# Blood and Steel

# A One-Round Mid/High-Rank Adventure for

# Heroes of Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido

# Month of the Moon, 1144 (Spring)

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When blood challenges blood, what will become of the Kakita Family? And what does their fate foretell about the Empire’s future?

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

# GM's Information

**THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!**

Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

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

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

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

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

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

* Family name precedes personal name for all characters; Akodo Toturi was a member of the Akodo family with the personal name of Toturi.
* Samurai do not commonly concern themselves with money or commerce; exchanges between samurai are treated as gifts, and payments are made to peasants as though humoring the lower orders petty ways.
* An event is not truly considered to have happened without samurai witness; even criminal investigations rely entirely upon eyewitness testimony.

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

**Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties**

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

Reminder

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

## Adjusting for Party Strength

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

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

**Low End Party** (most/all characters Rank Three, or all characters are Rank Four or lower and there are no shugenja at the table): Reduce the TN of the Social Rolls in Part Three by 10. There is only one Kakita House Guard in the final encounter, and none of the mind-controlled Crane will spend Void. Reduce the Elemental Terror’s Wounds to 20/40/60/80 and count all of Kakita Kyruko’s Void as spent before the combat.

**High End Party** (most/all characters Rank Five, or all characters are Rank Four or higher and there is more than one shugenja at the table): Increase the TN of all Social Rolls in Part Three by 10. Add a third Kakita House Guard in the final encounter, and increase all of the Crane bushi’s Reflexes by 1 (giving them +1k1 Initiative and +5 Armor TN). Increase Kakita Kyruko’s Earth to 5, giving her 95 Wounds total. The Elemental Terror of Water may initiate Grapples as a Simple Action, and may hold two PCs at one in this fashion.

# Adventure Summary and Background

Shinjo Yurei is a newly appointed Emerald Magistrate; though his exploits are rather well known throughout the Empire, having been near or around many prominent events, little is known about him personally. Due to the political maneuvers over the winter, he was granted his position by Kakita Toshiken with the specific mandate to enforce the Emerald Champion’s edict that Returned Spirits undergo the ritual that will sever their connection to the Spirit Realms. If they refuse, Yurei is authorized to arrest the individual and present them before Toshiken and Tsudao for judgement as standing in violation of an Imperial decree. If they resist, they are considered criminals due to Rokugan’s harsh justice system, and face the appropriate penalties. Yurei, who is quite prejudiced against spirits, has permanently dealt with more than a few recalcitrant samurai over the last few months, but has come across a bit of a problem with his next target. Kakita Takezo, the Master Sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy as well as Returned Spirit, has refused to see Yurei and has refused to undergo the ritual. Yurei has asked for the PCs’ assistance – since they are samurai of distinction, their arrival will help force Takezo to at least meet with the group.

In addition to the political issues the PCs are being asked to assist with, strange things are going on at the Dueling Academy, and part of the adventure will entail the PCs helping to discover what is amiss just as its too late to avert. They will also come into the presence of several very, very powerful nemuranai artifacts during this adventure, as well as be exposed to several different aspects of family and what it means to have a family in the world of Rokugan.

# Character Notes

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

* **PCS WHO ARE RETURNED SPIRITS CANNOT PLAY THIS MODULE UNLESS THEY CHOOSE TO UNDERGO THE RITUAL IMMEDIATELY.** If a PC doesn’t undergo the ritual, they cannot play. (The text of the spell is included in Appendix #2.)
* Any PC with a Nemuranai, Sacred Weapon, or other special equipment (this includes Kakita Blades, Hellrazer, Kaiu Armor, The Katana of Fire, etc.)
* Any PCs who are sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy or who are Kakita bushi-trained under Takezo.

**Introduction**

The PCs’ daimyo have received word that a newly appointed Emerald Magistrate, Shinjo Yurei, has requested their presence at Shiro Shinjo to assist him with a delicate matter. (As Yurei is a PC in the campaign, the characters may already be somewhat acquainted with him.) The PCs are all samurai of distinction in some way, and though there are no specifics on why Yurei has asked for their help, it should not be the first time they have given aid to an Emerald Magistrate. PCs who are affiliated with Hantei Okucheo or are members of the Owls, they have been sent specifically to spy on Yurei and to report back his activity. They are asked to meet with Yurei at Shiro Shinjo on the first day of the Month of the Moon,and to be prepared for traveling for two to three weeks.

***As you crest a hill, you can see the castle of Shiro Shinjo, stronghold of the Shinjo Family, across the vast, lush green plains of the Unicorn Clan. The weather is pleasant and your journey up to this point has been completely without incident. The sound of a horn echoes on the spring air, and a trio of Unicorn samurai bearing a flag of the Shinjo family ride towards you. As they halt, you can clearly see their badges of office proclaiming them to be magistrates; the one in the lead gives you a polite nod. “Greetings, honored guests of the Unicorn Clan. What brings you to the lands of the Shinjo family on this day?”***

One of the younger Unicorn approaches the PCs to examine their travel papers while his superior speaks with them. When they realize who the group is here to see (either from reading the travel papers signed by Yurei or through discussion), the magistrates give each other somewhat incredulous looks and laugh harshly.

***“Oh, you’ve come to see YUREI-san... how delightful. Please, honored guests, allow us to escort you the rest of the way to Shiro Shinjo, and we can give you a brief tour of our lands, including those of the HONORABLE Yurei-san... it would be our honor.”***

The PCs are really not in a position to say no, and so they are escorted through some of the surrounding fiefs and households, all of them in excellent condition, and showing signs of care and prosperity. All but one, that is…

***The ride through the lands around Shiro Shinjo is pleasant, and both the wealth of the Unicorn and their compassion toward those of lower status is obvious; peasants are smiling and happy, houses are well-kept and tended to – it’s all very idyllic, until you reach one estate that is nothing like the others. Largely isolated from the other properties by a line of hills and an unusual stand of trees, you come upon a field that has not been tended in a long time. The grass is dead and dying all around it, and in the center sits the ruins of what was once a several-story samurai home. Years have obviously passed since some raging inferno claimed the building, but charred wood and crumbled stones are all that remain in a rough square shape in the middle of the fields. A scrap of cloth that was once a family banner whips in the wind, whatever mon it once bore long faded in the sun. At the center of the rubble, displayed in a clear area, you see a samurai’s katana, blade snapped near the hilt. Rust dulls the steel, and the rotten silk of the wrappings show it has been left here since whatever calamity befell the house.***

***The three magistrates stop their steeds and turn to face you all. “See how the honorable Yurei maintains his family's lands – such fine condition indeed! He brings such* honor *and* glory *to the Shinjo name! You need only look on his soul to understand the true caliber of the man you are meeting.”***

This should be relatively awkward and uncomfortable for the PCs – even if Yurei is an Emerald Magistrate, the Shinjo are clearly mocking him; a broken sword is a horrible taboo in Rokugan (there is no skill roll needed for the PCs to understand that this is something that usually results in the samurai with the broken sword committing seppuku), and the lands given to his family by his lord have been left in ruin and to rot. Nothing they say is untrue (even if they’re doing it in an insulting and sarcastic manner), but it should be patently obvious how he is viewed by the rest of his family.

If the PCs ask about what they are seeing, the magistrates will tell them the following: ***“Yurei-san’s father Katakuro was a member of the Shinjo House Guard and served Shinjo Yokatsu directly.” On the name of the fallen Unicorn Clan Champion, one of the magistrates spits into the dirt; the leader continues as though nothing happened. “Katakuro was killed by our Lady Shinjo when she returned from the Burning Sands and revealed that several members of the Unicorn were working not for the Clan’s benefit, but for their own. Yurei-san’s mother, Akane, committed jigai just a few days later. This all took place shortly before Yurei’s gempukku.”***

Interested PCs may roll **Lore: History / Intelligence** (TN 35)or **Lore: Unicorn Clan / Intelligence** (TN 25) to recall that during the War against the Lying Darkness, the Kami Shinjo did return from the Burning Sands, and not only executed several members of the Shinjo family, but also stripped them of control of the Clan and placed it in the hands of the Moto, who traveled with Shinjo from the Burning Sands to Rokugan.

If any PCs ask what happened to Yurei after all this, they will be told the following: ***“Yurei-san was still a child at the time and had not taken his name; given the dark times our Empire faced, he was allowed to complete his training at the Shinjo Bushi school. A few days later, he, along with that wretched mutt his father left behind, left Unicorn lands, and what you see here is how he thanked us for allowing him to live in the face of his father’s treachery.”***

If the PCs ask about the “mutt”, the Shinjo magistrate will huff. ***“A war dog. The Unicorn Clan uses them, but they’re not the kind of animals you keep as house pets. Yurei’s father did, however, and I guess you can say Yurei had at least one friend that smelled as bad as he did!”***

It should be clear to the players by now that Yurei is a ‘Black Sheep’ of the Shinjo family, and is allowed to live only by the narrowest of threads; it’s one of the reasons he has always offered to take dangerous missions or assignments that take him far away from home. He’s had to seek out others to train him further in the Shinjo Bushi School, and his reputation amongst most of the family has never changed. Yurei is one of the last reminders to them of their fall from grace as leaders of the Unicorn, and they take it out on Yurei whenever they can. Once the PCs are done with the “tour” of Yurei’s lands, they are led to the city surrounding Shiro Shinjo.

**Part One: The Burden of Family**

***After the ‘tour’, you are escorted to the city surrounding Shiro Shinjo itself. While not as big as Otosan Uchi, the community around the seat of the Shinjo family is an impressive bustle of merchants, samurai, and peasants, all seemingly in a good mood as they go about the business of the day. As fits the quasi-nomadic lifestyle of the Unicorn, most of the residents seem to live out of tents, while the permanent buildings all show signs of gaijin influence in their architecture. The magistrates thank you for coming to visit the Shinjo, and direct you to the easiest way to reach the castle proper, where you are expected to introduce yourselves to the local lord. There, you find that your arrival was expected, and the servants inform you that you will be met with soon. You’re given an hour to wash and change as you deem appropriate.***

***After roughly twenty minutes, the laughter of children interrupts what is otherwise a very quiet wait, and a small kemari ball comes rolling out from one of the side chambers. Two sturdy boys in dark blue tumble after it, laughing and rough-housing. They stop cold when they see you, eyes wide like they’d just done something wrong. “We’re... we’re sorry samurai-sans... Jiro and I were just playing...” The other looks down and mumbles something likely meant to be: “…we didn’t mean to disturb you.”***

The PCs may roll **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** (TN 50) or **Lore: Crab Clan / Intelligence** (TN 30). Success allows them to recognize Hida Taro and Jiro, the twin sons of the late Crab Clan Champion Hida O-Ushi. PCs who played *SoB24: The Perfect Weapon* may remember them with a simple **Intelligence** roll (TN 25).

The boys are shy, and have been lectured that they aren’t supposed to let people know that they’re there. They will look around awkwardly for a few moments before a voice interrupts the silence.

***“Taro-san, Jiro-san, don’t be rude – introduce yourselves.” A stern young man in the colors of the Shinjo family steps out from the doors to the audience chamber, and bows politely. The two boys look at each other and bow very low and abruptly, trying to show proper etiquette. “I am Taro,” says the smaller boy. “And I am Jiro,” mutters the larger one. “We are honored to meet such esteemed guests of the Unicorn” they chorus in unison, before an Ide comes out and motions them off into the side room they came from. They both smile and wave as they leave, and the Shinjo shakes his head as he steps forward. “My apologies for keeping you waiting. I am Shinjo Shono. Welcome to my home. Please, come in” he says, motioning to the audience chamber.***

There is a small table in the center of the room, and Shono sits, motioning for the PCs to also do so. A few seconds later, several servants bring in tea and small treats and snacks. Shono will apologize again for keeping the PCs waiting, and welcome them to Shiro Shinjo.

***“I had been informed that you would be arriving, honorable guests. We have many visitors here at Shiro Shinjo, but not normally so many samurai of distinction and note at the same time, let alone from different clans. I assume that you are here at the request of… Yurei-san.” You don’t need to have any courtier training to realize that Shono says Yurei’s name with some mixed emotion and hesitation.***

The PCs may have encountered Shinjo Shono in previous modules (*SoB31: Fan and Sword* or *SoB54: March Beyond Hope*), but will find that he will prefer to speak with them as a proper samurai host – he will recall speaking with them at Kakita Toshiken’s wedding, for example, but will coolly ignore any reference to his brother Yasamura’s actions.

The PCs are being treated to tea by a family daimyo, due to their Glory and standing. He does, however, have an ulterior motive, which the PCs may pick up on if they are specifically paying attention to Shono (requiring the players to ask) and succeed at a **Courtier / Awareness** (TN 30) roll: having heard of their deeds, Shono is interested in learning more about the PCs in the hopes that they will be useful to him in dealing with his own enemies in the future.

The PCs do have the opportunity to ask Shono certain questions. (More specific answers may require contacting the Campaign Admin for resolution; it should be remembered that this module takes place before “Dark Secrets” or “City of the Lost” so information or events that come to light in those modules cannot reasonably be spoken about.)

If the PCs ask why they are there, Shono avoids the topic slightly: ***“I wished to speak with you myself; it is rare that samurai of your reputation come through the Shinjo lands. I do not know why Yurei-san has summoned you, other than that is has something to do with Imperial matters largely outside of my interest.”***

If asked about Yurei, Shono will relate the same story that the magistrates did, though with somewhat more impartiality. ***“I can sympathize with him, to a certain extent – I, too, am plagued by the deeds of my father, and I understand the anger he has. I have no patience with his outburst, however, and his failure to tend to his responsibilities has not earned him any favor in the family. Small wonder he turned elsewhere to advance his career. Take some care, samurai, that you do not let his opinions lead you astray.”***

Being asked about the young boys causes Shono to be somewhat cautious. ***“My nephews are good lads, for the most part. Overly energetic, sometimes. They are here while things are settled in the Crab lands. Taro will be the Champion of the Crab one day – almost a pity, he has his father’s aptitude for riding. I could turn him into a terror on horseback, given a few years’ training.”*** (Some care should be taken by the GM to avoid spoiling the events of *SoB60: Poisoned Thread* for players who have not played that module, though Shono is willing to talk around the issue – he is somewhat in mourning still himself.)

If the PCs are curious about the Shinjo family taking part in Yasamura’s rebellion in the Crab lands, Shono will make a token effort to speak around it. ***“The Unicorn are not interested in interfering in any internal matters of the Crab, obviously. Personally, quite a few of my troops are on extended training deployment, which would prevent me from officially being able to send them anywhere.”*** PCs who want confirmation that he is unofficially lending aid to the Crab may roll **Investigation / Awareness** (TN 25) to get it.

Questions about the Kolat are met with a cool, ***“There are subjects I do not wish to speak about under this roof, samurai.”*** He is unrelenting on this matter – seeking to press the issue will earn a flat stare. Trying to convince him that they are enemies of the Kolat themselves requires a **Sincerity / Awareness** roll – the PC uses either the Honesty or Deceit Emphasis, based on their own agenda, but the TN for honest PCs is 30 and 50 for less-than upfront ones. Success causes him to relent, to the extent of promising to discuss it another time. ***“I will not discuss the matter here, in this place, but I will not always be here. When I do not have to care for my nephews, perhaps I will find an opportunity to speak with you another day.”*** This earns the PC Ally: Shinjo Shono (Devotion 1/Influence 3). Failure, on the other hand, gets a longer, if final speech: ***“Since you wish me to be blunt, I will: I do not know you. I do not trust you. If, in the future, I discover we share an enemy, I may wish to work with you. If I discover you are allied with them, I will kill you without a second thought. I trust that makes my feelings plain?”*** At this point, he will depart; PCs who were trying to lie to him will have earned him as a 6-point Sworn Enemy.

If the PCs have other questions, the GM should do their best to answer as Shono would. He is, on the whole, a fairly paranoid man, unwilling to take too many risks with his trust and absolutely devoted to his family – all traits that make him a good guardian for his nephews.

With tea and their announcements to the local lord made, the PCs are free to go about settling in and preparing for their meeting Shinjo Yurei.

Meeting with Shinjo Yurei

The PCs are to meet with Yurei at the Inn of the Unsung Song, a popular and very large inn that is crawling with all manner of samurai and merchants. The PCs have the afternoon to prepare, and can go shopping, explore the city, or talk with the patrons of the inn to gather information.

Rumors

Gathering information requires a **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll, TN 10; a successful roll learns one rumor at random, plus one extra rumor for every 5 points by which the roll beats the TN. (Unicorn PCs receive a Free Raise for this roll.) The rumors include:

* The last month’s events in the Crab lands have left them in a state of confusion and disorder. [See *SoB60: Poisoned Thread*] There is talk that the Unicorn will make some move to assist their neighbors to the south, as the Khan has always had a great deal of respect for the Crab and their duty.
* The Army of the Black Lion continues to build at Toshi Ranbo, having taken the city from the Lion at the end of fall last year. Both the Emerald Champion and Imperial Regent have issued proclamations declaring him an attempted usurper.
* 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 border the Unicorn share with the Lion has been relatively quiet of late, indicating that the Lion’s attentions are elsewhere. The feud between the Lion and Crane has been in sharp focus due to last year’s fighting over Toshi Ranbo, but the Mantis Clan has also recently delivered serious insults to the Lion and the lands of the Tsuruchi are within easy reach of Shiro Matsu.
* 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.
* It has been discovered that a large group of Moto from the Burning Sands have been forming raiding parties for the last few years. Shinjo Shirasu, a high-ranked Emerald Magistrate, tracked down their leaders and delivered them to the Khan for justice. This has made the local Shinjo samurai somewhat smug, as it proves the Moto are not the perfect leaders they claim.
* The Unicorn Clan’s trade with the Dragon to the east has been very profitable of late; between the clans’ military alliance during the summer and the Dragon providing a good market for grains, relations between the two clans are better than they have been in centuries.

If the PCs ask specifically about gathering information on Yurei, they can learn the following by rolling **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** and gain information as below. (PCs who have actual ranks in the Lore: Kolat Skill may substitute that, but ranks from the Sage Advantage or other mechanics do not count.)

* **10:** Shinjo Yurei was given his position as an Emerald Magistrate over the winter. Obviously a political appointment, as he did not serve as an Emerald Yoriki, it is speculated that his bias against Returned Spirits has something to do with the Emerald Champion’s decision.
* **20:** Despite being a bushi, Shinjo Yurei is something of a scholar of nemuranai, and is considered one of the leading authorities on the topic in the Empire. His interest in the topic seems to stem from early in his career, when he served as one of the escort of the late Empress at her funeral.
* **25**: Yurei’s father was one of several Shinjo accused of being a traitor to the Empire; while it is not spoken of very frequently outside the Shinjo family itself, there is speculation that the Kami Shinjo may have been purging those who were members of the Kolat organization from the clan.
* **30:** Yurei’s previous appointment was as an Imperial Cartographer, one of the few non-Imperial samurai to served in that post. He’s traveled a large swath of the Empire in the last few years updating the maps for the Imperial archives.
* **35:**  (Lore: Kolat only) Shinjo Yurei is very well-connected, and frequently seen around events where the Kolat has been particularly overt in its actions. In each of these cases, he has been instrumental in causing those Kolat agents whose actions gained attention to be brought to justice.
* **40:** Yurei went to the Imperial City about six months ago, supposedly, on the invitation of Hantei Okucheo himself. Yurei was not seen in Unicorn lands again until spring, when he arrived at Shiro Shinjo wearing an eyepatch, and walking with a limp.

***Near sundown, you are approached by a small peasant, who bows deeply and recites a message. “Honorable samurai-sama, your presence is humbly requested in the back room with Yurei-sama.” You are led through the Inn of the Unsung Song, where sitting at a table is a man some of you may recognize. He is of lean build, his hair kept in a loose topknot, and wearing an eyepatch over his right eye. He smiles, stands slowly, and offers a polite bow. “Greetings, samurai. Thank you for accepting my request for your presence. Please,” he says, motioning to the table in front of him, which is already filled with dinner and tea. “Join me, and let us share a meal together.” Yurei has a bit of trouble sitting back down again, clearly favoring one of his legs.***

This is Shinjo Yurei, a PC in the campaign. He will be pleasant enough over dinner, engaging in small talk like asking the PCs how their journey was to Shiro Shinjo or asking what activities they’ve been up to recently. The PCs may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** (TN 20)to recognize that it does not appear that Yurei has slept in a few days. If anyone asks, he will smile and nod, saying that ***“I hold many duties to many lords now, and sometimes getting everything done takes more hours than are in a day”*.** This is not a lie, but it’s clear that Yurei does not wish to get into specifics. Once dinner is concluded, Yurei will clear his throat.

***“I want to thank you again for coming, friends. I have a matter of some delicacy that requires your assistance. You see, I was appointed an Emerald Magistrate this past winter, but Toshiken-sama gave me an additional charge above and beyond the standard duties of the office. As I’m sure you are at least partially aware, a ritual has been discovered that severs the connection a Returned Spirit has to the realm that they were a part of before returning through Oblivion’s Gate. Toshiken-sama, speaking for our Empress Tsudao-sama, declared that all Returned Spirits were to undergo this ritual, to help restore balance to Ningen-do. Toshiken-sama has charged me with enforcing this decree, and I have been doing so for the past several weeks.***

***“There are many in our Empire who have chosen to ignore Tsudao-sama’s decree, and getting to them all takes time. Working with the Offices of the Emerald Magistrates, I have written up a list of sorts. My efforts have come to a halt, though, because of Kakita Takezo, the sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy. He himself is a Returned Spirit, and has chosen not to undergo the ritual. My next step is to offer him one last chance to undergo the ritual, bearing my writ of authority. If he refuses, then he will be in violation of the Empress’ decree; the only option would be to place him under arrest, take him to the Castle of the Swift Sword to be presented before Toshiken and Tsudao for punishment. I can hope it won’t come to that, but there is a problem… which is where you come in.”***

***“Despite my many written requests for an audience, he has fairly blatantly refused to see me. You are samurai of distinction, and your merits and deeds speak for themselves; as a group, you will be impossible for even him to ignore. I’ve asked for your assistance to try and plead with Takezo-sama to make the correct choice, and cut his connection to the Spirit Realms. If he continues to refuse, then you will all serve as witnesses that he is in violation of Imperial Decree, and can assist me in his arrest when I arrive. Due to his prominence within the Crane Clan, this matter is somewhat delicate, which is why I require samurai such as yourselves.”***

If any of the PCs are Crane or are Kakita-trained, Yurei will look at them and add the following: ***“I understand that you may feel a conflict of interest here – but your familiarity with Takezo may aid in this. While I do not mean to imply anything other than what is true, the sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy ignoring a decree by the Empress has ramifications for not only the Kakita family, but the Crane Clan as well.”***

This is an opportunity for the PCs to ask questions about the trip, about Takezo, or anything else they’d want to know. They will be leaving in the morning, and Yurei has arranged for horses for those that do not have any.

* You said “when you arrive”? Won’t you be traveling with us? ***“I think, since he has directly refused me already, you will have greater success at speaking with him without my presence. I have another errand to attend to on the way; I should only be a day, two at the most, behind you.”*** Questions about the errand will be brushed aside with, ***“It is a personal matter, but one I can’t wait on.”***
* Who exactly is Kakita Takezo? ***“The Master of the Kakita Dueling Academy. Arguably one of the greatest duelists in the Empire, and the head instructor of the Kakita Bushi School. He mostly avoids politics, though he has made some unfortunate statements indicating support of Toturi Daio, the Black Lion. I understand that he was the Master in his own time, and when Kakita Kaiten performed the three cuts after the death of the Empress, Takezo was the logical choice to take his place as the current Master. I met him once, years ago, and though he seemed honorable enough, he has still refused to speak with me.”***
* What Realm did Takezo spend his afterlife in? ***“I have no way to know that, nor does the question have any real meaning. All of the Returned Spirits carry the same curse, and all of them need to be made safe for the good of the Empire.”***
* Where is Takezo now? ***“As the head sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy, he should be found close to it. My reports indicate that he is at Shiro sano Kakita, in attendance on the court of the Kakita family daimyo. Kakita Yoshi-sama was himself a returned spirit, but underwent the ritual last winter; I do not know why his vassal has chosen otherwise.”***
* Why should Takezo go through the ritual? ***“Aside from the fact that it is an Imperial Decree, my understanding is that the returned spirits have caused severe imbalances in the natural world as a side effect of their return. That the Empress allows them to remain in the Empire through this method is a testament to her mercy and this offer should not be spat on.”*** (If there are any Owl PCs, or others loyal to the Imperial Regent, Yurei will stare at them while delivering the following:) ***“Even Okucheo recognizes that his position comes from the Empress. Some day soon he, too, will recognize the necessity.”*** His hostility toward the Imperial Regent should be fairly obvious, particularly if the PC(s) are confrontational on the issue.

With their meeting concluded, and of course, assuming they all agree to assist him, Yurei will inform the PCs that they will be leaving in the morning, heading straight for Shiro sano Kakita, and that he will be meeting them there after taking a different route to take care of a few things. The PCs are free to mix and mingle for the evening, gathering more rumors if they’d like. Refusal to assist Yurei in his task will result in the PC being unable to continue playing the module – if they will not change their mind, they will be granted two experience and be out of the rest of the adventure.

Yurei will excuse himself from the inn, stating he has some business to attend to. He will not return until very early in the morning, and if a PC attempts to follow him, they will lose him near the peasant district. Yurei is meeting with a contact, and on his way back to the inn that evening, will be accosted and beaten by several Unicorn who want to make it clear that his shame and his status with the Shinjo is still well remembered.

The next morning, the PCs wake up and find that Yurei has all the necessary travel arrangements made, and breakfast is awaiting them. There is no need to make any kind of roll: they can all tell that Yurei did not sleep the previous evening. His face is rough and he walks a bit slower than he normally does. It’s obvious to anyone that’s ever been in a fight that Yurei got beaten up last night, though he says nothing regarding this unless a PC asks him directly. ***“Ah… someone in the Shinjo always seems to enjoy reminding me of my status within my own family. It’s nothing, really… just part of who I am. Though…” he says as he wipes his nose off a bit, “they didn’t kick quite as hard last time.”***

As the PCs mount their horses to leave, Yurei does the same. If is obvious at this point that he has no katana with him – only his wakizashi and bow.

**Part Two: Rising Terror**

It will take the PCs about two weeks to make their way from Shinjo lands all the way to Shiro sano Kakita. Passing through the Lion lands on the way, the PCs will be under close scrutiny from the local samurai, their papers examined very thoroughly, particularly as they approach the Lion/Crane border. Suspicious players may roll **Battle / Perception** (TN 40) to note signs of military build-up along the border with the Crane. Success with a 60 or more will tell them that an attack is likely immanent, based on the nature of the patrols and the type of forces in the area.

The weather holds fairly clear, with only a few normal spring showers to cool the air, until the last few days of the journey. Once crossing the Lion/Crane border, the group is deluged by a severe rainstorm. Though their route has taken them under the sheltering branches of a thick forest, this slows their progress towards the castle significantly, adding an entire extra day of travel. It is not yet severe enough that it becomes dangerous to travel, though the road is not pleasant. The PCs must take specific care to protect any paper goods or they are completely destroyed (including spell scrolls), and their clothes are saturated with water.

If any PC specifically asks to make a Divination roll (or another appropriate Lore Skill), the TN is 40. Success will tell them that the storms are both out of proportion for the season, and heavier and darker than usual. This is the kind of portent or omen that the Heavens are angry, or that something terrible will happen in a place where the rain is falling.

***Your journey to Crane lands certainly could have gone better. There were reports of heavy rainfall, but it has turned out to be unseasonably bad. The skies have been dark even in the middle of the day with ominous clouds, and the rainfall has been constant. Though there is little in the way of thunder or lightning, the rain has been heavy enough that many of the roads are washed out, which has made your journey take longer than you’d like. Eventually, however, you see a dim glow surrounding your destination – Shiro sano Kakita, seat of the Kakita family. The Crane, ever hospitable, allow you to at least get under a pavilion set up outside the gates before asking for your papers and why you are here.***

The Crane at Shiro sano Kakita have been expecting Yurei’s return for some time, but the presence of the PCs surprises them; since Yurei has not arrived yet, the Crane are caught off guard. A guard requests their travel papers, and upon seeing that they are from Shinjo Yurei, departs briefly, leaving the PCs in the pouring rain for several minutes. When he returns, he bows low, and asks for them to follow him inside. Waiting to meet the PCs is none other than an extremely well-dressed and handsome man, who bows low under the cover provided by a pair of servants holding umbrellas: Kakita Yoshi, daimyo of the Kakita family. ***“Greetings, travelers, and welcome to Shiro sano Kakita. I apologize that we did not have more of a welcome prepared, but given the recent storms, you can see how we might not be expecting visitors. What brings you here this dreary day?”***

Kakita Yoshi is tall and elegant, the epitome of a Crane courtier, from his immaculate kimono to his white-dyed hair, and he carries himself with a great deal of dignity while always, *always*, showing the utmost courtesy. Upon hearing that the PCs are here to assist Shinjo Yurei, Yoshi nods. ***“Ah, yes. We were wondering when Yurei-san would return. I presume he will be arriving shortly behind you, so we’ll prepare a room for him. Please, make yourselves at home Dinner will be served in your rooms after you’ve had a chance to change.”*** He gestures, and more servants scurry up with umbrellas to shelter the PCs as they walk across the courtyard.

Yoshi will politely excuse himself and the PCs will be shown to their rooms. If any PC is curious, and asks why they’re having dinner in their rooms instead of with each other and their hosts, they may roll **Etiquette / Intelligence** (TN 25) to know that, while not exactly rude, it is very strange, and extremely strange for the Crane to do such a thing. This is normally something that happens when the hosts wish to keep their guests pre-occupied or ‘out of the way’ of internal matters so that they can avoid any scandal or interference. It also has the subtle implication (but again, not explicit) that they are being asked to stay in their rooms until after dinner.

The PCs are now officially guests in one of the greatest castles of the Empire. They will be allowed to carry their daisho, though wearing it on the right of their body is the most appropriate. (PCs who do not place it on the right will lose a point of Honor, two if their Honor Rank is 7 or higher.) It is even more appropriate to leave their swords at the gate (doing so gives all PCs one point of Honor, two if their Honor Rank is 6 or less). Needless to say, wearing armor or carrying any other weapons is a Major Breach of Etiquette, causing the gain of half a Rank of Infamy as well as an Honor loss as per the chart on page 91 in the main book.

Throughout the course of their stay in the castle, the PCs will notice something very odd: there are almost no other non-Crane samurai here. Of the locals, the castle appears to only have guards. The courtiers, artisans, politicians, and performers one should expect at the court of the Kakita (renowned for their artistic prowess and pride in it) are nowhere to be seen. This should be a strange experience for the PCs – a largely empty castle, especially one as impressive and important as the Kakita family home, should put them on edge.

Assuming the PCs stay in their rooms, they are provided with hot baths and dinner is served to them with no interruptions. It’s a meal of the quality that they’d expect from being hosted by the Kakita family. After about an hour, a servant comes to collect the dishes, and informs the PCs that Kakita Yoshi would like to meet with them for evening tea. Skip to the next section, ‘Evening Tea with Kakita Yoshi’.

If a PC or several PCs do not stay in their room, they will find the inner halls almost entirely empty, with buckets laid around in various hallways and near corners or windows to catch rain. If a PC has any Skill Ranks in **Engineering**, they will realize that this storm is probably one of the heaviest in recent memory, as castles are built very well to keep out the elements; the fact that several “leaks” are springing up in Shiro sano Kakita should make them uneasy.

As the castle is largely deserted, save for guards and servants, it will be very difficult for the PCs to gather information. The only samurai in residence are bushi who are largely concerned with their duties, and a handful of aides to the daimyo who are too busy to gossip. Still, an enterprising PC may wish to know more about Kakita Takezo and may roll either **Courtier (Gossip)** or **Investigation / Awareness** at a TN of 40 to pick up a few rumors:

* Kakita Takezo is a very honorable samurai, who has made no secret of his absolute devotion to the Crane.
* He is a skilled duelist and swordsman, though his abilities do pale in comparison to some of the bushi trained at the Kakita Dueling Academy in recent generations (like Toshiken or his father Toshimoko).
* He is well-liked among the local samurai and respected by the castle guards, though there is a bit of strain in his relationship with Yoshi: he frequently offers advice even when not asked for, though the two of them rarely argue in public.
* Takezo has spoken in favor of Toturi Daio’s claim to the throne, citing precedent for primogeniture and taking the throne by right of arms both. He generally stays out of politics, however, and has not chosen to make a significant point of his support.

Wandering PCs will not have any trouble making their way towards the center of the castle, but will eventually come across a few bushi standing on opposite sides of a court chamber door. When the PCs appear, one of the Daidoji will step forward quickly, and give a brief but polite bow.

***“Apologies, honored guests, but Kyruko-sama and Yoshi-san are currently engaged in a private meeting regarding matters of the Kakita family. We respectfully request that you return to your rooms; you will be summoned soon.”***

If a PC asks who Kyruko is, the Kakita guard will clarify that it is Kakita Kyruko, a prominent Crane duelist and courtier (whom they may have encountered in *SoB12: Ancestral Dictate* or *SoB44: Winter Court: Shiro Chuda*). This is a pretty simple request, but a few things should stick out as a little odd. The guard is not lying – Kyruko and Yoshi are currently having a meeting, where they are arguing over the best direction for the Kakita family to go politically. However, specifically if a PC asks, they did hear correctly: the Daidoji referred to Kyruko as ‘sama’ and Yoshi as ‘san’ which is not correct – it should be the other way around, as Yoshi is the Kakita family daimyo. If the PCs asks, the Daidoji will have a brief moment of thought, before bowing low. ***“Apologies if you misheard me, honored guests –*** ***Yoshi-sama and Kyruko-sama are meeting. Please return to your rooms.”*** It is probably best for the PCs to return to their rooms at this point and eat their dinner, as there is nothing wrong with what is happening. If a PC gets aggressive or tries to force their way into the chamber or past the guards, they will summon others, and the PC will be taken to the holding cells in the basement of the castle for an extended period of time. They will also lose a Rank of Glory for each Insight Rank they have, Honor as appropriate for a Major Breach of Etiquette (pg 91 of the main book), and gain one full Rank of Infamy.

Since the room is an isolated side chamber, and is currently under guard, there is no way to “sneak” in or nearby and listen in without the guards spotting the PC.

**Evening Tea with**

**Kakita Yoshi**

Eventually, when the PCs are summoned, the servants will lead them down to the court chamber in which Yoshi was meeting with Kyruko, and there will be several places set out for them as well as tea. Yoshi will smile, motioning for them to come and join him, and tell him about their travels on the way here. He will make small talk with them, asking about their journey and complaining in a good-natured way about the weather. One of his early conversational tactics will involve feeling the PCs out concerning their feelings for the Emerald Magistrate they are working for. ***“I have met Yurei-san once or twice over the years, and he always struck me as a somewhat driven young man. I admit, I have some sympathy for him – I, too, have had to deal with being set apart from my family as a result of an accident of birth.”*** If the PCs succeed on a **Courtier** or **Lore: Crane / Intelligence** roll (TN 25), they will remember hearing that Yoshi was born during a siege of Shiro sano Kakita and that he is believed to be cursed to destroy the Crane if he ever bears steel. Asking about this should be done very carefully, otherwise Yoshi will ignore it, but an appropriately-worded inquiry will draw some of the story out of him.

Eventually, Yoshi will work his way around to the elephant in the room. An **Investigation /Awareness r**oll(TN 47 – Yoshi’s roll to oppose them)will tell the PC that Yoshi is putting on his host and daimyo face, but he’s hiding frustration or irritation at something.

***“So – I suppose we should discuss the matter of your presence in the home of the Kakita, samurai. This issue of Kakita Takezo-sama, and his… reluctance to give up his status as a Returned Spirit. That is correct, isn’t it?”***

Yoshi will listen to the PCs, and then nod, adding that Kakita Takezo has been in the castle for a few days on family business, and that a meeting between both Takezo and the PCs, as well as Takezo and Yurei, is likely going to have to happen. ***“Takezo-san spent a significant amount of time delaying Yurei-san upon his last visit, but even the Sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy can only keep an Emerald Magistrate waiting so long. I’ve spent the weeks since trying to convince Takezo that, while his view point is a respectable and honorable one, the consequences to himself and our family for his failure to comply may be more grave than he realizes.”***

If asked why he hasn’t just ordered Takezo to undergo the ritual, Yoshi will frown slightly, and say that he does not want to force an honored shiryo like Takezo to do something he does not wish to do. He respects Takezo, and wants Takezo to make his own decision regarding the matter, just as Yoshi did. Yoshi will add that while the evidence of the damage to Ningen-do the Returned Spirits are causing was clear to him, he will, *extremely politely* point out that the Empire as a whole has yet to accept the findings, and that many remain skeptical, both Returned Spirit and not. If the PCs ask about Takezo’s reasons, Yoshi will simply tell them it would be better to speak with him directly, which, if they’d like, they can do in the morning.

If asked what was being discussed with Kyruko earlier, Yoshi will give a polite smile and short answer. ***“Family business regarding the Kakita.”***

If a PC tries to press for more information beyond what Yoshi is willing to give, remind them that they are in his home, and that he is the daimyo of the Kakita family. He is one of most important and powerful people in the entire Empire at this time, and serves as advisor to the young Clan Champion, Doji Kurohito, and his mother, who currently sits as regent of the Clan.

Yoshi is unfailingly polite in the face of any questions, though he will obviously respond better to courtesy. If the PCs are blunt, he will overlook it as much as possible and only the most crass or crude efforts on the PCs’ behalf will cause him to dismiss them out of turn.

If the PCs mention having seen the Lion build-up along the border, he takes it quite easily. ***“Yes, the Lion have been making threats for quite some time. I’m not sure they ever really stop. Still, it is unwise to ignore their posturing – you may have noticed that most of the castle’s noncombatants are gone. We should have at least until summer, though – this abominable weather isn’t something anyone would wish to march an army through.”***

Questioning Yoshi on his reasons for going through the ritual will be largely uninformative. “I thought it best to reinforce my connection to the mortal Realm, as I do live here now.” Astute PCs (those who roll 60 or higher on a **Courtier / Awareness** roll) will realize that it was essentially politically motivated.

Asking Yoshi about Takezo will gain the information provided above, though he will talk around Takezo’s tendency to offer unsolicited advice – instead he will highlight the returned spirit’s genuine desire to serve the Empire once again. More, he will gloss over Takezo’s support of Daio, dismissing it as idle talk taken too seriously.

After their meeting with Yoshi, it is very late in the evening, and they should probably consider going to bed. Takezo has agreed to meet with the PCs in the morning, after breakfast.

If any of the PCs attempt to move around at night, they’ll find much of the same. Empty hallways and a few guards stationed at key areas. They will not be able to find or reach Kyruko, Takezo, or Yoshi’s rooms, as they are located in a wing of the castle that is much better guarded.

Meeting with Takezo

***After the morning meal, you are led down to the main court chambers, where before you waiting is none other than Kakita Takezo. Surrounded by the soft golden glow of a Returned Spirit, Takezo bows. “Welcome, guests, to the seat of the Kakita family and home to my daimyo, Kakita Yoshi-sama. I believe you wanted to speak with me.”***

The Master of the Kakita Dueling Academy is a lean, dignified older bushi. The gold aura of a returned spirit serves only to highlight his air of gravitas. Tea will be served, and Takezo makes polite conversation for an appropriate amount of time. Eventually, however, he will shake his head and sigh. ***“I do know what brings you here, as well as who sent you. I should prefer not to dishonor your actions by avoiding the topic any longer. I have no wish to undergo this ritual, that will sever my connection to Yomi. I returned through Oblivion’s Gate to serve the Empire once again. I remain dedicated to doing so.”***

This is the PCs’ opportunity to try to talk Takezo into changing his mind. While a single conversation is unlikely to drastically alter his opinion, the PCs have an opportunity to give him reason to reevaluate his stance. This is, obviously, primarily a role-playing opportunity, and while there is a mechanic associated with it, it is up to the players to decide what tactics to use and what direction to take the conversation.

Some of the possible avenues the PCs may use, and Takezo’s responses to them, are listed below. As this is primarily a role-playing encounter, it is essentially impossible to account for all of the options available to the PCs. The GM should bear in mind that Takezo is a genuinely honorable samurai, and the things he expresses below are his honest feelings on the matter – any other topics simply require extrapolating from these answers. PCs who are suspicious of his motives or honesty may roll **Investigation / Awareness** at a TN of 20 to realize that he is being entirely forthright; those who use Lore: Bushido to examine his Honor Rank will discover it is an 8.

* Why do you not want to go through with the ritual? ***“For many reasons. Quite simply, it is unnecessary and verges on the impious. I was a shiryo, one of the Blessed Ancestors. I guided my descendants from Yomi after my death, and simply chose to return to the mortal Realm when I felt I was needed. I still feel needed, thus, I remain. Too little is known; this ritual may sever my connection to Yomi permanently. I do not wish to be cast out of the Celestial Order.”***
* Why did you refuse to see Shinjo Yurei?  ***“His reputation has preceded him. His zeal in performing his duties is a matter of some concern, and I have no wish to take up arms in my defense against a representative of the Emerald Champion. I am confident that, given more time, this matter can be resolved on a higher level.”***
* Why are you refusing to follow the Empress’ command? ***“I believe you will find that the child Empress has little to no knowledge of this edict in her name. Rather, this seems more along the lines of a political gambit perpetrated by the Emerald Champion and directed at his enemy the Imperial Regent, who is himself a Returned Spirit and counts many other Returned Spirits among his supporters.”***
* Why do you support the Black Lion?  ***“Toturi Daio appears to be a strong samurai. If his claim could be proven, it would be in his best interest to stop this petty feud between the Emerald Champion and the Imperial Regent. I have no desire to see Tsudao-sama cheated of her place, but if her brother can bring peace, would that not be best for the Empire?”***
* What about the imbalances caused by the returned spirits? ***“While there are many who are convinced that we who returned are responsible for a myriad of terrible things, I am not. The Asahina have not confirmed the Phoenix Clan’s claims, nor have all of the effects of this ritual been determined.”***
* Who could take your place as head of the Kakita Dueling Academy? ***“That is another reason I am reluctant; I do not currently have a student with the appropriate qualifications. A handful are, perhaps, skilled enough with the blade, but none are truly teachers yet. I have begun searching for a replacement, but there is simply no one well-suited to the task.”***

Once everything is said and done, if the PCs have been respectful and have provided compelling reasons to go through the ritual (providing testimony regarding what they saw in *SoB50: A Glimpse Beyond*, or speaking plainly about the political ramifications for the Clan and School, for example), they may roll **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** at a TN of 40 – at the GM’s discretion, several PCs working in concert may roll using the Cooperative Roll rules and add their Ranks in Courtier as a bonus to the primary speaker’s roll. Success on this roll will cause Takezo to be willing to reconsider the matter: ***“I will follow up with the Asahina in more detail. Perhaps this issue deserves more critical thought.”*** While hardly a strong concession, it is at least enough to indicate that he is persuadable. Failure on this roll, while attempting to remain polite, will cause him to sadly shake his head. ***“You are honorable and worthy samurai, but I must respectfully disagree. I cannot abandon my family and Clan under these circumstances. Perhaps when more is known, I will reconsider, but for now my answer remains ‘no’.”***

Any rudeness or disrespect will be met with implacable resolve, and result in the offender being escorted out of the room by the guards. Such a PC will lose a half Rank of Glory and a point of Honor for causing a scene, and Takezo will speak with the rest of the PCs as though they were never present. This will, however, increase the TN of the final roll by 10.

Should the players simply not care about this matter, they should be reminded, once, that this is a large part of why they were asked to take part. Failure to even make an attempt at the discussion costs them a point of Honor, and of course, guarantees they cannot expect to reconcile Takezo and Yurei.

**Part Three: Blood, Water, Thicker, Thinner**

After the meeting, the PCs are free to move about for a bit. A servant announces that Shinjo Yurei has arrived, and is currently cleaning up from the travel before presenting himself to Yoshi. Have the PCs roll raw **Awareness, r**aw **Perception** and raw **Void**, respectively. The PC who rolls the highest (the 2nd highest in case of a tie; additionally, the same PC can’t win multiple rolls) for the following three events.

**Quarrel Among Lovers (Awareness)**

The PC who rolled the highest raw **Awareness** roll will stumble across two Kakita in one of the hallways leading towards the guest quarters having an argument of some kind. Though their voices are low, they are still easily distinguishable. The PC will need to stay around the corner to listen, otherwise both men will stop abruptly and walk on as if nothing happened.

***“How dare you say that she loves you! You know nothing about her. She’s just being polite and showing you compassion; it is me that she really loves!”***

The other Kakita snaps angrily. ***“Weepy fool! Kyruko-sama has only given you her attention so that she does not crush your soul! She loves me, and some day, we will be wed. A glorious wedding that will be remembered throughout history forever! I will be the husband of the Kakita daimyo!”***

If a PC approaches, the two Kakita will straighten up, bow low, and greet the guest of the castle. They will deny having any argument at all. ***“Apologies, honored guests – you must have misheard.”***

**The Seductress and the Magistrate (Perception)**

For the PC who rolls highest on the raw **Perception**, they come across Shinjo Yurei and Kakita Kyruko speaking in a dimly lit corner of one of the hallways near the main court chamber. They are whispering, and it’s clear that they’re arguing about something. Kyruko will try to walk away, and Yurei will grab her arm, forcing her to spin back around and say something. A PC who has **Read Lips** will be able to understand that she says ***“You’re not so different from me, Yurei. Remember that…”*** before turning, and leaving. Yurei will sigh, irritated, but make no note of the meeting. If asked now or later when he meets with the PCs, he will say that he was speaking with Kyruko about a previous matter that happened some time ago and that the business is of a personal nature. Any PC who wishes to roll **Investigation (Interrogation) / Perception**  may do so (they are only allowed to roll this if they ask specifically to do so; rolling higher than a 30 tells them that Yurei is clearly hiding something about his relationship with Kyruko, but he will not speak further on the matter if pressured.) PCs who rolled higher than 30 on any Perception-based roll here will note that Yurei is now carrying a katana.

**Concerns Allayed (Void)**

For the PC who rolls highest on the raw **Void**, they will also be wandering around the castle, and come across two members of the Kakita House Guard speaking. If they make themselves obvious, the conversation will end, but if they keep some distance or stand around the corner, they will observe the following exchange:

***Near an overturned bucket of water that had been catching drips from the ceiling, two members of the Kakita House Guard speak in hushed tones.***

***“Lion Scouts? Here? And in this storm? Surely you’re mistaken.”***

***“No, I’m sure of it. There have been several sightings the last few days from the village, as well as the area around the village. This worries me. We must tell Yoshi.”***

***The second-in-command of the Kakita House Guard smiles softly, and pats the other Kakita on the shoulder. He speaks. “I’m sure… that there’s nothing… to worry about.”***

***The other samurai nods, and says in a dull, dry voice. “Yes. Nothing is wrong. Everything is fine. Thank you, sama” before turning and walking away.***

The PC may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** (TN 30). A success will tell them that the water that was spilled out on the floor is gone – and they’re not sure where it went. A few moments later, the second-in-command of the House Guard disappears down a side hall. If the PC follows, they will find a hallway that seems like a flood came down it, water dripping from the ceilings and standing puddles of water, but no sign of the Kakita.

PCs might find these events strange (they should) and Yurei will gather them up together to hear their report of how things have been going since they arrived early in the evening.

Meeting With Yurei

Yurei meets with the PCs in an elegantly-appointed suite of rooms much like their own guest quarters. He is carrying a new katana at his side, though he has placed it on the right (truly curious or nosy PCs may roll **Kenjutsu / Perception** at a TN of 20 to realize that the weapon is, in fact, brand-new and has never been used, based on the condition of the hilt wrappings and the weapon’s fittings).

***Yurei paces unevenly, restless in the sumptuous room, and seeming ill at ease. He pauses near the window to listen to the downpour outside when he comes close to it, but does not speak until all of you have arrived. When you are present, he waves to the steaming tea pot on the table. “Take some hot tea, if you wish, and tell me what you have discovered.” He pauses and shakes his head. “If you please, samurai. I apologize, something has me on edge. Perhaps it’s just the weather cooping me up in this gilded cage. But I do need to know what you have seen and done since your arrival…”***

This conversation, while seemingly innocuous, is *extremely* important to the way this adventure will play out. As should be obvious by now, Yurei hates Returned Spirits, and his default position when it comes to Takezo is to take him in or kill him here if he resists; he doesn’t really care about the rhyme or reason for Takezo’s resistance to undergo the ritual.

**IF** the PCs are sympathetic to Takezo’s reasons, **AND** they were able to convince him to give the ritual second thought despite his feeling of obligation to his clan and his duty to teach the next generation of Kakita bushi, they can roll **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** (TN 50)to convince Yurei that he may be misjudging Takezo too harshly and too quickly, and that Takezo may undergo the ritual by choice. Particularly good role-playing or reasoning from the PCs, especially anything that involves talking about family in a positive perspective, should earn the PCs one or two Free Raises at the GM’s discretion. If any PC is successful, this will result in the **‘Hope Yet Remains’** climax. If they fail to convince him or do not try to convince him, this will result in the **‘Unwritten Future’** climax.

**IF** the PCs are antagonistic to Takezo, either because of his public allegiance to the Black Lion prior to his defeat or they also harbor a hatred of Returned Spirits, and they wish to convince the magistrate to act against Takezo, no roll is involved. Yurei’s default position on the matter will shift even further into hatred and disgust – no roll is required for this. This will result in the ‘**Loss of Hope’** climax.

Ultimately this comes down to what the party as a whole wants to do about the situation. If they are not interested very much in what’s happening or don’t care one way or the other, then Yurei’s default position remains the same. If there are different opinions among the PCs, they may each roll Sincerity as above, with the higher roll being the result that weighs the most with Yurei.

The PCs will probably also want to tell Yurei about the strange things that they’ve seen, and he’ll nod, politely take note, and then comment that ***“The business of what goes on in the home of the Kakita Family is, while important, not the purpose for our visit. I appreciate your concerns and I will bring them up with Kakita Yoshi-sama, though I expect that he will politely request I remain focused on Imperial matters and not details of the Kakita family’s internal issues.”***

The PCs and Yurei should talk until it they’ve said everything they want to say; Yurei would like to hear from everyone and tries to encourage them to give opinions on Takezo if they haven’t. After this conversation, a servant will announce loudly down the guest hall that the presence of all honored guests of the Kakita Family are requested in the main court hall for an important announcement.

Yurei asks the PCs to go find out what is going on; he has to go and speak with the House Guard, and therefore, will not attend the beginning of the event. If asked, he will simply state that it pertains to Emerald Magistrate business and that he will apologize when he arrives late.

Waiting for the PCs in the court chambers are Kakita Kyruko, Kakita Yoshi, and Kakita Takezo. Yoshi sits on the dais, with Takezo at his right side. Kyruko, a sultry, beautiful young woman, stands in the middle of the court; when the PCs enter, she spins gracefully to bow them as they enter. ***“Ah greetings, honored guests. Please, please, join us. Your presence will be required, and, if I am not mistaken, useful, in the moments to come.”***

***Kakita Yoshi, maintaining his* on*, smiles thinly. “Kyruko-san, I normally only allow the host of this court to call it to order, but given you are the niece of the former daimyo, I am indulging you for the time being. Please – state the business for which you’ve called us all here.”*** Kyruko turns, a wicked smile on her face, and removes a scroll from her sleeve, sealed with the mon of the Emerald Champion.

***“Thank you, Yoshi-sama. It is amusing you should mention my late uncle, Kaiten-sama. It is in fact my very relationship with him that brings me here with this document,” she walks forward as she speaks, and hands Yoshi the scroll. As he cracks the seal and begins reading, she turns. “My uncle was Kakita Daimyo and led my family with conviction, decisiveness, and dedication. I feel that in the years since his seppuku that the Kakita have become soft, and our* leadership *has not made the decisions that are in the best interests of either the Crane or the Kakita.”***

She pauses for a moment, letting her words sink before she continues. ***“I therefore have petitioned your nephew, Yoshi-sama, the Emerald Champion Kakita Toshiken, for permission to challenge you for leadership of the Kakita family. Our Empress Toturi Tsudao has approved my petition, which is the document you have before you.”***

***Yoshi reads over the documents for several moments, and turns to address the assembled guests. “These documents seem to be in order,” he says quietly. “Although Kyruko-san’s passion for our family is admirable, I cannot countenance the path upon which she would take us. I will not refuse this challenge. As I cannot and will not ever touch steel myself, I name Kakita Takezo as my champion. If you would do me the favor of standing as witnesses, it would be greatly appreciated.”***

It is important to note here that any suspicions the PCs have at this point are, for the most part, moot. The Kakita Family Daimyo has been challenged, and has accepted. He’s also named his champion, so really, the PCs’ only option is to stand as witnesses. Any attempts made to ‘see the paperwork’ or to stand as Yoshi’s champion will be waved off by Yoshi. (He, justifiably, believes that Takezo can defeat Kyruko, based on knowing both of them fairly well.) His face is one of deadly seriousness and he will not allow the PCs to interfere in what is a family matter, even if the PCs are Kakita.

***Takezo rises and bows to Yoshi. “I would of course be honored to stand in your place, Yoshi-dono,” he says formally. He gives his opponent a shorter bow as he takes his stance opposite Kyruko.***

***As Kyruko and Takezo prepare themselves, a soldier enters the room and, sensing the tension, hesitates. He circles wide around the center of the room that has become a dueling arena to approach Yoshi with silent urgency. Yoshi’s face pales at the whispered message he receives, but he delivers a calm order to the soldier, and then stands once again. “It seems the Matsu have mounted an assault under the cover of the storm. Please conclude this business quickly so that we may begin the defense of our ancestral home.”***

***Kyruko smirks slightly at her daimyo and nods, stepping forward to take up her place; Takezo’s abstracted expression makes it difficult to tell if he heard Yoshi’s words, but he readies himself as well. Both combatants fall into the classic Kakita dueling stance, palm held up above the hilts of the swords as if about to offer a gift. Takezo’s face is calm and detached, his breathing even and relaxed, where Kyruko is anything but calm – her breath speeds up and the strain is clear on her face.***

***Moments pass, and then without warning both duelists draw. Takezo, as might be expected from a Kenshinzen and the sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy, clears steel more quickly. As their swords strike, though, Kyruko maneuvers so that their blades meet in mid-air. Takezo’s finely crafted Kakita blade shatters upon contact with Kyruko’s sword, and Kyruko sweeps around in a fluid motion to cleave deeply into his right shoulder. Takezo flinches from the sundering of his weapon, and bright blood flows from his wound.***

There are three different outcomes possible, diverging from this point. Which one occurs depends on the PCs’ previous conversation with Shinjo Yurei.

IF Yurei has been convinced that Kakita Takezo may undergo the ritual and that Yurei should give the daimyo a chance, Yurei will involve himself in the duel at this point. This results in the **‘Hope Yet Remains’** scenario.

IF Yurei’s opinion has not shifted one direction or the other, then the **‘Unwritten Future’** scenario is what happens.

IF Yurei is convinced that persecution and hate toward Takezo is the correct path, **‘Hope is Lost’** instead.

Hope Yet Remains

***Kyruko smiles, raising her sword to finish the duel, but a shout from behind you stops her. “Her blade!” Yurei shouts in alarm from the entrance to the court chambers, surrounded by several castle guards and a trio of Kakita House Guard. “It is no ordinary sword. It is something wicked, and malign. It is a magical artifact, and as such, this duel is not legal. Kakita Kyruko, you are under arrest for falsifying documents and consorting with the Shadowlands! Stand down and surrender yourself at once.”***

***Kyruko smiles brightly at Yurei and says, simply, “No.” Her blade flashes down to sink into Takezo, though the sensei twists partly away from the blow as it lands. She levels the blood-stained steel at Yoshi and a mocking laugh bubbles up in her throat.***

***Yurei rushes towards the dais, shouting “We must stop her!” The guards with him falter and stumble when Kyruko calls out in a sing-song voice, “No witnesses, my dears!” The bushi then step into your path and turn their blades in your direction, all save one staring at you with slack faces and red eyes. The second-in-command of the House Guard instead appears to be drenched in water, as if standing in a rainstorm while in-doors, and suddenly the warrior is replaced with a monstrosity of water that grows in size as the room floods up to your waist.***

The water in the room counts as Difficult Terrain (-2 to Water for purposes of movement). The guards (both Kakita House Guard and Castle Guards) are being mind-controlled by Kyruko, though a Crane or Imperial PC may be able to influence their behavior by spending a Complex Action to make an appeal to their loyalty to the Crane and succeeding on a **Sincerity / Awareness** (TN 50) roll – only one guard can be broken free of control at a time with this.

There are a number of Castle Guards equal to the number of combat-capable PCs, two Kakita House Guards, and the Elemental Terror of Water. Kakita Takezo is alive but will bleed out in five rounds if he does not receive 20 Wounds worth of healing; regardless, he is incapacitated and Kakita Yoshi will do his best to avoid the combat.

For simplicity’s sake, Yurei will fight Kyruko on the other side of the guards and the Elemental Terror of Water. His defensive style will allow him to eventually wear Kyruko down – astute PCs may note that his blade survives multiple contacts with hers. (PCs who desperately wish to assist him may do so, but it largely involves staying out of the fight for at least two rounds while they circle the melee. Once there, they can provide a distraction that will allow Yurei to finish off Kyruko – the GM should proceed to **“Grasping Hope”** in the Conclusion after allowing two of the Guards free attacks on the PC in question.)

During the Reactions Stage of every Round, the PCs will hear the sound of combat in the castle growing louder. This should be used to put some pressure on them; if they kill the Elemental Terror of Water and deal with all of the guards before the end of the fifth Round, the encounter will end with **“Grasping Hope”** in the Conclusion. If they do not eliminate the enemy before the end of the fifth Round of combat, the encounter will end as detailed in **“Slipping Hope”** in the Conclusion. (It is possible Lion PCs will choose to side with the Matsu invaders and wish to use the additional forces to cleanse the castle of its corruption. In this case, the GM should allow the other PCs and Yurei to escape. If the enemy is eliminated within five Rounds, they should be able to take Kakita Yoshi and/or Kakita Takezo with them, if they wish.)

Unwritten Future

***Kyruko smirks, clearly enjoying her victory as she viciously cuts Takezo from shoulder to hip. Blood sprays across the room and she catches her breath. She turns toward Yoshi, smiling, but her smile is replaced by a frown when a voice cuts through the silence in the room. “Kakita Kyruko, you are in violation of Imperial Law and are hereby charged with Consorting with Dark Powers and orchestrating an illegal iaijutsu duel under false pretenses. By my authority as an Emerald Magistrate, you are to surrender yourself to myself and my yoriki immediately.” Shinjo Yurei stands in the door, accompanied by several castle guards and a trio of Kakita House Guard.***

***Kyruko smiles and shakes her head. “Silly fool – you and I are not so different, Yurei-san. Unfortunately for you – nobody will live through this night to support your claim.” The second-in-command of the Kakita House Guard, soaking wet as if he was standing in a storm indoors, dissolves into a flood of water. A moment later, the doors to the room burst and water pours in, filling the chamber up to your waist. A massive, monstrous form rises from the water to bat Yurei aside. He slams against the wall with a thud and a crunch, and the guards, eyes glowing red, turn to face you. “Her sword! It’s a Bloodsword! Stop her!” Yurei shouts, ripping his katana from it’s saya as the Elemental Terror of Water comes crashing down on him.***

Like in “Hope Yet Remains”, the water in the room counts as Difficult Terrain (-2 to Water for purposes of movement). The guards (both Kakita House Guard and Castle Guards) are being mind-controlled by Kyruko, though a Crane or Imperial PC may be able to influence their behavior by spending a Complex Action to make an appeal to their loyalty to the Crane and succeeding on a **Sincerity / Awareness** (TN 50) roll – only one guard can be broken free of control at a time with this.

There are a number of Castle Guards equal to the number of combat-capable PCs, two Kakita House Guards, and

Kakita Kyruko (wielding Passion). The Guards will primarily be focused on keeping Kyruko safe, allowing her and the Kakita House Guard to attack from the safety of their Guard (though also launching attacks of their own as appropriate.) PCs who specifically wish to target the Elemental Terror of Water may do so, though Yurei will eventually wear it down – his new blade has no difficulty in harming the monster. Kakita Takezo is quite dead, and Kakita Yoshi will do his best to avoid the combat.

During the Reactions Stage of every round, the PCs will hear the sound of combat in the castle growing louder. This should be used to put some pressure on them; if they manage to kill Kakita Kyruko before the end of the fifth Round of combat, the guards will collapse and the encounter will end as **“Written in Light”** in the Conclusion. If they do not eliminate the enemy before the end of the fifth Round of combat, the encounter will end as detailed in **“Written in Blood”** in the Conclusion. (It is possible Lion PCs will choose to side with the Matsu invaders and wish to use the additional forces to cleanse the castle of its corruption. In this case, the GM should allow the other PCs and Yurei to escape. If the enemy is eliminated within five Rounds, they should be able to take Kakita Yoshi with them, if they wish.)

Hope Is Lost

***Takezo stands in horror, spasmodically clutching the hilt of his broken blade. With one powerful strike, Kyruko severs Takezo’s head, blood spraying across the room as it rolls along the floor.***

***Kyruko calmly turns to Kakita Yoshi and speaks with authority, “Yoshi-san, you are no longer daimyo of the Kakita family, but are instead my vassal. I grant you permission to perform the three cuts, that your failures will not stain your name. A second will be provided.***

***“Yurei-san, you and your guests will no longer be needed here. My castle is under attack, and unless you choose to help us, you are in the way. As Takezo is dead, your mission is fulfilled. Join me, or leave.”***

The PCs may choose to stand in defense of the castle, or they may choose to leave. Yurei’s expression is one of seething anger, but he says nothing. After formally acknowledging that Kyruko is the daimyo of the Kakita, he bluntly states that he is going to leave, and that any PCs may accompany him if they wish. Flying the banner of the Emerald Magistrates, the Lion will allowing him exit from the province (even if the group has Crane in it, they’re with Yurei, and the Matsu will respect Imperial authority as long as it’s getting out of their way).

# Conclusion – Resolving the Conflict

Regardless of how the confrontation goes, the PCs will not be fighting for more than five Rounds. Each of the following ways that the encounter can end restates the conditions that trigger them, and each scenario presents the mechanics for their conditions. Despite the significant similarities in both the mechanics and the text, there are a few differences so it is important for the GM to be certain they are following the appropriate path for the players’ actions.

Grasping Hope

**(IF** the combat takes 5 rounds or less and **IF** Yurei was the one to fight Kyruko)

***Through the chaos of combat, you see several flashes of steel on steel as Yurei and Kyruko’s blades trade blows. Finally, Yurei assumes a defensive stance, breathing heavily. Kyruko taunts the magistrate*** [PCs who roll raw **Perception** at a TN of 30 hear her say “Tiger will not save you now”]***, before attacking Yurei with full force. Yurei performs a strange technique that you may or may not have seen before – the Shinjo Parry, leaving Kyruko vulnerable. With a swift cut upwards, Kyruko falls to the ground, blood pooling around her body. She looks up at Yoshi, coughing as she speaks. “Our house is doomed this day, Yoshi… take up this blade, and wield with it the power to defend our family. The Kakita will fall otherwise – what more damage could possibly be done?”***

***Yoshi gazes at the blade, hesitation in his eyes. The sounds of violence outside make him flinch, and he studies the sword, weighing the choice in front of him.***

More “direct” PCs may wish to attempt to tackle Yoshi or physically move the sword away from the daimyo. Doing so is entirely possible, though it means that Yoshi will be much less likely to listen to more reasonable methods of discourse. Direct physical action requires an **Athletics / Reflexes** (TN 35) roll – the GM may substitute other Skills, like Jiujutsu, as appropriate, but it is ultimately a test of Reflexes against Yoshi. If someone attempts to talk Yoshi around after taking a physical action, the TN for that roll is increased by 10.

Unless a PC takes up the Bloodsword themselves with the intent of using it, Yurei stays out of the situation. If anyone else looks likely to draw the blade, he will issue a command in a much firmer tone of voice than usual: ***“That is the Bloodsword Passion. Do not draw it, lest you fall under its sway!”*** Ignoring this order from the Emerald Magistrate is a terrible idea, and the PC who does so must make a **Willpower** roll (TN 20); failure means they hear a quiet voice in their mind asking them “What do you desire?” It also costs them three points of Honor and if they do not choose to drop the sword at this point, they will probably be arrested by the rest of the group…

The best option for the PCs at this point is to plead with Yoshi to make the correct decision. A well-roleplayed appeal to honor, family, duty, or maintaining his purity allows a PC to roll **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (TN 40). This does count as a Contested Roll against Kyruko, and multiple PCs speaking together may use the Cooperative Skill Roll rules at the GM’s discretion. Success produces the following outcome:

***Kakita Yoshi nods, and closes his eyes for a moment. “Thank you, my friends. You have done the Kakita a favor this day that we may never repay.” He turns to Yurei, the fan in his hand trembling. “Your interest in nemuranai is well-known, Shinjo-san. I believe you would be the best person to handle this. I would ask that you escort me from this castle, so that I may parlay with the Lion at a later date.”***

***Yurei bows to the Kakita daimyo and examines the sword in question critically. “The Bloodsword Passion, thought lost in the ocean centuries ago. Several other cursed items last believed to be beneath the waves have surfaced in the last few years. I venture to guess that the Dark Oracle of Water has sent them into the Empire, as he himself remains barred from entry to Rokugan.” The magistrate wraps the cursed blade carefully in black silk, and looks to you. “Our duty here is done. I would ask that any without a stake in this fight assist me in escorting Kakita Yoshi-sama to Kyuden Doji. After that, I will go to the Imperial City to deliver this cursed artifact to the Jade Champion, and your assistance with that would also be welcome. If you wish to stay, I will not fault you, and release you from your duties as a yoriki.”***

This scenario ends with “**Hope Rewarded**” in the final section.

If no PCs make an appeal to Yoshi, fail the roll, or threaten Yoshi, he snaps at the PCs:

***“You do not understand the weight upon my shoulders. I appreciate your advice, but in the end – she was right.” he says, looking down at the now lifeless form of Kyruko. Yoshi takes up the sword, and looks toward the fighting. His trained courtier’s voice rings out in a martial tone. “Kakita – come to my aid! Let us defend our home from the Matsu invaders!” The assembled Kakita bushi shout in unison, and follow Yoshi out into the fighting. Yurei sighs, and shakes his head. “Today is a dark day, friends. We must leave. Now.”***

This scenario ends with “Hope Denied” in the final section.

Slipping Hope

**(IF** the combat with the Elemental Terror takes more than 5 rounds and **IF** Yurei was the one to fight Kyruko)

***With a defiant shout, Yurei’s blade passes through Kakita Kyruko’s defenses, and she falls to the ground, coughing blood. She looks up, and gestures Yoshi closer. The sound of steel on steel echoes through the halls of the castle as the Matsu forces advance. Blood drips from her mouth as Kyruko speaks with a malevolent grin.***

***“Yoshi… you fool. Our family will die this day unless you do something. Take this blade – it is the only thing that can save us. Do not prattle on about that silly curse, our house will fall this day unless you act. We’re already doomed – what more could you possibly bring upon us?”***

***Yoshi gazes at the blade, hesitation in his eyes. The sounds of violence outside make him flinch, and he studies the sword, weighing the choice in front of him.***

More “direct” PCs may wish to attempt to tackle Yoshi or physically move the sword away from the daimyo. Doing so is entirely possible, though it means that Yoshi will be much less likely to listen to more reasonable methods of discourse. Direct physical action requires an **Athletics / Reflexes** (TN 35) roll – the GM may substitute other Skills, like Jiujutsu, as appropriate, but it is ultimately a test of Reflexes against Yoshi. If someone attempts to talk Yoshi around after taking a physical action, the TN for that roll is increased by 10.

Unless a PC takes up the Bloodsword themselves with the intent of using it, Yurei stays out of the situation. If anyone else looks likely to draw the blade, he will issue a command in a much firmer tone of voice than usual: ***“That is the Bloodsword Passion. Do not draw it, lest you fall under its sway!”*** Ignoring this order from the Emerald Magistrate is a terrible idea, and the PC who does so must make a **Willpower** roll (TN 20); failure means they hear a quiet voice in their mind asking them “What do you desire?” It also costs them three points of Honor and if they do not choose to drop the sword at this point, they will probably be arrested by the rest of the group…

The best option for the PCs at this point is to plead with Yoshi to make the correct decision. A well-roleplayed appeal to honor, family, duty, or maintaining his purity allows a PC to roll **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (TN 50). This does count as a Contested Roll against Kyruko, and multiple PCs speaking together may use the Cooperative Skill Roll rules at the GM’s discretion. Success produces the following outcome:

***Kakita Yoshi nods, and closes his eyes for a moment. “Thank you, my friends. You have done the Kakita a favor this day that we may never repay.” He turns to Yurei, the fan in his hand trembling. “Your interest in nemuranai is well-known, Shinjo-san. I believe you would be the best person to handle this. I would ask that you escort me from this castle, so that I may parlay with the Lion at a later date.”***

***Yurei bows to the Kakita daimyo and examines the sword in question critically. “The Bloodsword Passion, thought lost in the ocean centuries ago. Several other cursed items last believed to be beneath the waves have surfaced in the last few years. I venture to guess that the Dark Oracle of Water has sent them into the Empire, as he himself remains barred from entry to Rokugan.” The magistrate wraps the cursed blade carefully in black silk, and looks to you. “Our duty here is done. I would ask that any without a stake in this fight assist me in escorting Kakita Yoshi-sama to Kyuden Doji. After that, I will go to the Imperial City to deliver this cursed artifact to the Jade Champion, and your assistance with that would also be welcome. If you wish to stay, I will not fault you, and release you from your duties as a yoriki.”***

This scenario ends with “**Hope Rewarded**” in the final section.

If no PCs make an appeal to Yoshi, or they fail the roll, his reaction is more resigned:

***Yoshi hesitates for another moment, before closing his eyes briefly. He reaches out and grasps the blade. The light in the room dims for a moment, though you aren’t sure how, as he turns to you, a grim look upon his face.***

***“In this, she was right. I must protect my family, no matter the cost.” he says, looking down at the now lifeless form of Kyruko. Yoshi takes up the sword, and looks toward the fighting. His trained courtier’s voice rings out in a martial tone. “Kakita – come to my aid! Let us defend our home from the Matsu invaders!” The assembled Kakita bushi shout in unison, and follow Yoshi out into the fighting. Yurei sighs, and shakes his head. “Today is a dark day, friends. We must leave. Now.”***

This scenario ends with “Hope Denied” in the final section.

Written in Light

**(IF** the combat takes 5 rounds or less and **IF** the PCs were the ones to fight Kyruko)

***With a cry of pain, Kakita Kyruko falls to the floor, breathing heavily as her blood spreads across the wood and soaks into the reed mats. She looks up, and gestures Yoshi closer. The sound of steel on steel echoes through the halls of the castle as the Matsu forces advance. Blood drips from her mouth as Kyruko speaks with a malevolent grin.***

***“Yoshi… you fool. Our family will die this day unless you do something. Take this blade – it is the only thing that can save us. Do not prattle on about that silly curse, our house will fall this day unless you act. We’re already doomed – what more could you possibly bring upon us?”***

***Yoshi’s looks at Takezo’s drenched corpse and flinches at the sounds of fighting outside. Before anything can be said, he reaches down and grasps the sword shimmering in the water. The light in the room dims for a moment, and he turns to you, a grim look upon his face.***

More “direct” PCs may wish to attempt to tackle Yoshi or physically move the sword away from the daimyo. Doing so is entirely possible, though it means that Yoshi will be much less likely to listen to more reasonable methods of discourse. Direct physical action requires an **Athletics / Reflexes** (TN 35) roll – the GM may substitute other Skills, like Jiujutsu, as appropriate, but it is ultimately a test of Reflexes against Yoshi. If someone attempts to talk Yoshi around after taking a physical action, the TN for that roll is increased by 10.

Unless a PC takes up the Bloodsword themselves with the intent of using it, Yurei stays out of the situation. If anyone else looks likely to draw the blade, he will issue a command in a much firmer tone of voice than usual: ***“That is the Bloodsword Passion. Do not draw it, lest you fall under its sway!”*** Ignoring this order from the Emerald Magistrate is a terrible idea, and the PC who does so must make a **Willpower** roll (TN 20); failure means they hear a quiet voice in their mind asking them “What do you desire?” It also costs them three points of Honor and if they do not choose to drop the sword at this point, they will probably be arrested by the rest of the group…

The best option for the PCs at this point is to plead with Yoshi to make the correct decision. A well-roleplayed appeal to honor, family, duty, or maintaining his purity allows a PC to roll **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (TN 60). This does count as a Contested Roll against Kyruko, and multiple PCs speaking together may use the Cooperative Skill Roll rules at the GM’s discretion. Success produces the following outcome:

***Kakita Yoshi nods, and closes his eyes for a moment. “Thank you, my friends. You have done the Kakita a favor this day that we may never repay.” He turns to Yurei, the fan in his hand trembling. “Your interest in nemuranai is well-known, Shinjo-san. I believe you would be the best person to handle this. I would ask that you escort me from this castle, so that I may parlay with the Lion at a later date.”***

***Yurei bows to the Kakita daimyo and examines the sword in question critically. “The Bloodsword Passion, thought lost in the ocean centuries ago. Several other cursed items last believed to be beneath the waves have surfaced in the last few years. I venture to guess that the Dark Oracle of Water has sent them into the Empire, as he himself remains barred from entry to Rokugan.” The magistrate wraps the cursed blade carefully in black silk, and looks to you. “Our duty here is done. I would ask that any without a stake in this fight assist me in escorting Kakita Yoshi-sama to Kyuden Doji. After that, I will go to the Imperial City to deliver this cursed artifact to the Jade Champion, and your assistance with that would also be welcome. If you wish to stay, I will not fault you, and release you from your duties as a yoriki.”***

This scenario ends with “**Hope Rewarded**” in the final section.

If no PCs make an appeal to Yoshi, or they fail the roll, his reaction is more resigned:

***Yoshi hesitates for another moment, before closing his eyes briefly. He reaches out and grasps the blade. The light in the room dims for a moment, though you aren’t sure how, as he turns to you, a grim look upon his face.***

***“In this, she was right. I must protect my family, no matter the cost.” he says, looking down at the now lifeless form of Kyruko. Yoshi takes up the sword, and looks toward the fighting. His trained courtier’s voice rings out in a martial tone. “Kakita – come to my aid! Let us defend our home from the Matsu invaders!” The assembled Kakita bushi shout in unison, and follow Yoshi out into the fighting. Yurei sighs, and shakes his head. “Today is a dark day, friends. We must leave. Now.”***

This scenario ends with “Hope Denied” in the final section.

Written in Blood

**(IF** the combat takes more than 5 roundsand **IF** the PCs fought Kakita Kyruko)

***The sounds of fighting draw closer and closer to the court chamber. Kyruko, weak from a dozen minor wounds, turns to Yoshi. “You want to save our family, Yoshi? You want to be a leader like Kaiten was? Then take this, and lead us to victory. We’re already doomed this day, what possible fate could be worse for us now?”***

***Yoshi’s looks at Takezo’s drenched corpse and flinches at the sounds of fighting outside. Before anything can be said, he reaches down and takes the sword from Kyruko’s hands. She begins to speak, but is cut short as Yoshi runs her through, yanking the blade out and splitting Kyruko nearly clean in half. As he does so, the lights dim.***

There is no opportunity to talk Yoshi out of this course of action on this path. If the PCs wish to interfere, they must physically prevent him from leaving with the blade somehow. Attacking one of the most powerful politicians in the Empire will have consequences of its own, but the only way the PCs will be able to avoid his falling to the call of Passion is to do so. This requires some form of attack roll – Jiujutsu would be appropriate if they are trying specifically to avoid injury. The TN for the roll is 40; failure to meet a 25 means the PC takes 7k4 Wounds. Grappling means the PC must hold Yoshi (his Strength is 3); otherwise, the PCs must do 25 Wounds to him to get him to stop. If they do 40 or more, however, they will kill him themselves…

If the PCs do not act quickly, Yoshi will charge off into a group of his men and be quickly lost in the chaos of the battle.

***“In this, she was right. I must protect my family, no matter the cost.” With that Yoshi rushes off into the outer chambers, wielding the cursed blade with the strength of his ancestors. With a defiant shout, the Kakita rally around their daimyo, and the sounds of battle can be heard throughout the castle.***

***Shinjo Yurei sighs, and shakes his head, defeated. He looks down at Takezo and addresses you over his shoulder. “Stay if you wish. Our mission is complete now. Takezo died a spirit, not that it makes any difference now. Those who wish to leave this place, you may do so under my banner.”***

This scenario ends with “Hope Denied” in the final section.

Hope Rewarded

(Yoshi lives, and does not take up Passion)

***As you ride away from the fighting, the brilliant golds and yellows of the Lion are dull in the heavy rains. Yurei, Yoshi on his horse, flies the banner of the Emerald Magistrates. The Lion do not pursue, but it is clear that Shiro sano Kakita this day now belongs to the Matsu Family.***

Yurei and the PCs do not encounter any resistance taking Yoshi to Kyuden Doji, where Kakita Narumi will hear what has happened, from Yoshi, and thanks the PCs as heroes. Yurei asks the PCs to go with him to Otosan Uchi, and they meet with the Jade Champion in the South Hub Village – Yurei is not allowed into the city. Kuni Utagu accepts Passion in order to seek a way to ultimately destroy it.

Hope Denied

(Yoshi dies, or Yoshi lives but has taken up Passion)

***As you ride away from Shiro sano Kakita, the sounds of fighting intensify, the Kakita family pushing back the advance of the Matsu with all their might. In the aftermath, the news of the valiant defense of Shiro sano Kakita spreads, and the Kakita daimyo declares that the Kakita family will not stand for such unchecked aggression. A petition for blood feud against the Matsu family has been delivered to the Imperial Courts.***

Yurei will tell the PCs that they have served his duty with honor, and he will speak well of them to Toshiken. However, he urges them very deeply that the Kakita Family Daimyo is one of the most powerful people in Rokugan, and that regardless of the right or wrongness of it, they cannot speak of Passion or that it is now in Yoshi’s possession – such accusations will almost certainly be met immediately by a challenge to the death.

### 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

Participating in the final conflict: +1XP

Kakita Yoshi survives: +1XP

**Total Possible Experience: 4XP**

## Honor

If Kakita Yoshi dies, any Crane PC loses a Rank of Honor. If he is rescued by the PCs, any Crane PC instead gains two points of Honor.

## Glory

If Kakita Yoshi survives, the PCs gain a Rank of Glory.

If Kakita Yoshi does not survive, the PCs lose two points of Glory.

## Other Awards/Penalties

If the PCs convinced Yoshi not to take up the Bloodsword and rescued him, they gain him as an Ally (1 Devotion/4 Influence). If they acted physically against him, they instead gain a Crane Favor.

If the PCs forcefully took the sword away from Yoshi, they gain Sworn Enemy: Kakita Yoshi (7 points).

## GM Reporting

Did Yoshi take up Passion?

Did Shiro sano Kakita fall to the Matsu?

***GM must report this information BEFORE (7/31/2015) for it to have storyline effect***

# Appendix #1: NPCs

## Kakita House Guard

## Chosen for their skill as duelists, the Kakita House Guard act both as yojimbo and champions for Crane courtiers all across the Empire and as officers of the guards defending the family’s main holdings.

| Air 4 | Earth 3 | | Fire 4 | | | Water 3 | | Void 4 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reflexes 5 | Willpower 4 | | |  | |  | |  |
| Honor 7.2 | | Status 4.0 | | | | | Glory 5.0 | |
| **Initiative:** 10k5+14 | | | | | **Attack:** 10k4e (Katana, Simple) | | | |
| **Armor TN:** 35 | | | | | **Damage:** 7k2m (Katana) | | | |

**Reduction**: 3 (light armor)

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

**School/Rank**:Kakita Bushi 5

**Techniques:** *The Way of the Crane:* +14 Initiative; +1k1+5 to attack and Focus rolls while assuming the Center Stance and the following Round

*Speed of Lightning:* +2k0 attack 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 attacks with Samurai weapons

*Strike With No Thought:* May take one Simple Action per Turn while assuming the Center Stance. Gain the benefits of Center Stance while assuming the Stance instead of the following Turn, and may remain in Center Stance as many consecutive Turns as desired. The Simple Action can be a Move Action (bypassing the normal restriction of the Center Stance).

**Skills:** Artisan: Poetry 3, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 5, Iaijutsu (Focus) 7, Investigation (Notice) 4, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Lore: Heraldry 3, Meditation 3, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 3

**Mastery Abilities:** 9s explode on damage with swords

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Quick, Social Position / Driven: Protect the Kakita

## Castle Guard

## Members of the Kakita family drawn to more basic military service, the Guards are Daidoji-trained bushi who focus on security of the palace itself.

| Air 3 | Earth 4 | | Fire 3 | | Water 4 | | Void 3 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reflexes 4 |  | | Agility 4 | |  | |  |
| Honor 6.7 | | Status 2.5 | | | | Glory 3.0 | |
| **Initiative:** 8k4+5 | | | | **Attack:** 10k5e-5 (Simple, Katana or Yari) | | | |
| **Armor TN:** 35 | | | | **Damage:** 8k2 (Katana) or 6k2 (Yari) | | | |

**Reduction**: 5 (heavy armor)

**Wounds**: 26 (+0), 40 (+0), 54 (+2), 68 (+7), 82 (+12), 96 (+17), 110 (Down, +37), 124 (Dead)

**School/Rank**:Daidoji Iron Warrior 4

**Techniques**: *The Force of Honor:* +6 Wounds per Wound Rank; +1k0 attack rolls while in Attack Stance

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

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

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

**Skills**:Athletics 3, Battle 5, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation (Notice) 4, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Lore: Heraldry 2, Spears 5

**Mastery Abilities**:

**Advantages/Disadvantages**: Strength of the Earth / Idealistic

## Mizu no Oni

## A shapeshifter whose true form is, as one might expect from a Tainted embodiment of water, extremely fluid, the Mizu no Oni is a cunning infiltrator and a vicious brute in combat.

| Air 4 | Earth 3 | Fire 2 | | Water 7 | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Intelligence 3 | | |  |
| **Initiative**: 6k4 | | | **Attack**: 8k4 (Engulf, Complex) | | |
| **Armor TN**: 25 | | | **Damage**: 7k3 (Engulf) | | |

**Reduction**: 15 (10 vs jade or crystal, 5 vs fire-based attacks)

**Wounds**: 30 (+4), 60 (+10), 90 (+15), 120 (Dead)

**Taint Rank**: 6.0

**Skills**: Acting 4, Stealth 4

**Special Abilities**:

* *Aquatic*: The Mizu no Oni moves through water at the same speed as it moves on land, and does not need to make Athletics rolls to swim.
* *Engulf*: Anyone struck by the oni’s Engulf attack is trapped within the oni’s watery body until they can win an Opposed Strength Roll (attempting this roll is a Complex Action). They take Engulf damage each Round that they fail to escape. c Fear 4
* *Huge*
* *Instantaneous Movement*: While in its true (nonshapeshifted) form, a Mizu no Oni can collapse in on itself and disappear, reappearing an instant later anywhere within 500’. This is considered a Complex Move Action.
* *Shapeshifting*: A Mizu no Oni can shapeshift into any creature it has killed with its Engulf attack. This takes a Complex Action. While in the form of its victim it has access to the victim’s memories and voice, though not to their Skills. It can change back to its normal liquid shape as a Free Action. It loses the form and memories of its old victim once it Engulfs a new victim.
* *Superior Invulnerability*: In addition to the normal benefits of Invulnerability, the Mizu no Oni is completely immune to Water magic.
* *Vulnerable to Fire*: The Mizu no Oni takes an extra +1k0 damage from mundane fire attacks and an extra +1k1 damage from Fire spells.

## Kakita Kyruko

Kakita Kyruko is a devastatingly beautiful young woman with long, raven-black hair and bright, wicked eyes. Every move is poised and elegant, perfection in motion, and she knows it. As her previous power-base has begun to erode, she has been approached by darker forces, and she has been tempted to pursue her true passion: power.

| Air 5 | Earth 4 | | Fire 4 | | Water 3 | | Void 4 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reflexes 6 |  | | Agility 5 | |  | |  |
| Honor 2.8 | | Status 4.0 | | | | Glory 5.2 | |
| **Initiative:** 10k5+14 | | | | **Attack:** 10k6e (Passion, Simple) | | | |
| **Armor TN:** 35 | | | | **Damage:** 8k4m (Passion) | | | |

**Wounds**: 76 (Dead)

**School/Rank**:Kakita Bushi 4

**Techniques:** *The Way of the Crane:* +14 Initiative; +1k1+4 to attack and Focus rolls while assuming the Center Stance and the following Round

*Speed of Lightning:* +2k0 attack 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 attacks with Samurai weapons

**Skills:** Artisan: Painting 3, Athletics 3, Courtier 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, Iaijutsu (Focus) 7, Investigation 2, Jiujutsu (Grapple) 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Lore: Heraldry 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Tea Ceremony 3, Temptation (Seduction) 6

**Mastery Abilities:** 9s explode on damage with swords

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Dangerous Beauty, Social Position / Dark Secret, Lecherous

**Passion:** The Bloodsword Passion is a 4k4 nemuranai katana that ignores any special defenses on its target. The wielder gains +1k0 to all Kenjutsu rolls, and Kyruko has ten Free Raises that she may spend on any attack roll with it. (Free Raises are gained by killing an enemy.) While pursuing her passion, Kyruko may ignore Wound Penalties.

# Appendix #2: Embrace of Ningen-do

The ritual and its effects are included here should any PC require it to be cast on them in order to participate.

**Embrace of Ningen-do**

Ring/Mastery: Earth 4

Range: 10’

Area of Effect: one human target

Duration: Instantaneous

Raises: none

This spell takes an hour to cast. Strengthening the power of the Mortal Realm on the selected target, this ritual removes the influence of most other Spirit Realms from a willing mortal. As long as the target is willing when the spell is cast, any effect stemming from the following Realms will be ended: Chikushudo, Gaki-do, Jigoku, Meido, Sakkaku, Toshigoku, Yomi, and Yume-do. This includes the Shadowlands Taint, as well as the Touch of the Realm Advantage or Cursed by the Realm Disadvantage. However, effects from Ningen-do (including other spells), Tengoku, or Kosoku no Chigiri are NOT affected by this ritual. As the Lying Darkness is a creature native to, if forgotten by, the mortal Realm, Shadow Taint is not affected by this ritual either.

Returned Spirits who are subject to this ritual age ten years (a mostly cosmetic effect) and gain the “Curse of Mortality” Disadvantage. Their closer connection to Ningen-do limits their ability to call upon the Void: they must select one Ring, and may not spend Void Points to enhance a roll using either that Ring or its Traits. (So selecting the Fire Ring means they cannot spend Void Points on Fire Ring Rolls, Spell Casting Rolls using Fire, Trait Rolls using Agility or Intelligence, or Skill Rolls using Agility or Intelligence as the Trait.) The Void Ring may be chosen. As fully mortal once more, the character is again bound to destiny.

Characters who are Tainted by the Shadowlands are subject to great pain when this spell is cast, and due to the physical effects the Taint has on their body, it may kill them. Essentially, the chance that this spell will cause the death of a Tainted character is equal to the amount of Taint they have. A character with 2.5 Ranks of Taint has a 25% chance of dying; a character with 1.8 Ranks of Taint has an 18% chance of dying. This chance is never less than 10%, even if the target has less than a Rank of the Shadowlands Taint. However, even if the spell proves lethal, the character’s spirit will be cleansed and they will pass on to Meido (and then any other afterlife) without hindrance.

Finally, under no circumstance will this spell cleanse an unwilling target. Any target who is unable to agree to the ritual (unconscious, compelled through magical means, etc.) will cause the failure of the spell when cast. Even if the target is deceived as to the nature of the spell, once it begins to take effect they will know what is happening to them. A Tainted target will be banished to Jigoku instead, as their will can maintain the connection between their soul and the Realm of Evil. What happens to them there is a question that is as yet unanswered. This makes any Lost character almost certain to be banished, though the hour that casting the ritual requires means that the spell is not useful for combat purposes.