognized.
- **TN 40** – The Herald, Miya Sannosuke, is staying in the castle also, and his servants will politely tell the PCs that he is traveling north to Lion lands and unfortunately does not have time to meet them. If asked, yes, he supports the Regent.

Asking the guards at the southern gates of the city about anyone who left gains this response: *“I did not see a tattooed man come this way, samurai-sama. It was chaos, but I would remember that. There was a group of traveling monks with basket hats, though.”*

Interviewing the Survivor

The Temple of Jurojin is filled to capacity with wounded. Moans of torment echo in the halls as weary but determined monks move about, changing bandages and caring for the injured. When you arrive, an elderly woman in orange approaches:

“Greetings, O-samurai-samas. I am Hirako. How may I help you?”

- Where is the survivor from the Crimson Iris?
“Ah, that poor soul is resting in the major trauma ward. We did what we could, but only the Kami can help him now. I can take you to him, if you like.”
- Do you know how he survived, when everyone else was killed?
“A Brother found him face-down in the Inn’s koi pond and pulled him to safety. It pains me to say he was lucky, given his state.”
- Have you seen a Tattooed man here?
“So sorry, but no tattooed man has been found here... or anywhere else in the city.”
- Is the survivor awake? Can we interview him?
“He comes in and out of consciousness, but... his wounds are... well, you will see. We don’t even know his name, the poor dear.”

The major trauma ward is lit by soft lanterns and overlooks a tranquil garden, where an old blind monk plucks sleepy tunes on a samisen. Each bed is cordoned off by orange curtains. Ikebana displays and incense mask the more unpleasant odors as Hirako leads you to a shadowed corner.

“This is he, magistrate-sama,” she warns, drawing back the curtain.

On the bed lie the remains of a man, ruined and burnt beyond recognition. The scars of the fire are raw and red, but closed, healed by the kami. His head and face is a mask of melted wax; empty sockets stare at the ceiling and small black holes mark where his nose and mouth should be. Hirako kneels beside his bedroll and lifts the remains of his withered hand, tears welling in her eyes as his head turns toward her: the only thanks he can give is a pained exhale.

“I know he can hear you, magistrate-sama,” she whispers, her voice strained. “But I fear he cannot respond.”

PCs with the Advantage “Paragon of Compassion” or the Disadvantage “Soft-Hearted” must roll a **Fear Test** (TN 25) or leave the room. Failure causes a **Minor Breach of Etiquette**.

Those who stay may make an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll:

- **TN 10** – The survivor is a returned spirit. The survivor’s breath hastens when she says “magistrate”. It is likely that he knows something, but cannot express it.
- **TN 15** – He is functionally healthy, his wounds cured by the spell “Path to Inner Peace” and medical attention, but the damage cannot be undone. In game-mechanic terms, he has seven ranks of Permanent Wounds and would need *many* castings of “Regrow the Wound” or “Peace of the Kami” to be healed fully.
- **TN 20** – His hand is twitching in a way that would indicate he wishes to write something.

The survivor cannot write on his own due to his condition, so providing him with a brush and paper will only end in frustration. However, a PC who wishes to help can let the survivor guide their hand with a **Calligraphy / Reflexes** roll. The base TN is 10, but the PC will need to call three Raises to get the full message listed below; fewer raises mean choice words are illegible at GM discretion (two Raises should be enough to convey the meaningful parts of the message). The close contact required, however, is uncomfortable for

proper Rokugani and will cause a loss of a point of Honor. The text of the message is:

I am Bayushi Azuma. A group of men attacked me while I slept. I escaped the fire by climbing out the window. I have been framed. I cannot commit seppuku without my mask. I need my mask. Please find it for me.

After Azuma writes his message, he turns away from the PCs to hide his shame.

There are various other methods PCs may attempt to gain information from Azuma, though the pain from his wounds is severe and will prevent him from assisting them further at this point. Creative use of certain spells (such as Know the Mind or even basic Commune) should be allowed to gain the above information, though anything more specific will be masked; the spirits about the shugenja are chaotic due to his anguish.

It is up to the PCs regarding what to do with Azuma, but Otojiro will remind them that they must pursue the arsonist without pause toward Shimomura (assuming the PCs made the gossip roll). There is certainly time to send a message to Yojiro and the local daimyo, but it is late and the magistrate plans on leaving before dawn.

PCs who ran to Kyuden Bayushi from Beiden will arrive roughly around 2am. Those who succeeded this far will gain a point of Glory, but Otojiro will leave a polite note *insisting* they get a horse (Bayushi Makoto will offer one, requiring the PC to take a Minor Obligation to the Scorpion).

Riding to Shimomura takes two days of fast travel and one **Horsemanship / Stamina** roll (TN 25; failure again means the PCs do not recover Void). Running requires an **Athletics (Running) / Stamina** (TN 40) roll. Success once again means they arrive too late to sleep through the night (Fatigued, no Void Recovery), and failure means the PC is out of the adventure.

The Grave of Shimomura

Shimomura, the largest city in the Chuuou province, is a black smear on the earth and nothing more. Very little is left standing, and what buildings remain are significantly damaged. It was not a large town; perhaps two hundred people once called it home, but now only carrion birds do. The inns, the daimyo’s residence, the temples... all are gone.

The only living soul in Shimomura is a solitary young monk in filthy brown robes, busily using a wheelbarrow to carry bodies to a makeshift pyre. His name is

Houkaku, a martial monk with a strong devotion to the Fortunes. (PCs may have encountered him in SoBCI6: *Blessing of the Dragon*.) When Houkaku sees the PCs and the magistrate, he will bow and point south, saying only “that way.” He will politely refuse offers of assistance, instead suggesting that the party continue in pursuit of the one responsible. If asked, he will not acknowledge that he drew the sign for Jao or pulled Azuma from the fire, but a PC may roll **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** (TN 25) to realize that he did.

It is unknown if the provincial daimyo, Bayushi Moriko, and her family are alive; Houkaku has not found them. A **Courtier / Intelligence** roll TN 25 will allow a PC to recall that Moriko is neutral in the conflict between the Regent and the Emerald Champion (her vassals automatically succeed at this roll).

South of here is the Chuuhan Province in Tsuruchi lands. The only settlement of note there is Gateway Village, and riding there takes three days of hard riding; the PCs lose one Void Point that does not recover while traveling. At this point, if a PC has not acquired a horse, they will not be able to keep up and will be out of the module.

On the way south, they pass a lone Scorpion rider travelling north at breakneck speed.

Part Three: Mantis, Unaligned, and Fox Lands

Confrontation at Gateway Village

Gateway Village is a fort town on the province’s border, located atop a hill with a commanding view of the surrounding countryside. You arrive mid-afternoon to discover a small Scorpion force camped outside. The village was not razed like Shimomura, but it did sustain significant damage and the surrounding fields are black and barren. Ashes float lightly on the wind.

As the party approaches the village, a pair of Scorpion bushi will close with them and greet them politely, extending an invitation from their commander. If the PCs do not object, Otojiro will be interested in discovering what the Scorpion are doing in the area and what they have already discovered. The bushi will escort them through their well-disciplined camp (curious PCs may roll **Investigation** or **Battle / Perception** at a TN of 20 to determine that the Scorpion have been waiting here for about two days).

The leader of the Scorpion forces is Bayushi Paneki, a stunningly handsome young man (not even twenty) with a transparent silk mask; as a rising star in the Scorpion armies, this is his first command, and he is eager to make a good impression for his superiors. The PCs find him sitting at a table facing the city with a pot of tea and two cups, politely waiting for the Tsuruchi daimyo to let him in. He will explain with a certain amount of sardonic amusement (and only a slight quirk of his mouth toward any Mantis PCs) that the archers on the walls have shot arrows at all the messengers he has sent. Paneki will pour tea for them while he fills them in on the situation as he knows it: it is clear that the arsonist came through here, and while the rogue shugenja’s actions were certainly not condoned by the Scorpion, the Tsuruchi daimyo is understandably distrustful of anything he might say in this matter. Paneki will suggest they speak to the local daimyo.

The Tsuruchi archers will of course not shoot at an Emerald Magistrate or his yoriki, but will instead escort the PCs and Otojiro to their daimyo, Tsuruchi Korekiyo, an unusually tall, middle aged man who is missing his left ear. He will offer tea to the PCs and room in his estate, such as it is. *“I apologize that I cannot host you fully as courtesy demands, but as you can see, my home was attacked by the Scorpion. They have come to offer some bland apology, I’d wager. Many have died, and this cannot be forgiven.”*

Conversing with Korekiyo during dinner requires an **Etiquette (Conversation) / Awareness** roll which will provide the PCs with more details. (Mantis PCs receive a Free Raise on this roll, and any character with “Oath of Fealty: Tsuruchi Korekiyo” gains an additional Free Raise.)

- **TN 10** – Korekiyo is *obsessed* with gambling.
- **TN 15** – In the middle of the night, less than a week ago, a man in red robes with a bright steel mask walked into the center of town and began calling lightning and fire on the buildings. He disappeared in the confusion, but not before he killed about fifty people and destroyed much of the town.
- **TN 20** – Korekiyo is neutral in the conflict between the Emerald Champion and the Regent.
- **TN 25** – A group of (PC+1) traveling monks (wearing basket-hats) borrowed horses from the local stable a day or so before the fire. They asked for directions to Kyuden Kitsune and were sent *south* towards the monastery of Dangai.
- **TN 30** – One of the stable boys, Yuuji, noticed a kirin tattoo on one of the traveling monk’s forearm, and will swear he saw wind blowing in its mane.

A **Courtier / Intelligence** roll TN 25 will determine that the Kitsune family of the Fox Clan supports the Regent against the Emerald Champion, but are allied with the Dragon.

Though the PCs will surely inform Korekiyo about their suspicions of Azuma's innocence, he has had too many problems with Scorpion agents in the past to believe it, apologetically stating that it is Otojiro and the PCs who are likely confused. He will not listen to Paneki, except on one condition: Korekiyo is an incorrigible gambler and will wager on nearly *anything* the PC might suggest, but the one who takes him up on this bet will have to offer something *valuable* in return (or take "Major Obligation: Mantis"). For standard Skill Rolls ("I'll bet I can shoot that apple off your head!"), the TN will be 35. For traditional games of chance or other Contested Skill Rolls, he rolls 8k4 (with Emphases in Fortunes and Winds, Go, and Kemari), and if it is a social contest, Korekiyo has 4 points of Mental Disadvantages (Overconfident; Fascination: gambling). Determining other competitions is completely up to the GM, and this can be *anything* with roughly even odds (i.e. flipping a coin, rolling high or low on 1k1, etc). Only one PC might attempt this, and Luck may be used at GM discretion.

Korekiyo will abide by the result, whatever it is. Should a PC fail but still try to convince him, they will gain three points of Infamy and lose three points of Honor, for bad sportsmanship. Cheating in any way loses the PC a point of Honor for each rank of Honor they have, and being *caught* cheating gains the offending PC two ranks of Infamy and "Sworn Enemy: Mantis Clan" (or "Black Sheep" if the offender is Mantis). If the PC loses, whatever he gave up may incur Honor and Glory penalties as well, at GM discretion. *If it is a certed item, tear it up.*

If the PC wins, Korekiyo will send word to his superiors to hold their actions in court until more information is presented.

Blazing Through the Hinterlands

The road south to Dangai is rougher, but it is clear of travelers given the sparse population in the area. Riding takes three days of fast travel and one **Horsemanship / Stamina** roll, TN 25; again, failure means the PC does not recover Void. Running requires an **Athletics (Running) / Stamina** TN 45 roll. Success once again means they arrive too late to sleep through the night (Fatigued, no Void recovery), and failure means the PC is out of the adventure. Failure by more than 20 gives the PC "Permanent Injury: Bad Knees", giving the PC a +5TN penalty to all future Athletics (Running) rolls.

Along the way, the PCs may make an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** to spot the following items:

- **TN 10:** A crimson kimono, lying in the middle of the dusty road.
- **TN 20:** A black spell satchel, tossed behind a rocky outcropping. Bayushi Azuma's chop is in a side pocket of the satchel, as is a small ink brush painting of his smiling wife; it is full of scrolls marked with the Soshi family seal. PCs who wish to keep these scrolls must contact the Admin Team for further information.
- **TN 30:** A wakizashi with a red scabbard, sticking out of a bramble bush. The Bayushi family mon is emblazoned on the saya, and Bayushi Azuma's personal mon is worked into the tsuba.
- **TN 40:** A polished steel mempo, thrown off into a patch of tall grass.

The unassuming monastery at Dangai, and the small heimin village of Shaiga come and go quickly. Both are unaligned and undamaged, ignored by the arsonist. (Mantis or Scorpion PCs may know more about Shaiga, but the rest of the Empire does not and that includes the arsonist.) The residents remember the riders but did not see a tattooed man.

Meidochi is a Hare-controlled farming village, and the PCs are offered rooms for the night in the (very modest) residence of the Ujina family daimyo, Ujina Tokimasa, who will be greatly upset by the news of the arsonists, and he will open his (also modest) store room to them if the PCs need supplies.

Traveling south requires no roll as the PCs charge between the edges of the Kitsune Mori and the Kawa no Kin, the River of Gold. There are many peasants along the way, and any asked will confirm seeing a group of monks very recently, and that they followed the road to the ferry, travelling hard.

If one of the PCs or players have a specific animal fixation, such as 'pandas', 'bunnies', or 'cats' (*not* Ratlings), replace 'deer' below with that particular animal, and direct the box text toward them. Otherwise, address the character with the highest Animal Handling Skill or Void Ring.

The wide River of Gold rolls inexorably along as you approach, shining warmly in the late afternoon sun. Ishino, the stout peasant ferryman, bows deeply to the Magistrate. "Why yes I did see some monks, just yesterday morning. I took them across, they were heading to Kyuden Kits- oh... oh no..."

Ishino shakily points across a wide field behind you to the east, toward the forest. Flocks of birds have taken wing, framed against a hazy brown horizon, as an enormous mass of animals come swarming out of the distant trees. Deer, rabbits, foxes, and even bears can be seen in the horde, racing past your position before plunging into the river and swimming across.

An enormous [deer] breaks away from the group and saunters over. A strange wind blows as it bows its head, ears flickering, looking you right in the eyes. It speaks in an oddly musical voice: "Please hurry, the Lady is in danger. Won't you help her?" Before you can respond, it leaps into the river and rejoins the herd.

Across the river in the far distance to the south, toward Kyuden Kitsune, a towering column of black smoke rises. Kaia Osho Mura is burning.

A **Lore: Spirits / Intelligence** roll (TN 20) will inform the PCs that when a normal animal grows that size, it is usually an ancient animal spirit. With a **Lore: Theology (Myths) / Intelligence** roll (TN 35, members of the Kitsune Family or School receive four Free Raises), the PC knows that the spirit was likely referring to the Lady of the Forest, said to be the mother of the kitsune, the patron of the Fox Clan, and an aspect of either Benten, the Fortune of Romantic Love, or the kami Shinjo (some stories claim that she is *both*).

Otojiro is not quite willing to order the PCs into their armor at this point (it can still be construed as an insult to the local lord); convincing him to allow it will require an **Etiquette / Awareness** roll (TN 25). Even so, donning armor while on the ferry (the best option in terms of saving time) is difficult and cannot be done with the appropriate rituals; this will cause a single point of Honor loss for any PC with 6 or more ranks of Honor.

Part Four: Kaia Osho Mura and Kyuden Kitsune

You can see the black columns of smoke grow as you cross the river. As soon as your feet touch the shore, you can hear screams of pain and terror echoing through the crash and crackle of the blazing forest. Dark shapes circle in the sky above, and it's only when one dives toward the ground and emerges with a struggling form do you realize the distance and scale: they are giant birds of some sort, and the cries come from their victims. "The burning of the forest has awakened something terrible!" Otojiro gasps out, his hand flying to his sword. He barks out a single word

in command as he mounts and rides to the south. "Come!"

Pursuing the voices means charging into the burning forest, and this requires a **Horsemanship / Willpower** TN 20 (Utaku Battle Maidens gain a Free Raise): failure means the horse will not enter and the PC must dismount and lead their steed on foot. The Animal Handling Skill may be substituted for Horsemanship.

Charging into a burning forest is highly dangerous, on horseback or not. The PCs must make either **Horsemanship / Reflexes** or **Athletics / Reflexes** rolls. The TN for this roll is 40; success means the character takes no damage. Failing results in being struck by falling branches, and the PC takes damage based on the result of their roll:

0-20: 3k3	21-30: 2k2	31-39: 1k1
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On the edge of the great Kitsune Mori, fires smolder in Humble Priest Village; what were once modest houses, inns, and shrines are now collapsed piles of white-hot embers. Dead bodies lay everywhere, blacked and charred; peasants, samurai, priests, horses, all with dramatically broken bones and chunks of flesh missing. The fields have been razed and the forest closest to the village crackles with flame. There is thick smoke everywhere.

The haze of gray swirls as you charge through, and though much of the fire has already subsided, the air is still very hot and dry, full of floating embers and smoke. Your horse complains as you push through the still-hot ashes and blackened, bare trees.

About a hundred feet into the forest is a wide clearing, and in its center a small temple- possibly the only building in Kaia Osho Mura still standing. It is an open pagoda with no walls and inside a number of peasants are huddled, guarded by a priestess and a samurai spearman. The shugenja raises her hands and calls to the kami, throwing a blazing fireball into the sky. It strikes a colossal black bird, sending it crashing to the ground.

The creature, a black and bloody red owl as large as a horse, gets to its feet, and spreads its great wings,. Its head distends from its body on a bizarre, serpentine neck, and it emits an unholy screech. The others answer its cry with brassy shrieks, and three of the peasants break from the temple and flee, screaming in terror.

The attackers are enraged nature spirits, specifically fukurou-no-kami (owl spirits who are generally

considered ill omens at the best of times); the attack on their home has driven them mad. They are not Tainted; a curious PC may realize this with a **Lore: Spirits / Intelligence** roll (TN 25; Lore: Shadowlands may be used instead, but raises the TN by 5), however, doing so will cause the PC to use their first Round in study.

The combat begins with a **Fear 3** effect (TN 20), for the PCs *and any animals with them* (non-horse pets roll 1k1 and flee into the woods on rolls of 5 or less).

There are three enraged fukurou-no-kami (four for high-rank tables): one on the ground with 25 Wounds and a damaged wing, one diving after the peasants who ran away (away from the temple and the PCs), and the other circling in preparation to fall upon the PCs.

The flying owls can dive in as a Simple Action, attack as a Simple Action (possibly to grapple a PC), and use their Free Action movement to fly up and out of harm's way (30' in the air), while owls on the ground will use the same action, but while leaping. For Small or Crippled characters, the owls will grapple the PCs and begin to feast on their flesh.

Striking them means the PC must use ranged attacks (magic, arrows, etc.) or hold their action until the owl dives and act on the same Initiative; the spirit and the PC make their attacks simultaneously in this instance. When an owl takes 25 or more Wounds it is grounded and cannot fly (its movement rate is halved and must land at the end of each turn).

Shugenja who attempt to pacify the spirits must have some way to address nature spirits specifically (such as the Kitsune Shugenja School Technique) and succeed at a Commune spell with four Raises. (Kitsune Oriko can only call three Raises, which is why her attempts have failed.) Other spells function at the GM's discretion.

Enraged Fukurou-no-Kami

Wrathful owl spirits that eat people.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3
Reflexes 6		Agility 4	
Initiative: 5k4		Attack: 8k4 (Claw, Simple) or 9k5 (Beak, Complex)	
Armor TN: 30		Damage: 5k3 (Claw) or 7k3 (Beak)	

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 20 (+0), 30 (+5), 40 (+10), 50 (Dead)

Skills: Defense 3, Hunting 6, Intimidation 4, Jiujutsu (Grappling) 4

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 6* (when flying, movement reduced by 1 when on the ground)
- *Spirit* (half damage from non-jade, crystal, or obsidian weapons or spells)
- *Fear 3*
- *Raptor's Grip:* has one Free Raise on Contested Grapple Rolls (two for high tables)
- *The Hunter Feeds:* may call a Raise on a Beak attack to rip away part of the target's flesh and consume it. This allows the spirit to heal the amount of damage done. If the target takes more than their Earth x10 in Wounds from this attack, they gain the Permanent Wound Disadvantage.

Otojiro will spend the combat close to a shugenja, either Guarding or delaying his action to attack the spirits coming after them; a PC by preference, or he will move to support the Kitsune. The bushi, Shinjo Ikara, will use his actions to Guard the shugenja, Kitsune Oriko, who has two offensive spell slots left to help in the fight (Fires From Within, cast at 6k3 and doing 3k3 Wounds base). They are under cover, which means the owls will focus on the PCs (and the peasants who ran) instead. The number of peasants still alive depends on how quickly the PCs made it to the village from the river; there are a base of two dozen peasants under the pagoda, minus two for each PC who failed the most recent Horsemanship or Athletics roll (and took damage from doing so). The owls feasted upon them already, and their torn corpses litter the field.

Upon success, the peasants and two samurai will rush to Otojiro's side. They are all filthy and burned, but alive:

"It was terrible, samurai," Oriko says as tears begin to well in her bloodshot eyes. "A tattooed man attacked the village early this morning, burning the buildings while people slept, screaming about 'enlightenment'. Those who rushed to fight him were beaten to death or burned by fires he called down. He must have not have known this temple was here, thank the Kami."

"We thought we were safe, but then these spirits attacked," Ikara spat, his brows furrowed. Oriko nods. "The native animal spirits have been driven wild by the disaster. Some flee, while others attack. If this imbalance is not healed, the soul of the forest will be gravely wounded." From her weary voice and hopeless eyes, it is clear she does not know how to do so.

The NPCs will head to Meidochi now that the way is clear; obviously Kyuden Kitsune is not safe. Otojiro, somewhat shaken by the spirits, will order the PCs to don their armor and ready themselves for violence, now that he has testimony regarding the whereabouts of the criminal the group pursues.

Kyuden Kitsune

The sun sets quickly as you ride south into the waiting arms of the Kitsune Mori. A warm harvest moon reflects upon the River of Gold, but soon it too is gone, hidden behind a massive black cloud to the east. A great orange light glows on the southern horizon, getting brighter and brighter as you approach: Kyuden Kitsune burns.

Approaching the city requires another **Horsemanship / Willpower** roll, TN 20 to make the horses cooperate, otherwise the PC must dismount: The surrounding forest is on fire, carrying bright embers high in the night sky. The smoky air is dry and hot, scorching the PCs' lungs and eyes as crackling trees and homes burst into flames. PCs without a way to cover their face take 1k1 damage from inhaling the smoke of the fire every other Round (armor Reduction obviously does not apply, but the PCs may subtract their Earth from the Wounds dealt).

The city surrounding Kyuden Kitsune, once sheltered by the surrounding woodland, is aflame. Peasants flee along the road you came, funneled by the encroaching blaze. Some point towards the distant castle, some point off to the north of town, but all are shouting incoherently.

A palace in flames is a true sight to behold, resembling a giant pyre demanding reverence. Even from here you can feel the heat and terrible majesty of it, dwarfing the other fires and casting deep, black shadows behind the few trees and buildings that have not been set alight yet.

At the center of the burning town, surrounded by smoldering bodies, you see a bald tattooed man sitting in the seiza position, quietly watching the towering inferno. Before him are huddled several dozen children, cowering and whimpering. A stray breeze lifts a scorched banner, displaying the mon of the Fox House Guard among the still forms surrounding the monk.

The PCs may make an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** (TN 30) to see that one of the bodies on the ground by Hitofu is Kitsune Ryosei, the Fox Clan Champion. She is unconscious but alive (though she has been severely beaten and burned, her arm is badly broken), and will need to be carried out of the city to survive.

To the north, thick smoke billows out of a stone shrine as (# of PCs) men in black rush out, their faces hidden by basket hats. They form a semi-circle around the door as two figures, a spearman in pale blue armor and

a woman with long silver hair, emerge. The spearman takes a defensive position as the assassins raise their blades.

It is up to the PCs to decide whom to face: the arsonists, or the Hitofu, the Mad Monk. If they choose both, they will have to divide the party. Kitsuki Otojiro is inclined to go after the monk (between spotting the Fox House Guard and wishing to deal with his clansman), but is somewhat nonplussed by the spiritual ramifications of the earlier encounter at the river and cannot decide until a PC makes a good suggestion. Whatever they choose to do, he will support. A quick decision is necessary, though; too much time in discussion will cost the PCs combat rounds at the GM's discretion.

Anyone questioning who the lady with silver hair might be may make a **Lore: Theology (Myths) / Intelligence** roll (TN 30, with four Free Raises for PCs from either the Kitsune Family or School) to recognize that this is the Lady of the Forest, said to be the mother of the Kitsune race, the patron of the Fox Clan, and an aspect of either Benten, the Fortune of Romantic Love, or Shinjo, the kami of the original Ki-Rin clan (or in some stories, *both*).

It is important for later for the GM to track how much damage is done to the PCs by fire through this scene.
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The PCs start roughly 100 feet away from each target, but the burning city is a significant obstacle to movement. Mechanically, this is treated as Difficult Terrain (reducing all characters' Water Ring by 2, to a minimum of 1, for purposes of movement); given that most characters cannot travel more than their Water Ring x20' on foot in a single Round, this will certainly keep the PCs away from the enemies until after horrible things have happened. Athletics Mastery Abilities can mitigate this penalty, or PCs may choose to run through the fire to get to their targets. Ignoring the danger to themselves inflicts 2k2 Wounds on the PC per round they spend moving; Reduction provided by armor or kata does not affect this damage. However, it allows them to make an **Athletics / Agility** roll at a TN of 20 (**Horsemanship / Agility** if mounted, though the base TN in that instance is 30) to reduce the movement penalty to Moderate Terrain (movement penalty of 1); two Raises may be called to eliminate it altogether. Failure merely means that they are moving at the full penalty. Such a display of Courage is also worth an Honor gain; PCs with Honor 5 or less gain three points, those with 6 or 7 Ranks gain one, and those with higher are acting as appropriate for that Rank.

PCs may wish to cast the Extinguish spell to halt the blaze. This will put out many of the smaller fires in the

surrounding houses, and at the GM's discretion, they may reduce the damage done to PCs in the fires (by 1k1 or make the dice non-exploding, for example). However, the castle itself is too big, and the PCs cannot safely get within range. Those who charge into it die gloriously and bravely. Nothing short of a life-casting will save the castle itself, and even that will leave the city and forest to burn. (A player who wishes to go this route may contact the Campaign Admin, but there is absolutely no chance for survival, and the Fox Clan will remain decimated even if their castle survives.)

The Mad Monk

If the PCs do not intervene within three Rounds, Hitofu will attack the children of the Fox Clan to 'enlighten' them, and they will start to die screaming. There are (# of PCs x12) samurai and peasant children; he will kill six per Round.

PCs intercepting Hoshi Hitofu may make an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, with a -15 penalty for the smoke and irregular lighting, against Hitofu's **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** (10k5). Success reveals that he is actually on the roof of a nearby inn, hiding in a shadow, and the seated figure is an illusion created by the *Way of Deception* spell. Failure means the illusion is successful (Otojiro will fail this roll). The illusion will not move or respond to physical contact (an arrow will pass through it, for example), but it is otherwise convincing in every way.

If he is not spotted, the wide-eyed and maniacal Hitofu will initiate combat (Enlightenment!) during a surprise round with a flying kick, hands and feet ablaze. During the fight he will laugh madly about the beauty of fiery enlightenment. The second paragraph below may need to be modified based on the PCs tracking sheets from SoB06: *Walk Through the Mountains*, and he will say this directly to anyone that told him to "rethink his vows":

"He was right; the Kitsune do need enlightenment; look how afraid they are!"

"Who was right?"

"Who else? TOSHIKEN! HAHHAHAHA!! Isn't it all so beautiful?!"

"But Kakita Toshiken would never do this!"

"You think it wasn't Toshiken? Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't, but it doesn't matter; YOU told me to rethink my vows... AND I DID! This is all for you, brother!"

Come, let us bask in the glory of enlightenment together! HAHHAHAHA!"

Hitofu is a clever fighter, using his tattoos and spells to their greatest effect. He will not stand still for a toe-to-toe fight if he is outnumbered, preferring to keep his distance and blast them with fire. If Kitsuki Otojiro goes to fight him alone, Hitofu will kill him, burn the children, and escape.

Hoshi Hitofu

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 5	Water 3	Void 5
Reflexes 4				
Honor 1		Status -10 (arsonist)		Glory 0

Initiative: 10k4 **Attack:** 10k7 (unarmed, Simple)

Armor TN: 25 base **Damage:** 5k4 (+10 Blaze)
(+15 Bamboo Tattoo, +11 Defense stance)

Wounds: 20 (+0), 60 (+20), 76 (Dead)

School/Rank: Ronin Self-Taught Shugenja 2/ Tattooed Monk 4

Techniques: *The Kami's Gift:* +2k2 instead of +1k1 when spending a Void Point on Spellcasting

Blood of the Kami: Gain two Tattoos.

Body of Stone: Gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of all unarmed attack and damage rolls.

Blessing of the Kami: Gain two additional Tattoos.

Will of Stone: May make unarmed attacks as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action.

Bamboo Tattoo: +15 Armor TN; **Blaze Tattoo:** +10 unarmed damage; **Dragon Tattoo:** 15' long cone of fire; 5k5 damage auto-hit Complex Action; **Hawk Tattoo:** Leap 75' as a Complex Action

See PG 115 in 4th Ed Core Book for more information on Tattoos (Activate one at a time as a Free action)

Spells: (all are Innate) Sense, Commune, Summon; Air (5k3): *Way of Deception* (Air ML1); Fire (9k5): *Fires of Purity* (Fire ML1); *The Fires That Cleanse* (Fire: ML1), *Enticing Dance of the Flame* (Fire ML2), *the Fires From Within* (ML2)

Skills: Athletics (Running, Climbing) 7, Craft: Tattooing 2, Defense 5, Engineering 3, Hunting 3, Jiu-jitsu (Grappling, Martial Arts) 7, Lore: Fire 8, Meditation 5, Spellcraft 5, Stealth (Sneaking) 5

Mastery Abilities: ignores Terrain penalties for movement, +3 to Armor TN when in Defense Stance, +1k1 unarmed damage, Free Raise to initiate Grapple, +1k0 to Spellcasting Rolls

Affinity/Deficiency: Fire/Water, Earth

Advantages/Disadvantages: Hands of Stone, Friendly Kami (Fire), Friend of the Elements (Fire), Innate Spells, Dark Secret: Arsonist; Compulsion: Burn Things; Fascination: Fire; Enlightened Madness

Kiho: *Falling Leaf Strike:* Hitofu may spend one Void Point to activate both the Hawk and Blaze Tattoos in one turn for a Complex Action flying kick.

The Lady of the Forest and the Arsonists

The Arsonists have surrounded Daidoji Hachiato and the Lady of the Woods; half are testing his defenses, trying to bait him out of the Defense Stance, while the other half are in Center Stance, waiting for an opening. There are one fewer Arsonists than PCs at the table, plus Hitsu (for a total number of enemies equal to the PCs).

If the PCs do not intervene within three Rounds (two for high tables), Hachiato strikes two with his spear (standing on one leg while doing so), dealing 27 Wounds to each, but gets swarmed by the attackers. Over the next two turns he will kill two of them and severely wound two others, but will die on the third turn, and Lady of the Forest will be killed on the fourth turn. If this happens:

[In the distance], an unearthly cry of anguish overcomes the roar of the fires, one that is simply beyond mortal understanding. Cut flowers, wilting; love poems, discarded; wedding bells, silent; a newborn's blanket, unwoven.

The arsonists should fight with skill, but they are unused to working together. Only Hitsu has any real grasp of small-unit tactics, and he will spend more effort on remaining incognito among them than in trying to direct them (holding his action until the rest of the group, for example, so as not to stand out). When they begin losing the fight, the surviving arsonists will each take a small bottle of oil out of their kimono and throw it at the Lady of the Woods, then flee into the (burning) forest, running in different directions (though all traveling north, toward the River of Gold). The oil, if not washed off during the next turn (GM discretion; there is a well nearby, see below), will be sparked by a floating ember and catch fire during the turn after next, dealing 6k3 damage per turn until it is extinguished.

If Kitsuki Otojiro is in this group, he will loudly suggest taking one of the arsonists alive if possible, for questioning.

Catching up to an arsonist requires a Contested **Athletics (Running)** / **Water** 9k4 Roll. Mounted characters use their Horsemanship Skill and their steed's Water Ring (adding their steed's Ranks in Swift to the Ring); however, they must succeed at a **Horsemanship / Willpower** roll (TN 25) to convince their steed to run into the burning woods. Failure on any of these rolls means that the arsonist escapes into the smoke and confusion.

If a PC catches up to them, they will fight only long enough to try to escape. The arsonists each have one bottle of oil left to throw at the PC (high-rank tables: they may target the horse), and will use the dangerous terrain to the utmost (hiding behind trees, plunging through burning shrubbery, etc). If opportunity presents itself, they will hide using their **Stealth (Sneaking)** / **Agility** (10k6?), opposed by the PCs' **Investigation (Search)** / **Perception**. More proactive PCs may use **Battle (Skirmish)** / **Perception** instead to cut off their retreat. Starting on the second Round of combat, both fighters will begin to take damage from smoke inhalation and fire; this begins at 1k1 per round, and increases by 1k1 each round thereafter (this is a significantly dangerous environment). Again, armor Reduction does not apply, but the character can subtract their Earth Ring from the Wounds inflicted in this way.

Hitsu will fight until it is apparent he cannot win, at which point he will kill himself rather than be captured; even if taken alive, he will find a way to commit suicide and prevent his interrogation. The other Arsonists can be captured alive once they are "Down."

Hitsu, the Firebrand

If seen without his basket hat, Hitsu is somewhat more handsome than his associates, with refined features only somewhat marred by a burn-scar along the left side of his jaw. Apart from that, there is little to distinguish him from any other ronin.

Air 4 Earth 4 Fire 5 Water 4 Void 4
Reflexes 5
Honor 2.5 Status 0 Glory 0

Initiative: 10k7 **Attack:** 10k6-5e (ninja-to, Simple)

Armor TN: 35 (light armor); 40 vs lower init **Damage:** 7k2m (ninja-to)

Reduction: 3/10 vs fire

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

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 4/Kolat Assassin 3

Techniques: *The Way of the Scorpion:* +1k1 Initiative; +5 Armor TN against opponents with lower Initiative

Pincers and Tail: May Feint Maneuver with one Raise *Strike at the Tail:* When assuming a Stance at the start of Turn, may choose a target within 30'. If hit by Hitsu during that Turn, the target is Fatigued. During the Reactions Stage, an affected opponent may attempt an Earth Ring roll against a TN of 25 to recover. If they fail, they recover during the next Reactions Stage.

Strike From Above, Strike From Below: Simple Action melee attacks

Kiss of the Lotus: +2k2 instead of +1k1 when spending Void on Stealth or Acting

Tiger's Claw: +1k0 to attack and Simple Action melee attacks when striking on the first Round of a skirmish against an unaware opponent (or one who does not recognize the threat)

Steal the Light: once per opponent per skirmish, may call two Raises to make a melee attack that keeps one die of damage but leaves the target blind, deaf, or mute for four minutes

Relevant Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 4, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 4, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (katana, ninja-to) 8, Knives 6, Lore: Kolat 4, Ninjutsu 4, Stealth (Sneaking) 6

Mastery Abilities: no movement penalties from Terrain, +3 Armor TN while in Defense or Full Defense Stance, +1k0 damage with swords, may ready a sword as a Free Action, 9s and 10s explode on damage with swords

Advantages/Disadvantages: Quick, Shadowed Heart, Silent / Dark Secret: Arsonist, Social Position: Ronin, Sworn Enemy: Scorpion Clan

Special Note: Hitsu and the Arsonists are wearing flame-proofed clothing that gives them Reduction 10 for fire-based damage, including spell effects. It also increases their TNs for any Skill Roll involving a physical Trait by 5.

Arsonists

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 4 Void 4
Reflexes 4 Agility 4
Honor 0.4 Status 0 Glory 0

Initiative: 9k5 **Attack**: 10k4-5e (ninja-to, Complex)

Armor TN: 30 (light armor); 35 vs lower init **Damage**: 7k2 (ninja-to)

Reduction: 3/10 vs fire

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

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 1/Shosuro Infiltrator 2 (Insight Rank 4)

Techniques: *The Way of the Scorpion*: +1k1 Initiative; +5 Armor TN against opponents with lower Initiative

The Path of the Shadows: +2k0 to Stealth Skill Rolls.

Strike From Darkness: When attacking an opponent who is unaware of their presence, Raises are not limited by Void and +2k0 to attack. +1k0 on an attack roll against an opponent who is suffering from a Condition (These two effects are not cumulative.)

Relevant Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 4, Investigation 2, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (ninja-to) 7, Knives 4, Ninjutsu 5, Stealth (Sneaking) 6

Mastery Abilities: ignore Terrain penalties for movement, +1k0 damage with swords, may ready a sword as a Free Action, 9s and 10s explode on damage with swords

Advantages/Disadvantages: Bland / Dark Secret: Arsonist, Social Position: Ronin, Sworn Enemy: Scorpion Clan

Special Note: Hitsu and the Arsonists are wearing flame-proofed clothing that gives them Reduction 10 for fire-based damage, including spell effects. It also increases their TNs for any Skill Roll involving a physical Trait by 5.

If the Lady of the Woods Catches Fire:

A confused expression crosses the Lady of the Forest's face, a face too perfect for the eyes of man, as she gazes down upon the oil seeping into her kimono and over her delicate, snow-white hands. Her eyes, the color of sunlight through autumn leaves, rise to meet yours, and she does so with the faintest of smiles. Time seems to stop, and there is no doubt that you are in the presence of a divinely-touched being.

Pious PCs should avert their eyes; a character with any ranks in Lore: Theology will realize this. Any PC who gazes upon her smile must succeed at a raw **Willpower** roll or take "True Love: Lady of the Forest" (She is an Aspect of Benten, after all). The TN is 30 for PCs attracted to women and 20 for those who are not. Any PC with "Lechery" (or some other lust-themed Compulsion) fails automatically.

A lone ember floats slowly through the silence, landing gently in her hair, and the reality of the world rushes back with force as she bursts into flames.

Her unearthly cry of anguish is simply beyond mortal understanding. Cut flowers, wilting; love poems, discarded; wedding bells, silent; a newborn's blanket, unwoven.

The PCs each have *one* chance to put the flames out, either with water from the nearby well (**Raw Water TN 20**), summoning water (with a +20 TN penalty, due to the fiery surroundings), or by smothering her or hitting her with a blanket (**Jiujutsu (Grappling or Improvised Weapons) / Agility TN 25**). Daidoji Hachiato throws down his spear and runs for water, rolling 4k4 (Water + Void Point), even if he is on fire.

If the PCs and Hachiato fail, the Lady of the Forest burns to death.

Note: There is no description of this event for a reason, but suffice to say any PC with True Love now has Lost Love: Lady of the Forest, and Daidoji Hachiato quietly and immediately commits seppuku.

If the Lady of the Forest lives, however, she will need immediate healing.

After the combat is over, the Lady will turn away and make ready to leave. The Crane will gruffly thank the PCs for their assistance and escort her away; if pressed, he will introduce himself as “Daidoji Hachiato”, though a PC who rolls **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** at a TN of 40 will recognize the name as having belonged to a Crane bushi who lived more than fifty years ago.

Before she leaves, any PC who touched the Lady of the Forest, doused her with water, looked at her lecherously, or interacted with her in any way that would even *hint* at impropriety may make a **Lore: Theology / Awareness** roll to abase themselves properly and appease the Fortune (TN 20-50 depending on the flagrancy of that interaction). Members of the Fox Clan, or those trained in the Kitsune School, gain a Free Raise. A pious PC may also wish to make this roll to reflect their appropriate behavior, but the TN is only 10 if they did not do something untoward. Whichever PC rolls the highest will receive “Blessing: Lady of the Forest.”

Those who fail are directly ignored, and they lose whatever amount of Honor the *player* feels is appropriate for disrespecting an aspect of the Fortune of Romantic Love *in person* (at GM approval), as well as gaining the Benten’s Curse Disadvantage; PCs who have Benten’s Blessing lose it instead.

Any PC who chooses to flirt with her or continue to act inappropriately after the above roll has one chance to realize their mistake: they may roll **Lore: Theology / Intelligence** at a TN of 10 to understand that they are risking severe consequences for their blasphemy. If they choose to continue they will be cursed by the Celestial Order and receive the Momoku Disadvantage. Those who *still continue* will be challenged to a duel to the death by Daidoji Hachiato, to be resolved immediately (his stats are in Appendix #1). Killing him earns the PC the Benten’s Curse Disadvantage no matter how well they rolled on the above roll; if they had Benten’s Blessing, it is removed and they gain the Curse.

In any event, the Lady of the Forest is not interested in staying to chat; as soon as they can do so unobserved (once all of the PCs have looked away, for example), she and Daidoji Hachiato will disappear into Chikushudo.

Part Five: Aftermath and Conclusion

Once combat is over, the PCs will need to rally the surviving Fox samurai and peasants and lead them to safety, racing against the forest fires around them. This requires a **Perform: Oratory / Awareness** roll at a TN of 40; the Leadership and Hero of the People Advantages grant a Free Raise each, and the PC adds their Status and Glory Ranks to the total of the roll. Failure means that the survivors are scattered, and most of them will not make it out of the burning woods. The closest safe settlement is Meidochi.

Ujina Tokimasa will open his estate to the refugees, allowing the party to assess the damage wrought by the mad monk and his shadowy followers:

- The whole of the Kitsune Mori is on fire, blackening the sky and raining ash. While some of the trees may survive, the forest will remain uninhabitable for years to come.
- Kitsune Teika, the provincial daimyo, is missing.
- Whether or not Kitsune Ryosei, the Fox Champion, survived depends on the PCs’ actions.
- If the PCs saved the children from Hoshi Hitofu and were able to rally the survivors, there will be about 50 members of the Fox Clan left of various ages, with about 200 peasants. If the PCs did not save the children and/or rally the survivors, there may be between 30 and 60, with a dozen or so samurai. Ujina Tokimasa will host the refugees for now, but does not have the resources to keep them; they will need to find a new host soon (beyond the scope of this module).

Tokimasa’s healers will do what they can for the survivors, but the many wounded will stretch his resources to the utmost (the Hare are not overly-blessed with shugenja). During their recovery, the PCs may discover lasting effects from their encounter in the burning city:

- PCs who received any Wounds from fire must make a **Fear Roll** with a TN equal to the number of Wounds they received, plus 15. (This is treated like any other Fear check, and Void may be spent if the PC had any left at the end of that scene.) Failing this roll gives the PC one Rank of the “Phobia: Fire” Disadvantage; failing to roll a 15 gives two Ranks of the Disadvantage.
- PCs who were put in the Down Wound Rank during the fight at Kyuden Kitsune and took any damage from fire in that encounter will find that even with magical healing, they are unable to fully recover. The player must choose one of the following Disadvantages to gain for no points: Bad Health, Disturbing Countenance (Burn Scars), Permanent Wound, or Lamé.

If a PC's horse or pet ran away during the module, the PC may make an **Animal Handling / Awareness** roll (TN 20) to reflect prior training. If the PC succeeds, the animal comes back to them at some point, otherwise it is gone. If it was a borrowed horse, the PC will owe the owner 50 koku or a new horse. Failure to repay this debt or make any attempt to do so will cost a point of Honor for every Rank the character has and three ranks of Glory. Even so, particularly honorable characters (8 or higher) will lose two points of Honor for their failure.

The PC with "Blessing: Lady of the Forest" will find a small package in their room a day or two later: a large acorn wrapped in leaves and twine (easily the size of a ball of rice) with a note.

*Shade of an oak tree
Where lovers meet there is hope
Heaven and Earth touch*

A **Divination / Void** roll (TN 20) will determine that the acorn likely contains a spirit of the Kitsune Mori. What, precisely, that means is beyond the scope of this module.

The Fate of the Arsonists

Any surviving ronin arsonists are taken under authority of Kitsuki Otojiro (if he is alive), to be tortured for information at his and the PCs discretion. There are two possible outcomes:

If the PCs do not participate in the interrogation, the arsonists will offer a false confession to Otojiro, implicating whomever the PCs suspect at the moment: Kakita Toshiken, if they have not yet discovered the fraud involved, or Miya Sannosuke if they have (Sannosuke is a known supporter of Hantei Okucheo, but the arsonists know if they blame Okucheo, their testimony would be ignored as obviously false).

If the PCs participate in the interrogation, they must make a Contested **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** roll against the arsonist's **Sincerity (Deceit) / Willpower** (7k3). They may wish to call Raises for more information, and the following will give the PCs Free Raises: an **Intimidation (Torture) / Willpower** roll at TN 30 (causing an Honor Loss as per Using a Low Skill), threats to take them to Scorpion lands, informing them that the woman with silver hair was the Lady of the Woods and an Aspect of Benten (with an additional Free Raise if they killed her), and good roleplaying.

Provide the following in the order of worst roll to the best:

If the PCs fail by more than 10, the arsonists will provide a (convincing) false confession, blaming Kakita Toshiken through his "retired" underling, Doji Oharu: The Champion wished to send a message to the Empire that the allies of the Regent are not safe.

If the PCs fail by less than 10, the arsonists will "crack" and blame Miya Sannosuke, an agent of Hantei Okucheo: they had orders to cripple the Fox and frame Toshiken through Oharu for it.

However, this too is a false confession. If the PCs succeed, they will eventually get real answers; the more Raises called, the more information gained:

- Hoshi Hitofu was a useful (if unstable) pawn, who was sent to enlighten the Fox by Bayushi Azuma, another pawn who did so while impersonating Kakita Toshiken. They knew he would likely burn everything in his path. They killed Azuma when he began to have doubts and threatened to expose the truth.
- They only had orders to kill the people of Kyuden Kitsune. The Lady of the Forest was not an intentional target: they couldn't see who she was through the hats, and they are flatly mortified at the knowledge that they did her harm.
- They only know that they were supposed to blame either the Emerald Champion or the Regent once the deed was done. They do not know who really sent them (they get their orders via courier). All they know is that they are expendable assets.
- The arsonists are former Scorpion, recruited by Hitsu into the Kolat conspiracy and trained by him to assist them in bringing about the downfall of the kami. The Imperial Regent, representing a return to the reign of the Hantei, is a major target by the conspiracy, hence the attempt to blame him for the carnage and devastation.

PCs with actual ranks in Lore: Kolat should find this last somewhat suspicious as it is not normal for the conspiracy to use expendable foot soldiers with any sensitive information. Further interrogation along those lines requires a **Lore: Kolat / Awareness** roll (TN 25) to catch them in several mistakes concerning the Kolat; they are, however, sincere in their belief that they are agents of the Ten Masters.

Kitsuki Otojiro will wish to hang the arsonists here, but can be convinced to let Scorpion PCs take them to Kyuden Bayushi for justice with proper roleplaying. Scorpion PCs in good standing will be allowed to participate in the Traitor's Grove "ceremony" and gain Personal Status equal to their ranks in Lore: Scorpion+1,

+5 if they write a fiction about the event later (this cannot make their Personal Status exceed 3.9).

If the Lady of the Woods died, the surviving arsonists will offer to hang themselves at the site of her death and protect the area as ghosts for all eternity in atonement; they know they can never, ever be forgiven. This will be completely up to the PCs, though. (And again, such piety sounds odd coming from characters with knowledge of the Kolat.)

The Fate of Bayushi Azuma

Without the press of pursuing a dangerous arsonist, the journey back to Kyuden Bayushi takes three weeks. Bayushi Azuma will be found wherever the PCs left him (in the Temple or in a room at Kyuden Bayushi, if they reported him to Yojiro). If Yojiro was informed in advance, he will escort the PCs to Azuma's room personally.

If the PCs fail to recover Azuma's sword or mask there will be no confession, and he will be found hung in his room the next day. However if Azuma's sword and/or mask are returned, the following scene will occur:

Azuma struggles but dresses with Hirako's help, obviously feeling greatly relieved to have his identity back. Once his On and Honor are satisfied, he motions to write.

A PC must once again help him with a **Calligraphy / Reflexes** roll. Again, the base TN is 15 but the PC will need to call three Raises to get the full message listed below; fewer Raises mean choice words are illegible at GM discretion (two Raises should be enough to convey the meaningful parts of the message). And, again, the close contact causes the loss of a point of Honor. The first word he writes is simply "seppuku", which can be performed in a private courtyard; the PCs must agree to this or Azuma will not continue.

If Azuma's *sword* is returned, he will write a confession with his death poem:

*Trembling autumn leaves
carried away by the wind.
What path will they take?*

"I used magic to impersonate Kakita Toshiken and sent Hoshi Hitofu to attack the Fox, on orders of Miya Sannosuke. Kami forgive me."

If Azuma's *mask* is also returned, he will include something else on a different sheet of paper. However, this second confession is in a Scorpion cipher, so it is

only legible by Scorpion PCs (or those with the "Scorpion Cipher" Calligraphy emphasis):

"I was blackmailed by Hitsu to do this. I believe him to be a Kolat agent. My journal has the details. Miya Sannosuke is innocent."

After Yojiro and any Scorpion PCs read this note, Azuma will burn the paper in a nearby candle, and take up his wakizashi to perform seppuku. He will need a second. He will not elaborate further. His withered hands are strong enough to perform the Three Cuts on his own, but his second must use a katana and make a **Kenjutsu / Void** roll at a TN of 25. The PC gains a point of Honor if they can make the cut cleanly, while failure costs the PC a point of Honor per rank of Honor they possess.

PCs who are concerned about the weight of Azuma's confessions may make a **Lore: Law / Intelligence** roll at TN 20: Azuma's Status is not all that high, and Miya Sannosuke's is high enough to avoid legal repercussions from the word of a dead man who is publicly accused of such monstrous crimes. However, Azuma's final act lends his words some weight, and Sannosuke's reputation in the courts will be completely shattered. The Imperial will not face charges, but his career would be over.

Searching the ruins of Azuma's old home for more information, and succeeding at an **Investigation (Search) / Perception** roll TN 45, will turn up Azuma's journal buried under the hearth stone. This journal explains that Azuma was once a student of Shosuro Emon, one of the Ten Masters of the Kolat. He helped work against agents of the Lying Darkness during the War Against the Shadow, and many of his deeds can only be interpreted as traitorous to the clan (no matter the intent behind them). After his master died helping to destroy the Shadow at the end of the War, Azuma thought he was free. He discovered that someone else has been aware of his activities a little over five years ago, when he was suddenly pressured to assist with a number of questionable acts. Given that refusal would have certainly led to being condemned to Traitor's Grove, he chose to continue serving the Kolat. The book contains more general information about the Kolat, and gives the PCs who read it the ability to purchase the Forbidden Knowledge: Kolat Advantage for three experience (if they have the Advantage already, they gain two experience to spend on the Lore: Kolat Skill). There are no names obviously written in the book, but it could be encoded (a point for the PC to resolve in future fictions with the admin team).

Otojiro recognizes that he is in over his head here, and will defer to Yojiro, who wishes Azuma's confessions to remain secret, even if that means the Scorpion take the blame for the whole affair (Yojiro is willing to do this). Yojiro will caution the PCs to be extremely careful about discussing the Kolat; while the conspiracy has been becoming more public over the last few years, anyone trying to overtly work against them will probably suffer a mysterious death and Yojiro is intimately aware of the difficulty of keeping assassins at bay.

Assigning Blame

On their way home, the PCs are the major bearers of news regarding the Kitsune family (no-one else will know of it until weeks later), and their words and actions will determine who is blamed for the events. However, if the PCs did not rescue the residents of Kyuden Kitsune (choosing to save the forest instead), rumors of Kakita Toshiken's involvement will eventually spread like wildfire (in many cases pushed by those aligned with the Regent).

Assigning blame and spreading rumors regarding this event is *one* **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll. The TN depends on the target: Hantei Okucho (through Miya Sannosuke) and Kakita Toshiken are TN 40, the Dragon or the Scorpion Clans are TN 25; like other uses of Gossip, the PC must call a Raise to conceal their identity. PCs who fail this roll or do not conceal their identity lose two ranks of Glory, gain Sworn Enemy: Hantei Okucho or Sworn Enemy: Kakita Toshiken; in addition, if they fail the roll, they gain Infamy equal to their Glory + Status, as their reputation is tarnished in court. (PCs who already have Sworn Enemy add Nemesis.) Even a signed confession from Azuma cannot prevent this.

PCs who learn that Sannosuke was set up but choose to blame him, or allow the blame to fall on him, lose Honor equal to their Ranks of Honor.

Resolving the Affected Cities

There are a number of affected cities in this module whose daimyo will blame another faction for the damage caused by the arsonists. The Scorpion blame themselves, the Mantis blame the Scorpion, and the Lion blame the Dragon (and/or the Scorpion). If Toshiken or Okucho are blamed, that will impact things too.

There will be time for each PC to visit *one* city during the end of the module to sway the opinion of the local daimyo and spend Favors to help the city rebuild. This requires spending three Favors. Helping repair a city

gives the PC that Provincial Daimyo as an Ally with 1 Devotion and 3 Influence (+1 Devotion if they already had the Ally). Also, PCs who spend Favors to repair the town they live in gain points of Personal Status equal to their Courtier Skill Rank from their grateful lord (this cannot make their Personal Status exceed 3.9).

Influencing an unaligned daimyo to support Kakita Toshiken or Hantei Okucho is a **Sincerity (Honesty or Deceit) / Awareness** roll, TN 35, with +/-5 penalties/bonuses depending on whom they're trying to support, where the blame wound up, whose Favors helped rebuild that Daimyo's city, and so on; this gains the PC "Favor: Kakita Toshiken" or "Favor: Hantei Okucho" as appropriate.

PCs who wish to repair/influence other cities must contact the Campaign Admin.

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
Azuma makes a confession:	+1XP
Defeating Hitofu:	+1XP
<i>or</i>	
Saving the Lady of the Forest:	+1XP

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Honor

As noted through the module.

Glory

PCs who saved the Fox children gain half a rank of Glory. If the PC now has Glory 10, they may purchase the Hero of the People Advantage for one experience point.

If the PCs dealt with Hoshi Hitofu, they gain 5 points of Glory. Arson is treated very seriously in the Empire.

Other Awards/Penalties

Whoever rescued Kitsune Ryosei gains her as an Ally with 1 Devotion and 3 Influence.

A PC who gained True Love or Lost Love for the Lady of the Forest receives one free experience point to buy off Insensitive or Failure of Compassion.

Stopping Hitofu earns the party a Dragon Clan Favor (even for PCs that went to the other option in that encounter).

Saving the Fox Champion earns the party a Fox Clan Favor (even for PCs that went to the other option in that encounter).

Module Tracking Sheets

- Did the PC keep Bayushi Azuma's secret journal?
- Did the PCs get any Disadvantage?

GM Reporting

- Were the Kitsune children saved?
- Did Hitsu escape?
- Did any of the arsonists escape, and if so, how many?
- Did the Lady of the Forest die?
- Did Kitsune Ryosei die?
- Did Daidoji Hachiato die?
- Did Kitsuki Otojiro die?
- Who was blamed for the fires? (Dragon/Scorpion, Toshiken/Hantei/Kolat)
- Was Azuma's journal found?
- Which daimyo received aid, and which were swayed to support Toshiken/Hantei?
- What was the fate of Kitsune Ryosei?

GM must report this information BEFORE (11/15/2014) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

Kitsuki Otojiro

Only recently given his position as an Emerald Magistrate, Otojiro is anxious to serve both his clan and the Empire by bringing Hitofu to justice.

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 2 Void 3
 Awareness 4 Intelligence 4 Perception 4
 Honor 7.6 Status 4.5 Glory 4.8

Initiative: 6k3 **Attack:** 8k3 (katana, Complex)

Armor TN: 25 (light armor) **Damage:** 6k2 (katana)

Reduction: 3

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

School/Rank: Kitsuki Investigator 2/Kitsuki Justicar

Techniques: *Kitsuki's Method:* Gain a Free Raise on all Investigation Skill Rolls. In a skirmish, add your Perception Trait Rank to your Armor TN.

Wisdom the Wind Brings: Anyone making a Social Skill Roll for the purpose of deception, or making a Feint or Disarm Maneuver against you in a skirmish, must add +5 to their TN for each of your Kitsuki Investigator School Ranks.

the Purity of Justice: +6 to Assessment in a duel; +1k0 on Assessment and Focus when in a duel against an opponent declared guilty of a crime by a higher Imperial or Dragon authority; +1k0 on Hunting or Investigation rolls against such targets

Skills: Athletics 2, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 4, Defense 5, Etiquette (Conversation) 5, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu (Assessment) 6, Investigation (Interrogation) 6, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Heraldry 3, Meditation 2, Sincerity 4

Mastery Abilities: may retain a Full Defense Roll in successive Rounds, +3 Armor TN while in Defense or Full Defense Stance; +1k0 to Contested Rolls using Etiquette; may use Full Attack Stance while mounted; Free Raise to Focus Rolls in Iaijutsu Duel; may make a second Search roll without increasing the TN, +5 to the TN of Contested Rolls using Investigation; +1k0 damage with swords, may ready a sword as a Free Action

Advantages/Disadvantages: Clear Thinker, Precise Memory / Idealistic

Reflexes 6 Agility 5
 Honor 8.9 Status 4.0 Glory 1.6

Initiative: 10k5+5 **Attack:** 10k7-5 (yari, Simple)

Armor TN: 40 (heavy armor); +15 Defense **Damage:** 7k4 (nemuranai yari)

Stance
Reduction: 5

Wounds: 24 (+0), 36 (+3), 48 (+5), 60 (+10), 72 (+15), 84 (+20), 96 (Down, +40), 108 (Dead)

School/Rank: Daidoji Iron Warrior 5

Techniques: *The Force of Honor:* +4 Wounds per Wound Rank; +1k0 to attack rolls while in the Attack Stance.

The Shield of Faith: When performing the Guard Maneuver, the benefits last for an additional Round and the Armor TN bonus of the Guard Maneuver is increased by 5.

Strike Beneath the Veil: Simple Action melee attacks while in the Attack Stance.

Vigilance of Mind: May spend a Void Point during the Reactions Stage to target an opponent who has attempted to strike him or target of Guard Maneuver during the Round. Gain a bonus of +2k1 to the total of all attack and damage rolls against that opponent during the next Round.

To Tread on the Sword: May spend two Void Points as a Free Action when someone declares an action against the target of Guard Maneuver; becomes the target of the action instead (if it would be a legal action – GM's discretion in questionable instances). Gain one Free Action that may use immediately for the sole purpose of moving toward the target of Guard Maneuver. If cannot reach target, this Technique has no effect.

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 5, Defense 7, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu (Focus) 5, Investigation 3, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: Crane 3, Lore: Spirits 5, Spears (Yari) 7

Mastery Abilities: bonus ATN in Defense Stance, Free Raise on Focus rolls, 9s explode on sword damage

Advantages/Disadvantages: Touch of Chikushudo / Disturbing Countenance

Shapeshifter Abilities: Humanity (true form is a tsuru spirit; treat as same Traits but without Void and can fly); may not reveal true nature or true name

Daidoji Hachiato

An immortal crane spirit, trained as a Daidoji Iron Warrior. He has a heavily scarred face, and is dedicated to the protection of the Lady of the Forest.

Air 5 Earth 4 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 5

Appendix #2: A Life in Ashes

The fires set by Hoshi Hitofu and his associates have ravaged the central Lion lands, as well as doing significant damage through the Scorpion Clan's holdings and a Mantis village. PCs from those areas may well have had their homes destroyed, and possibly even lost members of their family or household. A character from one of the following locations may opt to suffer some loss, at the player's discretion. If they choose to do so, they gain the "A Life in Ashes" cert, and must choose one Advantage and one Disadvantage listed on that cert. If the player does not wish to put their character through this situation, they are not required to do so, but it is an option they can exercise. Needless to say, the cert should not be distributed until after the player has chosen to take this route; this is not a choice that should be motivated by mechanics.

Affected City; Province; Daimyo, Faction Support

Shiro sano Ken Hayai (Castle of the Swift Sword); Hayai province; Kitsu Kyuwa, Neutral

Rugashi; Rugashi province; Kitsu Honami, Neutral

Foshi; Foshi province; Kitsu Mito, Neutral

Tonfajutsen; Tonfajutsen province; Matsu Takako, Regent

Kaeru Toshi (Captured City); Kaeru province, Matsu Katsu, Neutral

Shiro Matsu; Yama province, Matsu Akane, Emerald Champion

Kyuden Bayushi; Kunizakai Province; Bayushi Makoto and Atsuko, Emerald Champion

Shimomura; Chuuou province; Bayushi Moriko, Neutral

Gateway Village; Chuuhan province, Tsuruchi Korekiyo, Neutral

Kaia Osho Mura and Kyuden Kitsune; Kakusu province, Kitsune Teika, Regent