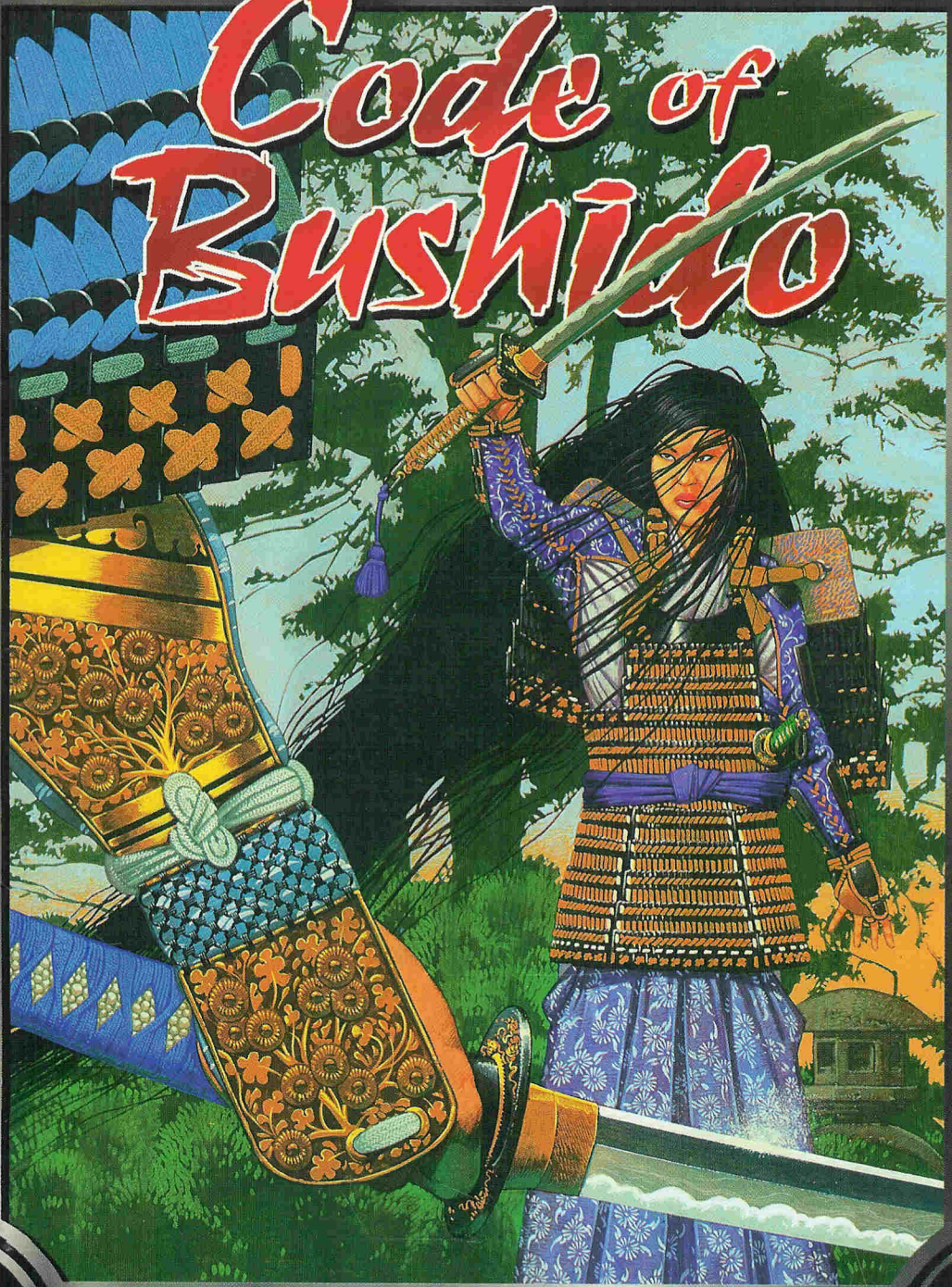
Legend of the Five Rings™

Code of Bushido



B–1
Bushido
Series

An Adventure of Honor and Duty

Legend of the Five Rings

Code of Bushido



"What general or army can stand against the heart of a true warrior?"

– Shinjo Iruko

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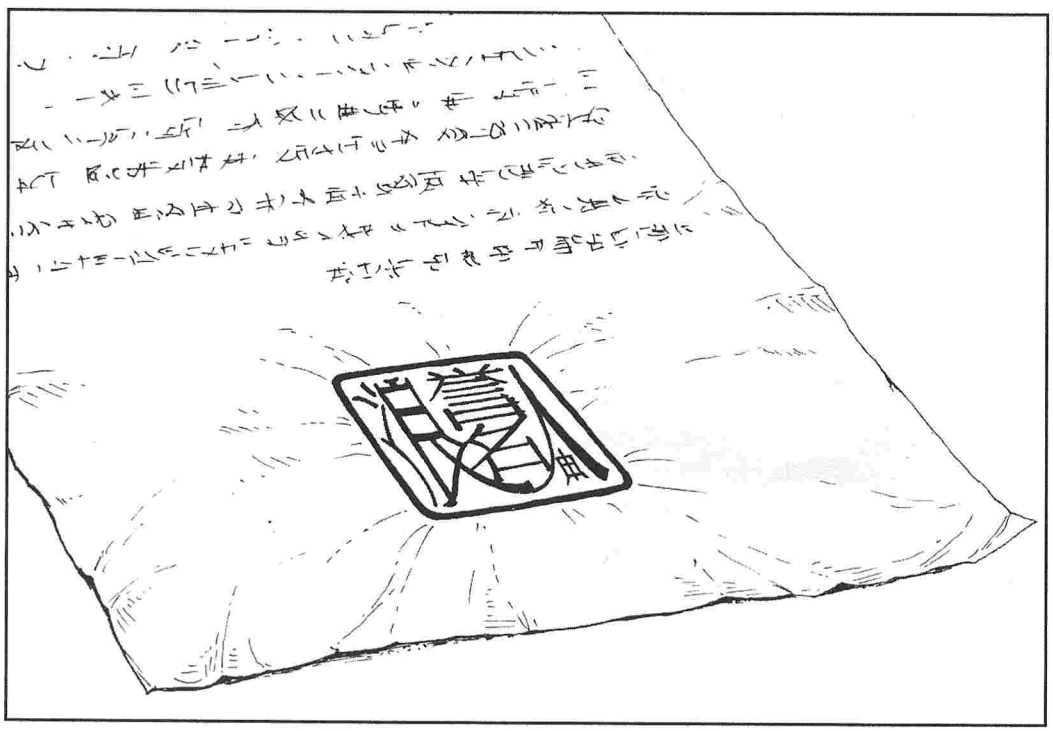


Introduction

Italicized Text

When you see italicized text in Code of Bushido, that means that you are looking at text which should be read to the PCs. This information is for their benefit, detailing what they see, or how an NPC speaks or acts. Be sure to look it over before you read it to the players, so that you know exactly what is about to happen.

What is *Code of Bushido*?

Code of Bushido, the first of our new 'B' series of adventures, is designed to test your players' understanding of honor, loyalty and ethics – bushido, the code of the warrior. 'B' stands for Bushido, and all upcoming adventures titled with this marker will be adventures designed to test the mettle of your characters. Not their battle prowess, or their dizzying ability to solve court intrigue, but their ability to make simple choices – the ones that change your life forever.

The story in *Code of Bushido* can be played as part of a larger campaign, in conjunction with *Honor's Veil* and *Night of a Thousand Screams*, or it can be played separately. Further, the next episode of the 'B' series will be designed to follow up with some of the characters and situations detailed here, and can be integrated smoothly with the information given here.

Each of the three mini-adventures in *Code of Bushido* is designed to offer the characters roleplaying situations in which their ethics are tested. They can be run back to back, or with short adventures of their own between each part. Further, each adventure is designed with several recurring NPCs and 'hooks' to easily integrate it into a larger campaign. We've added some information in the sidebars that will help your characters understand what the code of bushido entails, and some ideas for how to play a samurai living by the code.

This episode contains some tough choices for the characters. If they are magistrates, it will be easy to integrate them into this continuing scenario. Also, we have added some material to assist the GM in setting up the adventure if the characters are not magistrates. While you will find both combat and mystery in these adventures, their main purpose is to challenge their sense of loyalty. Be prepared to 'fail' in some of these tests – they aren't winnable. Rather, they teach the character (and, hopefully, the player) where they stand when their deepest beliefs are on the line.

Bushido isn't about honor. It is about duty. Duty to one's lord, to one's Emperor, and to one's own morals. Sometimes, as the characters will see, you have to put your own honor aside, in order to serve a greater duty.

The Theme of *Code of Bushido*

A running theme through all three of the mini-adventures in *Code of Bushido* is "duty above all else." There is no 'right thing' to do, no path which will safely guide the characters out of their moral dilemma. They have to choose where there truest duty lies. That also means that there is no 'right answer' for any of these scenarios – there is only the decision about where the character's deepest loyalties lie.

In Part One, the characters are asked to choose between the respected traditions of the Seven Clans and denying an honorable man his place – even if that man is a ronin. Part Two forces a decision between loyalty to their daimyo and loyalty to the Emperor. Finally, Part Three of *Code of Bushido* asks the characters to make the hardest choice of all: between true friendship and justice.

Sometimes, the path of duty demands sacrifice…

Part 1: A Matter of Honor

Background: The Setsuban Festival

Once every fall, the shugenja of Rokugan gather together and hold a great festival to celebrate the favors of the Fortunes and the wonders it has permitted them to view. The festival is held at the Shrine of the Ki-Rin in the Phoenix lands. They gather above the Shrine of the Ki-Rin to feast, politick and compete in a grand tournament designed to challenge their wits and abilities. The winner of the tournament receives a cache of scrolls, gathered from all the major schools and monastery in the Empire. More than that, they gain the respect of their peers and the implicit acknowledgment that they are the greatest shugenja in the land. Traditionally, the Isawa family dominates the competition, but enough non-Phoenix have won to make the prospect worthwhile for more than a few spellcasters.

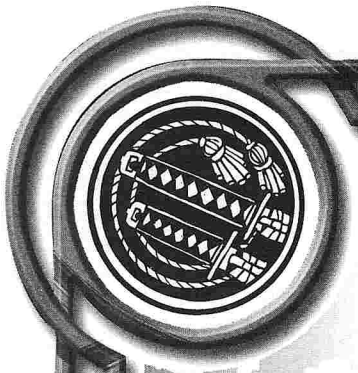
In addition to the tournament, the festival serves as another excuse for the courtiers and noblemen of Rokugan to play their endless games. Shugenja may be holy men, but they are also sources of power, and power attracts men like flies to honey. The Emperor's family usually attends, as well as daimyo from all seven Great Clans and quite a few minor ones as well. Rivalries and alliances are forged behind the scenes here, and deals are made which can affect the future of Rokugan for years to come. This next festival promises to be an especially interesting one, for the Emperor's niece, Okomo Yoroshiku, will be in attendance – and her uncle has just announced her eligibility for marriage.

This will be enough to get some of the players to attend the ceremonies – at least two of them (both males) have daimyo interested in a political connection with the Hantei. If she were to marry a samurai under the daimyo's banner, he would be assured of having the Emperor's ear. Accordingly, the characters have each been ordered to attend the festival and court Yoroshiku with the intention of making her a wife. If they do, their status in the clan will be secured. Depending upon which clan the characters belong to, each daimyo will address the issue differently:

Crab: The chief frustration among Rokugan's defenders is the perceived lack of support they receive from the rest of the Empire. If a Crab were to be placed close to the Emperor, he could procure all the supplies, munitions, and military assets they needed. No longer would they have to fight their battle alone; they could count on the entire Empire to always be behind them.

The Crab daimyo will phrase this to the character in the most direct manner possible.





Iuchi Taiga

EARTH: 2
WATER: 3
Perception: 4
FIRE: 2
Intelligence: 3
AIR: 2
Awareness: 4
VOID: 3
School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 3
Skills: Calligraphy 3, Defense 2, Hand-to-Hand 3, Herbalism 2, Hunting 1, Meditation 3.
Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Bo of Water, Castle of Water, The Path to Inner Peace, Biting Steel, Fury of Osano-Wo, Benevolent Protection of Shinsei.
Weapons: None.
Honor: 3.3
Glory: 2.5
Advantages: Gaijin Gear (telescope).
Disadvantages: Never Sat on a Horse.

A wily, smart, and cautious shugenja, Taiga has been assigned the duty of watching over scrolls on the final leg of their journey. He takes his responsibilities deathly seriously, and has vowed never to let the scrolls out of his sight.

There is no pretense or masquerade hiding what he wants the character to do and why.

"We need resources and this is the best way to get them. If you were to marry the Emperor's niece, you could be in a position to procure them when and where we needed them. Go. Play their games, dance to their foolish tunes. But do not forget that brave men die here every day; by bedding this Hantei woman, you could help end the bloodshed once and for all."

Crane: The Crane are not so much desirous of another position near the Emperor as they are afraid that one of their rivals may gain an advantage against them. Yoroshiku is an asset that the Scorpion or Lion could make great use of; best to deny it to them by marrying her off to a Crane as quickly as possible.

The Crane daimyo will point out the Clan's long-standing connection to the Hantei, and the need to maintain it through future generations.

"You will be part of a noble tradition, one that stretches back to the First Ones and will last for another thousand years. By taking this beautiful woman to wife, we can further fulfill our duty as the Emperor's Left Hand, and ensure the Empire's prosperity under his glorious reign."

The character should read between the lines that it is immensely important to the daimyo to establish this relationship.

Dragon: (**Note:** Under no circumstances should an *ise zumi* be allowed to court Yoroshiku. The tattooed men have more important things on their minds.)

The enigmatic Dragon are always cryptic about their motivations, and this situation should be no different. Togashi Yokuni has whispered dire warnings about the future of the Hantei dynasty – warnings which are only just now filtering down from his mountaintop. The more worldly members of the clan believe it would be prudent to have "one of their own" near the Emperor, to watch developments and perhaps intervene if the situation calls for it. They can think of no one more qualified than the player character.

"Tomorrow's sun prepares itself to shine, even today. So, too, do wise men prepare for the future, knowing it will beat down on their heads."

Lion: The Emperor's Right Hand has often chafed that so many of the Hantei have linked themselves to their simpering Crane rivals; the time has come to reassert themselves. Yoroshiku is an honorable woman and will bring great glory to this, the proudest clan. More importantly, however, Yoroshiku's mother was a Lion, and the daimyo believes that the bloodline should remain within the clan. He will stress the honor of wedding such a woman – and therefore, the reason why only the Lion can be allowed to receive it – to the character:

"She is the product of the two most noble families in all of Rokugan. Pawning her off to some Scorpion or Unicorn eta is a dishonor we cannot stand for. You have the courage of the Lion in your veins, as does she. Only you have the strength of heart to make her a proper husband."

Phoenix: Most of the time, the Phoenix do not concern themselves with such petty events as courtship for political gain. But the time and location of this particular courtship have changed things. The Asako family considers the Setsuban Festival to be the most important event to take place on their lands, and as such, feel the need to dominate it utterly. Everyone knows that this woman's fate may be decided here, which could draw attention away from the magical prowess the Festival represents. If her destiny is to be sealed on Phoenix lands, at a Phoenix festival, it is only fitting that a Phoenix intertwine his lifethread with hers. The character's daimyo explains it thus:

"They will be expecting us, as hosts, to send a representative in search of the lady's hand. By gaining it, we not only fulfill our duties as honor dictates, but we make it clear that petty politics have no place here. The Festival's agenda will not be dictated to us by schemers and sycophants."

Scorpion: The Scorpion see Yoroshiku as an angle, and wish to exploit her as they do any other angle. Placing one of their own at her side will infuriate the Lion – her mother was a Lion, after all, making the poor girl "theirs" as far as they're concerned – and make the Crane nervous by creating a link to the Emperor that they do not control. With all eyes focused on the young woman and her handsome Scorpion husband, the clan can make its real move unobserved…

The daimyo will imply to the character that his duty as a Scorpion depends upon becoming Yoroshiku's husband.

"Be our mask, noble samurai. Behind you, we can proceed with our duties unmolested, and ensure that our Emperor remains safe from his enemies."

Unicorn: The Unicorn are newcomers to Rokugan and are still settling into their new

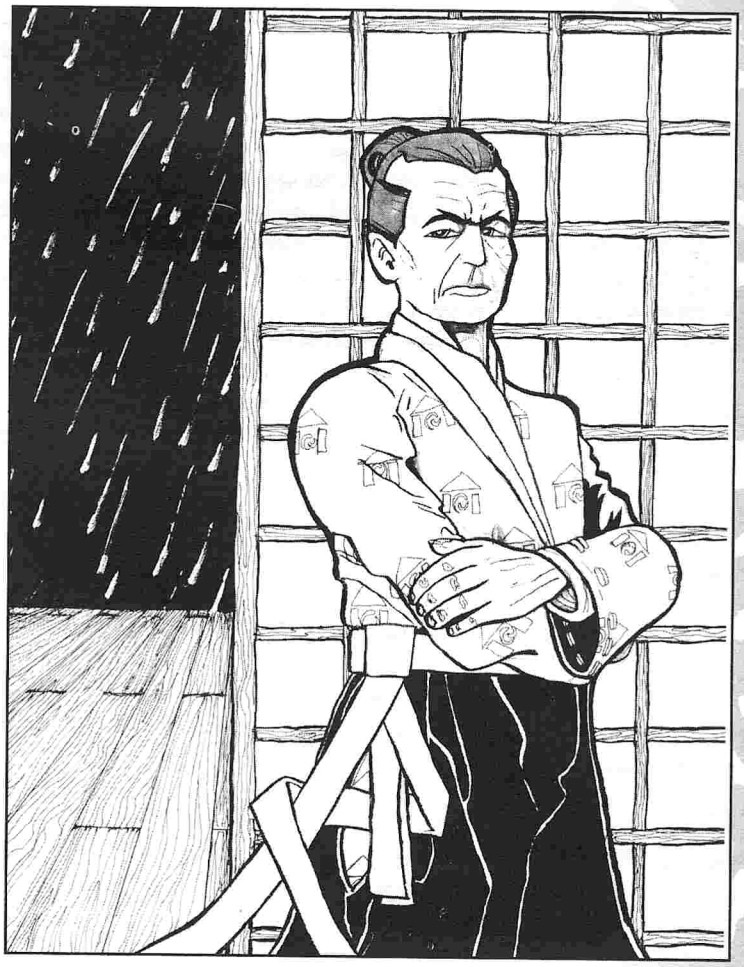
position. Much of the clan's economy depends on the maintenance of trade routes throughout the Empire – routes which they cannot always protect from bandits and other marauders. They have courtiers in Otosan Uchi to help in this endeavor, but no one in the Emperor's own family. The eligible niece provides just the opening they need. A husband of hers can help coordinate trade routes around the bustling Imperial capital, while ensuring that Unicorn interests are not thrown aside in for those of older, more entrenched clans.

"Our hooves have traveled far, so new vistas are nothing strange to us. Otosan Uchi is an important place, yet it remains on the far side of the Empire. We need to have someone there who can keep his wandering heart pure. If a Unicorn were to be present in the city – or even better, in the halls of the Imperial palace itself – then we could ensure our many travelers of having a home anywhere in Rokugan."

No matter what clan the two would-be suitors come from, their superiors will impress upon them the importance of making Yoroshiku their wife. She is a vital link to the Hantei family, and it would bring great prestige – not to mention some premium political connections – to any man who becomes her husband.

The other players will have more pressing, yet less complex duties. They won't have to worry about romantic rivalry during the Setsuban Festival, but will need to ensure that its most valuable element makes it there. In preparation for the festival, the head of the Isawa family dispatches a caravan to visit every major shugenja school in the land and procure a single scroll from each. The scrolls contain spells unique to the schools from which they come, and are not usually available to outsiders. The winner of the tournament receives the entire cache scrolls as his or her prize (a bounty which even the most powerful shugenja would covet). It usually takes the caravan several months to make its way to all the schools. During that time, it must be protected from those who would steal its treasure of knowledge for their own. It is the duty of every daimyo to provide guards for the caravan as it moves through their territory; since no single clan provides the entire scroll cache, no single clan can be expected (i.e. trusted) to protect it for the whole journey.

A Unicorn daimyo named Shinjo Gidayu has been given the honor of seeing the caravan through the last leg of its journey – from the Iuchi shugenja school to the Shrine of the Ki-Rin in the Phoenix lands. The way is long, and the scroll cache will be full, so an attack from bandits or raiders is likely. Gidayu needs reliable servants – the PCs – to see the cache to safety. If the



characters are all Emerald Magistrates, or other servants of the Hantei Emperor, he feels they are honorable enough to fulfill the responsibility. If they are not magistrates, or have no other ties to the Emperor, then he will assign the duty to a Unicorn PC – and ask him or her to use "trusted" samurai (the remaining PCs) to back him or her up.

Gidayu will invite the players to his castle – located near the City of the Rich Frog on the eastern edge of Unicorn lands – and explain what he wishes them to do over dinner. The PCs should feel compelled to help him; if not for the clan or the Emperor, then for the honor that guarding the scrolls will bring. Shugenja characters may wish

Caravan Merchants (5)

EARTH: 2
WATER: 2
Perception: 3
FIRE: 2
Intelligence: 3
AIR: 2
Awareness: 4
VOID: 1
School/Rank: None.
Skills: Animal Husbandry 1, Appraisal 4, Commerce 3, Etiquette 1, Horsemanship 1, Lore (Trade Routes) 3, Sincerity 3, one or two Craft skills (Armorer, Craft, Weaponsmith, etc.) at Rank 2 each.
Honor: 1.8

The merchants are minor members of the Ide family, interested in going to the festival. They range in age between 20 and 40 years old, and are dressed in the modest finery that befits their station. They are aware of the caravan's true nature and understand the risks, but are not trained in combat and will be of little use in the event of attack.

to participate in the competition, and delivering the scrolls will guarantee them a spot on the list. For everyone, it will be a chance to see one of the great festivals of the Emerald Empire.

Gidayu himself plans to attend the festivities, but has no wish to arrive with the caravan "like a common merchant". (He won't mention this to the PCs.) He will leave ahead of the characters and make much better time to the shrine of the Ki-Rin. He expects to see them there within two weeks. They will be provided with papers placing them in charge of the caravan, and (if they lack other means) passes allowing them to proceed through all of the territories en route to the Shrine.

At some point over dinner, the characters might ask Gidayu if his karo (assistant) might not be better suited to the task of guarding the scrolls. Gidayu will reply bluntly:

"I do not have a karo. My karo is dead."

This should signal the end of the conversation; Gidayu's tone suggests he does not wish to discuss it, and any attempts to bring the subject up again will result in a grave loss of face to whoever is foolish enough to do so.

Journey to the Shrine

The caravan arrives at Gidayu's fortress from the Iuchi school within two days. Gidayu will be long gone, but has invited the characters to enjoy his hospitality until they leave. The fortress is small, but contain a few amenities, including a pair of rock gardens and a gorgeous hedge maze patterned after a similar *gaijin* structure somewhere in the far north. The players should have no trouble occupying themselves, and the GM is welcome to come up with any minor palace encounters with servants, bushi guards, etc., that seem appropriate.

On the morning of the second day of their stay, the caravan passes through the fortress gates. They remain long enough to water the horses and take on the PCs, then move on as quickly as they can. The characters are free to arrange themselves however they wish, and establish any sort of order or routine for the other guards. They are in charge, and everyone traveling with them will obey them.

The caravan consists of the following:

Three wagons, filled with silks, spices, and other wares to be sold at the festival. The wagons are pulled by shaggy work ponies (two apiece), and occupied by five Unicorn merchants, to whom most of the supplies belong. They are aware of the caravan's true cargo, and have volunteered to accompany it to disguise its true purpose. In addition, fifteen bushi guards have been assigned to stand watch over the caravan – the most that could be attached without drawing undue notice. See the sidebars for their stats. Seven of the bushi are mounted on Rokugani riding horses; the rest are walking or riding on the wagon. They will all follow the characters' orders without question, and arrange themselves however the players wish to provide optimum protection.

The scrolls themselves are kept in a large chest made of cedar and locked with bands of steel. It sits in the bottom of the middle wagon, hidden under a pile of fur-lined cloaks and leather goods. The caravan organizers figured (quite correctly) that most Rokugani would be unwilling to handle animal flesh and thus wouldn't bother to check beneath the cloaks to find the chest. A shugenja from the Iuchi school – Iuchi Taiga – has been assigned to watch over the scrolls at all times. He will stay within the wagon, even eating and sleeping there, and cannot be persuaded to move under any circumstance. He swore to his master that he would defend the scrolls, and would rather die than put them out of his sight.

The path the characters will take to the festival runs along the northern bank of Drowned Merchant River, just outside of Lion Clan territory. The river is swollen with spring rains and difficult to ford, so the caravan planned to stay on its northern banks rather than risk the scrolls on an ill-advised crossing. The road runs through unoccupied grasslands and forested hilltops before turning into the great northern mountains and the vale which holds the Shrine. The ride should be fairly pleasant, but there won't be much in the way of fellow travelers – the route is only used by those wishing to visit the tiny Dragonfly Clan. Lion and Crane roads to the south are better maintained and thus preferable to most.

The journey will take some fifteen days, and can be peppered with as many or as few encounters as the GM wishes. The following two are provided as examples.

Merchant Ghosts

The Drowned Merchant River was named so three hundred years ago, when a prominent Crane merchant and his family were tortured and killed along its banks by a gang of bandits. Ever

since then, the river banks have been haunted by their ghosts, who wander its length searching for revenge. Local peasants refuse to go near the waters after dark. Unfortunately, the caravan's planners didn't consider such superstitions worthy of consideration, and plotted the path directly across the site where the merchant family were killed.

This encounter takes place in the dead of night, after most of the characters have gone to sleep. A posted guard (hopefully one of the PCs, although the other bushi will stand watch in turns if the players don't think of it) will catch site of a faint glow approaching the campsite. The glow soon resolves itself as a pair of harrowing figures – the merchant and his wife, glowing white in the moonlight. Their eyes are empty sockets and their faces are drawn with pain and horror. As approach the camp, they give a hideous howl in the sky:

"Where is the blood of my children?" he screams. "Where are the men who tore them from me?" (The cry will awaken characters on a roll of 1-6). *In answer to his questions, a quartet of smaller ghosts, two boys and two girls, will appear in the middle of the camp. They are eyeless, like their parents, and their small bodies are run through with arrows and nage-yari. They hold out their arms and rush wailing toward their mother and father, only to vanish again just before they arrive. Their screams turn to agonizing screeches, then to a horrible wet gurgle that slowly dies down. The two parent ghosts will stand aghast, then hold their hands out pleading to any witnesses. "The line of my ancestors ended with their murder. The cries of countless unborn cannot be silenced with time. Tell me that justice has been brought to their butchers, that I may finally rest in peace."*

The guards who first saw the ghosts, or anyone else who witnessed the demonstration from beginning to end, must make a Willpower roll at TN 15, or else run shrieking into the night. (With the exception of Iuchi Taiga, any NPCs will automatically fail the roll.) Their hair will gain a streak of white for their troubles, and they suffer an Honor loss as appropriate to their station (one or two for a regular bushi, five or six for a Lion samurai). Those who succeed may interact with the ghosts as they wish, but will be unable to say anything to assuage them. The men who murdered them died warm in their beds, and nothing the characters say or do can change that. When they realize that they cannot be avenged, the ghosts will rise into the air. Their moans turn to shrieks like those of their children, and as they vanish into the night sky, the horrible gurgles of the drowned follow after them. If the ghosts are confronted with pieces of jade, or other appropriate holy items, they will vanish in a flash. Done quickly enough, it will prevent the fear effects on other party members.

In addition to any who were frightened off, the display is enough to spook the caravan horses. Any not properly tied down will panic and bolt into the night. Their fearful whinnies can be heard on the wind as they disappear. Luckily, the ground is fairly even and the waxing moon gives good light; none of the animals will be injured galloping through the dark. Any that have run off can be found the next morning – after a few hours searching – in the nearby fields.

Before leaving, the characters may want to perform a purification ritual to honor the



Imperial Caravan Guards (15)

EARTH: 2
Stamina: 3
WATER: 2
Strength: 3
FIRE: 2
AIR: 2
Reflexes: 3
VOID: 2
School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 1
Skills: Archery 2, Athletics 1, Bard 1, Battle 2, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 1, History 2, Kenjutsu 2.
Weapons: Katana (3k2), Wakizashi (2k2), Da-kyu (as arrow).
Honor: 3.5
Glory: 1.5

The guards are low-level bushi attached to the Emerald magistrates. They will fight valiantly to defend the caravan, but their duties will change once they reach the Festival. They will not be under the characters' command after the caravan reaches its destination.

The Dragonfly and the Festival

The Dragonfly have no shugenja school of their own (most are trained in the Phoenix or Dragon schools), but have sent several of their members to compete in the festival, and are looking forward to the recognition their clan will receive there. The Festival is one of the few times the Dragonfly are accepted as an independent clan, and not an extension of the Dragon or the Phoenix .

departed ghosts. Taiga will suggest so if no on else thinks of it. The ritual (a variation of Blessings of Purity, known to any shugenja who possesses that spell) takes an hour and will prevent the spirits from tormenting the caravan again.

Dragonfly Castle

The halfway point for the journey is Kyuden Tonbo, the home fortress of the Dragonfly Clan. Here, the characters will have a chance to sleep in a real bed, surrounded by protective walls, rather than the uncomfortable and decidedly unsafe wilderness. The fortress itself is not formidable; in fact, it seems laughably small compared to the palaces of the Great Clans. But its size belies a quiet power, for mighty wards have been placed upon its walls. The magic has protected them since the Dragonfly were founded; no enemy has yet managed to capture the place.



The caravan will be met by a Mirumoto patrol as it enters Dragonfly lands. The Mirumoto recognize the Dragonfly provinces as their protectorate, and assign a small percentage of their troops to help patrol the border. The patrol's leader (a Dragonfly samurai-ko named Tonbo Sako) will ask for their traveling papers and purpose for entering Dragonfly territory. She will pointedly ask if they have any business or information they wish to pass on to the Dragon lands. Assuming everything is in order, the guards will then escort the caravan to Kyuden Tonbo.

The players will be greeted at the gates by Tonbo Sodan, the son of the daimyo and heir to the Dragonfly's leadership. He is a pleasant-faced man with an easy smile, who seems to take an instant liking to the party. He will regale them over dinner with amusing anecdotes about his Dragon cousins, and entertain them with a group of sleight-of-hand magicians.

There is, however, a small snag to this otherwise pleasant evening. One of the palace shugenja (Mirumoto Ekai) has not been permitted to attend the festival. In a fit of shame and jealousy, he has decided to break open the cache of scrolls and copy as many of them as he can. The fact that such copies probably won't work hasn't occurred to him; if he gets them made, he believes that he will have access to the original's power. He knows the palace bushi guarding the box, and will be able to get past them without too much trouble. Iuchi Taiga will be sleeping nearby, but Ekai can move very quietly when he wishes. He will succeed in breaking open the box's lock and making hurried copies of three or four scrolls before dawn. He will then relock the box and slip out with no one the wiser. Or so he thinks.

If any players are guarding the scroll box (i.e. in the direct vicinity of the box throughout the night), they should be allowed to try and stop Ekai if they wish. Otherwise, Taiga will notice that the box has been tampered with immediately upon waking, and raise a considerable stink about it – first to the guards on duty, then to their host. Sodan will be shocked to hear of such a thing, and will make attempts to apologize for the incident. Taiga, however, will be so rude in his accusations, that Sodan's humility will soon be replaced by anger. Who is this barbarian fool to make light of his hospitality so? The argument quickly grows out of proportion, and threatens to come to blows.

It is up to the PCs to step in and reconcile the two parties. This should be a role-playing experience, and the GM should judge success based on how well the players deliver their arguments. Taiga can be reasoned with by pointing out that none of the scrolls were stolen, so no harm has been caused. Sodan will be assuaged by complimenting his hospitality and asking for his assistance in determining what happened and why. If Sodan questions the guards, they will quickly point to Ekai. The errant shugenja will claim he merely wished to see the great cache. He will apologize for any misunderstanding, and beg Iuchi Gidayu's pardon for his thoughtless dismissal of the Unicorn's sacred duty. Under no circumstances will he admit to copying any of the scrolls.

Further development can be handled in any manner the GM sees fit. Regardless of how the confrontation ends, Sodan will dispatch another unit of guards to see the caravan safely out of Dragonfly lands.

"Bandit" Attack

At some point after they pass the Dragonfly lands – on the final leg of their journey to the shrine – the character will come under attack from a large band of what appear to be bandits. In actuality, they are merely ronin bent on achieving a specific task. The masterless samurai are angry at the Phoenix Clan and are hoping to take some measure of revenge by stealing the scroll box. The players, unfortunately, are in the way.

The land they have been traveling through has become increasingly hilly, with patches of trees and several deep vales between them. To the north, the mountains loom up on the horizon, becoming larger with each passing day. Once they pass Soul's Edge Road (the route to the Dragon lands), they will encounter evidence of numerous rockslides. The land seems to grow more and more wild as they proceed.

The attack comes as the caravan passes between two wide hills. The pathway is constricted here, and nearby rocks provide good cover, while three nearby vales give easy escape for those who know about them. The raiding party consists of some forty ronin, plus a powerful shugenja named Koan. They will launch arrows at both sides of the caravan, trying to keep the party pinned down and off balance. They will not engage in hand-to-hand combat until approached, which means somebody is going to have to charge their position. Volunteers, anyone?

Stats for the ronin are in the sidebars. They are led by a man named Niban and his lieutenant Tobuko, who have a very specific purpose for launching the attack. A Perception + Battle roll (TN 15) reveals that the attackers are deliberately trying to keep their opponents alive. The arrow volleys are intended as cover fire only, and the pattern of their assault suggests a diversion, not attrition. They will defend themselves if forced to, but otherwise will not cause any lethal damage. Whomever they are, they seem to have more respect for human life than most bandits.

While the "bandits" are distracting the caravan guards, the shugenja Koan will make a move for the box of scrolls. Hidden by an Essence of Air spell, he will creep into the center wagon and search for it. Before he does so, however, he will cast a powerful Wind-Borne Slumbers, putting everyone in the vicinity of the wagon to sleep (player characters included, unless they make an Earth roll at TN 30). The only one definitely unaffected by the spell will be Taiga, who will remain awake and alert when Koan enters the wagon. He spots the rogue shugenja and immediately launches an attack. Unless the PCs can intervene, Taiga will be killed in the ensuing scuffle, struck down by Koan's wakizashi. The bottom of the wagon will also catch fire (a spell of Taiga's that misfires when he dies), and spread slowly throughout the entire wagon. The ronin will quickly gather up the box and make his escape.

No matter what happens, Koan gets away with the spell scrolls. He is using powerful magic to aid him, and will not let himself be deterred by anything. The players should be suitably occupied by the attack (and the smoke rising from the center wagon) to keep from following them. No one will fire on a character or NPC attempting to put the fire in the center wagon out, further evidence that the attackers are trying to minimize injuries. The ronin bushi will break off once Koan has the scrolls, and will not trouble the caravan further. If for some reason, the players pursue the raiders, they will have a frustrating time of it. Their path is well marked, but ends at a steep ravine. The bridge across it has been cut, leaving the party to find another way across. It will take several days to do so – time the players do not have. They are due at the shrine the next

Niban

EARTH: 4
WATER: 3
FIRE: 2
Agility: 3
AIR: 4
VOID: 3
School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 4
Skills: Archery 2, Armorer 3, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Commerce 2, Defense 1, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand 5, Horse Archery 3, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 4, Lance 2, Leadership 4, Lore (samurai, bushido) 4, Shintao 3.
Weapons: Katana (3k2).
Honor: 4.8
Advantages: Higher Purpose (ronin village), Kharmic Tie (Kocho)
Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (ronin)

As the leader of the Ronin, Niban firmly believes in them and looks out for their welfare. His views on bushido are somewhat obsessive, which leads him to make some very unconventional decisions. He left his home Clan of the Unicorn because he felt they were not honorable enough; now, he searches to find something better. With the Village of the Nightingale, he thinks he has found it.

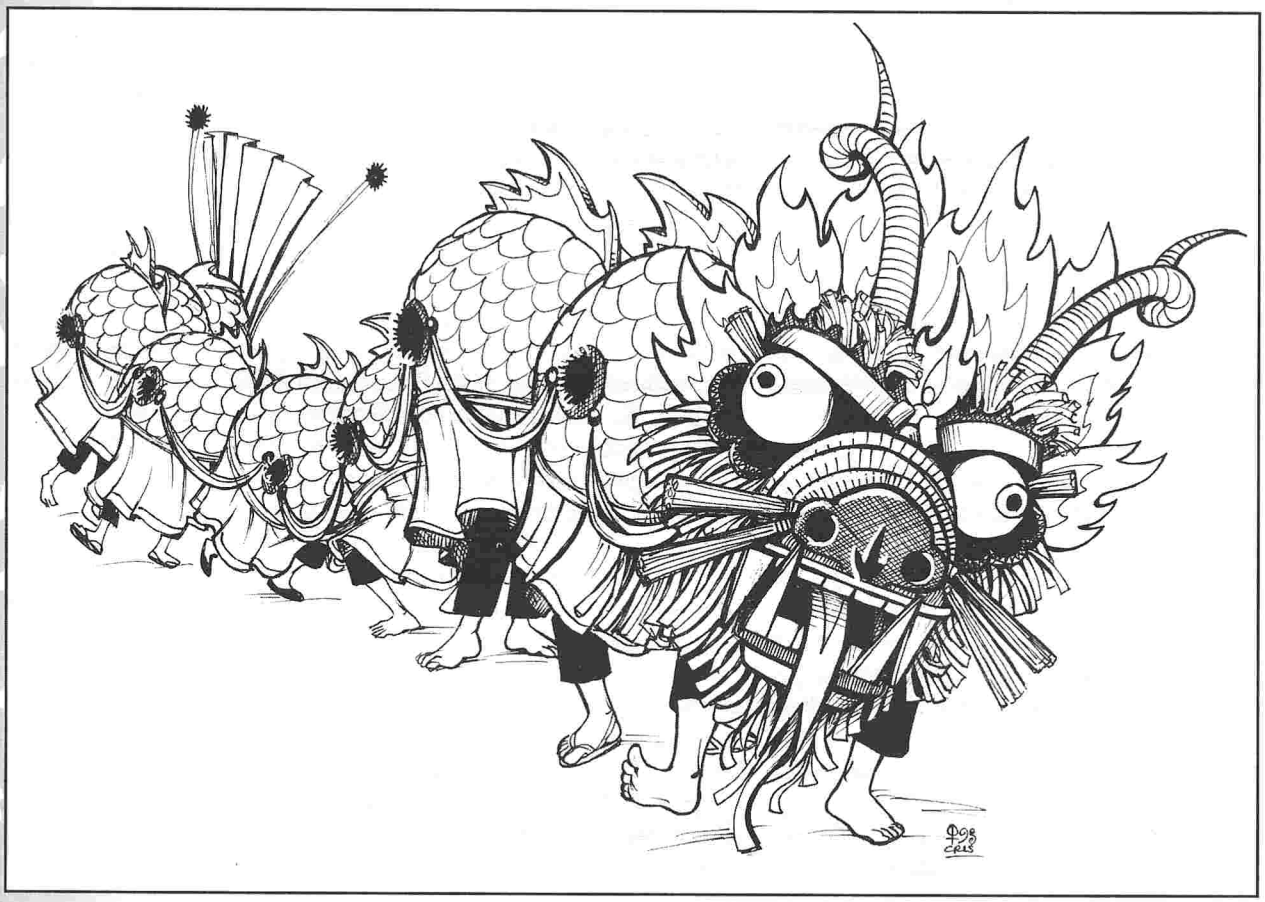
morning; the Festival itself is scheduled to begin in a little less than forty-eight hours.

The Shrine of the Ki-Rin

The characters are now faced with the unpleasant prospect of arriving at the festival without the grand prize. They have several ways of dealing with the problem, but should continue on to the Shrine of the Ki-Rin before doing anything. The merchants cannot be left in this wild land alone, and most of the bushi are anxious to reach Shinjo Gidayu and tell him what happened. The player characters assigned to court Otomo Yoroshiku should also be eager to proceed; their orders contain nothing about going after lost scrolls. In any case, they are close enough to their destination that they can come back and hunt the "bandits" without too much difficulty.

The caravan will roll into Dragon Heart Plain overlooking the Shrine of the Ki-Rin about midday. The festival participants are in the midst of preparations: raising tents, preparing foods, and rehearsing the numerous ceremonies that will take place over the next week. Streamers are festooned everywhere, and the smell of cooking rises through the air. Representatives from all seven clans can be seen milling about, talking in clusters, or conducting courtly intrigues in the numerous noblemen's quarters set up around the site. A group of drummers pounds out rhythms somewhere in the distance, while Phoenix acrobats rehearse the dance of a great paper mache dragon. The centerpiece of the festival is a huge circle littered with invocations to the Elements – the site of the great shugenja competition.

The Shrine itself stands below the plain, on a naturally-occurring shelf of rock in the midst of the mountains. It provides a stunning view of the lands north and east, including the entirety of the Phoenix provinces. The Great Wall of the North can be seen quite clearly, marking the final barrier between Rokugan and the barbarian lands beyond. The shrine itself consists of a large white statue of a Ki-Rin rearing up to the north. Its visage is covered in flames and its eyes reflect a thousand years of wisdom. The rising sun



bathes the statue in its light, causing it to glow brightly. A phrase has been carved on the pedestal: "Look to the horizon, for the visions there are the footsteps of the future." A prayer bowl and several burning sticks of incense surround it at all times; a small contingent of monks cares for the Shrine year-round.

While the merchants depart to set up their stalls, the players should find Shinjo Gidayu and report to him as soon as possible. It should take some time to find the tent housing the Unicorn lord. The characters will gain a great deal of attention from the festival participants, especially if they are sporting recent injuries or the bodies of companions (Taiga, for example). The crowds will part to let them through; their hardened demeanors will quiet the levity around them.

As they proceed, observant characters may have a chance to notice a few things about their fellow attendees. A Courtier + Awareness roll (TN 15) is required to learn each fact; they should have only a few moments to notice them before the jostling crowds block them from sight. Some of them have bearing on later adventures; others are included simply as flavor, to be developed however the GM wishes.

• The characters pass a Shiba lord (Shiba Himitsu, next in line for the position of Phoenix Champion), wandering around and looking quite distracted. He bumps into people and objects with muttered apologies, while distant concern creases his face. Normally, this wouldn't draw undue attention, but the party passes him several times as they wind their way through the crowd.

(**Note:** Himitsu is placed here as foreshadowing; he becomes quite important later on in the adventure. Under no circumstances should the players be allowed to kill or harm him.)

• A group of Scorpion noblemen have surrounded a small band of their Lion counterparts and engaged them in debate. The Lions look angry enough to come to blows, and the Scorpions seem to be walking a delicate line in their carefully-worded speeches. There are ten Scorpions in the group; more by far than can be seen anywhere else at the festival.

• The courtship of Otomo Yoroshiku has already begun. The Emperor's niece can be seen commanding the attentions of two NPC samurai: a Crane and a Phoenix. The Crane is comparing her beauty to the splendor of their surroundings, while the Phoenix works diligently in the construction of a haiku. There will doubtless be more suitors soon. If the courting PCs wish to make their presence known, they should probably do so fairly quickly, lest she get swamped by too many suitors.

• There are no ronin shugenja present in the crowds. All of the competition participants – in fact all of the noblemen at the festival – belong to one clan or another. All of them wear their affiliation proudly, either by sporting clan colors, or displaying their mon. Considering that there are over 100,000 ronin in Rokugan, it would stand to reason that at least a few would be here…

(**Note:** There are no ronin here because the Phoenix will not allow them to participate in the shugenja competition. This has some bearing on the players' current predicament; see the next page for more information.)

• A Dragon *ise zumi* is in conversation with a Kuni Witch Hunter. Both Witch Hunters and Tattooed Men are rarities at the festival; they usually have less frivolous things on their minds. That two would be together and talking like this suggests that something foul may be afoot.

• A small child seems to be following the characters around. He always appears at a safe distance, and seems well-versed in the art of concealment. They may spot him several times as they move through the crowd, but if they try to approach, he vanishes without a trace – only to appear again a few minutes later.

(**Note:** the child, Kocho, has been sent by the "bandits" to keep an eye on the player characters. Their leadership assumes that the party will come after them eventually and wants to make sure that someone stays close to them. See the next page for more details.)

After some time, they will come upon Gidayu's tent. The purple and gold banners above have been tied in strange barbarian patterns, while the tents are arranged in the Unicorn's traditional triangular format. A fierce-looking samurai-ko will hail the characters as they approach, and lead them to her daimyo.

Gidayu will listen to what the characters have to say and shake his head sadly. He was quite fond of Taiga, and will be understandably upset at his death. When they are done, he will consider for a moment, then speak.

"The loss of the scrolls is a tremendous dishonor, one which taints the entire proceedings. If anyone is to learn that we do not have them,

Tobuko

EARTH: 4
WATER: 3
FIRE: 2
Intelligence: 3
AIR: 3
VOID: 2
School/Rank: Mantis Bushi 3.
Skills: Archery 2, Armorer 2, Athletics 2, Commerce 4, Courtier 2, Gambling 2, Hand-to-Hand 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 2, Intimidation 2, Kenjutsu 3, Lore (ronin) 3, Manipulation 3, Music (singing) 1, Sincerity 2.
Honor: 0.2
Advantages: Blackmail (Adventure Three - may not be revealed until then), Heartless.
Disadvantages: Driven (ambition), Social Disadvantage (ronin)
New Disadvantage: Missing Eye (3 points) – No depth perception (+5 TN to all attacking and visual Perception rolls)

Tobuko is a true ronin, at heart, a woman who can never kneel before another. She likes the freedom of being a wave woman, and despises the concept of bushido. She likes to sing; it relaxes her, and she does it just before doing things she can't turn back from. Lately, she's been singing a lot.

Ronin Bandits (50 total)

EARTH: 2
Stamina: 3
WATER: 3
FIRE: 2
AIR: 2
Reflexes: 3
VOID: 2
School/Rank: None.
Skills: Animal Husbandry 2, Athletics 1, Commerce 2, Defense 1, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Shintao 1, one or two Craft skills and one or two weapons skills (GM's choice) at Rank 2 each.
Weapons: By Weapon skill.
Honor: 2.5
Advantages: Irreproachable
Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (ronin)

These are the masterless bushi united under Niban. They have varying traits and motivations for following him, but all are well-trained warriors (if a little scruffy around the edges).

They have spent a great deal of time building their villiage, and learning and teaching each other the skills which they will need here. Many of them have a great deal invested in the Village of the Nightingale.

the scandal could ruin us. As those charged with it its protection, I fear that you may bear the greatest weight of the burden. However, there is still hope. If you can find the scrolls before the end of the festival and bring them back in time for the winner of the competition to receive them, then all will be well. As far as the rest of the festival knows, they were never lost at all. The apprehension of these dogs will allow you to save face, and erase the dishonor of your earlier failure. Do you think you can find the bandits who robbed you?"

Any character with the Hunting or Battle skill will have no problems saying yes. The "bandits" were a large force, and could not have hidden their tracks particularly well. Roads in the mountain are scarce, and they would have few paths to follow. Furthermore, any Dragon players (especially Mirumoto) will be familiar enough with the territory to lead the party through. The shugenja competition will not take place until the end of the festival, so the players have a few days to find the scrolls.

Since Gidayu's reputation is on the line as well as the players', he sends one of his own samurai to go with them. Shinjo Iruko, the samurai-ko who first greeted them, will bow to her lord and swear to return the scrolls. How the players deal with this new companion is up to them. Iruko will pay them grudging respect, but already has a fairly low opinion of them (she silently blames the characters for failing Gidayu's trust), and does not want to be sidetracked by any of the characters' other agendas. Naturally, she will wish to leave right away, and wastes no time tracking down any wayward characters.. Those who may have engaged in other activities (like introducing themselves to Yoroshiku) will be quickly found and dragged off with a few curt apologies. At this point, she doesn't care what the characters want to do. Iruko is in no mood for games; her daimyo's honor is at stake. The characters are coming with her, and they're coming with her *right now.*

With Iruko in tow, and the knowledge that their honor is on the line, the players are now free to retreat from the festival and hunt down the men who robbed them.

The Village of the Nightingale

It should not be too difficult to track the path of the "bandits" who attacked the caravan. If the characters pursued them to the bridge across the ravine, they should have no problems (Hunting + Perception, TN 10) getting back there. This time, they won't have to worry about crossing the ravine, since they will be approaching the path from the north. If the characters didn't pursue them after the first attack, then the bridge will still be up. Starting from the site of the attack should enable them to pick up the marauders' trail quickly and easily.

The ronin struck and retreated through a wide spur of mountains to the west of the Shrine and south of the a waterfall called Firebird Cascade – a no man's land on the edge of Phoenix territory. The area is quite mountainous, and the road perilously winds its way across the peaks. Acrophobic characters may have a hard time advancing in places where the road drops off precariously. Here and there, flat valleys can be seen between the mountains, marking several good spots for a hideaway. The trail is easy to follow; there is little traffic in these parts and the path of forty men is not hard to ascertain.

A day or so after leaving the festival, the characters reach their destination – a wide valley, green and fertile amid the mountains' rocky gray. As they get closer, they can see buildings on the valleys floor – new ones by the look of them. A closer inspection reveals something peculiar. The buildings do not have a military style, nor are they the product of unrefined ruffians looking for shelter from the wind. This is no bandit's hideout or crude fortress. It appears to be a peasant village, a vibrant community in the midst of birth. Rice paddies are growing along the floor of the valley, while houses and other buildings are in the final stages of construction. Women and children can be seen performing chores, and several beasts of burden work alongside of them. There are even a pair of banners, displayed proudly at the village entrance. A *mon* in the shape of a nightingale can be seen on the cloth.

The characters will be spotted as they enter the valley, but allowed to proceed into the village. All work will stop at their approach, and the entire population (some two hundred souls), will gather to watch them. There are fifty ronin present, plus the shugenja Koan and his young apprentice. All of them are armed and fingering their weapons; some are taking up shooting positions on the nearby buildings. If the characters killed anyone during the raid on the caravan, the crowd will mutter darkly at their

approach. If not, they will simply wait to see what the party does next.

The ronin leader Niban and his one-eyed samurai-ko lieutenant, Tobuko, will emerge to speak to the characters. Both look as if they had been building something; Niban has a hammer stuck in his belt, and Tobuko's clothes are covered with sawdust. They will speak plainly and openly, asking the characters their business in their village. Neither of them look surprised to see outsiders here. Niban is wearing a symbol on his gear which is not seen at any other place in the village. (The symbol can be seen on the Table of Contents page.)

The Village of the Nightingale (it is far too small to be called even a minor clan) has been carved out here by a group of masterless samurai looking for a home. Tired of endless wandering, they have pooled their resources into procuring some land and supplies here. When the village is built, and the crop harvested, they hope to eventually petition the Phoenix for membership in the clan. Before they can do that, however, they wish to make a point.

Koan is a very powerful shugenja, as demonstrated by his mastery of several spells in succession during the raid on the caravan. His efforts have helped protect the village in these early days, and he has taken up a position of de facto leadership in the new community. However, despite his skill, he has not been allowed to participate in the Setsuban Festival. The Phoenix do not recognize his status and have barred him from competing. The decision dishonors them and ridicules their inevitable attempts to join the clan. They wished to be recognized as assets with honor and respect, not beggar-samurai coming to the Phoenix on their knees. In retribution, they have taken the contest's prize right out from under the Phoenix's nose.

Niban is a reasonable man, and will not hold any grudges against the PCs for their actions during the raid. However, he steadfastly refuses to turn over the scroll cache unless Koan's grievances are addressed. The shugenja has a right to demonstrate his prowess, they argue. If he can be allowed to compete in the tournament as an equal, they will return what they have stolen. Otherwise, the scrolls stay.

The PC's best option is to bargain with the ronin. As the guardians of the scrolls on the last leg of their journey, the characters are in an honored position and may hold sway with the tournament judges. If they stand behind Koan and support his entry into the tournament, the Isawa family may be persuaded to let him in. If Koan enters the tournament, they can send a messenger back and Niban will bring the scrolls himself. Iruko, for her part, is willing to do whatever it takes to get the prize back. She will side with Niban and try and convince the players that his cause is just. Of course, she wasn't shot at by Niban's companions, so her pride isn't on the line as the characters' are. She will champion this options as the only way out of the situation. The players may suggest any others they wish; Niban is open to anything reasonable (*i.e.* anything that meets his goal of getting Koan into the competition).

The characters can always fight the ronin for the scrolls if they wish, but they are heavily outnumbered and fighting on the ronin's home turf. Many of the archers have already taken position and have the players in a nasty kill zone as they speak to Niban and Tobuko. The characters should be dissuaded from fighting. If combat breaks out, the ronin will attempt to subdue the PCs while the women and children duck for cover. If any of the villagers is killed in the altercation, the rest will slaughter the players without mercy.

If the characters agree to support Koan's participation, then the shugenja will return to the festival with them – as will his apprentice, Uisako, and the boy Kocho, who has been following them for the last few days. If Koan enters the tournament, he will return to the village and tell Niban, who will then bring the scrolls. Kocho is the only one Niban trusts enough to believe.

Return to the Festival

The characters should make their way back to Dragon Heart Plain with little difficulty. Along the way, they have a chance to interact with Koan, who is willing to discuss his dilemma at length with them. He is sorry for the death of Iuchi Taiga, but does not regret what he has done. "I am searching for a vindication of my honor," he will explain. "Would you hesitate to strike a man who had offended yours?" He promises, however, to pray to Taiga's spirit and honor the memory of the fallen shugenja at the tournament.

Shinjo Gidayu will welcome the characters back and inquire after the details of their adventure. He scowls at the ronin shugenja who took Taiga's life, but after listening carefully to

Koan

EARTH: 4
WATER: 4
FIRE: 3
Intelligence: 6
AIR: 3
VOID: 8
School/Rank: None.
Skills: Astrology 2, Bard 2, Bo Stick 3, Calligraphy 4, History 2, Intimidation 3, Lore (Shugenja) 4, Lore (Elements) 4, Meditation 5, Shintao 3, Theology 3
Spells: Too many to list (anything you want from the RPG and more)
Weapons: Bo Stick (2k2)
Honor: 2.4
Advantages: Higher Purpose (ronin village), Innate Ability (3 spells of GM's choice)
Disadvantages: Overconfident, Social Disadvantage (ronin)

"Koan" (who dropped his true name long ago) is a loud, outspoken and confident ronin, as ready to drink with his friends as he is to tangle with his enemies. With the Village of the Nightingale, he feel he has found his place in the world, and will do anything to protect it. His own recognition in the eyes of the Isawa serves that purpose – as well as his own sense of self-importance.

Kocho

EARTH: 2
WATER: 1
Perception: 3
FIRE: 3
AIR: 2
VOID: 2
School/Rank: None
Skills: Acting 2, Animal Husbandry 3, Archery 1, Athletics 1, Defense 2, Hand-to-Hand 1, Horsemanship 1, Hunting , Knife 1, Stealth 3
Weapons: Tanto (1k2).
Honor: 2
Advantages: Kharmic Tie (Niban), Luck (9 points)
Disadvantages: Meddler, Social Disadvantage (ronin)

Kocho is the cute, cuddly, and adorable eyes and ears for the ronin village. He lost his parents long ago, and somehow hooked up with Niban as an apprentice. He's learned quickly, and has found himself taking on a lot of the scouting duties for the Village of the Nightingale. Someday, he hopes to be a great man like Niban is. Kocho loves horses (a connection to the Unicorn, perhaps?), but has never gotten the hang of riding them. When he's bigger, he is sure he'll do much better.



what occurred, will grudgingly support Koan's entry into the tournament. It is the only way to preserve honor on all sides, he agrees. Avenging Taiga's death (and the death of anyone else in the caravan) comes second to saving face.

The Isawa judges will be a bit harder to convince. The Setsuban Festival is one of the most honorable occasions in Rokugan, and they will not stand for some "unwashed dog" leaving his mark upon it. They are quite smug and condescending about it. As the greatest shugenja in the Empire – the ultimate arbiters of spiritual magic – their opinion is unimpeachable in this arena. They do not consider Koan worthy of competition. Period.

Allow the players to use any arguments they wish to convince the judges otherwise. Keep in mind, however, that the Isawa do not know that their grand prize is being held hostage, and that both the players and Gidayu will be dishonored if they find out. If presented with a credible argument, however, the Isawa may eventually consent to letting the ronin in – under one condition. He cannot be allowed to win the tournament; to do so would indelibly stain its reputation and cause the family to lose an incalculable amount of face. He can compete and prove his "adequacy" to a certain extent, but if he enters the final round, he must be prepared to deliberately lose rather than accept the trophy. Koan will grumble a great deal about this, but will eventually relent and agree to their terms. If he cannot become champion, he reasons, he can at least show the other competing shugenja that he is a force to be reckoned with. Knock a few of them down, and they will remember his name for some time to come.

The Festival has only just begun, and the players now have an opportunity to enjoy the remainder of it. While many events are staid and formal, others are full of ebullient joy. There are ceremonies invoking the Five Elements, asking for balance in the coming cycle. Other rituals invoke the blessings of the Emperor, and the cosmic harmonies which dance across the night sky. There is storytelling and Noh performances from some of the best actors in the Empire. There are dancers and acrobats, and the costume dragon weaving menacingly through the crowd. And there are politics galore, as the players have already seen in their efforts to get the scrolls back.

It all closes with the great shugenja tournament held in the center of the plains. It is divided into four parts, based on the four tangible elements. Each contestant must cast one spell based on each element (Air, Earth, Fire and Water) to the best of his or her ability. The winners in each category are determined by the respective Elemental Master, and will be permitted to enter the next round. In addition, the top four "all-around" winners (demonstrating the greatest skill in all four elemental magics) move on as well, leaving a field of eight to compete for the grand prize.

The eight remaining competitors then each cast one spell, to be judged by the assembled panel of Elemental Masters. The spells at this stage are known for their daring and spectacle. Bonus points are earned if a shugenja creates a

new or previously unseen effect. From these eight, four semi-finalists are chosen, who then begin another round of spell-casting. At this point, spells cast must be new to the tournament; the participants cannot use any demonstrated in the previous rounds – including the first. Two finalists are selected from the four, who then begin a direct head to head competition. One by one, the judges call out a series of spell names: the first finalist unable to cast the proper spell loses. If neither contestant can perform a given spell, the competition continues until only one succeeds. The winner receives the grand prize, but may not participate in any future tournaments – thus keeping the competition from being dominated by any one shugenja year after year.

Player characters who wish to participate in the tournament may do so – provided they can cast at least one Air, Earth, Fire and Water spell. The higher the mastery of the spell, the more impressive it is to the judges. They can also boost their chances by using raises to increase the spells' effects. Assume the PC must cast four spells with a TN of at least 20 to be able to move on. Participants in the tournament will gain an extra Experience Point as a reward; two if they manage to last to the second round.

The eight shugenja who survive to the second round include Koan, an Agasha alchemist, two Asahina (one if a PC has moved on), and four Isawa shugenja (three if more than one PC has moved on). From there, two Isawa, Koan and an Asahina shugenja emerge as the four finalists (the player characters cannot beat these four – period). Koan takes this opportunity to bow out, deliberately throwing his match to the Crane Asahina Akie. It is apparent from the expression on his face that he loathes doing it. The two Isawa face off, and the young Isawa Uona – a prodigy with a specialty in the element of Air – emerges victorious. In the final round, Uona defeats Akie after nearly two hours of heated spellcasting. The Asahina bows in reverent respect to Uona's skills, then clears the field, leaving the Phoenix alone to relish her victory. (**Note**: the GM should feel free to dramatize the succeeding rounds of the competition – describing the flashing spell effects, the determination of the competitors, etc. – as much as he or she wishes.) A rousing fireworks display follows the awards ceremony and signals the end of the Setsuban Festival.

In addition to the regular experience and honor rewards (as determined by the GM), the characters will be congratulated on a job well done by the Unicorn daimyo. Honor has been accrued by all participants, and through their efforts, the festival has gone unmarred by any nasty altercations. Gidayu is aware that they may have been interested in courting the Emperor's niece, and realizes that they have squandered their chance while fulfilling their duties to him. In return, he invites the characters to attend him at the Phoenix Winter Court, where they will again have an opportunity to interact with the beautiful Yoroshiku. In addition, he offers Shinjo Iruko to one of the PCs as a yojimbo (to better keep an eye on them in the future). The ronin have achieved their goal, and feel confident about approaching the Phoenix now. Niban offers the services of the boy Kocho as a token of appreciation for the players' efforts on Koan's behalf. When they wish to turn in the favor, they can simply send the boy home.



Lovestruck Shinjo

As the adventure continues, Iruko will find herself growing attracted to one of the male PCs. She will say little of her feelings and will do an admirable job of covering up any emotions, but the attraction will have ramifications further on in the campaign.

Part II: Testmony, Murder, and Lies

Background

After the competitions of the Setsuban Festival, the last days of fall come quickly. Although you may decide to have a more significant amount of time pass between these two adventures, it is recommended that only a few days to a few weeks be allowed to elapse. Adventure Two of *Code of Bushido* takes place in nearby Gisu Castle, a palace belonging to the Asako family. The Setsuban Festival was a time to look back on the old year. Thereafter, at the behest of Shinjo Gidayu, the group will retire to spend the winter in the lands of the Phoenix, and be given rooms in Gisu castle, under the eye of Asako Kagetsu, the minor daimyo who rules these lands.

Winter Court is a time of holidays, festivals and gatherings, during which the finest courts of the land are held for three months within a host's abode. In these palaces, the nobles of Rokugan use courtly graces and political manipulation to gather resources and information for their clans. The Asako court is no different, and this year, it is the High Court of the Phoenix, including the Emperor's niece, Otomo Yoroshiku, her courtiers, and the daimyos of several of the noble houses of the area. It is said that Shiba Ujimitsu, the solemn Champion of the Phoenix, will also be a visitor at the court.

It is considered a great honor to spend the winter in the lands of the Asako, primarily because of the spectacular scenery and famous celebrations for which the Asako palaces are noted. It would be a terrible insult to refuse the invitation.

Gisu Palace rests on a high mountainside, overlooking a perfectly clear mountain lake. When the winter snows come, the branches of the brown trees rise like fingers, nearly touching the sky. There are many balconies of the palace, most facing the magnificent view. In the evenings of late fall, before the first snow, members of court gather on these balconies, to watch as the flaming sun dies each night over the crystal lake. A small waterfall to the north is the water source for the lake, rising from a clear spring near the Ki-Rin's shrine. Known as Firebird Falls, it is said that Shiba once climbed the rough stone cliffside as part of a challenge when the world was young. It is a sacred place to the Phoenix, and many say it is a place of mystical powers and strange kami.

Inside, the palace is constructed with thick mahogany posts and richly painted rice-paper walls and sliding doors. Ornate carvings line the outer walls and gates. The palace is obviously built for defense against the elements, not sieges or battles. Inside many of the inner rooms, tremendous fireplaces have been carved into the walls in widely arching stone hearths.

Otomo Yoroshiku, the niece of the Emperor Hantei, will be staying at Gisu Castle this winter, spending time among the young men who seek to court her. Her uncle requested that she choose a husband when the first spring flowers bloom, and there are many young suitors at the palace. Because the court is bustling with eligible young men, there are plenty of lovely young women as well, ready to comfort (and hopefully marry) those suitors who do not succeed in winning Yoroshiku's hand.

Day 1, Month of the Horse

Morning

The characters are escorted to their rooms when they first arrive at Gisu Castle, following Otomo Yoroshiku's grand procession from the shrine of the Ki-Rin. The Asako lord, Kagetsu, greets all of his guests individually, standing at the top of a long staircase before the palace walls. For nearly ten hours he stands there with his guards as each of the noble and Imperial guests are brought in, and offers to each of them a small gift, telling them to please refrain from opening it until tonight's feast. Each of the characters, as representatives of their daimyo, is given a small package wrapped in their clan's mon, with the appropriate family crest. If the player characters are Magistrates, they may also see the crest of the Emerald Champion's guard, or the crest of the family to whom they are Magistrates.

Otomo Yoroshiku

EARTH: 2
WATER: 2
FIRE: 2
Intelligence: 4
AIR: 2
Awareness: 6
Void: 3
School/Rank: None.
Skills: Artisan (Poetry) 2, Courtier 4, Dance 3, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 3, History 3, Law 2, Lore (various) 2, Music (biwa, song) 3, Oratory 4, Rhetoric 3, Shintao 2, Sincerity 4.
Honor: 3.7
Glory: 7.5
Advantages: Social Position (Emperor's niece), Voice.

Yoroshiku is lovely, impulsive, and spirited. Needless to say, she's extremely hard for her maids to keep up with.

During the entire plotline of *Code of Bushido*, Yoroshiku will spend her time inciting suitors to show off, playing one against the other, and attempting to capture everyone's heart. If she feels that a female PC is getting more attention that she is getting, she's sure to make trouble for them.

Subtly, of course, though political means. She has no idea that she's not the daughter of a Hantei.



It should be quite obvious that Asako Kagetsu not only knows who each of his guests are, but also to whom each guest offers allegiance and fealty. He has taken a great deal of time to invite, research, and appropriately outfit his household for the winter court, and no courtesy has been ignored. The characters have an adjoining set of fine rooms, with one central balcony. Although it is on a lower level, it still has a fine view of the lake, down through the trees. The balconies of the daimyos are above them, and at the uppermost level; the characters can see a terrace with the Imperial banner hanging on the wooden walkway. It seems that the uppermost level is built near enough to the top of Firebird Falls that a small cable bridge, woven of living vines, connects the center of the terrace to a small garden area built on the rocks at the top of the falls. The view from that height must be spectacular.

The Feast (Evening)

The welcoming dinner is magnificent, filled with excellent sake and beautifully arranged food. Otomo Yoroshiku sits at the table on the dais, surrounded by fine courtiers and the Lord Asako Kagetsu. The courtiers are deliberately seated together, rather than by virtue of household or family. It is a formal gathering, and the eyes of the court are sharp to see what this winter's entertainment will be. Who will court whom, what malicious mischief will brew in the hearts and minds of the representatives of the various clans, and what political gains and losses will be made?

Various NPCs should be pointed out to the characters at this time. Because of their adventure at the Ki-Rin's shrine, the characters should be familiar with Otomo Yoroshiku, Mirumoto Hanzu, the suitor for the Dragon Clan, and Shiba Sanru, from the Phoenix. Shinjo Gidayu, a daimyo of the Unicorn, and Shinjo Iruko are also here, as guests of the Asako. Iruko continues to serve as *yojimbo* for one of the PCs, fostering friendships and possibly a love interest with one of them. One of the Elemental Masters, Isawa Tomo, will also be staying at Gisu Palace for the winter, although the others will be following Shiba Ujimitsu when he leaves to go to the Imperial Court in Shien Shite Reigisaho (Violence Behind Courtliness City).

Also attending is Koan, the ronin shugenja who performed at the Festival. He has only one attendant, a young female apprentice named Uisako, whom the characters may have seen among the ronin. She is young, shy and timid, as her master is loud, outspoken and confident.

Yoroshiku's three maids are more prevalent at the Winter Court than they were at the Festival.

Yoroshiku's Maidservants

Hida Yauta

EARTH: 2
WATER: 2
FIRE: 2
AIR: 2
VOID: 1
School/Rank: None.

Hida Yauta:
Skills: Courtier 1, Dance 1, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand 1, Intimidation 3, Seduction 2.
Honor: 1.9
Advantages: Large.
Disadvantages: Benten's Curse.

Kitsu Saia

Skills: Courtier 2, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 1, Lore (Court) 1, Sincerity 2, Sleight of Hand 1.
Honor: 2.3
Advantages: True Friend (Yoroshiku).
Disadvantages: Dependent (Yoroshiku).

Saia is the youngest maid. She giggles constantly with Nantoko. Saia feels personally responsible for Yoroshiku's happiness.

Gisu Castle is a relatively small place, filled with dark corners and twisting passages, and Yoroshiku's maidservants are constantly at her side. Their protective presence serves to safeguard the Princess's honor, as well as form a buffer between her and the less favored suitors. Because Yoroshiku is a noble born of the Hantei line, all of her maids are of the samurai class. Hida Yauta is a tremendously large Crab woman approaching middle age. Her grandfather was a Yasuki, and arranged for her to have this prestigious position, and she has been the Princess's nanny since her birth. Kakita Nantoko and Kitsu Saia are the two younger maids, and they often giggle together, certain that their mistress's beauty only casts a greater light on themselves. None of the three maids is outstanding in any way, and they can become comic characters as they struggle to keep up with their impulsive young mistress.

Several new NPCs are visible at the Winter Court gathering, some of whom did not attend the Ki-Rin festival of the previous week. Among these are Shosuro Tage, the foremost actress of the Imperial troupe, along with a group of four retainers and actors. She is a smiling, petite woman, with laughing eyes and delicate, almost fragile features. Her abilities as an actress are well-known, and her knowledge of Rokugani literature is second only to her skill in the court. She will approach any Scorpion PC and attempt to engage him in conversation, using her high Awareness to determine the character's loyalty to the clan and knowledge of court intrigue.

A second visitor to the court, although one who will not be staying long, is Shiba Ujimitsu. Ujimitsu is the Champion of the Phoenix Clan, a man with a solemn, quiet temperament who is noted for his political skills as well as his peaceful nature. He has brought with him another young Lord, named Shiba Himitsun. Many courtiers whisper that Ujimitsu is training the young lad to follow in his own footsteps. There is a retinue of guards, *yojimbo* and courtiers with them, many of whom will be traveling on in a few days, to Shien Shite Reigisaho, where Hantei 38th's Winter Court is to be held.

Another important NPC will be Hiruma Usigo, a ranking Emerald Magistrate. He has just retired, and will be going to a monastery in the spring, but decided to accept this last invitation to Winter Court. He loves to reminisce about his duties, and will gladly spend time with one or more of the PCs who are Magistrates, advising them and listening to their stories. He is an older man, unable to walk without the help of a cane, but he is very intelligent. Further, he is greatly respected by the Asako, as he was a Magistrate here for nearly thirty years.

Lastly, the daimyo of one of the PCs will be arriving at court shortly after the feast begins, entering from the rear and approaching the dais with great solemnity. Ideally, this will be a daimyo of whichever character has had the least success courting Yoroshiku. After introducing himself and making apologies for being late, he will join the others at the table on the dais. His eyes will scan the room until he sees the PC, and he will nod in recognition. If you do not have such an NPC, one has been provided under the name "Ryuden."

Near the end of the feast, Asako Kagetsu will speak to the assembly. Kagetsu is a young lord, not much older than the majority of PCs. He is dressed in a fine robe, with an enameled daisho, and he has a warm, booming voice:

"Welcome, friends," says Kagetsu, and the assembled courtiers begin to turn their attention to their host. Kagetsu looks down from the slight dais and nods politely as he once again greets the Winter Court. After the pleasantries, he holds up one of the small boxes which you were given when you entered the Gisu Castle. His is wrapped in mauve paper, the light reddish-purple of the Phoenix Clan. "These gifts, my friends, have been prepared for your entertainment by my lovely sister, Asako Nuriko. When you open them, and I ask that you do not do so here, you will find inside a small object. This object is the half of a pair. The other half, you see, is in the hands of another member of the court." A faint murmur ripples through the courtiers at this, and many people whisper softly. Kagetsu smiles. "It is the setting for a small amusement we have planned. The object of the game is to find the other member of court whose bauble matches your own. Once you have, then you may ask that person one question per day, which, by their honor, they must answer. Truthfully."

A hush falls over the court, and then voices begin to hiss urgently, as the surprise begins to pass through the audience. "Of course," continues Kagetsu, as if nothing had happened, "you are free to trade objects among yourselves, changing the game each time you do. A person with your object's match will, of course, also be seeking you, so I suggest you keep the object hidden. There are

What's in the Box?

Each package given out by Asako Kagetsu contains an item. In another box somewhere in the court, an identical item is in someone else's hands.Allow the players to use this game in order to gain useful information, gain glory through their political manipulations, and otherwise have a good time. But remember, if things get too tough or confusing, feel free to use the item game to help them along. Some of the items which are given out in the packages include:

- A golden ball.
- A thick silver chain.
- A colored fan (there could be several fans given out, of varying colors or patterns).
- A small pearl-handled tanto.
- A horseshoe.
- An ivory hair pin.
- A sash of varying color or pattern.
- A poem on a scroll.
- A large ring of brass (as large as the horseshoe).

All items should be large enough that they are concealable only with effort.

only two final rules, my dear guests. The object you own can only be traded for another object which is also in the game, and you must keep your item on your person at all times."

Kagetsu smiles, then, and his sister flutters her fan beside the Imperial Princess. After a moment, the Princess begins to clap in appreciation of the game, and soon all of the courtiers follow suit.

The characters may open their gifts wherever they like, at any time during the night. If they do so in public, it will not be difficult for their match to discover what they have. If they do so in private, be sure to tell them what their object is separately from the other player characters, as it is possible that another character has their match. Have all the characters privately roll d100 (a d10 for the first integer, and another for the second). If any two have rolled the same number, they have a match. Don't tell them this yet, as they should find out on their own. When the items are given to them, be sure to decide ahead of time which NPC has the matching item. Also, be prepared for the items to shuffle between the NPCs, as they make political bargains, or discover what item a certain person has. The game is intended to be a factor in solving the upcoming plot, so keep track of the items on a separate piece of paper, and be sure to occasionally allow a PC to 'discover' what item someone else has. Not all the items can be hidden easily.

Because the characters will be shuffling items between themselves, and because this means they will be interacting with several NPCs who aren't integral to the plot. Who is there depends on the GM. There will be some from all of the clans, as no family would refuse an invitation to spend the winter in Gisu Castle. Use this list of names to help you keep the image of a bustling court, filled with peripheral people and plots. Complexity is the rule, not the exception, in a Winter Court, and the PCs should be aware that there are undercurrents they do not see, and stories around them, that they aren't involved in.

Night

Late that evening, the PC's daimyo (referred to hereafter as Ryuden) will summon their liegeman to their chambers. The daimyo has been housed in chambers slightly above the PCs, nearer the Imperial chambers. Ryuden is an outgoing, but not very tactful daimyo, more suited to the Crab or Lion Clans. His skill on the battlefield is much greater than his skill in the court. With that in



Kakita Nantoko

EARTH: 5
WATER: 4
Sttrength: 6
FIRE: 4
AIR: 3
VOID: 1
School/Rank: None.
Skills: Weapon skills default to Rank 2.
Weapons: As PC that she is mimicking. Bonuses from the Shadowbrands (+2 dice to *all actions*, attacks or non-combat related, rolled and kept) are applied when she is in darkness (in the cellar) This is unique to her character, and a result of her 'corruption.'
Special: Shadowbrands
Honor: 0

Kakita Nantoko (also known as Yogo Bashiko) is a Scorpion spy in Crane guise, sent to 'maneuver' the Princess into marriage with a Scorpion-chosen candidate. When Himitsu makes his accusations, she is sent to spy on him, and return the information to Tage.

However, her Shadowbrands have become somehow 'corrupt,' sending her into madness. The effect has also increased her Rings, and given her several strange abilities. Its not normal – something's gone terribly wrong.

mind, he will summon the PC and begin interrogating him on how the courting of the Imperial Princess is going. The daimyo has some unlikely schemes for courting the Princess, and insists that the PC continue to advance his cause with Yoroshiku. After their discussion, Ryusen will talk with the PC about the festival, and learn all that happened in the first adventure. He will appear very interested in the nearby ronin, and their village.

Further, Ryusen asks the PC to draw a map leading to the ronin village, and detail each of the ronin who live there. He asks many questions, about military aspects, personalities and impressions of each of the ronin leaders (Tobuko, Niban and Koan in particular). Once he is finished, he will light a long pipe filled with sweet-smelling tobacco, and will dismiss the PC. He will remain on his balcony for many hours before he finally returns to bed, and if the character goes onto his own terrace, he may see Ryusen sitting and staring intently into the dark sky.

Days 2–11, The Month of the Horse

Morning

For several days, the court will move in its slow circles. As people meet, and NPCs introduce themselves, the characters should be allowed a small amount of time to play the object game, meet important people and get an idea of whom they feel they can trust (and who needs to be watched).

These days are designed to give the characters some time to interact with the other nobles at the Court. Yoroshiku will be highly visible, keeping her suitors on their toes and playing political games in order to manipulate her suitors. One morning, the group (including any relevent PCs) is sitting in the garden with Yoroshiku, enjoying the bitter air and the taste of snow on the wind. *In a spontaneous haiku, the maiden suddenly closes her eyes and whispers,*

"Winter's friend? Not I.
I would trade my fan for this:
A simple blossom."

There is scattered applause, and Yoroshiku opens her eyes, smiling prettily. As she does so, she looks directly into one of the PC's eyes, with a faint smile and a hint of challenge. "Do you not think so?" She looks away, and one of the other suitors catches her eye quickly as she continues, "If only a blossom could be found..."

If the characters do not get the hint, one of the other suitors will, and then it will be a race to see who can find something to give Yoroshiku, to gain her favor. If one of the characters can actually come up with a flower (there are none in the house or on the grounds), they will gain 1 Glory point.

During these preliminary days, the characters should have several opportunities to sit with Yoroshiku (after all, she is supposed to choose a husband by spring), although never alone. She is always surrounded by courtiers, attendants, and other suitors. Ryuden doesn't help the matter much, either, for when he has his turn to chat with the lady, he always seems to draw the conversation to battle and tactics, and Yoroshiku finds a reason to leave as soon as possible.

Iruko, the *yojimbo*, will spend some time attempting to discover and match the object which her love interest among the PCs was given. With that information, she will continually come up with the item to match that of her PC love interest, even as the PC trades his item to other courtiers. This should not be done in an annoying manner, as Iruko is simply trying to get the PC's attention, and uses her questions to lead him into conversations on their likes and dislikes, and the things they have in common. Clever GMs will also use this for mild comic relief, rather than pestering the PCs.

The Shosuro acting troupe will convert one of the lower rooms of the palace into an impromptu stage, and Tage will announce that their first performance will be "The Death of the First Hantei," in honor of their Imperial visitor. Himitsu will spend some time with the PCs as he seems interested in anything they can tell him about Yoroshiku. He should seem to be no more than a late suitor, hoping to catch up on her likes and dislikes, history, relatives, actions, etc. Anything the players tell him about Yoroshiku interests him, although he spends little to no time asking the Princess herself.

Ujimitsu, Champion of the Phoenix, will leave for the Winter Court of the Emperor on the fifth day of the Horse, leaving Himitsu and several retainers behind, as a courtesy, to attend the Asako court. Usigo, however, will spend a great deal of time with the PCs, and should become a trusted source of information about the basic workings of the court, the Asako, and the Phoenix

lands in this area. He knows some information about the ronin and their village, but will be unwilling to discuss it at this time.

The Play (Night)

The play *"Death of the First Hantei"* was written by Shosuro Furuyari, a famous Scorpion playwright. It is considered to be apocryphal, because the events which it discusses are inconsistent with Ikoma histories. The Ikoma bards claim that the first Hantei lived to a ripe age, siring many children and finally dying from old age in the first temple of Shinsei. The play, however, reenacts a radically different demise. It opens with the War against the Shadowlands, the first defeat of Fu Leng, and the great battles and heroic deeds performed by each of the Kami. However, its ending is significant. Hantei is wounded by his brother, Fu Leng, and has been brought back to the palace at Otosan Uchi. While Hantei lies, dying, on the soft cushions of the palace, Doji tends to his wounds, while Akodo and Bayushi stand ready to defend him with their lives.

Hantei, or at least the actor portraying him, turns to the woman who is frantically tending to his bleeding wounds. "Am I going to die?" He whispers, and the hiss rivets through the audience.

"No, no, brother," you hear Tage's voice, as she speaks Doji's lines. Her face has become the very image of Doji, exactly as in the famous tapestries in the Imperial Palace. The resemblance is simply amazing. "Your wounds are not grave. You will live."

"Am I going to die?" the young Hantei turns to a tall man wearing the characteristic eye-patch which defines the role of Akodo One-eye.

"Your name will live on with honor, brother," the man says in a stentorian voice. "A man with honor can never die."

One last soft questioning, this time to the inky black shadow which seems nearly a part of the darkness. "Am I going to die?" Hantei weakly extends a hand to his brother, Bayushi.

Bayushi comes to the side of the cushions, looking down beyond his elaborate mask at the face of his dying brother. "Yes, Hantei-sama." His voice is clear, cold. Comfortless. "You are going to die, and you are going to be alone. But one day, we will come after, to be by your side again."

With that, the actor on the cushions trembles once, and then is still. "What have you done?" murmurs Doji, dropping the hand of her dead brother and rising to stand beside Akodo.

"You, sister, cared for our brother's body. Akodo cared for his honor. But I..." Bayushi turns, and the last line of the play is delivered to the audience, "I cared for his soul. The soul is the heart of a Hantei. It is the one thing that no other can have. The one thing which is the center of the Empire. The soul."

The play is given polite applause, and the acting troupe bows to the assemblage as Yoroshiku rises and makes for her chambers. A perceptive PC (Awareness 20) will notice that Tage, after her face has relaxed into her normal visage (a sight which should be pointed out to the players, as all the Shosuro actors 'relax' out of their roles), is watching Yoroshiku with great interest, as if expecting some reaction. Whether she received it or not, Tage smiles with the others, and takes a final bow.

Day 12, Month of the Horse

Afternoon

During the day in the garden, one of the PCs who is not courting Yoroshiku mistakenly overhears (from the other side of a large hedge wall) her speaking to Mirumoto Hanzu.

"You know that I would choose you, Hanzu..." the Princess is saying, "But that my father expects me to wed a man of many abilities. I know that you are surely the bravest suitor among them, but many of the courtiers are not aware of your fine talents. If only they could be convinced..."

Hanzu's words are muffled, and a bit hard to hear, but part of his reply is audible. "...glad to show the strength of my steel... honor, of course."

A soft response from Yoroshiku confirms that this was what she had hoped to hear, and then you hear a silken rustle against the hedge as she and her maid move on through the garden.

Evening (Hour of the Rooster, 6 – 8 pm)

Before the feast, one of the other courtiers comes up to a PC and asks to exchange items with them. The courtier, a Phoenix named Shiba Nessen, says that one of the Princess's maids (the rather large, unpleasant looking Hida woman) seems to be attracted to him, and has the matching object. He's hoping to trade the item with one of the PCs. He would consider it to be a favor, which he would owe back at a later time. All this, in order to avoid the maid's attentions. Will one of the PCs be kind enough to help?

Shadowbrands

Shadowbrands are the strange 'essence marks' with which Scorpions often brand their servants. Kakita Nantoko is an example of Shadowbrands gone bad. Very bad.

Nantoko's situation isn't typical. Servants of the Scorpion aren't supposed to turn into soulless demon-things. In fact, Tage has negver seen it before. That's why she's willing to let the players in on the problem in the first place.

More information about Shadowbrands is available in the *Way of the Scorpion* Clan Book, available now.

Shinjo Iruko

EARTH: 3
WATER: 2
Strength: 3
FIRE: 3
AIR: 2
VOID: 3
School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 3
Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 3, Lore (Bushido, Samurai) 4, Kenjutsu 3, Horsemanship 3, Shintao 4, Sincerity 1.
Weapons: Katana (3k2), Wakizashi (2k2), Dai-kyu (as arrow).
Honor: 4.7/4.9
Glory: 3.8/4.3
Advantages: Ambidextrous

Iruko should have her personality tailored to be compatible with one of the PCs. They will be traveling together, so use the time to integrate her into the PC group.

Iruko must become involved with the PCs, as a firend, and as more. If possible, she should have a serious romantic involvement with one of them. If necessary, she will risk her life to save the PCs, gaining their trust and affection. For adventure three to be successful, this is *critically* important.

If the PCs trade with Shiba Nesshin, they will receive a small porcelain doll, modeled after the Lady Shinjo. Keep track of where this item is, and who has it throughout the feast. Spend some time with the characters between the time they receive the doll, and the time they go to the feast, so that they have opportunities to trade away the doll if they really wish to.

The evening ends with another great feast, similar to the one which was held on the first night. During the festivities, one of the suitors (a Crane named Doji Fusaya) stands and approaches the dais. He smiles at Yoroshiku, and shows her a golden fan. "I believe, my Lady," he smiles, "That you have in your possession the matching object?"

Yoroshiku smiles, and her maids giggle behind their hands. "You are incorrect, Doji-san." With a delicate gesture, she pulls forth a small white porcelain doll, and the courtiers applaud, whispering to each other of the Princess's cleverness. Smiling, but abashed, the Doji bows as she steps away from the dais.

If one of the PCs has the doll, read the following text aloud to them.

Suddenly, you realize that you have the other doll … but if you don't speak out immediately, she may have a chance to trade items again.

If this occurs, steer the conversation as if an NPC had given her the doll, seen below. Any other courtier will certainly take the chance:

Once Fusaya steps back, (NPC) steps from his seat, holding the doll which was traded to them. The courtiers applaud at the trap the Princess is now caught in, and she smiles and laughs politely. "One question, my friend," says Yoroshiku.

"My Lady," says (NPC), "I only wish to know one thing." The hush is audible as the court listens to these words. "What, above all else, would make you happiest at this moment?" The court whispers approvingly as Yoroshiku answers.

"The good health of my Uncle, Hantei." There is applause, and Yoroshiku, knowing she has escaped the trap, continues. "And a poetry competition, by the fine members of this court."

Night

In any case, there will be a poetry competition in the Princess's honor after the feast, whether called for by the Princess or by Asako Kagetsu. All of the PCs will be invited to attend and show their skill. The topic for poems is, of course, the Princess. Poems will be read two hours after the feast is finished, and the suitors quickly retire to their chambers, to create their entries. Ryuden quickly approaches the PCs after the announcement is made, and asks his retainer to speak to him privately. Once alone, he makes an unusual demand.

As Ryuden approaches, you bow, and you see that he has an uncommon look of glee and excitement on his usually reserved, impassive face. "I need a poem, yojimbo. One to woo Yoroshiku. Only this afternoon, in the garden, she spoke to me sweet words of love, and told me that she had all but chosen me." He smiles and looks filled with pride. "However, she says that I need to prove my skills off the battlefield as well as on. I know she has arranged to convince Asako Kagetsu to hold this poetry competition to help me prove my worth, so that she can marry me! I have her!"

He turns to you, then, and smiles widely. "Get me a poem. I don't care how you arrange it, but make sure it's better than any of the other poems to be read tonight. I must win this competition. The honor of our house, and the Lady's heart, rely on it."

The poems are to be judged by Asako Kagetsu, Hida Usigo, and of course, Yoroshiku. During the poetry competitions, many of her suitors read poems. They are met with moderate levels of success. As Ryuden rises to speak, however, he is interrupted by Shiba Himitsu, who has been quiet and brooding all night. He has been drinking sake, and his face seems angered and bitter. As Himitsu begins speaking, The daimyo's face turns an angry, unpleasant shade of red, and there is a furious light in his eyes as Himitsu begins speaking.

Although his words are angry, his tone is pleasant and polite. He offers a poem in tribute to the Princess of the Hantei, and the hair at the back of your neck prickles. He speaks:

"A blighted flower
Dandelion among chrysanthemums
A weed knows a weed."

On the dais, there are gasps, and Yoroshiku turns white. Several of the suitors start to cry out in protest, and Asako Kagetsu stands angrily at the breach of etiquette. Nearby, the Lion guards reach for their katanas and leap to their feet. Hiruma Usigo rises, and his old voice quickly brings order to the gathering.



"What is the meaning of this?" Usigo says in low tones.

"The meaning?" Himitsu sneers. "The meaning you will see for yourself. Tomorrow at sunset."

Your daimyo, enraged, steps between Himitsu and the Princess's dais. "I formally challenge you to a duel, samurai," the daimyo says. "Your bad manners and impudent tongue have cost you your life."

Himitsu nods. "Tomorrow. At dawn. Then, I will produce my testimony about this …" The Lion guards tense. "Weed." He lowers in a curt bow to all assembled, fire in his eyes, and leaves.

Any player who rolls their Awareness above TN 20 will note that Koan seems very uncomfortable when Himitsu begins to speak, and that he has a nervous look on his face after Himitsu begins talking about 'dawn tomorrow.' His apprentice, Uisako, will draw the older shugenja's attention, and whisper something urgently in his ear. If a character is attempting to listen at a distance, or read lips, then they will catch the following information:

Uisako whispers urgently, "He's giving us away – can we stop him?"

Koan shakes his head ruefully, indicating that there is nothing to be done. Then, they both turn to watch Himitsu stride out of the hall.

Another guest who takes particular interest in Himitsu as he leaves the room is Shosuro Tage. The Scorpions stand in the wings, just outside the room, and have been ready to put on a performance once the poetry competition had finished; Himitsu passes through them as he heads back to his room. When the play begins, characters may notice (Awareness at TN 20) that there are only five actors on the stage, rather than six (the total number of the troupe). Because Shosuro actors can change their facial features, average characters can only guess which Scorpion is not on stage. A Perception roll at a TN of 30 confirms that Tage is the missing performer.

Shortly after the play starts, Otomo Yoroshiku and two of her three maids will retire quietly, without disturbing the performance. The courtiers will notice that they have gone, as should the PCs. Whispers say that the Princess has has a difficult evening, and is likely to have an even more difficult day tomorrow.

After the play, the household retires with a strange mix of eager anticipation and dread over the next day's events. Some of the courtiers will spend their time in the great hall, exchanging stories, or listening to the sweet *biwa* of Kakita Nantoko as she plays quietly by the fire.

Late Night

Ryuden calls his PC retainer to his chambers shortly after the play, to discuss with him the essentials of the duel to be held the next day. Ryuden is preparing for the duel, drinking heavily, and wondering if Himitsu's words about Yoroshiku were true. After all, if Ryuden is given Yoroshiku's hand in marriage, and then it is

Shiba Himitsu

EARTH: 2
Stamina: 3
WATER: 3
FIRE: 2
AIR: 2
VOID: 3
School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 3
Skills: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 4, Defense 1, Ettiquette 2, Heraldry 4, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 2, Lore (various) 2, Meditation 3, Shintao 2, Theology 2.
Weapons: Katana (3k2), wakizashi (2k2).
Honor: 4.9
Glory: 5
Advantages: Precise Memory.
Disadvantages: Brash, Compulsion: Sake

Shiba Himitsu is in grooming to be the next Phoenix Champion. He knows his position, and will use it if necessary.

He hates Yoroshiku, primarily because he believes that she knows her birth as a bastard, and he thinks she is part of the cover-up. She isn't, but he doesn't know that.

He's always been a sake drinker, and uses it as a relaxation technique in times of stress.

revealed that the Princess is not of the Hantei line, Ryuden will be shamed, and his marriage will be useless. At the end of the conversation, Ryuden will still be aggravated, irrational and angry, and will dismiss the PC sharply, muttering that he'll have Himitsu's head, either way.

Himitsu's room is on the west side of the palace, blocked from the PCs by guards who patrol the second floor. They will not be allowed into that area of the palace unless either Hiruma Usigo or Ryuden are with them. If the characters attempt to speak to Himitsu, they will be rebuffed by his guards, who insist that the young lord is not to be disturbed until morning, for any reason. One of the guards is a smaller man, with a scar across his cheek that makes him very recognizable.

From the balcony, the PCs can hear him loudly talking to his guards, and see the light in Ryuden's room go out. Then, silence. Most of the lights on the east side of the castle go out fairly early, as the guests retire. However, the light in the uppermost suite remains lit for most of the night, dying out as the fire burns down, about two hours before dawn.

What's Really Happening

At this point, GMs need to understand which of the following information is real, and which is false. What's really happening on the night of the 12th day of the Horse can be a little confusing, so read carefully.

The Hour of the Rat (12 – 2 am)

• Ryuden went to Himitsu's room, challenged him to a fight, and Himitsu managed to calm Ryuden. Ryuden left, still threatening Himitsu's life and drunkenly calling him a coward.

• Koan arrived and tried to convince Himitsu not to go to the duel. Koan feared Himitsu would lose, and Niban would not be able to testify about Yoroshiku. Koan was unsuccessful, and left, sending his apprentice to tell Niban what had occurred.

• Shosuro Tage, eager to learn what secrets Himitsu was hiding about a member of the Hantei family, sent in Kakita Nantoko – a trained Shosuro spy.

• Isawa Tomo, also concerned, used the spell Reflecting Pool to watch Himitsu's chambers. He could not hear anything, but he could see what was going on.

The Hour of the Ox (2 – 4 am)

• Ryuden left his room, via the balcony, in an attempt to speak with Yoroshiku. He met Kakita Nantoko in the hallway, told her how much he hated Himitsu for the accusations about Yoroshiku, and she convinced him to return to his chambers.

• Tomo saw Nantoko morph from Ryuden's form to her own, and back again. Not knowing what she was, and fearing Shadowlands involvement, he rushed to the room, passing Tonbo Jehenko as she left to find the guards. He arrived just after Nantoko/Ryuden had killed Himitsu.

When the girl changed form, Tomo saw the following: Her eyes turned black, her features descended into formlessness, and a black shadow seemed to radiate from her. On her arm, he could see a mark of some kind: a shadowy brand. Her skin became a shadowy grey, and her voice echoed, like many people speaking through one mouth.

• At 2:30, Tombo Jehenko hears the fight, and peers through the small tear in her wall. She hides. At 2:45 she leaves her room to find help. She passes Tomo in the hall, and tells him Ryuden has killed Himitsu (although the fight was still going on). Tomo sends her to Asako Kagetsu's room to alert the guards.

• The woman known as Nantoko, Tage's spy and Yoroshiku's maid, was a shadowbranded Shosuro assassin. She ignored her orders, and killed Himitsu and his guards instead of simply collecting information.

• Nantoko, disguised as Ryuden, escaped out the window, and vanished into the shadows. She hasn't been seen since.

• Between 2:45 and 3, Isawa Tomo arrives and Nantoko escapes out the window. Tomo casts a spell on Nantoko to prevent her from leaving the castle grounds.

• Tomo interrogates the nearby kami, and then dismisses all spirits in the room, so others could not hear their testimony.

• The guards arrive at 3 am, and take control of the murder scene.

Other important facts:

• Ryuden and Himitsu were both drunk, and Ryuden's memory will be shaky. He will most likely have to recite his story two or three times, stopping to correct himself as his memory plays tricks on him. It might even appear that he is making it all up.

Asako Kagetsu

EARTH: 4
WATER: 4
FIRE: 3
Intelligence: 5
AIR: 4
VOID: 5
School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 5
Skills: Bard 3, Courtier 5, Defense 2, Etiquette 4, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 2, Law 3, Lore (various) 3, Meditation 3, Oratory 4, Origami 3, Shintao 4, Sincerity 3.
Weapons: Katana (3k2), wakizashi (2k2).
Honor: 4.6
Glory: 7
Advantages: Different School, Ear of the Emperor.

Kagetsu is a rather influential Phoenix daimyo. Because he has hosted many Winter Courts, he has the ear of the Emperor and could cause problems if the PCs are involved in any scandals at the palace.

He's terribly unhappy that there's been a murder in his court, and is willing to assist the characters in their investigation – provided they keep a low profile, of course.

• Shosuro actors can change their forms and faces, as the PCs saw earlier. Tomo assumes one of the following is the true murderer: a Scorpion; something from the Shadowlands; or an unknown magic. He doesn't believe that something so sloppy (or so seemingly magical) could have been Scorpion, so he's looking at the 'unknown or Shadowlands' options very seriously.

• Tomo knows that if the Yoroshiku's maid is found to have killed Himitsu, the Emperor's line will be shamed (even if Yoroshiku did not have anything to do with it). Further, if the Shadowlands have infiltrated that closely to the Imperial Princess while she is in Phoenix lands, the Phoenix will be shamed as well.

• Ryuden will be blamed, regardless. There is testimony (from three sources: Tombo Jehenko, Asako Innasai and Asako Hensuko) that places the blame on Ryuden. Further, the court knows Ryuden had a motive, and had the skill to have committed the crime. Tomo will not come forward to clear Ryuden's name.

• Tage was unaware that Himitsu had died (that Nantoko had disobeyed) until she heard that a murder had been committed.

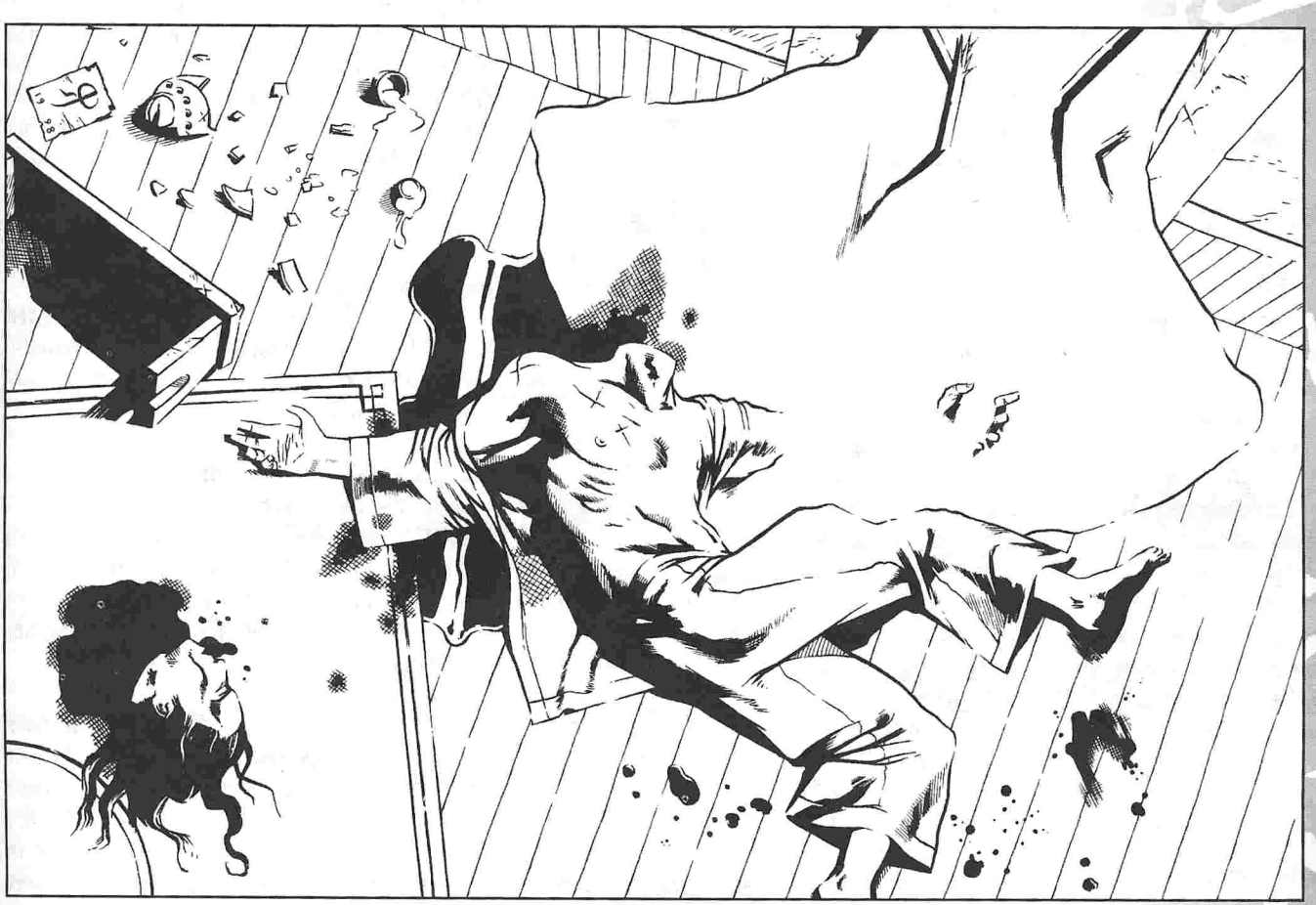
All right? Let's set up a murder.

Day 13, Pre-Dawn

Morning (Middle of the Hour of the Ox, 3 am)

Just before dawn, the peaceful silence of Gisu Palace is destroyed by the sound of an alarm. Guards in the palace bolt the doors and fires on the walls are lit. PCs are awakened by the shouts of guards. If the PCs are not Magistrates, they will be asked to return to their rooms and await the Asako to tell them that all is well. Through a hallway, they see Isawa Tomo speaking to one of the Asako guards. A Perception roll at TN 25 can make out the conversation.

"Dead, you say?" Isawa Tomo mutters. "Damn the boy and his recklessness. Has anyone testimony to prove who has done this?"



Asako Kuro

EARTH: 3
Stamina: 4
WATER: 2
Strength: 4
FIRE: 3
AIR: 2
Reflexes: 4
VOID: 2
School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 2 (1-2)
Skills: Archery 2, Athletics 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Hand-to-Hand 2, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 4, Meditation 2, Shintao 2, Tea Ceremony 2.
Weapons: Katana (3k2), wakizashi (2k2).
Honor: 2.9
Glory: 3.7
Advantages: Quick
Disadvantages: Dependent (Himitsu).

Kuro is a competent guard, completely loyal to the young Isawa lord. He speaks only when necessary, and has a general bad attitude. He's perfectly willing to use his sword rather than allow anyone to disturb his lord.

Note that this package represents the typical stats of any of the Asako guards in tha palace. If the PCs start a fight, this is the kind of person they can expect to deal with.

"Yes, Master." The guard bows respectfully as he speaks. "The guards say that the last person to enter the room was (Last name) Ryuden, daimyo of the (Clan)."

"Ryuden?" A pause. "Yes, that would make sense. Ask all the guests to remain in their quarters until we are certain there is no danger. Keep Ryuden-san in his chambers at all costs." With that, Tomo continues up the stairs toward the second floor.

If the PCs attempt to follow Tomo, the guards at the bottom of the stairway will stop them. As they argue with the guard, Hiruma Usigo will appear at the top of the staircase. Seeing the PCs, he will order the guards to allow them through, on his authority. Out of respect, the guards will reluctantly step aside, and the PCs can join him.

As he leads the way to Shiba Himitsu's chambers, Usigo tells the characters that there's been a murder. He doesn't know much about it, as he was just summoned by Kagetsu. He reminds the characters to be very careful not to touch anything until the shugenja can arrive, and interrogate nearby spirits.

Phoenix guards are in the hallway, and there are two bloodstained blankets covering bodies in the hallway. Behind them, the doors to Himitsu's chamber have been opened; Asako Kagetsu and Isawa Tomo stand inside the room. Two other shugenja (one of whom you recognize from the Festival as Isawa Uona) investigate the room. As you enter with Usigo, he swiftly says, "These Magistrates are acting as my assistants in this matter."

After that, you are allowed to look about the room as you wish, provided you do not disturb anything.

Usigo will spend most of his time speaking with the two lords, Kagetsu and Tomo. The characters will be able to tell that Kagetsu very much respects the old man's advice and wisdom. Tomo, on the other hand, seems to rely much more on his own spells, and the assistance of young Uona, who is also in the room, studying the pattern of broken items strewn about the chamber.

The murder of Shiba Himitsu was a particularly brutal one, and it is not at all a pleasant sight. The body lies sprawled across the floor, blood spattered outward from several wounds. A broken door marks the criminal's possible entrance, as the sliding door has been torn apart, and lies in pieces, hanging from the rafters by thin shreds of balsa. Nearby, a low table on which a sakizuki set may have once rested lies overturned, the pottery smashed and sake mixed with blood on the wooden boards of the floor. Snow has drifted in the broken window, mixing with the blood and covering one arm of the body as it rests upon the floor.

Most gruesomely, Himitsu's head has been completely removed, severed with one expert blow and resting several feet away in a pool of blood. Himitsu's daisho still lies, untouched, on a stand near the door everyone entered.

Usigo will begin speaking with the two other daimyo about the murder while the characters are left to investigate. One thing that the investigators will notice is that the spirits of this room seem to know nothing about the murder, or what occurred during the night. In fact, no spirits currently in the area were here last night, and the fire has been completely extinguished. It is as if someone has either scared away or removed all the spirits who were here last night. Uona will report this to Tomo if there are no PC shugenja to discover the fact for themselves.

The following clues can be found if the characters carefully investigate the scene of the crime. They have been separated into two categories: Evidence and Testimony. Remember that testimony is far more important in Rokugan. Be sure the characters have more faith (and find more of) the false clues, in order to convince the PC investigators that that Ryuden may have committed the crime.

In all cases below, where Perception is listed for a roll, a character may also use Perception + Investigation, or any other relevant combination, as the GM allows.

Clues in the Room:

Clue 1 – The Letter.

TN 25 allows the PCs to discover a loose board in the table where Himitsu's daisho rests. Within the compartment is a letter to Himitsu. It is very brief, and appears to be a response to another letter which is not present. It reads:

Himitsu-sama,

Your words are kind, and I was glad to have them. It is my hope that we can become friends, and in time, even become part of your proud clan. However, there is something I must first finish. I have discovered that Y. is not what she seems to be, and my honor demands that I bring testimony before a formal court. However, without someone

of your stature to stand for my words, I could not even begin to approach such a gathering.

I know it requires three such testaments to prove someone's tale to be true, and I suggest you speak to Y.'s maidservants. One of them knows far more than she offers, and may be willing to help for the sake of honor. I know that, years ago, she was willing to speak. As for a third – I cannot say. Perhaps, if the tale is at last brought to light, another may be willing to admit his part in this foul plan.

Meet me during the hour of the Rooster, on the 12th of the Horse, outside the castle where Sazanami Lake meets with the Drowned Merchant river, and I will tell you all.

Below the words is a symbol, sealed with a chop which may seem familiar to the characters. An Intelligence check at TN 30 (20 if the character has the Precise Memory Advantage) will reveal that the symbol is the same one used by the ronin Niban, which was seen on his various personal belongings at the Village of the Nightingale (his tent, etc; not the Village's symbol).

The letter is very clear that someone did indeed contact Himitsu with information discrediting Yoroshiku. in some way. Whether the information was accurate, or what it was, precisely, is not contained in the letter. Characters may decide to ask Koan more about it, once they recognize the symbol.

Clue 2 – Isawa Tomo

Characters who spend time talking with the Asako daimyo, Isawa Tomo or Hiruma Usigo will note that the Phoenix interrogators seem to have already decided that Ryuden committed the murder, even before they have gotten a good look at everything. It very much seems that the Phoenix want to sweep this under the rug, and make certain it doesn't upset the Winter Court. Unless the characters come up with valid testimony, Tomo will formally ask Usigo and Kagetsu to declare Ryuden guilty. However, if the characters have good reasons to keep it open for a few more days, Hiruma Usagi and the Asako Lord will overrule Tomo, and grant the Magistrates two days to find the real killer.

Clue 3 – Who was the better fighter?

One of the greatest discrepancies in the arguments for and against Ryuden's motive concerns whether he was 'afraid' to face Himitsu in a duel. If the characters ask around different NPCs, they will receive varied answers. Ryuden, for one, is certain that Himitsu would have been no challenge.

The pattern of blood on the floor indicates that there has been intense fighting. If Himitsu was not Ryuden's match, there should have been much less struggle. They had both had sake that evening.

Clue 4 – How Did the Murderer Get In?

An Awareness check at TN 15 can tell that whoever killed Himitsu came in through the door, and left through the window. Therefore, the guards patrolling the hallways must have known the killer. Anyone not allowed on the second floor



Hiruma Usigo

EARTH: 3
Willpower: 4
WATER: 4
Perception: 7
FIRE: 3
Intelligence: 4
AIR: 4
Awareness: 5
VOID: 2
School/Rank: Hiruma Scout 5
Skills: Battle 4, Defense 3, Goblin Culture 2, Hand-to-Hand 4, Intimidation 2, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Lore (various) 3, Ratling Speak 2,
Weapons: Katana (3k2), wakizashi (2k2).
Honor: 4.4
Glory: 5.5

Usigo is an aged, retired Magistrate who has served in Phoenix lands for over twenty years. He is wise, not only in the ways of killers and thieves, but in the politics of a Winter's Court. He takes a liking to the 'young' PCs, and will use every opportunity to offer advice or education in their duties, if they are magistrates.

He's gone a bit blind, so he needs the characters to help him along, but his mind is still clever. He will offer advice, not solutions, so use his abilities sparingly.

of the palace would have been challenged before they got to Himitsu's room. There are few people whose rooms are on the upper floor, and of them, only Ryuden or Asako Kagetsu are physically capable of this kind of violent crime.

Further, (TN 20) if the murderer had come in the window, Himitsu could have easily gotten to his katana. If they came in the doorway, Himitsu would have been cut off from his weapons, and been unable to use them in the fight.

Clue 5 – The Balcony

The balsa wood of the light window casing in Himitsu's room has been torn from the wall, and the balcony doors lie on the floor, some broken parts hanging from the ruins of their frame. Perception at TN 15 will reveal that the door was knocked off its hinges by either a very large person (like Ryuden), or someone who was incredibly strong.

Testimony from Witnesses

Clue 1 – The Guest

A courtier in the room to the left of Himitsu's belongs to a fearful and elderly Dragonfly Clan woman named Tombo Jehenko. She will tell the characters that Himitsu had three visits last night. First, Ryuden came to meet with him. Ryuden was drunk, and angry, and shouted a lot. Himitsu let him in, there was a lot of yelling, and Ryuden left after tossing over the sakizuki table. (Or that's how it sounded to Jehenko.) Ryuden had with him one guard, a man whom she recognized as Asako Innasai, a guard assigned by the Asako for their guests' safety.

Afterwards, the ronin known as Koan came to visit. It was so shortly after Ryuden, that the two men must have passed in the hallway. That visit went far more quietly, and Jehenko went to sleep. She is unsure how long Koan stayed, or what they discussed. She does not remember Koan leaving, in fact. She believes he was alone.

Lastly, very early in the morning, perhaps around the beginning of the hour of the Ox (2 – 2:30 am), Jehenko heard more shouting in the room next door, and a crash, as if the balcony door had been splintered. She peered through a tiny hole in the wall adjoining the two rooms, and saw a man, fighting a small woman whom she didn't recognize. Then, after they shifted out of and back into her sight, Jehenko says she clearly saw Ryuden, choking Himitsu. After that, she was too terrified to look through the hole again. She hid in fear, and after fifteen minutes, rose from her bed and went to find help. After meeting Isawa Tomo in the hallway, she went to Kagetsu's chambers and alerted his guard. They sounded the alarm. This was at roughly 2:45.

Clue 2 – House Guards

Asako Innasai, a guard here at the Gisu Palace, was on duty outside Ryuden's rooms for the last part of last night. He will say that the PC who visited Ryuden was the last to be in Ryuden's room, and that shortly thereafter, Ryuden went to visit Himitsu. Innasai claims that Ryuden was drunk and angry, and that the talk almost came to blows, but that Himitsu refused to be provoked. Ryuden left, cursing. After Ryuden went back into his room, Innasai did not see him again. The guard was relieved of duty by Asako Budo at the beginning of the Hour of the Rat (12:00 Midnight).

Innasai also says that, while off duty and getting some food, he saw Ryuden walking down the corridor toward his rooms. He remembers the event clearly, because although Ryuden had had a lot of sake earlier, at this time the daimyo seemed calm and sober. Possibly, murderously sober. This was approximately 2:00 am, just before the Hour of the Ox.

Asako Budo says that he didn't see Ryuden at all last night, and assumed that he stayed in his rooms, sleeping; he couldn't possibly have been walking the corridors at 2:00, unless he went out the window, across the balcony, and around the outside of the palace. Budo thinks that Ryuden was too drunk for those kinds of acrobatics, but Innasai says that when they met in the corridor, Ryuden seemed very capable. Both will admit it is possible. If pressed, Budo will also admit that he had had some sake during the evening himself, and might not have been aware of any unusual movement in the room, such as Ryuden sneaking across the balconies.

Clue 3 – Guards on the Walls

If the PCs do not interrogate the guards on the walls outside the palace, Isawa Uona will. One of them, a woman named Asako Hensuko, claims that she saw a man climb out of Himitsu's window, drop to the ground and vanish into the shadows. She didn't know the man, but if Ryuden is shown to her, she will absolutely and unquestioningly say he's the one she saw. Hensuko is the best archer on the wall, although she didn't have time for a shot. Her eyesight is well known to be keen, and she has served the Asako house dilligently for fifteen years.

Clue 4 – Motive

Everyone in court knows that Ryuden has a motive. He believed that he was to marry Yoroshiku, and would have killed Himitsu if it meant defending her honor. Further, Ryuden argued earlier in public with Himitsu, and the Shiba insulted Ryuden's honor by interrupting him at the poetry competition. Both men were drunk at some point in the night, and both were hot-tempered. Isawa Tomo will mention that Himitsu was a fierce duelist, and perhaps Ryuden was afraid to face him in a fair fight. Many of the courtiers will agree, and the rumor will spread. Characters who make an Intelligence + Courtier roll at TN 20 can trace the rumor back to Isawa Tomo.

Clue 5 – Koan

Koan, the ronin shugenja, knows exactly what the letter was about. If the characters approach him about his visit with Himitsu, they will find him in the palace gardens, meditating. He will say that his meeting with the Shiba was a private matter, and had nothing to do with the murder. If they bring the letter to him, or talk to him about it, he will hesitantly say that the matter was between Niban and Himitsu.

"I don't know much about it." Koan begins, sighing. "Niban has had something against Yoroshiku since the first moment he saw her. But Niban's like that. He has something against the Crane, the Unicorn and for all I know, the Phoenix. He doesn't forgive past insults.

"But I know he wouldn't lie. If he says he has something to say about the girl, then he's telling the truth. I trust Niban, and I trust his word." Koan shakes his head and plucks a blade of grass from the ground.

"Niban was supposed to arrive this morning, with information he wanted to bring forward. Himitsu was to sponsor that information, so the Phoenix would have to accept it as valid. I know they needed another witness – someone whose name they didn't tell me. They were also very worried about one of the lords here at Gisu Palace. Niban never told me the name, but I overheard enough to know that 'the daimyo' was going to be ready to kill them, when this information was released."

Hopefully, the characters will realize that the long trip to the Village of the Nightingale will take too much time. By the time they find out what the letter was about, Ryuden will have been tried, convicted, and put to death. There will be time enough for that matter, after they clear Ryuden's name.

Morning



After the characters have investigated the room to their hearts' content, they will probably wish to leave and speak to Ryuden. One of the Phoenix guards escorts them to Ryuden's room, to vouch for their reason to see the daimyo.

While the guards at Ryuden's door have been doubled, they listen to your escort as he explains that you are assisting Hiruma Usigo with the murder investigation, and you are allowed to pass.

Ryuden sits on his balcony, a bowl of steaming rice gone unnoticed on his table. When you enter, he does not look at you. His eyes are hollow, darkened. He listens as you explain what you have found in Himitsu's room, and nods slowly when you have finished.

"I did not do this horrible thing," he begins. "I was willing to give Himitsu an honorable death." Ryuden looks at the guards, standing just inside the door. "I have been asked to remain in my room, and out of honor to our host, I must do so. You must be the ones to clear our family's name."

Before they can ask questions, Ryuden will tell them what he remembers. He is only being partially honest with the characters, and describes his evening as follows:

He went to his room after the competition, talked with [the PC] for an hour or so, and then dismissed him. Afterwards, he decided to visit Himitsu, to see if he could talk the boy out of the duel. Ryuden has absolute confidence in his ability to have defeated Himitsu. He believed that he would easily have killed the Phoenix, and was attempting to avoid a conflict between their clans.

Himitsu did not agree, and after some shouting (they were both a bit tipsy), Ryuden left, "disgusted by that impudent boy's desire to kill himself on my blade." After that, he went to bed and slept soundly.

At this point, Ryuden is lying. He did leave his room once more that evening, by stepping across to the nearby balcony and exiting that chamber's door without the half-asleep Asako Buto noticing. He went toward Yoroshiku's room. One of her maids, Kakita Nantoko, met him in the corridor, and told him that Yoroshiku was already asleep. She spoke to him at length about the Princess, and reassured him that Yoroshiku was expecting him to win the duel and save her honor. With platitudes and flattering words, Nantoko persuaded Ryuden to return to his chambers. However, on his way back, he was seen by Asako Innasai. By that time, the sake had begun to wear off, and Ryuden was much more lucid.

If the characters mention that Innasai claims that he saw Ryuden in the corridor, the daimyo will then discuss his midnight stroll.

"I wanted to reassure the Princess that I would do everything possible to save her honor, even if it meant killing that dog of a Phoenix," he says. "Yoroshiku is the niece of the Emperor. Any stain on her honor is a stain on the Emperor's name. I would gladly die before I allowed any dishonor to be placed at the feet of the Hantei family.

"I would gladly have died to protect her."

Day 13, Month of the Horse

Morning

The Asako prepare a trial, and Isawa Uona is asked to gather testimony for the Phoenix, in Himitsu's name. The characters should 'bump into' her during their own investigation. They should be able to recognize that Uona is clever, and that she will undoubtedly find any holes in their testimony in order to use them for the Phoenix. Uona intends to place the blame squarely on Ryuden's shoulders.

The court is buzzing about the murder. The representatives of various clans have wildly varying theories on why Ryuden did it, or who else could have; the Scorpion are completely silent. Only a Scorpion PC, or someone who had made an effort earlier to spend time with Tage and her acting troupe, will be able to get anything out of them. Even then, they claim to know nothing about the murder, although they admit they had heard other claims that Yoroshiku's birth was not of the Hantei blood.

There's still the matter of the accusation about Yoroshiku's bloodline. The Unicorn daimyo, Shinjo Gidayu, will ardently defend her, and will ask Shinjo Iruko to help him prove the blasphemous accusations wrong. If the letter is brought up, Gidayu argues (and the Phoenix will agree) that without someone to sponsor the ronin's words in court, they are meaningless and can be disregarded as those of a dishonorable man.

Afternoon

If the players appear to be successful in gathering enough information to cast doubt on the claims that Ryuden killed Himitsu, the Scorpion and Phoenix will both become nervous. Uona will approach one of the PCs (a shugenja, if possible) alone, and discuss the case with them. During the conversation, she will say:

"Have you ever served anyone other than your own daimyo?" Uona smiles in a friendly manner. "I have. It is a difficult decision, when one loyalty comes in conflict with another.

"I once heard a fable about a dove in the same position. The dove believed in the Law above all else. When the lord of the Birds was accused of stealing seed from a farmer's garden, the dove would have done anything to have cleared his

The Plot Thickens

The characters should know, being the dutiful Rokugani citizens which they are, that Otomo Yoroshiku is the only heir to the Emperor's throne besides his young son. If Yoroshiku is killed, dishonored, or otherwise made unsuitable to assume the throne, there will be no 'safety net' for the Hantei dynasty.

Of course, if the characters manage to marry her, and something happens to the boy, they could be in a position to inherit the throne – with a little political wrangling.

And isn't the Emerald Throne of Rokugan worth a little compromise – a little dishonor?

There are those who would answer 'yes.'

Master's name. But in doing so, he discovered that the young son of the Master of all Animals had been the one to steal the seed. But if this were discovered, all the animals would surely revolt against their leader.

"So the dove was forced to decide. Where was his loyalty?" Uona smiles and bows. "To the Emperor, or to the Law? Ah, but I must go. There is still testimony to collect, and you have no time for silly fables. Good day, my friend."

In the garden, Yoroshiku walks with many of the courtiers, as has been her custom in days past. However, this time she has only her Hida and Kitsu maidservants, both of whom are trying very hard to put on pleasant smiles. Yoroshiku is so practiced, of course, that hers looks genuine. Theirs, unfortunately, could use some work. If anyone asks, they say that Kakita Nantoko is a gentle girl, and that the excitement has made her ill. She'll be staying in the room for a few days.

Evening

No great feast is planned for this evening. The horrible events of last night, coupled with the continuing investigation, make festivities difficult. Instead, Hiruma Usigo summons the characters to feast in his room, mentioning that he has found something they might find very important.

Once there, they are served by Usigo's personal attendant, Hiruma Arawa, a man who is often in Usigo's company in the palace. Usigo offers them all tea, and they sit on the terrace as Arawa serves them all from a single pitcher of tea.

Usigo says that he found the following poem among his writing utensils earlier in the day. He did not write it, nor does he know whose handwriting it is. As Arawa has never learned to write, it cannot be his, either. Usigo tells the characters that he has been away from his room nearly all day. He oversaw the eta clearing Himitsu's room, and then had lunch in the garden with their host. Afterward, he was in Asako Kagetsu's chambers, discussing the murder with Asako Kagetsu and Isawa Tomo. The poem reads:

Three little kittens
And the Emperor's Cat
Stares in the mirror
And sees two

As Usigo discusses this piece of information with them, he begins to talk more slowly, and with some effort. The characters may begin to question him, or extrapolate on what he says; if they do, he won't listen, and seems a bit detached. Try to play this as a slow decline, without giving the characters anything obvious until the end of the scene. Finally, he slumps to the floor, dead. His tea has been poisoned. When the characters return to the room to find Hiruma Arawa, he is gone.

As soon as the characters call the guards, Asako Kagetsu will arrive with a group of men, asking questions and trying to find out what has happened. A successful Awareness + Poison at TN 25 will reveal that the cup which Usigo had been using is poisoned with a swift-acting toxin. Kagetsu asks the characters to please keep this death as quiet as possible, and not disturb the other guests until they've had a chance to investigate. He will now treat the characters as the foremost investigators in the palace, and begin seeking their advice on what to do with Usigo's body, his belongings, and how to handle the situation.

Kagetsu is a competent *daimyo*, but he has never been faced with such a dilemma. He relied heavily on Usigo's counsel, and is now looking to the PCs for the same. This does not mean that he will blindly agree to their suggestions, only that he will ask for their opinions and consider their words more heavily than before.

The characters can find the real body of Arawa hidden in a firepit in an empty room of the castle (or someone else will find it very shortly, even without them); the man was killed with a garotte, several hours earlier. If they realize that the only people in the palace with the ability to change their features are the Shosuro Acting Troupe, they'd be right. And the actors are now in their room downstairs, preparing for tonight's show.

The Actors

The Scorpion chambers are divided into two parts – one area is the receiving chamber, where warm sake rests in delicate sakizuki and painted rice walls brighten the austere chamber. The second is filled with costumes behind painted screens, elaborate Kabuki masks, and the smell of greasepaint. When the characters come to the room, they are met by a young Scorpion named Yogo Yasai, whose mask resembles a smiling fool's face. He is only a young actor, and knows little of politics and intrigue. If the characters ask to speak to Tage, he will let them in, smiling behind his mask, and go to the second room to tell her they are here.

Tage will enter, offering the characters sake and wine, and will sit on a cushion near the fire. At no time will she look into any of the

Isawa Tomo and Isawa Uona

The two major shugenja in the second adventure are Isawa Tomo, current Master of Water of the Isawa Elemental Masters, and his apprentice, Isawa Uona. Those players familiar with the CCG will already know that Uona is going to become the next Master of Air, but that hasn't happened yet in the RPG.

Tomo has an amazing variety of water spells, all of which he has mastery over, as well as a tremendous amount of skill with other spells. If he needs a spell, he has it. If he needs an *effect*, he can probably figure out how to make it.

Uona's not as powerful, but she has all the Air spells, most of them in mastery, and a plethora of other spells, too numerous to mention. If she needs a spell, and it's in the basic book, she has it.

Remember that Isawa Tomo is one of the five most powerful people in the Phoenix lands. He's not used to being contradicted, and the Asako aren't used to contradicting him.

characters' eyes, or even in their general direction. It is as if she is avoiding looking toward them. However, her assistant, the man who met the characters at the door, will sit silently just outside the balcony door, watching them carefully.

If the PCs describe the man who was in Usigo's room, or how he mimicked Arawa's form, Tage will listen carefully. Have the character



speaking (and any Scorpion characters in the room) to roll Awareness + Sincerity at TN 15, to see how Tage reacts to their news. If the roll is successful, they will see that Tage has decided that they are telling the truth.

"I see." Shosuro Tage murmurs, lifting the sake cup to her lips. "So, you think that one of my actors may have killed honorable Hiruma-sama?" She smiles, and sips again. "You would be wrong. They say the Scorpion use ninja – the object of many children's tales – to gather information. What they do not say is that sometimes, even the finest actors lose themselves in their roles. A pity.

"All of the troupe has been here, readying their costumes for tonight's performance. We can all speak for each other in this, and no one was missing at any time. No, my friends, we did not kill either Usigo or Himitsu, but I can show you who did. I know where they are hiding.

"But, first, some sake. Please." Her assistant offers you each a glass. "Such a pleasant day for walking in the garden. The Imperial Princess herself spent the morning beneath the willows. She has three maids, neh? Three lovely attendants. But only two today. Only two." Tage pauses, and a faint smile crosses her lips.

"You must be certain, friends, that you know whose name you must kill in order to save your Lord's. I cannot help you with the decision. I can only tell you this: Your lord's name can be cleared, at great cost. An innocent must be sacrificed. Are you prepared to pay that price?"

The magistrates among the PCs will know that even if Yoroshiku did not order her maid to commit the crime (which is the case), it will appear that she did. The name of the Emperor will have been slandered, and Yoroshiku will be dishonored, at least in private. Be sure to remind the player characters of Ryuden's words earlier:

"Yoroshiku is the niece of the Emperor. Any stain on her honor is a stain on the Emperor's name. I would gladly die before I allowed any dishonor to be placed at the feet of the Hantei family.

"I would gladly have died to protect her."

If the players do not clear Ryuden's name, of course, he will be dishonorably put to death. The secret of the real murderer will never be discovered, and the Princess's name will remain clean. Her maid, Nantoko, will apparently have run off with one of the more unremarkable courtiers, and the Winter Court will grieve the loss of two of its most prestigious members, Himitsu and Usigo.

If the characters do ask Tage to tell them where to find the real murderer, she will speak of a room beneath the kitchens, used as a supplementary pantry. It is unstable, nearly collapsed, and has been fortified with a maze of tall shelves and stone pillars.

"There," she says softly. "There you will find the true killer. But be wary. It has many faces, and some of them may be your own." Tage sets down her sake bowl with a faintly trembling hand. "If anyone asks, of course, I did not see you this evening."

She rises, and leaves through the balcony door. Her assistant will be sure none of the PCs follow her. If they try to question him, or push past him, he will say:

"Enough. Can you not see that the Lady has dismissed you? Let her be alone with the death of her friend."

The Pantry

Once, the room was used as an additional kitchen as well. There is an old oven, very deep and made of huge stones around a central aperture. The sides of the room are of crumbling rock, and if there are any explosions or if any of the pillars are destroyed, the roof could very well fall in on the PCs. The room is approximately twenty feet beneath the floor of the castle, and the characters would certainly die if this happened.

There is a peasant in the kitchens who is willing to show the room to the characters, complete with a small tour. He has just been down into the pantry, bringing up firewood for the ovens in the upper two kitchens. He is unafraid to go there, but warns the PCs about its crumbling walls and asks them humbly to be careful.

Within the deepest recesses of the oven, rests Kakita Nantoko. She is wounded, and a few tarlike, black drops of blood can be found at the mouth of the oven. However, it is deep enough so that even the longest yari cannot reach her, so she is relatively safe within.

If the PCs disturb her in any way, or if they come too close to the shaft of the oven, Nantoko will assume the shape of the nearest PC, leap out, and attack them with her katana. She is quite insane, and has no concern for her own life. If possible, she would rather collapse the ceiling than be taken prisoner.

It should be obvious to the players through this combat that Nantoko has gone mad. Her brand is massive, and covers most of her left side, chest and back. She laughs hollowly, and strange voices come from her lips. She fights like a puppet on strings, and possesses a strength beyond her natural form. She is confusing, maddening, and clearly not sane.

In any case, Nantoko must die. Her appearance will change throughout the fight, to make the darkened scene as confusing as possible. Switching from one PC's form to another (complete with equipment and clothing), Nantoko speaks with their voice, moves with their actions, and knows their names. She is a perfect copy of whomever she wishes.

If the characters kill Nantoko, her face will turn blank and featureless (only indentations for eyes, a ridge for a nose, and a lipless, open mouth will remain), and a viscous black smoke will escape from her silently screaming mouth. Then, the body will fall to the ground, leaving the face a bloody and unrecognizable pulp.

Day 14, Month of the Horse

If Ryuden has not been cleared, he will commit seppuku, to save his family's honor, at dawn. His family will be dishonored, but not disgraced, and the PCs will be lauded as true and noble magistrates.

If they have killed Nantoko and brought the matter to Asako Kagetsu's attention, things will be different, of course. While the body is recognizably the maid's, the large shadow-brand on the girl's back is of great concern to the Phoenix, and the Scorpion say they don't know anything about the murder, Yoroshiku's birth, or the strange powers displayed by Nantoko.. The murders are blamed on the maid, and she is sure to have been acting in her mistress's defense (which, while it doesn't implicate Yoroshiku directly, certainly validates the ronin's claims that something is being hidden). Yoroshiku will be dishonored, and some of her suitors will begin looking more seriously at other females at the Winter Court as candidates for marriage. A message will be dispatched to Yoroshiku's uncle, and in general, the characters should be made to feel as if they have failed in some way.

One final side-note. When the maid's body is being burned, Ryuden will mention something he remembers from meeting Nantoko on her way to kill Himitsu. One thing the maid said struck him as odd:

"We don't always act on our Mistress's will, my Lord. Some of us have other lives. Other dreams … and nightmares of our own."

– Kakita Nantoko

PC Daimyo (AKA "Ryuden")

EARTH: 3
WATER: 3
FIRE: 3
AIR: 3
VOID: 2
School/Rank: (As PC) Rank 5
Skills: By base school template, mostly Ranks 3-5.
Honor: 4
Glory: 7
Advantages: Social Position (Minor Clan daimyo).
Disadvantages: Brash.

'Ryuden' is the name we've arbitrarily given to the *daimyo* of one of your PCs. Feel free to change it, if necessary, to maintain continuity for your campaign. Note that a *daimyo* is not the same as the Champion of the Clan – we're not talking about Hida KIsada.

Ryuden is a noble of some authority, who rules the lands which the PC lives in/hails from. As such, he has certain direct influence over the PC, even if they've never directly met.

His stats should be adjusted for clan affiliation, and feel free to boost one or two Rings, until you feel he's appropriate for the job.

Mirumoto Hanzu

EARTH: 2
WATER: 2
Perception: 3
FIRE: 2
Agility: 3
AIR: 3
VOID: 2
School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 3
Skills: Archery 2, Defense 3, Kenjutsu 3, Meditation 2, Lore (Shugenja) 2.
Weapons: Katana (3k2), wakizashbi (2k2).
Honor: 2.7
Glory: 2.8
Advantages: Luck (3 points).

This duelist is one of Yoroshiku's suitors, convinced that the PCs are simply making up all the information they 'find' about Ryuden. He comes forward at one (very public) point, and challenges the foremost PC to a duel of honor.

Such a duel is commonly to first blood, but this guy is intending to play for keeps. He believes that by showing Yoroshiku his merits in a duel for her honor, he can convince her to marry him – and the PC is no more than a good excuse for a duel.



This is it. The end. The part where you take your kid gloves off and start hitting them below the belt. It's time to start asking some really tough questions. You know, the kind that nobody likes to answer.

This is *Code of Bushido*'s climax. No more building action here. This is deadly ground, where decisions have to be made, and they have to be made quickly, or everybody dies. There's no time for reflection, or consideration. Only swift action will save the day here; hesitation will only seed defeat.

Overview

At the beginning of this chapter, the characters will discover that Otomo Yoroshiku has been kidnapped. A note has been left behind, notifying everyone in the court that it was Niban who stole her, and he intends to marry her, thus gaining the status he has sought for so long. If you think this is a little out of character for Niban, you are right. He had nothing to do with the kidnapping … but his lieutenant Tobuko did.

She kidnapped the Otomo maiden and left the note behind. Then, she hid the girl in the village and notified Niban that she saw a contingent from the Phoenix lands – armed to the teeth – approaching the village. Niban panics and takes up arms to protect what he has rightfully worked for all these years. Of course, he's walking in to a very simple, but effective, trap.

Whether the characters rescue Yoroshiku or not, they will return to the festival with a decision to make. It is a decision that will change their lives forever; a decision between doing what is right and what is correct. It will not be an easy decision to make, nor should it be. There is no room for compromise in bushido. None. If the characters believe otherwise, they are in for a lesson they will never forget …

Organization

The last part of *Code* is not structured like the first two. There are really only two major events and one optional conclusion event. How things occur really depends on how your characters act.

The following sections is divided into three parts. The first gives you what your players need to know about the kidnapping itself. The second outlines the events that occur when the characters arrive at the ronin village. The last (and possibly optional) part shows you what happens if your characters decide to confront the real villain of this piece: Shinjo Gidayu.

The Kidnapping

Scene One: Rude Awakenings

Sometime after the troubles of the second adventure (the quicker you make it, the less time the characters will have to think), Yoroshiku is kidnapped from her rooms. The following events occur at approximately 3 in the morning.

The characters hear a piercing scream from the other side of the household. Those who are asleep will have to stir themselves out of their dreamy slumbers while guards with polearms and armor rush by them.

Despite all their efforts (and status), the characters are not allowed to exit their chambers. Guards are positioned at the doorways and everyone is politely ordered to go back to sleep. If the characters became 'rusted by Asako Kagetsu during part two of *Code of Bushido,* of if characters are prominent Emerald Magistrates, (and only if they make a successful Awareness + Law roll at TN 30), then they will discover the source of the clamor: Otomo Yoroshiku has been kidnapped. Even still, once they learn the cause, they are still urged to return to their rooms and go back to sleep.

Any characters who refuse to do as ordered are making a quiet claim: that the Phoenix are unable to solve the situation on their own. Any characters with Courtier Skill will know better than to make such an insinuation, and you should encourage them to share their observation with their fellows, so they don't make any avoidable mistakes.

Scene Two: A Quiet Call For Help

The next morning, the characters will find that a strange hush has fallen over the household. If they ask anyone – servants, bushi, shugenja –

about the event that occured last night, every Phoenix will reply "I'm sorry, sir, but I don't know what you're talking about." The entire household has been ordered to ignore the fact that the Emperor's niece was kidnapped, and they will not contradict the orders of their lord.

All morning long, the characters will walk among the silence, busting to ask questions they know they should not ask. Fortunately, around noon, they will get a reprieve. A note arrives, informing them that Shinjo Gidayu wishes to have lunch with them.

When they arrive, the old samurai serves them well. When the food is done, he will solemly hand them a rolled up piece of rice paper. The characters read the following:

I have the girl. She will be my bride. I will be the husband of a Hantei. I will be a samurai again.

It is signed with Niban's chop, with which the characters should be familiar.

Gidayu then speaks:

"It is not the place of the Phoenix to speak of such things, and so I have taken it upon myself to aid them in this time of crisis. As you undoubtedly know by now, our beloved Emperor's niece has been taken from this home against her will. It is the duty of all samurai to protect the Hantei family. I call upon your honor now. You know where the ronin village lies. The Phoenix argue amongst themselves – bickering about who has the right to save her – while they ignore the fact that we all have a duty.

"Go now, and bring her back. I know that I do not need to speak of reward for such a duty, but I also know that I will be in a position to reward all of you ..." he eyes any samurai who have become "close" with Shinjo Iruko "... some of you more than others."

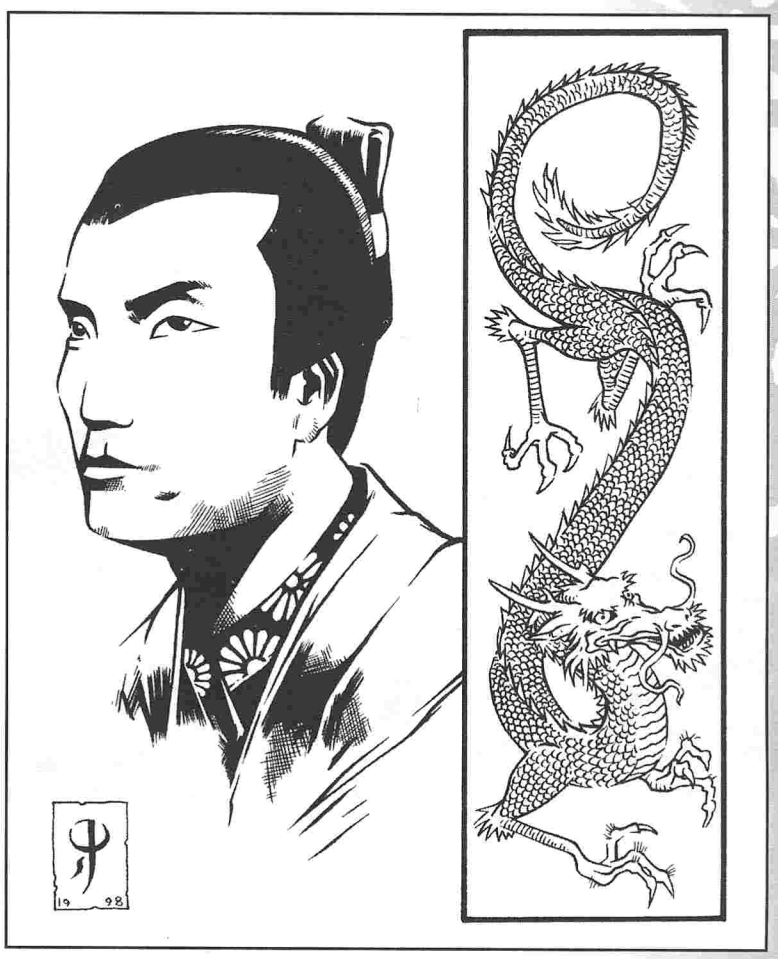
When he's done talking, he bows to the characters, turns on his heel and leaves the room.

It is very possible your characters may decide to leave the duty of saving the Emperor's niece to the Phoenix. If they do, each of them loses 5 Honor for neglecting their duty to the Emperor. If they try to offer aid to the Phoenix, they will find them behind locked doors with no time to speak to the characters. The Phoenix are far too busy figuring out how to save the Emperor's cousin and save face.

Make it clear to your characters that if something is not done soon, any action that might be taken will be too late.

Scene Three: Fall From Grace

The next scene takes place when they arrive at the ronin village. If the characters send out scouting parties, a strange sight will be awaiting them. In the middle of the square are two groups. At the front of one group stands Niban. At the



head of another stands Tobuko. Yoroshiku is nowhere to be seen.

As the characters advance on the village, they can hear the screams of the two ronin. They are in the midst of a heated argument, neither hiding their emotions under any kind of veneer.

What's Really Going On

There's a very delicate game being played here. Niban did not kidnap Otomo Yoroshiku. His lieutenant did.

Tobuko has spent the last two years of her life here in this village, raising crops, counting taxes, dealing with brigands, and she's sick to death of it. In her heart, she loves the smell of battle and blood. She is a ronin, after all, and her only duty

is to her own death. Ronin should be in battle, not rice fields. They should be bathing in blood, not counting taxes. For ten years, she has followed Niban, and for eight of those ten years, she knew the life of a wandering mercenary, seeking death at every corner. She longs for areturn to those days, and she has kidnapped Yoroshiku in order to bring them back.



Here's her plan. Last night, she kidnapped Yoroshiku and left behind the note with Niban's name signed at the bottom. Then, she hid the girl in the village and told Niban she saw an armed squad of men marching down to the village, talking about taking his head.

Niban could respond in many different ways, but however he responds doesn't matter to Tobuko. Any way this falls, it ends up with her wandering once again, with a handful of men at her side. If Niban buys the story, he'll either stand and fight (in which case, Tobuku recieves her glorious death) or run (and she'll be the wandering mercenary once again). Either way, she's free from living the life of a peasant, and back to living the life of the ronin: the way things ought to be.

On the other hand, it doesn't help that Niban's past is focusing his paranoia. He's convinced that the characters were sent by Shinjo Gidayu – a man that Niban knows all too well. And, in a way, he's right. Gidayu has sent the characters down here to deal with the situation … but he never mentioned his true intentions.

Confused? Well, let's set a few things straight.

Niban's Story

Sixteen years ago, Niban was known as Shinjo Toda, karo to Shinjo Gidayu (remember when he said, *"I have no karo"* at the beginning?). Gidayu was having a discreet affair with a certain Otomo Jiko, a very married member of the Imperial family (although by birth a Lion). When Jaikedo gave birth to a baby girl (Yoroshiku), she called for Gidayu. The Unicorn daimyo did not come to her side, but instead sent his karo,the man who became known as Niban.

Niban arrived, and discovered Jiko was on her deathbed, sick with fever. He knelt at her bedside, and she called him by Gidayu's name. Niban nodded somberly, hoping his deception would bring her a little peace in her final hours.

"The girl," Jiko whispered. "She is yours, my love. She is your daughter."

Niban was shocked. By cuckolding the Imperial line, Gidayu had comitted a serious crime. He had, in fact, stolen an heir from the Emperor. Niban watched as the woman passed away, then returned to Unicorn lands with the knowledge that he would have to tell his lord what happened.

When Gidayu asked what occured, Niban bitterly told him. Then he said, "I swear on my life that I will keep the secret."

But Gidayu shook his head. "No. The only way this will remain a secret is if all who know it are

dead." Then, he ordered his karo to fall on his sword.

Niban was confused. "Is my word not good enough?" he asked.

"No," Gidayu responded, his voice growing in anger. "Now, fall on your sword."

Niban refused a second time, and Gidayu called his personal guard into the room. "Kill the traitor," he ordered them. The floor of Gidayu's throne room was quickly covered in blood, and the last man standing was his karo.

"There is no need," he said. "For I am already dead. And your secret has died with me." With that, Niban disappeared, never to be seen in Unicorn lands again.

He spent the next fourteen years as a bandit. Disenchanted with bushido, he reverted to his ancestor's ways, living off the land and the unwary. It was during this time that he gathered the ronin who follow him now, as well as Tobuko, his most trusted lieutenant. For over a decade, the group became one of the most notorious bandit gangs in the northern provinces of Rokugan, preying off the Dragon, Dragonfly, Crane, Lion and Phoenix.

But all that changed two years ago. After so many years of wandering and pillaging, Niban's heart softened. When he reached the age of thirty-eight, he began to feel the pangs of retirement. He signed up as yojimbo for the Phoenix, and began to build a small village just east of the Ki-Rin shrine. For two years, they have made the village the hub of their lives. For the first time in a very long time, Niban thought he had found his place in the world.

But Tobuko was restless, as were some of the other ronin. They sought the adventure they once had, and the wealth and power that went along with it. The final straw was the Phoenix Clan's refusal to allow Koan to participate in their festival, knowing the shugenja would make the Phoenix look foolish in front of the other clans.

And so, Tobuko has arranged for Niban's little dream to fall apart. She knows Niban's past, and she knows Shinjo Gidayu is one of the visiting daimyos.

So, she's kidnapped Gidayu's daughter and placed the blame on the Unicorn's old karo. She's told Niban that the Phoenix are coming down to crush him for humiliating them at the festival, for even if Koan didn't win, his talent blatantly outshined the other competitors. Now, she believes, Niban knows exactly who orchestrated his doom: his old daimyo, Gidayu.

One of two things will happen. Either he will come to his senses and resume the role of a wave man, or he'll get killed and control of the gang will pass to her.

Either solution will suit her just fine.

Confrontation

With all that in mind, let's take a look at how the characters fit into this little confrontation and how everyone at the village is going to respond to them.

• *Niban*

The ronin leader is convinced that Gidayu has sent the characters to kill him. He doesn't know about the kidnapping, nor does he know the girl is unconscious and bound up in his own hut. He's completely paranoid by now (it's had a lot of time to build), and will not listen to the characters at all.

What's more, he has regressed back to his "bushido is for fools" viewpoint. He's very near madness, and when he finds Yoroshiku bound and gagged, he will recognize her. That causes him to fall right over the edge.

• *Tobuko*

The ex-Mantis followed Niban for one reason and one reason only: she was convinced that bushido was a fool's game that daimyos preached but never practiced. As she watches Niban's ethics fall apart, she can't help but smile, because this is exactly what she wanted to happen. The Niban she met was a cold-hearted killer, not a protector of helpless, weak peasants. He once told her, *"The world is made of two kinds of people: the weak and the strong. The strong take from the weak, and the weak can do nothing but complain."*

Now all she has to do is convince him to leave before the characters arrive. Unfortunately, she's a little too late.

• *Koan*

Many of the characters may notice that one element is missing: Koan. As soon as Tobuko and Niban started quarelling, the shugenja took for the road. He's left behind the village and all those who live within it. He may show up again someday, but right now, he's only interested in saving his own skin.

He's got a five hour start on the characters, and he's using a lot of magic to put as much distance between himself and the village as possible. By

Shosuro Tage

EARTH: 2
WATER: 3
Perception: 5
FIRE: 4
AIR: 3
Awareness: 5
VOID: 2
School/Rank: Shosuro Actor 5
Skills: Acting 4, Bard 3, Courtier 3, Dance 2, Etiquette 3, Forgery 2, Knife 2, Lore (Rokugani Literature) 3, Poison 4, Seduction 2, Sincerity 2, Slieght of Hand 4, Tessen 3
Weapons: Tessen (0k2), Tanto (1k2)
Honor: 1.4
Glory: 2.1
Advantages: Heartless

Tage is the foremost actress in the Shosuro troupe. Obviously in charge, she is a polite leader, and always aware of her audience. She is petite, with lovely, laughing eyes, and delicate features.

She enjoys the political games of the court, but knows when to respond with deadly force. Trained by Shosuro Hametsu, Tage's dark nature denies her smiling appearance.

She put the poem in Usigo's room, of course, to help the characters find Nantoko. She didn't kill Usigo, though. Nantoko did.

Acting Troupe (4 male, 2 female)

EARTH: 2
WATER: 2
Perception: 3
FIRE: 2
AIR: 2
Awareness: 3
VOID: 2
School/Rank: Shosuro Actor 1-2 (half of each)
Skills: Acting 2, Couriter 1, Etiquette 2, Forgery 1, Gambling 2, Knife 1, Locksmith 1, Poison 1, Seduction 2, Stealth or Sleight of Hand 2 (half of each).
Weapons: Tanto (1k2).
Honor: 1.5
Glory: 2
Advantages: Read Lips.
Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Scorpion)

The Shosuro acting troupe is one of the most famous performing groups in the Empire. They have won numerous honors, performed for the Emperor on many occasions, and their ability to entertain and educate is unparalleled.

The five members of the troupe (Bayushi Gadigo, Bayushi Kutsuko, Shosuro Aidata, Shosuro Suta and especially Yogo Yasai) are all incredibly loyal to Shosuro Tage.

the time the characters figure out that he's missing, he might be halfway to Crab territory.

The Characters

When they arrive, things in the village are falling apart. Niban and Tobuko are standing face-to-face, screaming at each other. Their conversation sounds something like this.

Niban: "There's no reason for it! No reason at all!"

Tobuko: "What reason do they need? They're samurai, and we're ronin! We're nothing to them. That's all the reason they need!"

Niban: "I don't believe it. I won't believe it."

Tobuko: "I don't care what you say. As soon as steel hits your flesh, you'll believe."

As the characters move closer, Niban will order his men to take position. Remember, he's got fifty men under his command. Ten archers take to the forest surrounding the village and five more climb to the top of the village's tallest buildings. The rest take up positions surrounding it.

From this point, whatever happens is really up to your players. Niban has got men all over the village. He's got five bowmen at the tops of the buildings and ten men more hidden in the surrounding bush. If the characters try for a direct assault, it's very likely they are going to get themselves killed.

However, if they try a more conversational tone, they might save their hides … at least for a few minutes more.

If they ride in to the village with their swords at their sides, Niban will allow them to approach. Unfortunately, if the characters say anything that puts doubt in Niban's belief, Tobuko will sabotage their efforts. As soon as they show signs of making peace or explaining the situation to Niban, she'll cry out:

"Of course they're lying! Look at them! They're probably just distractions while the real army moves into position in the woods. Wait! Did you see that?"

If the characters bring up the subject of the kidnapping, Niban's jaw will drop. Any character making a Simple Awareness + Sincerity roll at TN 10 will know that his reaction is genuine. But this roll isn't a freebie. They've got to ask for it; otherwise, they don't get it.

As soon as you mention Yoroshiku, Tobuko also turns ashen. She looks at Niban and shakes her head. "I can't believe it. I knew you were desperate, but …"

Then she goes on to explain to the characters that Niban talked of kidnapping the girl, but that she never expected him to go through with it. She immediately orders ten men to look for Yoroshiku. The ronin spend exactly three turns (fifteen seconds) looking, before they find her. During this time, the debate with Niban and Tobuko continues.

The ronin bring the girl up to the characters as Niban's expression slips from suprise to complete lunacy. His sword is out before anyone can move, and he snatches the girl from the ronin, killing anyone who gets in his way (at your discretion, of course).

When Niban snaps, Tobuko takes charge. She orders her ronin (note that they are "her" ronin now) to stand down, and allow the PCs to deal with Niban in their own way.

He lives or he dies. Either way, she wins.

Niban's convinced that Yoroshiku was placed here by the Asako and Shinjo Gidayu; he doesn't suspect Tobuko at all. And these fools that Gidayu sent (the characters) are here for his life. Any attempt to communicate with him will prove an interesting exchange. All the doubts Niban has allowed to sleep in his head for sixteen years have finally awakened.

If the characters try to appeal to his sense of loyalty, he will laugh and condemn them as fools. And one by one, as the characters bring them up, he will knock down the virtues that bushido teaches.

"That is what bushido is: a religion for fools. Look at those you serve. Do they follow bushido? Do they? Or do they use it as a convenient tool to push their pawns about a board that only they can see?"

Honor:

"Honor? That is a fine word. Do you know what honor is? It is a code of conduct meant to keep the strong from overpowering the weak. Those souls who do not have the stomach for killing invented it. Only we – the strong – only we have the stomachs to do what must be done. The weak provide what we need. Isn't that what bushido is all about? The weak feed us and we kill those who disobey. That is our way. That is bushido."

Temperance:

"How many times have you helped your lord sneak into the geisha house? How many times have you killed those who insulted him, all because he was too drunk to mind his manners?"

Loyalty:

"That is the cruelest of them all. They demand loyalty, and ask for our heads when we ask for even the slightest return of what we give them. They are gaki. Hungry for our lives, our love, our blood. Their hunger knows no bounds, and if we even question their judgement... even question it once... it's 'Fall on your sword, scum! You're unworthy of my favor!'

Niban will continue his tirade while he holds a knife to the girl's throat. Then, as soon as you feel your characters are about to rush him, he shouts once more:

"I believed! I tried! I walked in Akodo's footsteps, and look what it got me! Look at me! I'm nothing! Nothing! And all because of this... this..." He pushes the knife closer to the girl's throat.

He has reached the point of no longer caring about any life.. If the characters rush him, he will kill the girl. If any shugenja show any sign of casting a spell, he'll kill her. Remember, Niban has spent more than two decades training himself as a cold-blooded killer. Add to that the fact that he doesn't really care about anything anymore.

Why doesn't he just kill the girl? Glad you asked. Despite all the mess he's gotten himself into, Niban wants the truth to be known, even if it's just the characters.

He'll tell them, if they are willing to listen – or better, if the players have made an impassioned plea or stunning argument (pure role-playing; it's up to you do decide how well they pull it off) – then he'll share the whole story.

When he's done, he looks at you and smiles. "Now you know the truth," he says. "But bushido has no room for the truth, does it?" He snickers,



throws down the knife and pushes the stunned girl forward. "Go on, then. Serve your lord. Do your duty. Kill me. I'm only a ronin after all."

After Niban's words fade away into echoes, wait. If your players don't declare any actions, he will laugh and bow sarcastically. "There is no



room in a samurai's heart for doubt." Then, he charges the girl. Roll for initiative (taking into account the fact that the PCs probably have their weapons drawn). If he wins, Niban gets his hands on the girl's throat and breaks her neck with a single twitch of his hands.

Once you've finished describing that scene, ask your players, "Are you doing anything?" If they still don't move, then he'll jump on one of them and break their neck.

Give your players only one chance to react. Niban never hesitates. He is a killer. He sold away his mercy long ago. If Niban gets hold of a character, he's more than likely worm food. It's up to you, but let's face it, if a 38 year old samurai got his hands around your neck, do you think he would need to roll for damage?

Niban fights to the death. He has no sword, only his bare hands. However, particularly nasty GMs can choose to have him pull the sword from the obi of any fallen characters.

If the characters do not pause or hesitate after Niban gives them the chance to kill him, he dies a very quiet, ignoble death. Particularly idealistic characters may offer themselves as his second. He shakes his head. *"That is a samurai's privilege. I fell from their graces long ago."*

That's the cue to kill him outright. Niban wants death. Not a handsome, honorable death, but a messy one. And one way or another, he's going to get it.

Tobuko's Fate

Tobuko observes the body of Niban, and says "It's over now. Take the girl peacefully, and we will part here in peace."

Yoroshiku stands in fury, then, pointing a blameful finger at the new ronin leader. "You are the one who kidnapped me! If you do not pay in blood, my uncle will have a thousand Imperial soldiers hunt you down like the filth you are."

The Hantei turns to you and orders you to kill her - now.

Tobuko has 15 ronin with her, a number of which (determined by the GM) are archers. She will remain behind them until they are decidedly outmatched, at which time she will turn and run, forsaking them and the rest of the village. The PCs may pursue her, as they wish.

Be warned. If she escapes (as she is likely to do), she will make a point to return, someday…

Afterword

As Niban's blood spills, the characters may note just how quiet things have become once he has stopped screaming. The village is deserted. Niban's ghost may very well spend the rest of eternity here, haunting the empty huts and rotting fields. A tragic end for a man who only wanted to believe in bushido.

But now, the characters have a new dilemma. The characters and Yoroshiku have information that only two men shared for sixteen years, and it's time to decide what to do with it.

Conclusion

The characters must now choose what to do with the information they gained from Niban's confession. Gidayu cuckolded the Hantei family and stole their heritage. That sin is unforgivable.

Unfortunately, there are a few obsticles in their way. First and foremost is Otomo Yoroshiku.

She was there when the ronin made claims about her. She was too frightened at the time to talk, but now that he is dead, she has found her tongue.

"I forbid any of you from uttering a single word that man spoke to you regarding my lineage. He was obviously a liar and a scoundrel, and his word is no better than that of a common churl."

Yoroshiku will not take "No" for an answer, and she is in the position to ensure that she doesn't have to. She is the Emperor's niece, after all. What's more, she will full-heartedly admit to being kidnapped by the ronin to protect her position.

"Of course it was him. I saw him climb in through my window and bind my hands and feet and gag me. It was him."

It is completely up to the characters how to handle Yoroshiku. After all, sticking up for her may very well win her hand in marriage, and a reward for her safe return.

The second problem is Shinjo Gidayu himself. Confronting him with Niban's story will cause no end of troubles. Quite simply, the characters do not have the Glory Rank to question his word – or Yoroshiku's for that matter. Only if an Emerald Magistrate presents the accusation can Gidayu's honor even be questioned. If that is the case, then Gidayu has one more trick up his sleeve.

If the players roleplay the whole scene (don't let them get away with just rolls), then the aging Unicorn *daimyo* takes a deep breath and shakes his head.

"Very well. It seems my honor is in question. As I am an old man, and unable to protect my honor. Iruko-san, I call upon you to serve as my champion?"

Iruko will not listen to anyone who tries to talk her out of defending her lord's honor. Her stance on this subject is very simple. Right or wrong, Gidayu is her lord, and she promised to serve him.

"A samurai is as good as his promise. When I say I will do a thing, it is as good as done, or I will die trying. Do you want me to fall back on my word?"

From the viewpoint of bushido, Iruko is right. She promised her lord to serve him, and if she breaks her promise once, she can do it twice. The only thing of worth to a samurai is his honor, and if she backs down, if she steps aside from her vow to Gidayu, she proves that her word is worth less than dirt.

Now comes another decision. The characters have challenged Gidayu's honor. Iruko now stands to defend it. Who will face her?

One of the PCs must face Iruko, or they will suffer consequences to both their Honor and their Glory, and be forced to take back their accusations about Gidayu. Anyone who backs down is admitting that their testimony is false, and they will lose an Honor Rank and a Glory Rank for disgracing themselves before such a distinguished host. Anyone faces Iruko in the duel



The Mantis

In *Code of Bushido,* the ronin lieutenant, Tobuko, is a member of a Minor Clan – the Mantis. In order to flesh out her abilities, we have included a bit of Mantis history.

Mantis is easily the strongest Minor Clan, and this is reflected not only in the strength of their abilities, but in their four techniques, rather than the standard three which most lesser clans have created. The reason the Mantis have four is twofold: one, they are the oldest true Minor Clan, (the Fox were shortly after), and two, they have had constant assistance from their Lion and Crab relatives, as well as the guidance of one of Rokugan's most well-known Fortunes.

We hope this tides you over until we can collect all of the Minor Clan techniques. You know how hard it is to get all the Minor Clans to do anything together, much less give us all their secrets. But, luckily, there's this nice samurai known as Yoritomo, who has offered to lend a hand…

Enjoy!

will likewise gain 3 Honor Points and 5 Glory Points. This is not a fight to first blood. This is a duel about Imperial honor. Someone must die. Blood must be spilled to wash away the stain that has fallen on the court.

• *If Iruko wins the duel:*

Niban's claim is proven false and the characters all must recant their words. Gidayu (and Yoroshiku, if she's still alive) will both look on the characters with scorn, and they may gain Gidayu as a Major Enemy in the Unicorn Clan. The characters will lose both 5 Glory and 5 Honor points, and will be stripped of their titles (such as Magistrate status). It is a harsh punishment, but they should consider themselves lucky they are not made ronin on the spot.

• *If Iruko loses the duel*

If Iruko loses the duel, the character dueling her gains 5 Glory Points, and Iruko is dead. The Honor gain depends on the individual character. Ask the character to make an Honor roll at TN 20. If the character makes the roll, he recognizes Iruko's devotion to her lord and is inspired by it, even if it was mislaid. That character gains 3 Honor Points. If the character fails the roll, Niban's rant has made its way into his heart, and all he can see is the waste of a beautiful woman's life. That character loses 3 Honor Points.

If the character had any emotional attachment to Iruko, he loses at least 2 points of Honor, regardless of his Honor roll.

Gidayu's Fate

If Iruko wins the duel, Gidayu is redeemed. He has kept his secret in the dark, and will continue to do so. If Iruko loses the duel, any Emerald Magistrates about can demand that he face the Emperor's justice and commit *seppuku.*

Gidayu has no intention of falling on his sword. He draws it from his katana and dares any to face him in personal combat. Tears well up in his eyes and he throws curses at the characters' families. The Unicorn has lost his face, and is not going to die quietly. The characters may choose to beat him into submission, but if they look at the Phoenix, they will see their eyes are calling for blood. The shame that has been brought on the Imperial house must be cleansed, and if the characters won't do it, they will.

Gidayu will not surrender, and will run if he can. Characters may have to pursue him, but they won't have to go far. He is an old man, and his body cannot match the characters in strength. He will fall soon enough.

At the Last

So ends *Code of Bushido.* It can be seen as a tragedy, for there is much blood spilled by the end of it all, and the characters have found their beliefs in honor and justice shaken to the very core. But the fact remains that they have survived, and in the midst of all this treachery, perhaps their honor has survived as well.

Experience, Glory and Honor rewards depend on how well the characters maintained their own codes of ethics throughout the adventure. Now that you've finished reading it, go back and take a look at every ethical choice the characters have to make. Remember to pay close attention to what decisions your characters make. If they compromise or take ethical short cuts, their rewards should be less. However, if they stand by their beliefs, you should reward them heartily.

Not every samurai believes in the same *bushido,* mind you, and you should keep that in mind when handing out rewards. After all, what a Lion calls honor, what a Crane calls duty, what a Crab calls courage, and what a Scorpion calls loyalty are all very different things.



"I know my place in history. My destiny is to defeat you."

– Kaimetsu-uo

Long ago, the son of Hida struggled to defeat the Shadowlands before they could rise to challenge the strength of the new-born Empire. Osano-Wo rose to become one of the most famous legends in the history of the Emerald Empire. He has become a Fortune in his own right and, some say, the true incarnation of the mysterious creature known as the Sixth Dragon.

It is said that Osano-Wo was the son of the Dragon of Thunder, and that the blood of the Celestial Heavens ran in his veins through both

his Kami father and his Serpent mother. He destroyed the Kingdom of the Trolls, and drove the Shadowlands far from the Empire – a defeat from which Fu Leng's minions took centuries to recover.

When Osano-Wo chose to marry, his bride was the daimyo of the Matsu. On the day she announced her pregnancy, Osano-Wo celebrated with *sake*. Too much sake. The next morning, he awoke in a little peasant hut with a little peasant girl who handed him his tetsubo with a smile.

Nine months later, two children were born … on the same day. Osano-Wo formally acknowledged the child of the peasant as his own, and the boy was brought to Hida Palace to be raised with his Lion half-brother. When the heir to the Crab was decided, it was the son of the peasant who was given the Crab Clan sword.

In a rage, Osano-Wo's Lion wife cut off her hair and left it on the floor of their sleeping chamber, taking her son away from the Crab lands to begin a life of their own. They traveled across the wide waters of the Crane bay, to a distant island chain known only as the Islands of Silk.

The son's name was Kaimetsu-uo, and this is the story of his clan.

Kaimetsu-uo

"Never be afraid to speak, for the words of a true samurai are recorded in the histories of the Celestial Heavens, even if the men of this world are blind to the truth."

– Doji Satsume

Kaimetsu-uo, son of Osano-Wo, was born at the palace of the Crab and lived much of his young life in luxury. While the Crab are not renowned for their great wealth, within the walls of the Crab fortress, Kaimetsu-uo was given everything he needed: food, weapons and the training to become one of the finest soldiers in the Empire. He saw everything as his right as the son of the Champion, and had every right to believe that one day he would assume his father's mantle as leader of the Crab.

On the day that Osano-Wo was to give Chikara, the sword of the Crab, to his son and heir, Kaimetsu-uo knew that he would not be the one to receive the prize. His father had come to him the night before the ceremony, and had spoken for many hours with his son. They talked of battles, and of duty. When dawn came, Kaimetsu-uo knew his destiny.

He found his mother sobbing and cutting off her hair in his father's chambers, and helped her rise. "Stand, mother," he told her. "You are a Matsu."

"I am a Matsu," she told him, "But you are a Crab."

"No, mother." The boy said, gathering his *daisho*. "I do not know what I am, but I know what I am not."



With that, the mother and her son traveled away from the lands of the Crab. Kaimetsu-uo gathered those few men who were loyal to him and set out for the islands to the east.

Seventeen years later, Kaimetsu-uo had built a small town, a tall palace on a rocky ledge, and a thriving legion of soldiers. One day, he received a letter from his brother, now Champion of the Crab. Their father had been poisoned by a traitor, and that man was being sheltered in Phoenix lands.

"I cannot avenge our father," Kaimetsu-uo's brother wrote, "I must stay here, and defend the Empire against the Shadowlands …"

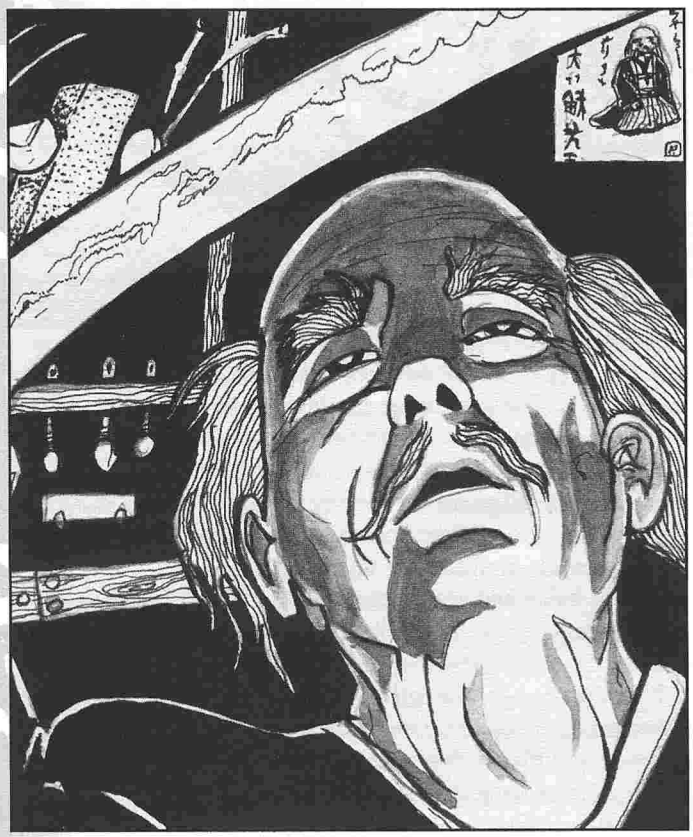
With a cry of vengeance, Kaimetsu-uo led his men to battle against the Phoenix. The Great Clan

first heard rumors of the small force and laughed behind raised fans, whispering with their Crane allies about the joke. They did not ready their armies, nor were they prepared when the storm came.

Only ten ships followed Kaimetsu-uo to the northern coasts, ten small kobune boats filled with loyal men. As they approached the shores of Kyuden Isawa, the sky grew black and dark around them, hiding them from view of the mighty spellcasters on the Phoenix walls.

Lightning led the way through the high seas, as the wind threw spray into the faces of the soldiers. Although the Isawa called to the spirits of air and water, no magic at their command turned back the mighty storm. Kaimetsu-uo's men landed on the beaches, and made their way toward the enchanted walls of the palace, unafraid. Despite the wind, the Phoenix blindly hurled spears of flame and pillars of stone down upon the advancing army. Kaimetsu's men died in agony, but no sound crossed their lips as they followed their lord in silence, no noise betrayed their position.

When they reached the gates of Kyuden Isawa, only fifteen brave samurai still lived. Seeing the tremendous oaken barriers lodged firmly in the stone walls of the palace, Kaimetsu lifted his arms to the raging heavens. His face drenched with rain and hail, bruised from the agonizing climb, he howled like a madman to the storm.



"FATHER!" he screamed, "Let me avenge your death! Give me a sign of your will, and I will move the mountain itself to find your killer! Open the gates, and I will not fail!" With those brave words, Kaimetsu lifted his sword and cut deeply into the wood of the gates, leaving a long scar. As he struck, the heavens shattered, and a bolt of blue flame raced down from the sky, exploding the gates from their iron braces and opening the palace of the Phoenix.

The Isawa, mute from this obvious intervention of the Fortunes, offered treaty with their attackers, however pitiful the army. They refused shelter to the man accused of Osano-Wo's death, and offered recompense of silver and jewels. Kaimetsu-uo and his men, weary but rewarded, returned to the lands of the Crab bearing the head of the murderer. Once there, Kaimetsu-uo and his brother brought the body of their father to the plains where he had been born, and returned it to the flames of the spirit.

But since that day, the Mantis, children of Kaimetsu-uo, have forever felt the spirit of their forefather, and the presence of his hand in their lives. His heart may have remained with the Crab, but his soul stands by the son who never failed.

History

The Mantis are the strongest Minor Clan in Rokugan because of their rich and established history. Although the Mantis are not the wealthiest Minor Clan, they have many resources available from trade of the fine silks which their islands produce. Because of this income, the Mantis have the leisure to develop Techniques and create their own distinct style of fighting.

Undisputed masters of sailing, it is often the servants of the Mantis who pilot the kobune ships on their ocean voyages. Because the Rokugani have little or no true knowledge of navigation, and because of the dangerous and frequent *tsunami,* or 'ocean waves,' the art of deep ocean voyaging has never been discovered. Instead, the Mantis are extremely proficient in the use of tides, wind and other coastal patterns. Trade ships sail up and down the Doji coast with frequency, carrying silver from Phoenix lands, silk from the

Mantis isles, and iron and steel from the Crab highlands.

Territory

The Mantis Clan lives in a fertile archipelago to the east of the Crane shoreline, within view of Kyuden Doji. Their island is beautiful, but dangerous. Many volcanoes form the heart of the islands, their snowy tops reaching into the clouds far above the ocean. Not all of these are inactive, however, and numerous earthquakes rock the shores of the Islands of Silk each year.

One mountain in particular, known as Nemuiyama (Sleeping Mountain), is formed of thousand of layers of exploded ash and lava, around a tremendous crater high in the hills. This mountain, located on the small island near Toshi no Inazuma, has collected the clear rainfall of hundreds of years, and now contains a crystal lake within its high rock walls. The site is considered to be a sacred place to the Mantis, and small shrines dot the hillside above the water.

When earthquakes rock the island, the peasants are often known to say that it is the snore of the great Osano-Wo, who traveled to the Islands of Silk in order to die with his true son, years after the great samurai had stepped down from being the Champion of the Crab. Of course, this is only peasant superstition, but even some of the more level-headed Mantis samurai believe that the spirit of Osano-Wo still lives within the Islands of Silk, watching over the children of his outcast son.

Mantis Bushi School

Benefit: +1 Agility
Beginning Honor: 1
Penalty: -1 Glory Rank
Basic Skills: Athletics, Battle, Commerce, Defense, Kenjutsu, Sailing, Any one Bugei skill.
New Skill: *Sailing (Agility)*

Sailing is considered a Merchant skill, but it is not dishonorable for a Mantis Clan member to know and use it. Knowledge of this skill includes how to sail simple kobune craft, maintain a course on coastal seas, and understand the rudimentaries of boat craft and repair.

Beginning Outfit: (All items are of average quality): Any 1 Weapon (No swords, bows or daggers), Light Armor, Helm, Traveling Pack, Kimono, 3 Koku.

Techniques:

Rank 1: Fight Without Steel

The origins of the Mantis are noble, but their lives have been spent mixed with the simple heimin of the Islands of Silk. Because of this heritage, Mantis Clan members have a great familiarity with using improvised, unusual, or 'peasant' weapons, such as the tonfa, the nunchaku, or kama. Mantis bushi may use any Low Weapon Skill as if it were a High Skill. In addition, Mantis bushi fight with any weapons they do not have a Skill Rank in as if they have a Skill Ranking of 1. This is not a substitute for regular Skill Ranks, and all weapons skills must be purchased as normal. In addition, Mantis bushi train for years on the unstable footing of the Silk Islands and the rolling boats of the Mantis fleets. This training allows Mantis bushi to ignore any penalties for unsure footing and imbalance during combat.

Rank 2: Voice of the Storm

A Mantis lives knowing that they are the true heir to the strength of Osano-Wo. Using the storm within their souls, they fuel their ferocity against an opponent. The Mantis bushi may spend a Void Point when declaring a Full Attack, so that the bushi's TN to be hit stays at its normal level and is not reduced due to the Full Attack.

Rank 3: Claws of the Mantis

Long ago, it is said that the son of Osano-Wo, Kaimetsu-uo, learned a style of fighting from a traveling Dragon monk. If the bushi has a medium or smaller sized weapon in each hand, he rolls initiative separately for each, and gets an attack with each weapon every round. If the character is already ambidextrous, they may use the higher initiative for both weapons.

Rank 4: Yoritomo's Rolling Wave

The bushi masters of the Mantis Clan have developed a weaving and dodging style of fighting that is perfectly suited to the rolling waves of Rokugan's wide oceans. This movement is hypnotizingly slow and unpredictable, and causes the Mantis to be more difficult to hit. While making a normal attack, the Mantis bushi's normal TN to be hit is increased by the bushi's Water Ring times five. It is said that the newest general of the Mantis armies, Yoritomo, created this technique on his own, and has taught it to his followers.

Ancestor: Kaimetsu-uo (5 Points)

Hida Kaimetsu-uo was the son of Osano-wo and a Matsu daimyo, refused his rightful place of honor within the Crab Clan. When his mother took her son and left for the Islands of Silk, Kaimetsu-uo renounced his name and ties to his father's clan. He is depicted in story and song as having been very much like his father: a volatile man who believed in action, not words. His temper is legendary. Any descendant of Kaimetsu-uo inherits his ancestor's nasty disposition, and can be easily provoked to combat with insults. However, their will is nearly indomitable. They gain one free Void Point to spend on any tests involving Willpower, save those tests which would allow him to avoid combat.



Shinjo Gidayu
Minor daimyo of the Unicorn Clan



Shinjo Iruko
Yojimbo and Unicorn Clan samurai-ko
(pg. 24)



Niban
Ronin who longs for a better life
(pg. 11)



Tobuko
Niban's lieutenant and renegade ronin
(pg. 13)



Kocho
Niban's ward and disarming informant
(pg. 16)



Otomo Yoroshiku
Eligible niece of the Imperial Emperor
(pg. 18)



Shiba Himitsu
Phoenix nobleman
(pg. 25)



Hiruma Usigo
Retired magistrate
(pg. 30)

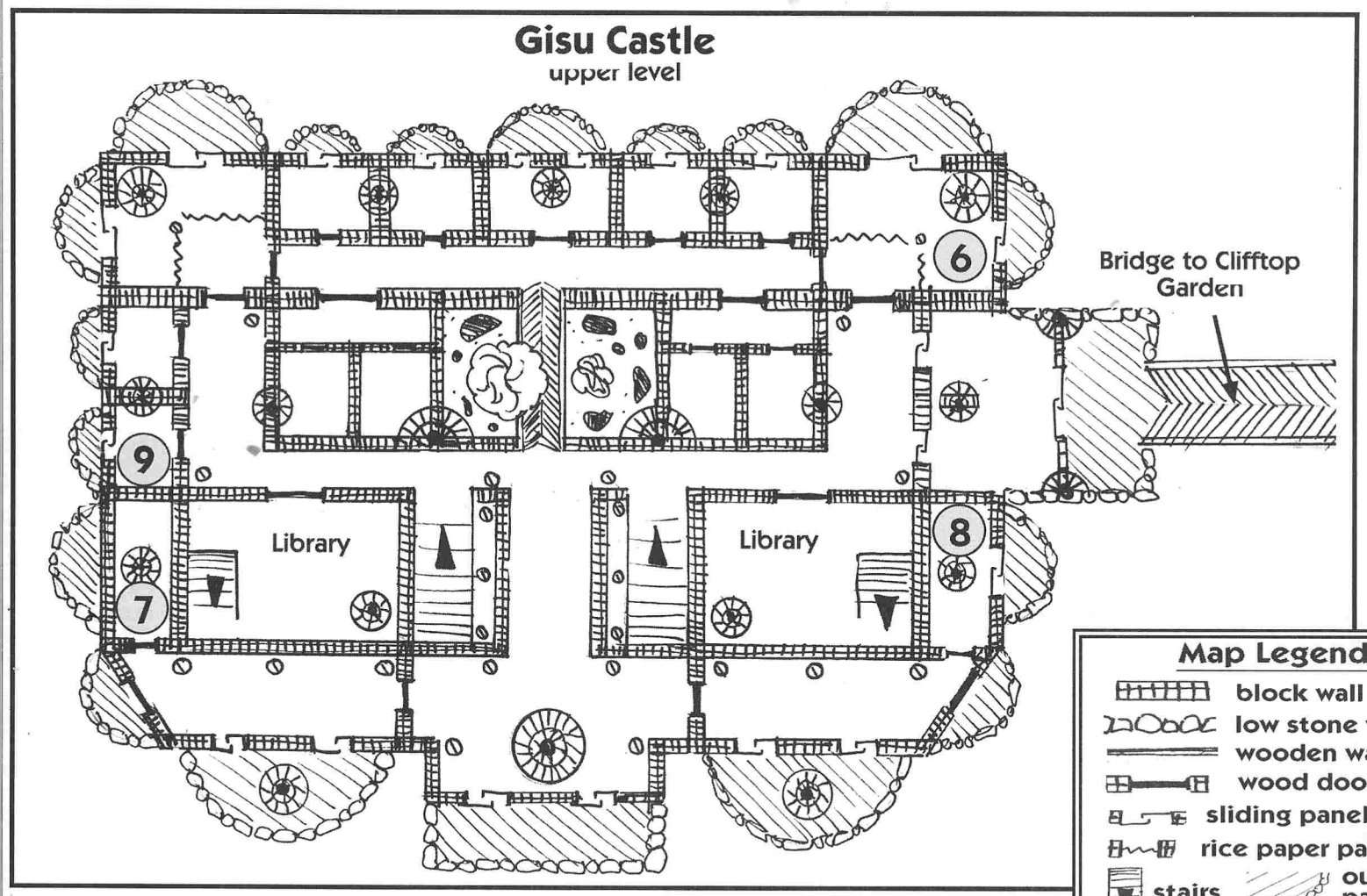


Shosuro Tage
Scorpion actress and infiltrator
(pg. 39)



"Ryuden"
Daimyo of one of the PCs
(pg. 35)

Dramatis Personae – Code of Bushido


Gisu Castle
upper level
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Bridge to Clifftop Garden
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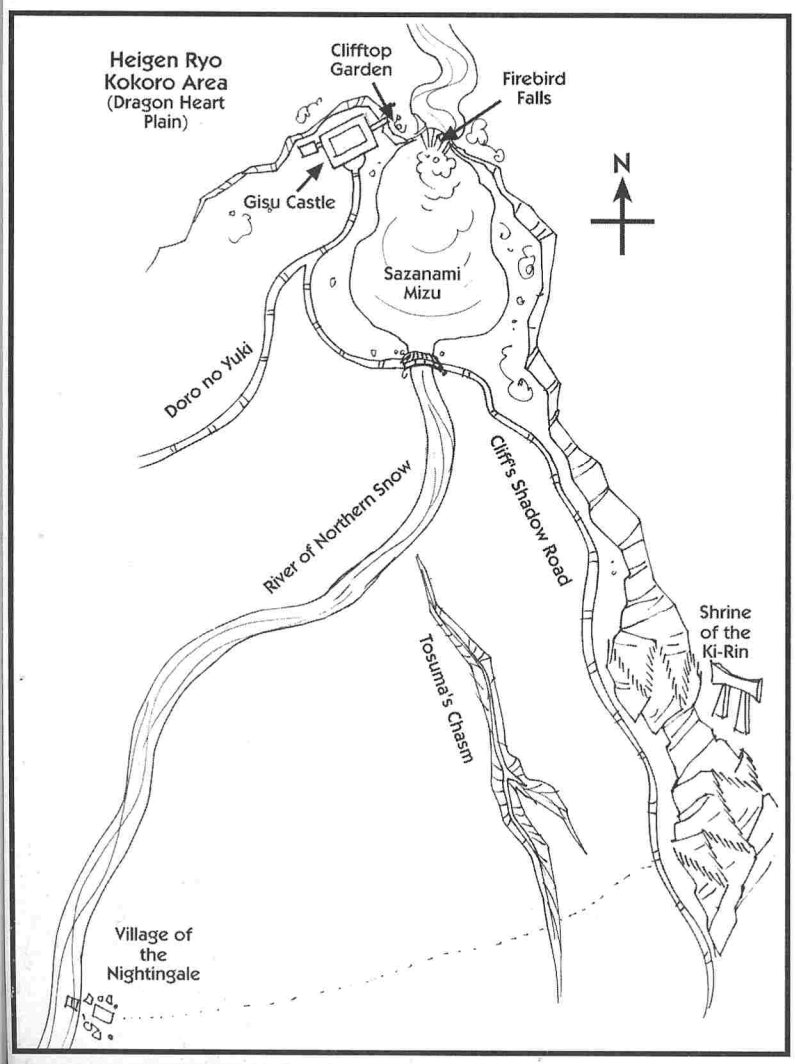
Library
Library
8
7


Heigen Ryo Kokoro Area (Dragon Heart Plain)
Clifftop Garden
Firebird Falls
N
Gisu Castle
Sazanami Mizu
Doro no Yuki
Cliff's Shadow Road
River of Northern Snow
Shrine of the Ki-Rin
Tosuma's Chasm
Village of the Nightingale

Map Legend
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stairs
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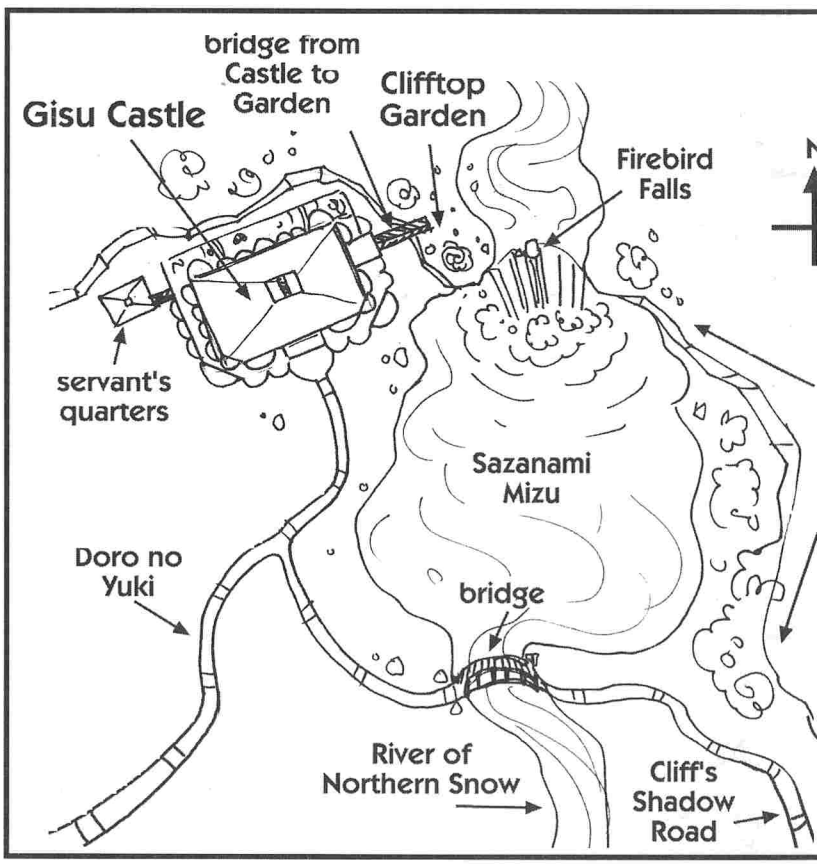
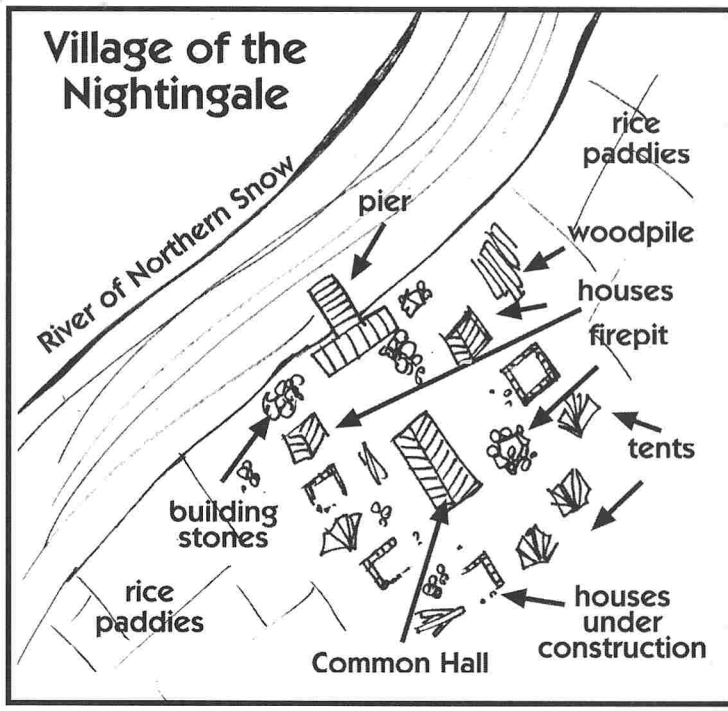
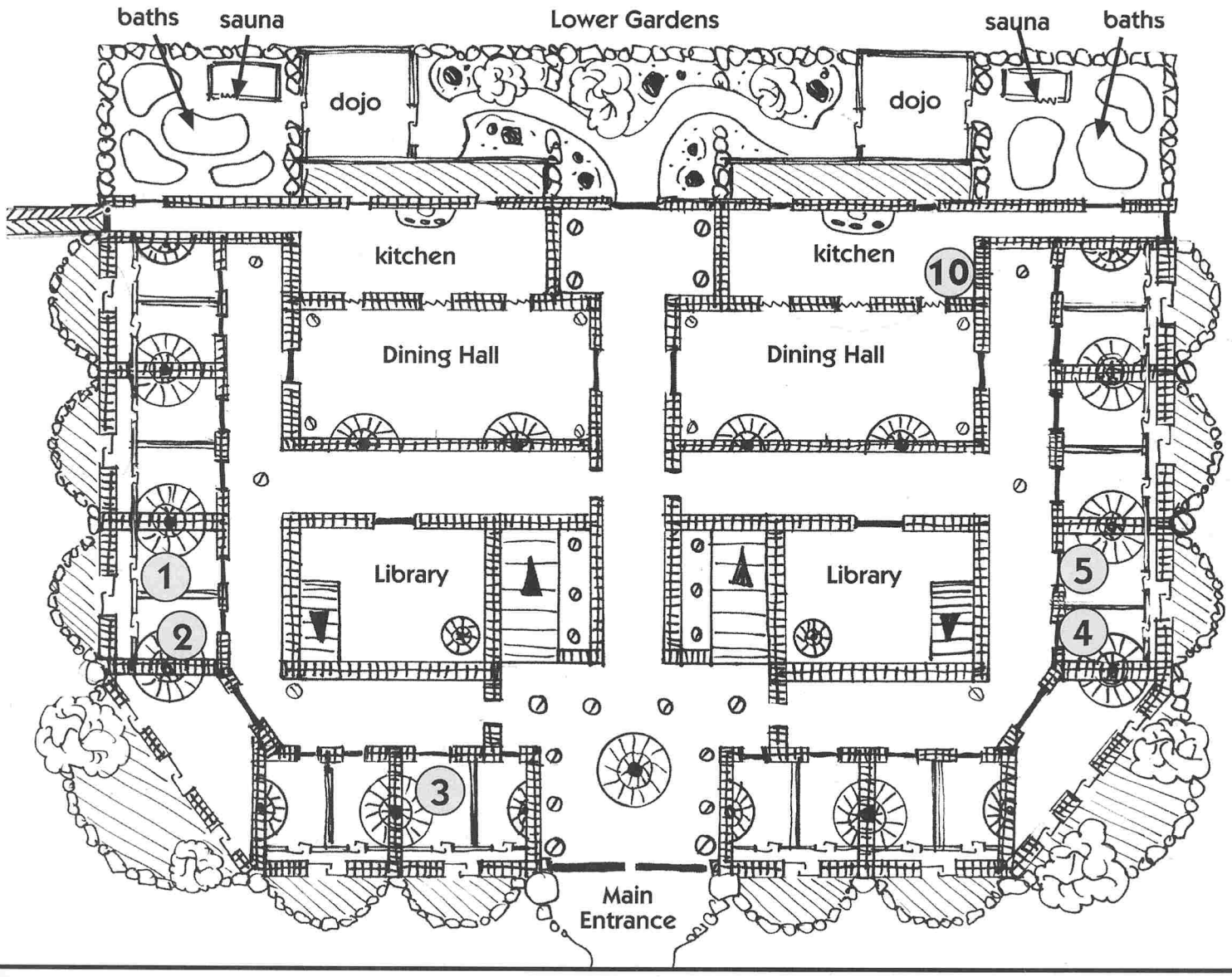

bridge from Castle to Garden
Gisu Castle
Clifftop Garden
Firebird Falls
servant's quarters
Sazanami Mizu
Doro no Yuki
bridge
River of Northern Snow
Cliff's Shadow Road

Code of Bushido

1. Players' Chambers
2. Players' Chambers
3. Hiruma Usigo's Chambers
4. Shosuro Troupe's Chambers
5. Shosuro Troupe's Chambers
6. Otomo Yoroshiku's Chambers
7. Ryuden's Chambers
8. Asako Himitsu's Chambers
9. Unoccupied Room
10. Access to Lower Pantry



Gisu Castle
lower level



4003

Code of Bushido

"To serve as a samurai is not simply to be unafraid to die. It is also to be unafraid to live." – Niban

At the Shrine of the Ki-Rin, shugenja gather to mark the beginning of winter with a magical competition. Courtiers and bushi come from all corners of Rokugan, ready to spend Winter Court in the lands of the peaceful Phoenix Clan.

Suddenly, a group of bandits attack the caravan, stealing the prize before it can be delivered to the Shrine. Demanding to be allowed to enter the competitions, they challenge the right of the Seven Clans to ostracize those who do not swear fealty to the Code of Bushido. A brutal murder shocks the court, and the honor of the Imperial Line is challenged. Otomo Yoroshiku, niece of Emperor Hantei, is kidnapped, and the once-empty threats of the bandits suddenly become far more deadly.

When honor is more than a word, the price of loyalty may be your life.

- **Suitable for 3-6 mid-level (ranks 2-4) player characters.**
- **Filled with danger and mystery, Code of Bushido can be used independently or as part of an ongoing campaign.**
- **Requires a copy of the *Legend of the Five Rings* basic rules.**
- **Plus, a special sneak preview : *Way of the Mantis*!**

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