

Poisoned Thread

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

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A longtime investigation is about to finally wrap up – as long as the PCs can tie up one last loose thread.

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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 High rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank Five.

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 Four): The combats are already largely appropriate for this rank, though the GM may reduce the TN of Investigation rolls by 5 at their discretion.

Adventure Summary and Background

The Kolat are a group with a long and shadowed history; they have worked behind the scenes throughout the ages with one goal in mind: the supremacy of mankind upon the face of Ningen-Do, safe from the influence of the Kami and the Celestial Heavens. To do this, they promote a blasphemous subversion of the Celestial Order, stating that all men are created equal and that anyone can be promoted according to their merit, regardless of their social position as peasant or samurai. They were in a strong position to “free” Rokugan after the death of the last Hantei... until Lady Shinjo returned and purged their ranks, shattering the group into independent sects.

It did not take long for the ambitious Kolat Masters to once again rise to power.

Bringing light to the secretive cabal has been an arduous process. One of Kakita Toshiken’s primary investigators in this task, Shiba Utsuro, has asked the PCs to help him take down the elusive head of the Coin Sect, Yasuki Oguri, and bring him to justice. However, on the way to a secret meeting with the Crab Champion, Hida O-Ushi, Utsuro is murdered in broad daylight and his evidence stolen. The assassination is pinned on Oguri, but for once, he is innocent; he was framed by Daidoji Ichiko, the head of the Daidoji Trading Council and the one most likely to replace him as Master Coin. Outplayed, Oguri does the unexpected: he confesses to O-Ushi and is fully willing to cooperate... if the PCs take down Ichiko first.

The PCs must work quickly, raiding Ichiko’s closest establishments to not only find her, but to find proof of her guilt before it is destroyed.

Character Notes

Check the PCs’ character sheets for the following:

- Dark Secret: Kolat agent
- Compulsions related to gambling or drinking
- Wary
- Kolat Hunter
- “Targeted”

Introduction

As the adventure begins, the PCs are arriving at Face of the East Castle, near the Crane/Crab border on the western side of Earthquake Fish Bay, at the request of Emerald Magistrate Shiba Utsuro. He has asked them there to “aid me in the organization and presentation of sensitive documents related to an ongoing investigation of the highest importance and discretion;” Despite the apparent importance of the investigation, however, the letter has remarkably few actual details about the inquiry or its target or targets.

Utsuro, with whom the PCs might have worked before in the adventures “Forgotten Tomb” and “The Enemy You Deserve”, has rented a small, rather unimpressive samurai residence in the town outside the castle while he wraps up his preparations. The PCs find themselves arriving on the evening before the presentation is to begin, and even moderately-perceptive characters can tell he is nervous. At the initial meeting, Utsuro and his yoriki Doji Arata (again, the PCs might have met Arata in “New Beginnings” or “Forgotten Tomb”) tell the PCs that Utsuro’s investigation has targeted an extremely high-ranking Crab – Utsuro is hesitant to identify the Crab in question, and he will only say that the investigation covers a wide variety of Imperial crimes, many of which are capital in nature. If questioned separately, Arata follows Utsuro’s lead in not identifying the individual, but does admit to knowing who it is. Instead, Utsuro says that he intends to present his case to the daimyo of the samurai in question in the morning, and needs the PCs to help him organize the case. This largely consists of sorting notes, reports, ledgers, recorded testimony and so on into packets tied with various colors of dyed twine. The information itself is cryptic at best, consisting in many places of a shorthand only Utsuro himself seems able to read easily and elsewhere with key names and kanji painted over with heavy ink. Still, a **Lore: Law or Investigation / Intelligence** roll, TN 15, determines that it is a case involving organized criminal activities, mostly financial in nature. A second roll of **Lore: Law or Etiquette / Intelligence** at the same TN notes that, as an Emerald Magistrate, Utsuro would not normally require a

presentation to a lord to prosecute one of their vassals, nor would the added prestige of several ranking samurai such as the PCs be necessary; that Utsuro has arranged either, let alone both, hints that the target must be someone placed well above his own social status. That fact no doubt explains the signs of nerves.

Throughout the evening, it is important to portray Utsuro's personality: long ostracized and ridiculed by his fellow magistrates for his obsession over a group thought destroyed a decade ago (the Kolat), recent events have turned some of that mindset around among his colleagues. That shift in the prevailing winds has led to this moment and the first public demonstration of a truth he has fought to expose for a decade. He is a complex mix of emotions, including elation, nervousness, triumph, fear, vindication, and hope. He does a terrible job of keeping his face during the work.

Eventually, near midnight, the planning and preparations are complete and Utsuro suggests the PCs retire before their presentation in the morning. As Utsuro's rented house simply lacks the socially-required minimum space to house important samurai such as the PCs, the magistrate has instead made arrangements with a nearby inn in the town. He recommends the PCs be sure to wear full court kimono for the function, extremely unusual in the lands of the Crab and another hint at the sort of person Utsuro plans to charge in the morning.

Note: wary, paranoid or simply genre-savvy PCs might wish to stay at Utsuro's residence overnight, for fear of a last-minute attack on the magistrate. While events prove such concerns entirely valid, nothing happens in the evening, so their efforts will be wasted. Utsuro politely but firmly refuses any requests for the PCs to stay with him – it's simply too rude to host anyone else in his residence, the loss of face would be too much – but, wary and paranoid himself, Utsuro has also placed a number of booby traps around the house both inside and out. PCs watching from outside must make an Earth roll, TN 20, or fall asleep (losing Glory equal to their current Rank minus 4, as well as a point of Honor for anyone Honor Rank 6 or higher); if they succeed, they will be Fatigued the next day unless they can get at least four hours' sleep before sunrise. Anyone sleeping is found by Arata the next morning and ushered back to the inn at once. Also, the PCs will not be allowed to dress in court finery in the street or inside Utsuro's house, and attending the morning meeting without court-suited attire is worth Honor and Glory losses appropriate for committing a Minor Breach of Etiquette.

Rumors

During their travels to Face of the East Castle and the time they spend at their end, the PCs have opportunities to hear a few rumors. A **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll, TN 10, can be made to determine if this is the case; a successful roll learns one rumor at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN. The rumors include:

- Rumors of unrest in the Crab provinces continue, with most sources agreeing that more than half the Kaiu Wall is in some kind of rebellion, although whether it is against the leadership of Hida O-Ushi, the Clan Champion, or the first army to march in direct opposition to the rule of Hantei Okucheo is not clear. It is said that O-Ushi was summoned to Otosan Uchi for Winter Court to answer for the situation to the Regent himself, and dark whispers point out that no one has seen O-Ushi's sons and heirs in either the capital or the Crab Provinces in nearly a year.
- One of the stories spreading through the Empire from this last Imperial Winter Court at Pale Oak Castle is about the child Empress Toturi Tsudao and her martial potential. Rumor has it that the eight-year old daughter of Toturi bested her Lion sensei in a sparring match before the court. This has many hopeful that she will be able to achieve her gempukku at a young age, possibly within the next five years.
- The Crab forces that were deployed last year to the Dragon Heart Plain are not returning home with the coming of spring and the finalization of a peace treaty between the Crab's Phoenix allies and the Dragon Clan. Instead, they are being sent to assist the Crane in retaking Toshi Ranbo from the Army of the Black Lion in pursuit of another alliance. Most Crab are uncertain about this decision, involving Crab troops once again in battle well away from the Wall.
- It is rumored that the Lion Clan are preparing to declare war upon another clan, but no one seems to know the target of their ire. The Crane are a logical speculation, between their long-standing feud and the fighting over Toshi Ranbo, but the Mantis Clan has also recently delivered serious insults to the Lion.
- Those lords who have declared their support for the Emerald Champion and the Imperial Regent have called up their forces, and it is expected that this spring will see a massive gathering of troops to put down the Army of the Black Lion.
- While the Crab and the Mantis alliance has been quite strong in recent years, there are indications that the clans' leadership may be having issues.

Specifically, there are whispers that Hida O-Ushi, Champion of the Crab, got into a disagreement with Yoritomo Gusai, Defender of Golden Sun Bay, at the Winter Court in Otosan Uchi last month. How violent this confrontation varies from teller to teller, ranging from a shouting match to an all-out brawl (the victor again depending on the source). It is thought that this altercation may have something to do with the Crab Champion's remaining in Otosan Uchi after the close of court.

The next morning, Arata meets the PCs at their inn to take them to the designated meeting site, which turns out to be a meeting room on the ground floor of Castle of the East itself.

Ahead, the squat tower of Castle of the East anchors the city walls, looming over the Crane provinces visible in the distance like a wary guardsman betrayed too many times before. As you approach the castle gates, you see Utsuro approaching from a different direction, awkwardly wearing the heavy, overly-ornate kimono of a courtier and clutching a thick scroll satchel to his chest. He waves at you from about two blocks away – just before an arrow streaks out of a nearby alleyway and buries itself in his back. With a strangled cry, he crumples to his knees, just before another buries itself in the base of his skull and throws him forward onto the dusty street. Screams go up from the passersby on the busy thoroughfare as several nearby merchants and samurai rushing over to help.

By the time Arata and the PCs reach him, Utsuro is dead and the satchel he was clutching, the satchel that held his presentation materials, is gone. None of the people crowding over the body saw who took it, but all realize that it would have been a simple matter to do so in the spontaneous crowd as it was in the process of forming. In the alleyway, the archer who fired the arrows is still visible, crouched in the shadows; when the PCs spot her, she shouts, "My life for yours, lord Oguri!" before plunging her knife into her neck.

Part One: Guilty as Charged

The PCs have little option but to continue to the meeting once the initial shock of the murder is over; if the PCs report the murder to local authorities or send Arata in their place, Crab samurai appear shortly thereafter and demand that the PCs accompany them to meet the samurai to whom Utsuro was going to present his case. It turns out to be none other than Hida O-Ushi, Champion of the Crab. (This probably comes as a

surprise to the PCs, since rumors place her several hundred miles from here, and there is nothing in the town or the castle to suggest a Clan Champion is in residence at the moment.) With her is Yasuki Oguri, daimyo of the Yasuki. In her usual brusque way, O-Ushi informs the PCs that Oguri was the target of Utsuro's investigation, and he is here to hear the charges against him and answer them.

Oguri smiles confidently. "Ushi-dono," he smirks, "Shiba-san is a magistrate with a widely-known reputation for, let us say, 'eccentricity.' While I do not mean to downplay the threat of this 'Kolats conspiracy' he is so obsessed with, the man is convinced that traitors hide in every cabinet and assassins lurk in every shadow. Even this melodramatic meeting: secrecy on top of secrecy, and for what? He has not even had the courtesy to appear, sending these worthy samurai in his place to deflect his lack of proof! Clearly you can see that I am the injured party here!"

O-Ushi studies him for a moment and replies, "Your response would be more compelling, Yasuki-san, if Shiba-san had not been assassinated a few hours ago and his evidence stolen while on his way here to present it. The assassin named you as her master before killing herself."

For perhaps the only time you have ever seen, Oguri clearly has no idea what to say. His mouth opens and closes for a few moments, helplessly, before he stammers, "But... but...that makes no sense! That makes me look... guilty...!" O-Ushi merely waits, her hand on her katana. Finally, a look of horrified realization comes over Oguri's face, and his eyes flick between O-Ushi, you, and something only he can see, as though tracing the strands of a net or web. "That... bitch," he finally says. Looking at O-Ushi, then at the you, he continues, "No doubt you will find papers or something similar in my quarters that links me to this crime." He drops to his knees. "My lady Hida, I confess it freely: I am a member of the Kolat. I offer my free cooperation to you against them, if you will honor me with only two boons: my life, and the promise that the woman who has framed me for this will die."

O-Ushi punches him hard enough to send a tooth shattering against the wall in a spray of blood. "I grant your boons, dog. You will likely come to wish I had not." She turns to you and Arata. "With Utsuro's death, the matter of his investigation falls to you. I cannot command you in a matter for the Imperial magistrates, but you have the cooperation of the Crab Clan in your hunt. I would recommend wringing him for everything you can get, then move quickly – like any cockroach, no doubt his fellow Kolat will scurry for the

shadows once they learn he has been captured, and his information will quickly grow stale. And I remind you that I have only guaranteed his life, so ask your questions as thoroughly as you like. A man can live with no fingers, toes, feet or tongue, after all.” She leaves and two burly Hida samurai replace her, roughly grabbing hold of Oguri as he straightens and spits out more blood. He looks shaken by her speech, but tries to hold onto his dignity as the guards drag him to the cells below the castle.

When the PCs can question him again, they find him in a dark, cramped room, four bare walls and a small stash of hay on the floor, nothing else. As they question him, Oguri tells them the following:

- The general philosophy of the Kolat is one of personal merit as the only measure of personal worth, rejecting the Celestial Order and the traditional feudal arrangement of birth as determinant of value or social role. Peasants can command samurai if the peasant has proven himself the samurai’s better in whatever matter is at hand. Despite the pogrom launched by Toturi under the influence of the Lying Darkness, the Kolat considers the modern era to be a triumph of their philosophy, where a peasant was made a Minor Clan daimyo and a ronin was made an Emperor after proving their worth.
- In the wake of Toturi’s purge a decade ago, the Kolat has reorganized into subgroups or “sects” responsible for one part or another of overall operations. Oguri is the head of “Coin Sect,” the sect that supplies the conspiracy’s finances, handling smuggling and a variety of other criminal enterprises related to making and laundering money. Oguri insists that it was money and money alone that attracted him to the Kolat, as he has little interest in its heretical aims or philosophy.
- He does not know the identities of any of the other sect heads, but he can describe several of their functions, including Steel (military operations), Lotus (external security) and Dream (mind control), along with Roc (links to the Burning Sands). He will not discuss either Tiger or Jade, nor admit to knowing anything more than the name about either. He believes Chrysanthemum beneath his consideration, Master Cloud is recently dead (and every sect keeps its own records anyway), and Silk doesn’t have enough contacts to be a concern.
- There is a central headquarters, but he doesn’t know where it is. It had been located in the northern part of Dragon Heart Plain, but the area has become too much in the eyes of the Empire in recent years, and they were forced to move it – so far, Oguri has not been told where. This is mostly because he’s not very concerned about the question; he had not

visited the previous headquarters in nearly a decade, and participates in meetings via magic.

At this point, Oguri becomes much less cooperative. *“We have no more time for this,” he insists. “You want details, and I will give them to you – but not until I know you’re handling the other boon Ushi-sama granted me. This is not simple malice on my part however, samurai. Your own investigation will suffer if we further delay with this unnecessary interrogation. I have said I will tell you all I know, and I will. If you want that information to still be worthwhile, however, you’ll set this aside and focus on my demands. The Kolat are not fools; they know I am a significant threat to them if I am forced to confess what I know. The longer you delay in acting, the more time they will have to burn their bridges, move their stockpiles, abandon their catspaws. The best way to avoid that is to bring down the rival who has placed me here. With both of us gone, coordinating the cleansing will be much more difficult; new hierarchies will have to form, new lines of communication established. It will buy you time.”*

Arata reluctantly supports Oguri’s words, observing that he and Utsuro had faced similar challenges on previous Kolat investigations. “As Hida-sama said, they are like roaches,” he observes dryly. “Light the lamp and they scurry for the shadows; you might crush one, but the rest scuttle free. They must be hunted in the dark, quickly and with as little warning as possible.”

“To aid in that, I believe I can delay their response even further with a letter,” Oguri continues. “A coded missive to a few trusted operatives that all is well. I will require brush, ink and paper to send it, however, so if you would be so kind...?”

It is entirely up to the PCs whether they wish to allow Oguri to send his letter or not. They likely have no way to determine whether he honestly intends to help them and send the appropriate message or not; he does, as it happens, but magic is the only way to conclusively verify it. A Contested Roll of the PCs’ **Investigation (Interrogation) / Perception** and Oguri’s **Sincerity / Awareness** (he rolls 10k7+5) reveals that he seems sincere on a failure and that he’s trying really hard to sound sincere on a success, but nothing more definitive. Arata demurs in any attempt to pass the decision on to him, admitting he has no way to know if Oguri is telling the truth either. *“It certainly seems like something he could do. Whether that is his intention, however...?”* Regardless, the decision to permit or deny Oguri his chance to write the letter will have consequences later in the adventure.

If the PCs permit him to write the letter, Oguri does so with alacrity, handing it off to Arata with delivery instructions for a small bakery a few blocks away. (The contents of the letter are seemingly innocuous and bland; they thank “Misho” for his last batch of rice cakes and order another three batches for delivery the following day. Oguri claims that the relevant bits are the name, number of batches and the date; the combination will indicate a clear path to proceed with all planned activities. Again, without magic, the PCs have no way to verify this.) If one of the PCs insists on carrying it instead, the note is accepted without comment; the young, heavyset woman behind the counter merely tucks the note into a small box with a heavy gold koku and says that the PC’s order will be ready the day after tomorrow. If they do not, Oguri grimaces in frustration but resigns himself to continuing without the letter.

“The person you must arrest – and I do very much hope she resists your arrest – is Daidoji Ichiko, the head of the Daidoji Trading Council. She has been jockeying for some time to replace me as head of the Coin Sect, and I’ll admit she outmaneuvered me here. I’m looking forward to seeing you return the favor. If you capture or kill her, the Kolat in this area, and those tied to us across the Empire, will be at a loss for direction or guidance. They will be vulnerable, and you will be able to acquire them with ease. Ichiko herself, though – I want her dead.”

The PCs may roll **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** or **Lore: Crane / Intelligence**, TN 25, or **Commerce / Intelligence**, TN 35, to remember a few facts about Daidoji Ichiko. An elderly merchant patroness well past the usual retirement age (she is in her early 50s), Ichiko shows no sign of stepping away from her life as a samurai any time soon. Five years ago she was appointed as the head of the Daidoji Trading Council, and rumors suggest that she is a contender to lead the Daidoji family should anything befall their daimyo Uji. (Uji has not named an heir since his previous choice, Daidoji Rekai, disappeared at Tsuma on the day Empress Kaede died.) She is wealthy, powerful, and without question the Daidoji family’s most respected and well-known courtier – although that is admittedly not a terribly high bar. Oguri can also provide this information. The PCs might have met Ichiko during the course of their investigations in the module “Under Cover of Night.” Certainly there is nothing in her public persona that would link her to the Kolat; should any PC express skepticism, though, Oguri just barks a short laugh and replies, “You don’t know her as well as I do.”

Regardless of whether the PCs question his revelation, Oguri goes on, *“Naturally, Ichiko has financial interests throughout the Empire, particularly the*

Crane, Phoenix and Mantis provinces, but there are three holdings in particular that are key to her businesses. Two are in Mura Sabishii Toshi: an upscale tea house called The Kami’s Respite and a nondescript warehouse one building east of the intersection of South Market and Dockside streets. The warehouse doesn’t have a name that I know of, but my agents started calling it ‘Fushigi no Ichiba.’ The last is Ushi no Chichi, a sake house in Seawatch Castle City – the name goes back further than our honorable Champion, in case you were wondering. The Kami’s Respite is the centerpiece of Ichiko’s money laundering operation; Fushigi no Ichiba is the primary depot for her smuggling operations; Ushi no Chichi is what it looks like in the front, but the rear of the place extends into the buildings behind it and is one of the largest gambling houses and casinos outside of the Scorpion lands. Information at all three locations should verify all that I have said here, and justify Ichiko’s arrest. Moreover, I believe you will find her at one of those places; she is nothing if not ‘hands on’ with her projects, and as things begin moving after my capture, she will want to make sure the cleaning goes smoothly.”

The PCs may ask more questions about Ichiko or the three locations, but Oguri has little more to offer on those specific topics; questions about other pieces of the Kolat puzzle, members, activities and the like, are all met with, “I will answer everything, once Ichiko is dead.” This might not satisfy the PCs – if they press the issue, Oguri is adamant even in the face of threats of torture, pointing out that torture takes time, and by the time they finish breaking him all his information will be worthless. If the standoff continues, Arata offers a compromise: he will continue Oguri’s questioning while the PCs pursue his leads. If the PCs accede to Oguri, then Arata merely volunteers to keep the questioning going in their absence. Oguri reluctantly accepts the proposal either way. As the PCs prepare to leave, Arata reminds them again to be subtle about their investigations until they can definitively locate Ichiko.

Before they leave, O-Ushi summons them to one more brief meeting, to get the breakdown on what Oguri has said so far. When they explain about Ichiko, O-Ushi nods. “I can’t write an Order of Appearance for a Crane samurai, especially not one as... renowned... as Daidoji Ichiko. However, I do have an old friend who I think will listen to me. There’s history there, but... I think he’ll help. Let me know where you’re heading, and I will see that the necessary documents are there to meet you.”

Part Two: Kolat Hunting

The PCs now must choose where to begin their search for Ichiko. Wherever they look first, they will not find her; instead, once they have first investigated one location, they will be able to pinpoint her location in one of the remaining two spots (determined randomly by the GM). How they handle the investigation of these locations will determine what they find at each spot and how prepared Ichiko is for their arrival when they confront her, as measured by the PCs' Notoriety. Mura Sabishii Toshi is a hard day's ride from Face of the East Castle, while Seawatch Castle is two days. Starting from the day of Oguri's arrest, the PCs accumulate 2 points of Notoriety a day (so if they leave as soon as the questioning is done, they will reach Mura Sabishii Toshi with 2 Notoriety, or Seawatch Castle with 4 Notoriety). Add 2 to this total if the PCs did not permit Oguri to send his letter signaling that all is well. If there are any PCs at the table who are Targeted by the Kolat, add 1 Notoriety at the start of the investigation. Once they have captured Ichiko, they cease gaining Notoriety as the Kolat's communication networks begin falling apart.

Mura Sabishii Toshi is a robust Crane port city, geographically isolated from much of the rest of the mainland by steep hills but with an exceedingly fine natural harbor. Walking through the city, the PCs encounter almost as many Mantis as they do Crane, and it is clear the Yasuki, Ide and Soshi families have large presences here too. Practically everyone appears to be a sailor, and there is almost as little concern for the proper samurai's "feigned distaste" of money as one might find in a Yasuki market; every block has one or more Daidoji or Yoritomo openly haggling with an Ide or Yasuki right in the street. Market and Dockside Streets are easy to find, and all the samurai know where to find The Kami's Respite, even if it is largely out of the pocketbook's reach for most peasant traders.

By contrast, Seawatch Castle City is much smaller, barely more than a village, and a fairly shabby one at that. Seawatch Castle itself stands on a bluff overlooking the ocean, excellently positioned from a tactical perspective but only very lightly garrisoned. A contingent of Doji and Daidoji bushi train in a large, sprawling academy further down the hillside, but the town at the base of the bluff, right on the water's edge, is salt-bitten and crumbling, clinging to the rocks like lichen. The town is only about three blocks wide from shore to cliffs, but stretches for most of half a mile along the beach. There are docks here as well, and a steep, zigzagging road allows shipments and travelers to come and go between the castle and the town. The peasants are fishermen almost exclusively, and they eye samurai in their streets with wary curiosity, clearly used to being left alone by their distant masters in the castle.

In either city, the PCs may attempt to determine whether Ichiko is in town at the moment; these investigations should be initially inconclusive. The Daidoji Trading Council appears to be operating with business as usual, but only low-ranking members are meeting with clients or trading partners; Ichiko and the other highest-placed councilors are "unavailable at this time," "working on other matters" or the like, and no amount of persuasion can crack the shell of denials. Rumors do confirm that Ichiko's personal kobune, *Harvest of Gold*, has been both in and out of port in the last few days; it is not currently docked in either city, but no one can say for certain whether Ichiko was onboard when it last sailed. Once the PCs have investigated one location, though, they will finally be able to pin down answers to these questions, and in fact should be able to identify in which of the remaining two spots Ichiko is to be found.

Once the PCs reach of the two towns, they have the option of doing some preliminary investigation of a location in that town. Doing so takes about half a day. (A party who left in the middle of the day, after questioning Oguri, will have about half a day left once they reach and get settled into Mura Sabishii Toshi or Seawatch Castle City.) This can include both rumor-hunting and physical inspection of the site – the information available about each place is listed below, with the location descriptions. The PCs can also just head straight in, which will save time but might cost them useful information. The PCs can gather rumors with **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** or **Lore: Underworld / Awareness**, with information acquired at various TNs (see the location descriptions), but they gain 1 point of Notoriety for every roll made that does not include a Raise to conceal the questioning (effects that apply to concealing the source of a rumor, such as the Rank One Bayushi Courtier School, apply to this roll as well). If the PCs physically scout a location, they can learn all the listed information with an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, but gain 1 point of Notoriety unless they also make a **Stealth (Shadowing) / Agility** roll, TN 30. GMs should be open to player creativity here in using other options (magic, disguises, etc.) to prevent the gain of or even potentially reduce Notoriety, but without extraordinary measures the PC or PCs involved should lose Honor appropriate to the use of a Low Skill at the minimum. The same character can both hunt rumors and scout the location in one half-day period if they so choose.

When the PCs reach their second search location and encounter Ichiko, they find her accompanied by her two yojimbo, Daidoji Shashu and Daidoji Kikori; Ichiko herself has no meaningful combat ability, fleeing as fast as her Water 2 will allow her to move. The yojimbo will not be the only obstacle between her and the PCs, however.

In addition, there should be one Kolat thug for every PC, and an additional Kolat thug for every shugenja PC or PC with Simple Action attacks; see the end of each location description for more details. Statistics for all the combatants can be found in Appendix #1. Should the PCs have accumulated 7 or more Notoriety before they find Ichiko, the guards' parangu are coated with coral snake venom as well (page 333 of L5R 4E). By the time they find her, she knows enough about them to recognize them on sight, and she orders her men to kill the PCs as soon as she lays eyes on them.

A Package is Delivered

On the first evening of their investigation, the PCs are approached at their table in whatever inn they have selected to stay in. A ronin samurai, battle-scarred and roughly dressed, bows deeply and asks, in low-pitched and unexpectedly cultured tones, "May I join you, honorable samurai? I do not wish to intrude, but I have been commanded to deliver a message to you." PCs may make a **Lore: Crane / Perception** or **Lore: Heraldry / Perception** roll, TN 45, to recognize Daidoji Uji, despite his disguise. If denied, the "ronin" repeats his request, this time adding, "You were expecting some documents from your friend Yoritoko?" A **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** or **Lore: Crab / Intelligence** roll, TN 25, recalls that "Yoritoko" is Hida O-Ushi's actual personal name, although almost no one, including her, actually uses it. If refused a second time, the "ronin" throws some folded papers on the table and leaves; these turn out to be the requested Order of Appearance for Daidoji Ichiko, signed by Daidoji Uji, daimyo of the Daidoji family. If allowed to sit, however, the "ronin" bows again, quite deeply, and introduces himself as "Aiguchi." "If you will permit me, honorable samurai, my master sends his respects and well-wishes for the health of his old friend Yoritoko, along with this letter." "Aiguchi" places the Order of Appearance on the table, unfolding it enough to make its contents visible. "Despite their more recent disagreements, some bonds do not break. My master would like to add that he regrets he could not be here in person, because his daughter Ichiko is showing signs of illness; he has seen symptoms for some time without knowing how serious the disease was, but now it proceeds quite rapidly. He hopes you understand. Please, my friends, go with his blessing." He reaches into his obi and draws an aiguchi, wrapped with sky-blue silk. The blade is marked with the Daidoji family crest as well as the personal mon of Uji. "If you need aid, call upon my name and I will do what I can." Uji very pointedly taps on the personal mon as he says the words "my name," hoping to convey his true identity. Standing and bowing again, the "ronin" steps out of the inn as discreetly as he entered.

Part Three: The Kami's Respite

The Kami's Respite is an extremely old establishment in Mura Sabishii Toshi, with a history that goes back at least three hundred years. The tea house's own story is that it was the first tea house in the Crane lands, and construction was completed only one day before Doji-kami herself spent the evening in it, as the house's first patron. Regardless of the truth of the story, an evening's meal and tea service cost 8 koku per person; the meal and ceremony are both the work of retired sensei of the Kakita Artisan Academy, and the full experience takes four hours (two Rokugani hours) to complete; it includes a complete dinner as well as an extraordinarily beautiful and moving tea ceremony. There is also an intermission of sorts about halfway through, during which patrons are escorted to the well-appointed garden for about twenty minutes while one set of dishes is cleaned up before another presentation round begins. The tea house only accepts guests via reservations, and never has more than four parties at one time. It does have guest facilities for overnight stay, included as part of the cost of the meal, but is not truly an inn in the usual sense. (As with most private entertainment spaces, samurai are expected to set aside their weapons and armor upon entry.)

This extremely high-end clientele and exorbitant cost makes it perfect to act as a means by which funds gained through illegal activities can be transformed into legal revenue, at least as far as the tax collectors of the Empire are concerned, and has functioned in that capacity for the Kolat for nearly two centuries. The house's present manager, a peasant named Miasho, is a skilled accountant; he has a real set of books, tracking the house's income and expenses, but the fake set that he shows to the tax collectors is as spotless as one could ever hope.

The two sets of books are the key pieces of evidence that the PCs need to acquire; if they don't realize it themselves, a **Lore: Law / Intelligence** or **Commerce / Intelligence** roll, TN 15, will confirm that false records of income would be the key to proving money laundering. Miasho keeps both sets of books on the premises, but only one is in the tea house's offices; the other is in his private apartment above the tea house, hidden within his collection of puzzle boxes.

Rumors about The Kami's Respite:

TN 15: This level earns the PC the legendary history of the tea house, its prices and policies.

TN 20: The Kami's Respite is owned by Daidoji Ichiko, but the day to day operations are handled by a peasant manager named Miasho. Miasho is a man of great wealth, with personal resources rivaling most samurai, and a taste for refinement to go with it.

TN 25: In addition to managing The Kami's Respite, Miasho also handles the bookkeeping; this isn't a surprise, as he received training at a Yasuki-run academy in his youth.

TN 30: Miasho recently separated from his mistress; he has apparently begun spending basically every night working in his office to get over the heartbreak.

TN 35: Although Miasho has a number of fine things in his rooms over The Kami's Respite, he is especially fond and protective of his collection of puzzle boxes.

TN 40: For a peasant, Miasho has a surprisingly wide array of samurai acquaintances. Known patrons of the restaurant include Yasuki Oguri, Doji Oharu, Kakita Kyruko, Daidoji Eizo, Doji Takuya, Kakita Takezo, and Seppun Hotaitaka.

Physical inspection of The Kami's Respite:

The Kami's Respite is a three-story building in the heart of Mura Sabishii Toshi, well-built but several centuries old in style. There are three entrances on the ground floor, the main entrance for customers, a smaller side entrance that opens into a fenced-in garden with a small pavilion and two benches (the garden fence is gated), and a rear entrance for servants and deliveries. An **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll adds the following:

- TN 10: The rear of the building holds the kitchen and storage areas, along with an internal access to the building's small cellar. The front of the building has a receiving area connected to four spacious private dining areas. A passage situated between the front and back halves of the building connects to the garden and a stairway that leads up to the upper floors.
- TN 15: The second story contains the manager's office, two tiny rooms for the resident servants, and four suites for guests who choose to stay the night. All four of the guest rooms have small balconies overlooking the street. The stairs up to the third floor are located within the manager's office.
- TN 20: The upper floor is the manager's private residence; there is one balcony, overlooking the garden below.
- TN 25: No matter the day or night, there appear to be at least large, intimidating-looking "servants" guarding the second floor.

The simplest way to gain access to The Kami's Respite is, of course, to make reservations. This is possible on any evening the PCs request it, as long as they do not yet have 7 or more Notoriety. Of course, they do need the necessary 8 koku per person. While the PCs are under the eye of their chef and tea masters during the ceremony itself, the twenty-minute break between portions of the ceremony does provide a possible window for a stealthy character to make a move into the rest of the building. There are two guards on duty at all times on the second floor outside Miasho's office; whenever the guards make an **Investigation / Perception** roll, they use the Cooperative Rolls rules to do so. One guard is the leader on the roll, and the other adds his ranks in Investigation to the total. This means they roll 5k2+3 together.

If the PCs wish to instead try to meet with Miasho and they have less than 7 Notoriety, he immediately entertains any Crane, Mantis, or Unicorn, as well as any PC with the Wealth, Blessing of Daikoku, or Gentry Advantages. Status 3.0 or higher characters are also entertained at once. If the PC has none of these traits or if they have accumulated 7 or more Notoriety, the servants who greet them politely lie, informing the PCs that Miasho is not on the premises, having left that morning, and they do not know where he is gone. Of course, samurai being samurai, the PCs can force the issue; the servants in the tea house won't stand up to any actual intimidation or aggression, but doing so gives the PCs 2 Notoriety after the meeting with Miasho ends.

Miasho is in his late 30s, and though not precisely fat, he clearly does not starve or do much exercise. He wears very finely-made clothes, but they aren't terribly well cared for, and dark circles combined with heavy lines mark his eyes.

Miasho has all Rings at 2; Awareness 3; Willpower and Intelligence 4; Investigation 3; Etiquette, Courtier, and Sincerity 5; and Commerce (Mathematics) 7.
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He is perfectly aware of who he works for and why, and is wholly committed to the Kolat cause – he seems himself as an exemplar of the Kolat philosophy of advancement based on personal merit, but has no ambitions of seeking a higher role in the conspiracy itself. On the other hand, he is not a fanatic – he can be both bribed and coerced into aiding the PCs, albeit with some difficulty. The easiest path to gain his cooperation would be an offer of clemency in return for his aid; simply showing him the Order of Appearance with Ichiko's name on it is enough to persuade him that his position is threatened and Ichiko's time is at an end, and if given some reason to think he will not be destroyed by the investigation, will happily turn against his erstwhile employer. In his dealings with samurai he is even-

tempered and respectful, but not obsequious, speaking carefully and deliberately as though considering each word before saying it.

Note that if the PCs have earned at least 7 points of Notoriety before meeting with him (points earned during the meeting, such as by bullying the servants to get in, do not count), Miasho has already destroyed the true ledger, burning the book and scattering the ashes over the ocean. He can still be persuaded to testify, but the testimony of a peasant is essentially useless against a samurai such as Daidoji Ichiko.

The false ledger is kept in a scroll rack in Miasho's office, where he is to be found both night and day (a recent heartbreak has made him throw himself into his work, and he's taken to sleeping on a mat in his office rather than go back to an empty bed in his apartment). It is large and clearly labeled, but anyone attempting to acquire it without Miasho's permission gains the PCs 1 point of Notoriety, whether they succeed or not. Physical security in The Kami's Respite is provided by four Kolat thugs (see Appendix) who switch out night and day shifts (two at any given time); there are no locks or bars on any internal doors. The true ledger is kept in the largest of Miasho's several puzzle boxes, all of which are displayed on a floor-to-ceiling polished cherrywood rack. Handling each of the boxes quickly indicates that only one actually has something heavy stored in it – the box is rigged with an acid bottle so that the contents are destroyed if the box is simply broken into (recognizable with a **Lore: Underworld / Intelligence** or any relevant **Craft / Intelligence**, TN 20), so safely retrieving the ledger requires solving the puzzle. Three wrong answers also destroys the contents, just as breaking it does. (Note: the spell Mending Forge *can* recover a destroyed ledger.) Solving the puzzle box requires either a **Craft: Puzzle Box / Perception** roll, TN 35, an **Engineering / Perception** roll, TN 35, or a **Meditation / Void** roll, TN 50. Of course, if persuaded or compelled to do so, Miasho can open the box without a roll. If the ledger is taken without Miasho's permission, the PCs gain 3 Notoriety as soon as he becomes aware of its absence; this happens automatically unless the PCs steal the ledger by solving the box and then replacing it where it was before, in which case it takes him two days to discover the theft.

If the PCs locate Ichiko at The Kami's Respite, she is in Miasho's office; typically she will flee to Miasho's apartment and jump off his balcony, using an Asahina fetish to land harmlessly in the garden before escaping. If largely unharmed, her yojimbo will follow suit without the fetish, trusting in their Techniques to save them from the fall's damage (4k3).

Part Four: Fushigi no Ichiba

"Fushigi no Ichiba" is a large but uninteresting – at least on the surface – warehouse near the intersection of South Market and Dockside Streets in the southeastern part of Mura Sabiishi Toshi. Technically no illegal activities occur here; there are smaller buildings scattered all up and down the central and southern Crane coasts where tariff-evading alterations to paperwork, crate markings, inspector stamps and more are made, typically just before or just after a given shipment is loaded or unloaded from a sailing vessel. What makes Fushigi no Ichiba worth investigating, though, is the sheer amount of illegally marked goods stored in one location; Ichiko uses it as a central depot to store and redirect the contraband she moves around the Empire, as using one terminal allows her to further confuse the paper trail of any particular shipment among all the others going in and out. Literally hundreds of koku's worth of goods move through it daily, more than enough to prove the scale of Ichiko's smuggling operations, if they can actually be identified as contraband.

That last, though, is the tricky part. Ichiko's team of forgers, papermakers, paint retouchers and so on are very skilled. Moreover, the warehouse is run and operated by a woman named Anjiko, a tiny, bone-dry stick of a woman with an iron grasp of paperwork and absolutely no idea she works for the Kolat. Her books are spotless, but incredibly difficult for anyone else to dig through; she has no trouble keeping track of everything, but the occasional tax inspectors have just given up before finding any evidence that might point to malfeasance. Anjiko, despite not being a Kolat, is not immune to feeling a certain amount of satisfaction and resentment when this happens, as she is "just" a peasant and the tax inspectors are inevitably low-ranked samurai – her betters, in theory, yet incapable of understanding something she finds quite simple. (Note that, if PCs want to use the books to try to prove there is smuggling going on, they will be unable to do so – while a TN 45 **Commerce [Mathematics] / Intelligence** roll can decipher Anjiko's records system, doing so accomplishes nothing without matching records from wherever the goods came from or where they are sent, none of which are locations within Mura Sabiishi Toshi.)

Rumors about Fushigi no Ichiba:

Results with less than a 20 basically amount to "It's a warehouse. What more do you want?":

- TN 20: The warehouse seems busy and active, but none of the local import/export traders around here seem to have anything to do with it.

- TN 25: A few whispers mention having seen inside crates that were labeled as one thing, but the contents looked to be something very different.
- TN 30: The place seems to be busy at all hours of the day and night; at the very least, there are workers on site, in the building or loitering just outside it, any time anyone happens to go past it. The workers look to be pretty rough sorts too – those heavy chopping blades they carry may just be work tools, but they look pretty well-used.
- TN 35: The guards – because come on, they’re obviously guards – on that warehouse must be part of some kind of cult or something. The Fireflies (they’re the biggest criminal gang in the city) recently tried to buy off one of them to get into the warehouse, and the Fireflies’ number two guy was a head shorter the next day. And the bribe was... sizable. Whatever they’re guarding, they take it really seriously.
- TN 40: The approval and destination paperwork on some of the crates when they leave the warehouse include some... interesting... names. Daidoji Eizen, Akodo Hayato, Yoritomo Masasue, Asako Miya, and Iuchi Aseo all received shipments of... sandals. Lots of sandals.

Physical inspection of Fushigi no Ichiba:

Physical inspection of the warehouse reveals that it is about three stories high, although the windows outside suggest it only has two levels. There are three loading entrances, each double doors wide enough to allow wagons to enter, and two smaller doors that would be used by workers themselves. An **Investigation (Notice)** / **Perception** roll adds the following:

- TN 15: There are always at least three workers “lounging around” outside the doors. They appear to be smoking pipes, talking with each other or just sitting, but as soon as one goes in, another wanders out seemingly at random.
- TN 20: The “lounging” guards congregate around the two smaller doors. The three double doors are all locked with large, gaijin-style padlocks when not in use; one of the double doors is not visible from where the guards sit, while the other two are.
- TN 25: There are windows but no balcony on the second floor, on one of the two corners overlooking the street. The windows are connected to a small office, for when there is a site manager on duty. The office is in one corner of the walkway that circles the building on the second floor, allowing access to and manipulation of the loading and unloading cranes inside.
- TN 30: There are skylights on the roof in four places; a set of rafters and loading cranes crisscross

the space beneath them, and in a few places the stacks of crates reach up to within a few feet of the rafters.

- TN 35: There are roughly eight to ten workers onsite at all times, including the three to four guards always stationed outside the building.

The worker/guards are not interested in fighting samurai without a really good reason; while a lone intruder might be worth trying to deal with, an entire group of PCs is far more trouble than they’ve bargained for, and without Daidoji Ichiko’s presence, the guards will simply run from any direct confrontation. A violent confrontation with the guards gives the PCs 3 Notoriety; if the PCs avoid leaving any survivors, this gain is delayed for one day. None of the guards outside the building carry keys to the padlocks – the only key is in Anjiko’s hands, who is in the warehouse during daylight hours and in her small house a few blocks away in the evening. (If statistics for Anjiko are required, use the ones for Miasho, above.) Deliveries and shipments only happen during the day to avoid any appearance of malfeasance – much of Fushigi no Ichiba’s value and security come from its bland obscurity, and Ichiko likes it that way.

If the PCs explore the warehouse while they have less than 7 Notoriety, they find its interior to be a maze of well-organized crates stacked in every direction, stamped with location markers, plastered with bills of lading and sale, and neatly inscribed with the personal mon of various harbor masters and tariff inspectors. Casual examination reveals nothing out of the ordinary, but an **Investigation (Search)** / **Perception** roll, TN 25, finds clear signs of criminal behavior – bills of lading plastered over older ones that actually describe the crate’s contents, wood putty covering over an inspector’s brand and a new one seared into its place, destination labels altered to redirect them, and so on. Note that the interior of the warehouse contains no built-in lighting outside the manager’s office; there are skylights, but otherwise the guards rely on hand lanterns to patrol the warehouse at night, and otherwise the warehouse is pitch dark after sunset. This means that all Perception rolls (including Investigation [Search]) take a -3k3 penalty without a light source; a hooded lantern or small candle reduces this to -1k1, but also grants the guards 2 Free Raises on Perception checks made to spot the intruders. As long as the PCs make the Investigation (Search) roll to confirm the existence of contraband, they have the evidence they need from the warehouse.

Opening one of the locked padlocks requires the key, succeeding on a **Craft: Locksmithing** / **Agility** roll TN 25 (this is a Low Skill use, obviously), or forcing it open with a **Raw Strength** roll, TN 40 (using a tool to provide suitable leverage, like a crowbar, gives two Free Raises).

The lock can also be cut – the lock has an Armor TN of 15, Reduction 15 and 15 Wounds. Using a katana or wakizashi to cut the lock incurs Honor losses appropriate to a major breach of etiquette, as well as the loss of a Rank of Glory and severely dulling or damaging the blade (exact mechanics at the GM's discretion, based on the PC's rolls). It is also possible to simply break the door down with a TN 25 **Raw Strength** check. Unlocking the lock or picking it does not require a Stealth roll, but cutting or breaking open the lock does, resisted by the guards' **Investigation / Perception** roll; breaking the door down does as well, and gives the guards four Free Raises on their roll.

As at The Kami's Respite, whenever the guards make an **Investigation / Perception** roll, they use the Cooperative Rolls rules to do so; one guard is the leader on the roll, and the other nearby guards add their ranks in Investigation to the total. Typically this means they roll 5k2+9 outside (four guards) and 5k2+12 inside (five guards) the warehouse. If the guards beat the PCs' Stealth check(s) more than once, the PCs gain a point of Notoriety and they will have to either flee the warehouse immediately or confront the guards, who will be moving toward them.

If the PCs enter the warehouse with 7 or more Notoriety and Ichiko is not there, they find it empty.

If the PCs locate Ichiko in the warehouse, she is in the manager's office on the second floor, guarded by her yojimbo. The Kolat thugs are scattered evenly throughout the first and second floors; the ones on the walkway have three throwing knives (Knives / Reflexes to attack, DR 2k1) to use along with their parangu.

Part Five: Ushi no Chichi “Sake House” (Casino)

Ushi no Chichi Sake House (The Bull's Breast Sake House) is an actual, albeit terrible, sake house in Seawatch Castle City. It's at the north end of the narrow, strung-out village, right against the cliffs. The road in front peters out just a few feet past the rotted wooden porch. Around the corner, on the perpendicular street facing east, is what appears to be a row of crumbling tenements, tall, narrow houses with no privacy fences, gardens or anything at all to make them look appealing. The only thing that makes them stand out at all is their dissimilarity from the more spread-out and traditional peasant huts on the village's other streets; narrow, bunched tenements like these would not look out of place in Ryoko Owari or Yauski no Yashiki Toshi, but in a small fishing village like this one they don't seem to fit.

Of course, that's because they don't – they're not really houses at all, but facades left in place to hide the largest illegal gambling hall on the whole Rokugani coast.

If the PCs have less than 7 Notoriety or if Ichiko is present, getting in simply requires a 1 koku bribe to the bartender for each person who wishes to enter. The bartender, a surly grandfather named Panewa, lets pretty much anyone in if they pay the bribe, and repeat guests get in for free once Panewa has seen them often enough to recognize them. The actual entrance to the casino is down a short hall behind the bar; the hall leads to the toilet, but the wall at the corridor's end is actually a door. As the toilet itself is filthy beyond words, no one goes there except to enter the casino, and Panewa has a cord hidden beneath his bar attached to an alarm bell inside the casino in case anyone tries to force their way in (gaining 1 Notoreity in the process). He won't try to physically impede anyone, however.

If the PCs have more than 7 Notoriety and Ichiko is not here, the casino has shut down; the cavernous room is empty except for a few leftover tables, scattered mahjong tiles and a handful of dice dropped here and there.

Otherwise, what the PCs see when they enter is a deep but narrow room, about two hundred feet long and about forty feet wide. Just inside the entrance is a small kiosk where an employee, typically a young, smiling woman, requests that the PCs set aside their weapons while they play and directs newcomers toward the cashiers to buy their chips. Most of the casino's floor space – the two-thirds nearest the door – is filled with gaming tables for almost every variety of chance-based gaming known in Rokugan. The most popular and common are Fortunes and Winds tables, but mahjong and other domino games, a roulette-like game called fan tan, sloped pachinko tables and more also crowd the space. At the far end there are bookies accepting bets on all sorts of future events, crowded around a roughly-staked cleared circle, obviously used for pit fights – the dirt floor there is deeply stained with old blood. On the western wall, to the PCs' left as they enter, metal-fenced cages hold cashiers who change coins (and even trade goods) for chips to use on the gambling floor. These cages are carved into the rock of the cliff, which directly abuts the casino on that side, for extra security. The crowd is almost always tightly packed, regardless of the day or night, and samurai are afforded almost none of their traditional space due to the tightly-packed conditions.

The Ushi no Chichi casino is run by a man named Kiwa. Kiwa takes great pride in being the first non-samurai entrusted with the operation of the casino since its founding more than a century ago; he uses a set of rich, well-appointed samurai quarters originally carved out of

the hillside at the same time as the cashier cages were for his private residence, and revels in the opulence his position affords him. Kiwa follows samurai fashion assiduously and always dresses in clothing that would be impressive even on a noble, but Kiwa largely despises samurai and looks forward to the promised day that the Kolat overthrow the Celestial Order for a regime of their own devising. Kiwa is quite sure he will figure prominently in that regime when it comes. As a result, his loyalty to the Kolat is essentially unbreakable, although he will do his best not to be killed by investigating PCs – flight is much preferable to capture. Should he fall into a magistrate’s hands, though, only extended torture over several days will draw any useful information out of him, by which time the information itself will no longer be valid.

By contrast to the way he feels about samurai, though, Kiwa is deeply committed to improving the lives of his fellow peasants. By far the wealthiest person in the town, Kiwa acts as an unofficial headman, and his generosity has earned him a lot of loyalty from the rest of the villagers. Kiwa gives generously to the village’s small temples to Daikoku and Ebisu to support their charity work, and gives low-interest and even no-interest loans to struggling families in the city. The whole town knows about the casino, but they all consider it an excellent way to take money from samurai and outsider merchants and give it to the locals instead, via Kiwa’s free hand. Should you require statistics for Kiwa, use the ones for Miasho in Part Three.

Rumors about Ushi no Chichi:

- TN 15: At this level, the PCs learn about the casino behind the sake house and the minimum bribe needed to enter. They are also warned not to actually drink any sake there. (It’s not poisoned or anything. Just utterly terrible.)
- TN 20: The Bull’s Breast is run by a man named Kiwa. Despite being a peasant and owner of an illegal operation, Kiwa has a sterling reputation among the peasants of Seawatch Castle City as a pillar of the community, wealthy but generous and caring.
- TN 25: The casino does phenomenal business; it’s likely a hundred or more koku move through it every day. Payouts as large as six to seven hundred koku have been heard of, but larger ones seem to be paid in letters of credit rather than cash.
- TN 30: There’s supposedly an underground dueling ring being run out of the place right now. Three bodies have been found in alleyways in the last few weeks, suggesting the duelists are getting sloppy.
- TN 35: The casino has a strongroom built right into the cliff below Seawatch Castle. That’s where Kiwa

– and only Kiwa – goes to get the funds for the biggest payouts.

- TN 40: The casino’s guests have included some rather unexpected names. Daidoji Eizo, Kakita Kyruko, and Doji Oharu have all “won” large amounts of koku here (but none are in town).

Physical inspection of Ushi no Chichi:

Physical inspection of the sake house/casino reveals that it is narrow but lengthy, a city block long but only the width of a typical midsize house. There are no windows, just small chimneys for the lamp-smoke from the casino’s only lighting. There is only one obvious entrance, the front door of the sake house itself. An **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll adds the following:

- TN 15: The passage between the sake house front and the casino is hidden in a wall at the end of a short corridor behind the bar.
- TN 20: There are always half a dozen or so guards in the casino at any given time, but only two or three are actually on the casino floor. The rest are apparently busy somewhere out of easy view from the main public space.
- TN 25: The building is built parallel to the cliff, but it doesn’t stop there. Several rooms connect to the casino but are actually built into the stone itself.
- TN 30: The casino strongroom is one of those rooms; this level earns the PC the exact location.
- TN 35: There is at least one and possibly more than one exit from the casino into a series of small caverns in the limestone cliff itself. They all exit at a spot about two blocks north of the casino, roughly thirty feet above the beach. (Exploring the caverns without any previous knowledge of them takes a full half-day, but eventually leads the PCs to hidden doors that connect to Kiwa’s private apartments and a shadowed nook in the back corner furthest from the front door. If you know where you’re going, the travel time is about five minutes for a Water 2 character.)

While samurai merely entering the casino have sufficient testimony to shut it down (and may in fact report it to the Daidoji authorities in Seawatch Castle if they wish to have it raided – this earns them 4 Notoriety), doing so does not connect it to Daidoji Ichiko. Unlike The Kami’s Respite and Fushigi no Ichiba, the sake house is not owned by Daidoji Ichiko on paper; that honor belongs to Kiwa, and thus merely shutting the casino down doesn’t provide meaningful testimony against Ichiko. Moreover, a combination of Kiwa’s acts during a raid to destroy evidence and bribes and blackmail used on

certain members of the raiding samurai mean that no links to the broader Kolat conspiracy will be discovered.

Instead, the key to finding the connection is, as is usually the case, to follow the money. The Ushi no Chichi casino normally has several hundred koku on-hand to cover bets, stored in a strongroom behind the cashier cages. On rare occasions, with large bets that pay off against long odds, the casino's cash reserves are not enough to cover the payout, and a letter of credit is used to provide the necessary backing. This letter of credit ties the account's owner – presumably Ichiko – to the casino, and seeing it or obtaining it would give the PCs the testimony they need. As the letter is basically a blank check, it is almost certainly going to be kept somewhere secure; the casino's strongroom or Kiwa's own quarters are the most likely locations. A **Lore: Underworld, Lore: Law or Commerce / Intelligence** roll, TN 20, reveals all this to the PCs; the difficulty then becomes actually laying eyes on the letter.

The letter is in fact kept in the casino strongroom, a vault located behind the cashier cages, cut into the limestone cliff rock with a bronze door almost six inches thick. The door has two locking flywheels that must be turned together to open it; each requires Strength 4 to move. The door is always guarded by four loyal and well-trained Kolat thugs (total **Cooperative Investigation / Perception** check of 5k2+9), and only Kiwa is authorized to enter the strongroom. The thugs do not leave their posts except when relieved by one another, even in the event of a raid or other distraction; they fight to the death if confronted. (Killing the guards is worth 3 Notoriety.) Magic or exceptional mundane disguises, coupled with skilled Deceit rolls, are required to pass them from the front. Digging through the cliffside is not practical, but the spell Embrace of Kenro-ji-jin could prove exceptionally useful in this regard. If the PCs are able to enter the strongroom without raising an alarm, they can easily locate the letter in a rosewood box, tucked away among the bags of zenì and bu and careful stacks of koku that line the strongroom walls. Even if the PCs steal the letter, the theft will go unnoticed for some time; only if they actually rob the casino will they provoke any Notoriety gain (3 points' worth).

The other way to see the letter is to persuade Kiwa to show it to the PCs. Simply asking won't work (and earns the PCs 1 point of Notoriety); the PCs need to position themselves as having a right to show it. Demanding to see it on their authority as magistrates will work, of course, but unless the PCs keep Kiwa with them from the moment they reveal themselves officially, he will make his way to the strongroom ahead of them and destroy the letters to protect Ichiko before attempting to use one of the secret cave passages to flee. Keeping an eye on Kiwa

is made more difficult in that any public confrontation in an official capacity sees the crowd stampede out, overwhelming the PCs in the press of bodies; unless he is bound or held, Kiwa attempts a Stealth roll, spending Void to gain the skill and gaining four Free Raises from the crowd's cover (for a total of 3k2+20 on the roll). The crowd makes everything Difficult terrain, but Kiwa's familiarity with the layout and respect from the clients means he only treats it as Moderate. Such a public confrontation earns the PCs 3 Notoriety, whether they come up with the letter or not.

A more subtle option would be to simply appear to be high-rollers. Placing a large bet against long odds can allow the PCs to ask to see the letter of credit without raising suspicion; the bet must be large enough to warrant such reassurances, however. The bet must be large enough that the potential payout is roughly 1000 koku or greater; the longest odds the casino offers regularly are 33 to 1, meaning the PCs must have at least 30 koku to bet on such odds before they can easily request to see the letter. (This means doing something entirely random like picking a single number to put the whole bet on in fan tan, picking a specific set of faces to turn up on a Fortunes and Winds roll, etc. Anything that involves skill gets much lower odds – the worst of the duelists in the fighting ring right now is only at 7 to 1, and an unknown duelist, like one of the PCs, would debut at around 3 to 1 at worst, requiring a bet of 330 koku to see the letter of credit. A PC with Glory 6+ and Iaijutsu 5+ would be even odds, with higher ranks of the skill actually tilting to make the PC a favorite.) Making a request to see the letters from Kiwa requires a TN 20 **Etiquette or Lore: Underworld / Awareness** roll, but the asking PC must Raise once for every 2 koku less than the 30 koku minimum they possess for the bet. High Honor characters or characters with reputations and/or Advantages or Disadvantages that make gambling badly out of character for them might also need to make a **Sincerity / Awareness** roll opposed by Kiwa's **Investigation / Perception**, at the GM's discretion. As long as they succeed, Kiwa agrees to show them the letter as a surety on the bet. If they fail, Kiwa becomes offended by the implication that his casino cannot cover its debts and refuses to help further. Once the PCs see the letter, they can either take it and Kiwa into custody (gaining 3 Notoriety), leave without making their bet (gaining 2 Notoriety) or place the bet. If the PCs make the bet, roll 1k1 against TN 18. On a failure, the PCs lose their money; on a success, Kiwa provides them with a letter of credit from Ichiko's accounts to cover their winnings, essentially signed testimony from Ichiko herself (this costs the PCs Honor for gambling either way, as they would lose for a minor breach of etiquette, but earns them a Rank of Glory and +.1 Status at the end

of the adventure for gaining the confession without raising the target's suspicions).

If the PCs locate Ichiko here, she is overseeing an illegal dueling tournament in the fighting ring; rather than only Kolat guards, there is instead one Kakita duelist for every shugenja PC and PC with Simple Action attacks, and enough Kolat thugs so that the total of (duelists + thugs) equals the number of PCs. Ichiko is about one hundred feet from the front door and attempts to flee out of the secret passage at the room's far end, her escape covered by her yojimbo. If the PCs have 7 or more Notoriety, the duelists have been given performance-enhancing drugs that reduce their Wound Penalties to half the usual (rounded down) and grant an extra Rank of Reflexes (for +5 Armor TN and +1k1 Initiative).

Part Six: The Final Stroke

Once the PCs capture Ichiko, they have essentially completed the task given them by Oguri. Her yojimbo, if they survive, openly lie and try to claim responsibility for any and all criminal actions the PCs might try to blame Ichiko for – even beyond the PCs' own testimony, their utter lack of information about the crimes beyond what the PCs tell them gives them the lie, but they defend their claims up to and including issuing challenges to anyone who disagrees. Given the weight of testimony, however, the challenges are meaningless and will be refused by an authority capable of authorizing them, with the shame driving the yojimbo to seppuku. (A PC Emerald Magistrate can make a different choice if they so desire, but should be aware that nothing obligates them to.) Ichiko herself, in her mid 50s but with a still-solid constitution, says nothing, no matter the provocation, but the PCs find Utsuro's prosecution notes on her, linking her directly to the murder of an Emerald Magistrate in addition to her other crimes.

With Ichiko in hand, the PCs have only to return to Face of the East Castle and report to O-Ushi. The journey back is uneventful.

When you reach the gates of Face of the East City, the guards examine your papers carefully, each trying not to look curiously at the bound prisoner traveling with you. Before you can be passed through into the city proper, though, a nikutai comes out of the gatehouse, bowing an acknowledgement to you as she does. "These samurai are to be escorted to Hida-dono at once," she snaps, pointing toward the castle. "Orders from the Champion herself."

One of the guards looks surprised. He asks, "The Champion is here?" looking a bit stupefied.

"I only learned myself this morning," the nikutai replies, "but it doesn't change a thing about your orders, hohei. Get them to her at once!"

The guard leaps to respond, quickly guiding you through the streets to the castle's main entrance. There he hands you off to one of the soldiers, and in another few moments you are in O-Ushi's presence once again.

The Crab Champion listens to your report in silence, nodding occasionally to indicate her understanding of your tale. Her eyes never leave Ichiko's face. When you are finished, she inclines her head slightly in respect. "You've done everything I asked, and returned with the traitor to boot. She'll likely enjoy her cell next to Oguri quite a bit – until she finds she no longer has need of it." She gestures to two of her men, and they escort the white-faced Daidoji merchant out of the room, the door slamming behind them with finality.

"Now then," she goes on, "the next step-" But she is interrupted by the door opening again, and a red-faced and gasping Hiruma bursts into the room, holding out a scrap of rice paper.

"My Champion!" he says, sketching a bow and nearly passing out as a result. "Scouting report, just came in! Highest priority!"

O-Ushi takes the paper at once, scanning it quickly. When she finishes, she looks for a moment at the floor, then her eyes lock with yours. "You. Come with me now. I need you to witness. The rest of you, man the defenses and sound the alarm. The city is under attack."

Even if the PCs are Crab, O-Ushi insists on having them remain separate from the rest of the city's defenders, although she does not explain why. She also does not identify the city's attackers, nor will she accept any offers of aid the PCs might extend. "You will not fight my fight," she says, emphasizing the possessive. "I need you to witness it, and offer testimony later. That is all."

Accordingly, she directs the PCs to the top of the city wall, near the city's western gate. The western gate is at the opposite side of the city from the castle, as only Crab lands are to the west. The possibility of a Shadowlands end-run around the eastern edge of the Wall means that no point of the city is without its defenses or sturdy fortifications, so the spot where O-Ushi positions the PCs is both well-protected and furnished with a wide view of the rice fields surrounding the city. Behind and below them, the streets are filled with running soldiers forming into units and local residents heading for the

presumed safety of the castle itself, while over it all a heavy, bass gong thunders out its warning and call to arms.

Within minutes of your arrival atop the wall, a dark line appears on the horizon, blurred by a dusty haze in the air. Swiftly it resolves itself into mounted samurai, line after line of well-organized cavalry thundering toward the castle. A quick count reveals the approaching army to be in the thousands; only the Unicorn field mounted forces of that size, but the riders either wear the mismatched armor of ronin or the solemn blue and grey of the Crab Clan. At their head is a triangle of three samurai a few lengths in front of the rest; distance renders them anonymous, but the banner carried by one of the three strips that away again.

Hida Yasamura has come to Face of the East Castle.

A murmur goes up from the bushi standing around you as they recognize the banner. In the street below, just behind the sealed city gate, you can see O-Ushi forming her personal guard up at the head of her own forces. Hundreds more Crab bushi fill the streets and alleyways behind them, ready to march through the gate and out onto the field beyond.

Yasamura lifts a war fan, signaling a halt as the cavalry reaches the edge of easy bow range from the castle walls. The bannerman on his left waves the flag to relay the order back to the army, while on his right, the third figure produces a scroll satchel and begins a brief prayer. Suddenly a flickering, translucent image of Yasamura on his horse, taller than the castle wall itself, appears on the grass before the wall. One archer looses a shot out of reflex, but the shaft passes through the image without effect.

“Sons of Hida!” the image booms out, echoing over the city. “Brothers and sisters of the Crab! I am Hida Yasamura! You know me! You know what I have done in the name of the Crab! I have stood on the Wall alongside you! I have lifted my blade next to yours as we fought the Shadow together! I am your brother, born anew in the crucible of the Crab’s burden, the one we alone can bear! You know this! And since you know it, know this too: I am not here today as your enemy!”

“I am here because the Crab have faltered in our duty! Not because our will has weakened – our will is like the Wall itself! Not because our strength has failed – our strength is that of the very mountains! No, my brothers! We have faltered because we have been betrayed! Used, abused, and forgotten by a petty tyrant who usurps our Empress’ throne and forces our

honorable Champion to dance to his tune like a puppet in the hands of a cruel child!

“No more! As of today, my forces have completed the retaking of the Kaiu Wall, freeing the Crab to once more turn ourselves away from political antics and the whims of a madman and refocus on the duty given us by Hantei-kami at the Empire’s dawn! We are true Crab one more! Now I ask you to do as your brothers and sisters on the Wall have done, to set aside your weapons and join us! I have no desire to shed my cousins’ blood! I have no desire to weaken us further, to complete the usurpers work – but I also cannot permit traitors to the Empress and to our sacred duty as Crabs to continue to prosper! I ask you now: open your gates! Let us share rice and sake as the blood-brothers we are! For if you do not, remember well the fate of any who betray the Crab – and know that today is the day that fate finds you!”

The Crab on the walls and in the streets alike look stunned, visibly shaken and uncertain. Only O-Ushi’s expression remains fixed, resolute. She gives the order for the gates to open, marching through them almost before the heavy doors have time to move out of her way. The Hida House Guard follows behind her in perfect order, and if the rest of the army is less certain of itself in the wake of Yasamura’s speech, their steady tread does not betray it.

Overhead, the shimmering figure of Yasamura pales as he sees O-Ushi for the first time. His lips move, and the magnification allows you to read the name “Yoritoko.” O-Ushi herself continues marching out into the center of the field, while behind her the rest of the city defenders form up into lines in front of and on either side of the gate.

About half-way between the wall and Yasamura, O-Ushi comes to a halt. She removes her mempo and lifts her head to speak; her words carry over the field, needing no magical enhancement.

“I am Hida O-Ushi! Champion of the Crab! Daimyo of the Hida! Defender of the Wall! Yes, I know you, Hida Yasamura! I know you are a rebel, proclaimed a traitor by the Imperial Regent, and your death ordained by his command! You have taken up arms against his authority! Slaughtered his agents! Imprisoned his loyal supporters! And you have done all this without my sanction and against my orders! Yes, I know you, Yasamura the Brotherless!”

“And as I know you, I know you are not a coward! And for that alone I will offer you this: meet me here with your blade and receive the death the Regent has

demanded, and when it is done, all will know who the one true Champion of the Crab is!"

The massive image of Yasamura flickers out, leaving you squinting down at the field to see his reaction. There is a long pause before he at last dismounts, handing his reins to the shugenja mounted next to him, and begins to walk slowly, stiffly across the grass toward O-Ushi.

Soon they are only a few paces apart, and what they say to each other then is for them, husband and wife, alone. Whatever it is, it does not take long – a few words, a sentence or two perhaps. No more. Then O-Ushi raises her voice again, and you catch her shout to the shugenja: "I want them to see this."

At this point, the PCs atop the city wall should roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception**, TN 45 – the benefit from the Wary Advantage applies, and should anyone state that they are trying to look anywhere but at the scene between O-Ushi and Yasamura, give them a Free Raise. PCs who succeed spot something odd on a section of the city wall very near the castle itself, most of half a mile away across the city: a lone guard suddenly jerks sideways and then all but flies over the edge of the wall to the ground itself. Immediately afterward, a barely-visible shape in dark blue-grey climbs over the wall at the same spot and moves quickly toward the castle.

While it is a simple matter to share this information with other PCs, getting the attention of random nearby samurai is far more difficult. Attempts to point the distant figure out fail, and most are too focused on the drama outside the castle to even pay attention. If anything is to be done about it, the PCs must be the ones to do so.

In order to reach the castle, the PCs will have to cover roughly three-quarters of a mile, whether they take the longer but clearer route around the city perimeter atop the wall or the "straighter" but more obstacle-laden route through the city proper. Either way will take even fairly swift runners most of five minutes to accomplish.

Reaching the castle as swiftly as possible requires four rolls, each starting at TN 40. PCs with Water 5 or higher gain a Free Raise on these rolls, while PCs with Water 2 or less must Raise once on each roll for no effect. Every successful Raise on a roll reduces the TN of all the remaining rolls by 5, while failing a roll (with or without Raises) increases the TNs of the remaining rolls by 5. If PCs are using some method of movement other than their feet, modify the necessary Skill or Trait rolls, award Raises or apply penalties based on their effective Water, and consider whether the PC might deserve other Free

Raises for being able to circumvent some obstacles (such as perhaps flying over them or traveling through the earth beneath them).

The first roll is **Athletics (Running) / Reflexes**, as the PCs try to push through the dense crowd packed around them to get to an area with more cleared space to run in.

The massive image of Yasamura flickers into existence over the city again, but this time O-Ushi is visible as well, two giants in Crab armor staring at each other across the horizon. Yasamura holds his blade high and angled downward, tip aimed at O-Ushi's belly, while O-Ushi stands in a more traditional stance, facing Yasamura with both hands on her katana hilt for maximum power. The tableau holds for a moment, then the two figures begin to circle. Yasamura's movements are quick, graceful, almost elegant; O-Ushi's steps are slower, deliberate, centered. Neither wears a mempo now, and Yasamura's pale face and O-Ushi's darker grimace are plain to see.

They circle for another moment, then rush toward each other almost as one. They clash together, sparks striking from the blades, and O-Ushi's greater strength at once sends her husband reeling back. He recovers almost immediately, but only his lightning reflexes spare his head as O-Ushi's blade thunders into the ground where he was a half-second before. Yasamura tries a series of feints, attempting to draw O-Ushi out of her stance; her frown deepens as she watches his sword, but then she leaps toward him again, turning to let her armor catch his blade as her own finds a gap along his ribs and draws a line of red that begins to spread over the silk. Yasamura twists away once more, and even as he bleeds his blade slips up behind her guard, catching the tsuba and twisting. The disarm almost works – he tears the blade free of her right hand – but she keeps a grip with her left, and instead uses her now-empty right to deliver an uppercut to Yasamura's jaw, sending him staggering back yet again.

Next, the PCs should roll **Athletics (Running) / Strength**, as they find some open room to begin putting their full effort out into sprinting for the castle.

The two bushi begin to circle again, but this time it is O-Ushi who moves the faster, as Yasamura falls into a defensive stance, guarding his wounded left side. O-Ushi's expression tightens as she shakes her right hand a little before resettling her grip; from the way she holds the blade, Yasamura's disarm attempt might have broken one of her fingers. It doesn't seem to alter the strength with which she holds her katana though, nor pull her from her focus. Now it is O-Ushi who launches

a rapid series of strikes, but Yasamura's rapid parries manage to hold her off, although his counterattacks are almost clumsy by comparison.

Suddenly, in the midst of another attempt to hammer through Yasamura's guard, O-Ushi changes tactics again, turning the full strength of her swing directly into Yasamura's blade. There is a clash like an earthquake, and Yasamura's whole body is twisted around by the force of O-Ushi's swing; she pivots to follow him, turning so they are almost back to back for a split second. In rapid succession, she punches Yasamura in the kidney, hooks her left elbow around his throat, braces her leg behind his knee and hurls him to the ground. There is a cracking sound as she releases him, and Yasamura's left knee refuses to support his weight any further.

The PCs should make another **Athletics (Running) / Strength** roll.

O-Ushi doesn't follow up on her advantage at once, watching with narrow eyes as Yasamura whips out his saya and uses it to lever himself back to his feet. The actions must be agony, but he forces himself upright with surprising speed. Balanced on his one good leg, Yasamura returns O-Ushi's fixed gaze with a stare of his own. Something seems to pass between them, but it's impossible to say what it might have been. Yasamura straightens, and you see death settle into his eyes. O-Ushi readies her blade and waits, while Yasamura tosses aside his saya and takes a few slow breaths.

The moment stretches.

All at once Yasamura moves. As though he has simply forgotten that his leg is broken, he surges forward, putting all his remaining strength into his swing as he cries, "Kanika banzai!" The strike is broad, obvious, easily deflected by even a beginning student.

O-Ushi lowers her blade to the earth.

Yasamura's katana hits her square in the chest, the force of the swing driving straight through her armor. Yasamura's leg gives out then and he pitches forward, driving the blade deeper, the red-covered tip bursting out her back. O-Ushi catches him, steadies him, almost as though she hasn't noticed the sword impaling her. A fleck of red appears at the corner of her mouth, but her voice is loud and carries as she shouts, "All bear witness! The traitor meets her death, and the true Champion of the Crab holds the field!"

Then O-Ushi slumps, slowly, as though kneeling for a meditation. She falls sideways and is still.

The PCs should make one last roll of **Athletics (Running) / Stamina**, to maintain their sprint over the last stretch to the castle.

Yasamura staggers, standing over O-Ushi's body and staring as though he cannot comprehend what has just happened. The image flickers, wavers, almost disappears, as though the shugenja concentrating on it could not maintain focus; it finally steadies, though, revealing Yasamura as he bows deeply, formally, to his fallen Champion and wife. He holds the bow for some time. When he at last straightens, his expression is completely unreadable. "I regret," he says slowly, "that I am unable to perform my Champion's command. I will cleanse my shame that our sons will not bear the stain of my failure." His eyes remain fixed on O-Ushi. "I'm sorry, Yoritoko. Without you, I can't..." He pulls his wakizashi free of its sheath –

If at least one PC went running toward the castle, read that PC this:

The projection suddenly flickers out. As you throw open the castle door, you hear a samurai on the distant wall cry out, "Utz!" There is a thunderous "Banzai!" in response. A second shout begins, but the closing door behind you cuts it off.

Any PCs who did not instead see this:

The projection suddenly flickers out. Seeming tiny now in the distance, you can see Yasamura drive his blade into his stomach, performing the three cuts with determined speed. If he makes a sound, it does not reach your ears.

Suddenly, one of the Hida House Guard in the field below you bellows, "Utz!" And all around you the city walls roar back, "Banzai!"

If the PCs started running toward the castle but none of the runners made the final Athletics roll, they find a scene of slaughter when they reach the dungeon: two Hida guards outside the corridor have their throats cut; inside, the cell doors for Yasuki Oguri and Daidoji Ichiko stand open, and within them the two Kolat agents stare sightlessly toward the heavens. A throwing knife is buried deep in Ichiko's throat, and a second protrudes from Oguri's chest. The body of Doji Arata is slumped against the far wall, next to a small writing table, a knife in his shoulder and a katana slash across his chest. Whatever he might have been writing is gone.

On the other hand, if at least one PC succeeded on the final roll and heads directly for the dungeon, they open the door to find this:

The dungeon is a slaughterhouse. The Hida guards on duty outside the dungeon corridor are dead, their throats cut. Inside, you see Doji Arata, backed up against the opposite wall as he duels desperately with a tall, lightly-built man wearing dark blue-grey clothing and a mask. The cell doors of Yasuki Oguri and Daidoji Ichiko stand open in between, and you can see that each holds the dead body of its former occupant, throwing knives protruding from chest and throat respectively. A similar knife is visible in Arata's shoulder.

Hearing you enter, the assassin spins to face you, drawing another throwing knife from his belt as he does. He readies the throw – and behind him, Arata's blade flashes, taking his head in a clean stroke.

As soon as the assassin dies, Arata slumps backward, almost knocking over the small writing table where he has been collating the results of his interrogations with Oguri. His hands badly shaking, the yoriki pulls the knife from his shoulder and tosses it aside. "Poisoned," he grunts. "Something fast. Can't control my muscles. Getting harder to breathe. Don't... don't... don't think I've got much time."

A **Medicine (Antidotes) / Intelligence** roll, TN 25, can confirm Arata's basic assessment, although the specific poison involved is not one anyone outside the Kolat has ever seen before. The PCs have only a few minutes to act before Arata dies. There are two methods to save him: a successful **Medicine (Antidotes) / Intelligence** roll, TN 35, or the Water spell Peace of the Kami. Note that Arata can only get one Medicine roll in a day – failure on the roll is fatal, if not quite immediately. A PC with Jurojin's Balm can cast it before the Medicine roll is attempted to add +2k0 to the roll.

If the PCs can save him, Arata thanks them graciously, but is deeply upset by his failure to prevent Oguri's and Ichiko's deaths – having killed their killer is little consolation to him. He turns over his notes from his interrogation and vows to pursue the Kolat wherever they might hide.

If, on the other hand, they cannot save him, Arata nods shakily. "Very well," he says through gritted teeth. "But not... not... not like this. Like a samurai should." He chooses one of the PCs – the one who most tried to save him, if possible, then selecting any magistrate, any other Crane, or finally the highest Honor Rank among them –

and continues, "I may not... have strength enough. Will you guide...my hand?"

He indicates the notes on the table and explains what they are, then kneels – falls, really – to the floor, gesturing for the chosen PC to kneel with him. He closes his eyes for a moment, then looks into the face of the PC as he draws his wakizashi and places it near his stomach, drawing the PC's hands to cover his and, with ragged, forced breaths, he speaks his death poem:

Our every breath
Traces our first line, our first draw
To the final stroke

And nods to the PC.

Conclusion

In the aftermath of the duel outside the city, the shugenja, revealed at last as Hida Rohiteki, O-Ushi's cousin, leads the assembled army through the gate and to the castle. Now effectively the Champion – acting regent on behalf of Yasamura and O-Ushi's young twin sons, only aged seven – she announces that the Crab armies will begin to withdraw from the north back to the Wall, pulling the Clan largely out of its political adventurism elsewhere in the Empire. This will take time, and is complicated by the uncertain place of Toturi Daio, the so-called Lost Heir; nonetheless, the new direction of the Clan is clear.

The PCs have Utsuro's notes and possibly Oguri's information as well; together, the documents represent substantial weapons in the fight against the Kolat. It will take some time – weeks for certain, possibly even months – for the Empire's magistrates to make use of the revelations, but the Kolat has suffered a major blow, one from which it might not recover.

If the PCs managed to avoid earning 7 or more Notoriety during the adventure, word reaches the city two days after Rohiteki's entrance that the Daidoji daimyo, Daidoji Uji, survived an attempt on his life from a lone knife-wielding assassin just a few days prior; though still alive, he is badly wounded and has announced his pending retirement as a result. On the other hand, if they did earn 7+ Notoriety during their investigation, the news is worse: Uji is dead, killed by a squad of assassins. Daidoji Ichiko is rumored to have been the front-runner to replace him.

Finally, just before the PCs leave Face of the East Castle, they have a brief meeting with Hida Rohiteki. The young woman, just barely into her twenties, is clearly weighed down by her new responsibilities and new griefs both, but she thanks the PCs for their efforts on O-Ushi's

part and asks them to spread the word to the rest of the Empire of how O-Ushi and Yasamura died, as O-Ushi commanded.

“Also,” she says slowly, frowning, “there is one other thing I wanted to tell you. When the eta came to clean up the bodies in the dungeon, they found something under Oguri’s corpse. A word, written in his own blood before he died. It was... ‘Oharu.’ I don’t know what he meant by it, but I thought you might want to know.”

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
Gained Evidence against Ichiko:	+1XP
Captured or Killed Ichiko:	+1XP

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Honor

Capturing Ichiko gains the PCs 2 points of Honor (4 points if their Honor is 3 or less, and no points if their Honor is 9 or 10).

Glory

Apart from any losses incurred during the module, there is neither any gain or loss for this module; the death of the Crab Champion distracts the Empire from noticing the PCs’ actions.

Other Awards/Penalties

PCs who capture Ichiko gain a Crab Clan Favor.

If he survived, the PCs gain Doji Arata as an Ally (Influence 2/Devotion 4).

If Daidoji Uji survived, the PCs gain a Crane Clan Favor.

GM Reporting

Did the PCs investigate The Kami’s Respite?

Did the PCs investigate Fushigi no Ichiba?

Did the PCs investigate Ushi no Chichi?

Where was Ichiko confronted at?

Did Arata survive?

GM must report this information BEFORE (6/12/2015) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

Daidoji Shashu

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 3
 Reflexes 5 Agility 4
 Honor 7.1 Status 3.0 Glory 1.7
Initiative: 8k5 **Attack:** 10k4e (Attack Stance, katana, Simple) or 10k6e (Attack Stance, yumi, Complex)
Armor TN: 35 (Light Armor) **Damage:** 7k2 (katana) or 5k3 (yumi with fleshcutters)

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 18: +0; 27: +0; 36: +2; 45: +7; 54: +12; 63: +17; 72: Down; 81: Dead

School/Rank: Daidoji Iron Warrior 3

Techniques: *The Force of Honor:* Add 3 Wounds at each 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: May make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while in the Attack Stance.

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 3, Iaijutsu 4, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 6

Advantages: Strength of the Earth

Daidoji Kikori

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 3
 Willpower 4 Agility 4 Strength 5
 Honor 7.0 Status 3.0 Glory 1.9
Initiative: 6k3 **Attack:** 10k5e-5 (Ono, Attack Stance, Simple)
Armor TN: 30 (Heavy Armor) **Damage:** 6k4m (Ono)

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 18 (+0), 27 (+3), 36 (+5), 45 (+10), 54 (+15), 63 (+20), 72 (Down, +40), 81 (Dead)

School/Rank: Daidoji Iron Warrior 3

Techniques: *The Force of Honor:* Gain a bonus of your Honor Rank (rounded down) minus 4 to Wounds at each

Wound Rank, to a minimum bonus of one. +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: May make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while in the Attack Stance.

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 4, Iaijutsu 3, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Kyujutsu 2, Heavy Weapons (Ono) 7

Mastery Abilities: Free Raise on Knockdown with Heavy Weapons, 9s explode on damage with Heavy Weapons

Advantages: Large, Paragon of Courage

Kakita Duelists

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 3 Void 4
 Reflexes 5
 Honor 4.5 Status 3.0 Glory 4.5
Initiative: 9k5+12 **Attack:** 10k4 (Katana, Simple), 10k5 if against slower opponent
Armor TN: 35 (Light Armor) **Damage:** 7k2 (katana)

Reduction: 3

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

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 4

Techniques: *The Way of the Crane:* +6 Initiative. +1k1+4 to attack and Focus rolls while assuming the Center Stance. This bonus also applies during the Combat Round following one in which assumed the Center Stance.

Speed of Lightning: +2k0 to attack rolls against those with lower Initiative.

First and Last Strike: May Strike first in a duel if wins the Iaijutsu/Void roll by a difference of 3 or higher. Gains a Free Raise on Strike for each additional margin of 3 instead of 5.

One Strike, Two Cuts: Simple Action Attack with Samurai weapons

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle (Mass Battle) 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu (Focus) 6, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Kyujutsu 3, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 2

Advantages: Quick

Kolat Thugs

Air 2 Earth 2 Fire 2 Water 2 Void 2
Reflexes 3 Stamina 4 Agility 4 Strength 4
Honor 2.8 Status 0 Infamy 0

Initiative: 4k3 **Attack:** 9k4 (parangu,
Complex)

Armor TN: 20 **Damage:** 8k2
(parangu; broken if it
does 30+ Wounds in
one attack)

Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+0), 18 (+2), 22 (+7), 26
(+12), 30 (+17), 34 (Down, +37), 38
(Dead)

School/Rank: none/Insight Rank 1

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 1, Games:
Fortunes and Winds 1, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3,
Jiu-jutsu 5, Kenjutsu 5, Knives 3, Lore: Underworld 3,
Stealth 4

Advantages: Large, Strength of the Earth