

Rolling Thunder

**A 1-Round All-Ranks Adventure for Heroes of Rokugan:
Nightmare War**

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Module Number NMW12
Release Date: 8/4/2016

Only in the heart of evil can the light of truth be finally seen.

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

GM's Information

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

Reminder

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is an All Ranks rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The

encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank Three.

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

Low End Characters (Characters with less than 50 XP): Reduce Skill TNs by 5-10, at your discretion. Double the available XP for Engineering and Meditation that they can earn through speaking to Ryoushi and Rosoku.

High End Characters (Characters with more than 150 XP): Increase Skill TNs by 5-10, at your discretion.

Adventure Summary and Background

The PCs must travel to Otosan Uchi and the palace of the Immortal Caliph to investigate a rift in the fabric of spacetime. The breach is determined to be in during the Second Day of Thunder, but while the PCs are investigating it from within the Void itself, they are noticed by Fu Leng, who attempts to break out of the past, into the PC's timeline to avoid defeat at the hands of the Thunders. This creates a temporal causality paradox loop, threatening to destroy the universe and every realm within it... but at the same time, the PCs can finally identify the precise dream-Realm that is the source of the Nightmare Storm.

The PCs must return a fallen god to his proper timeline and then escape themselves in order to bring word of their discovery back to the Owl Clan.

If any player had a PC in *Heroes of Rokugan 3: Spirit of Bushido*, make a note of that character's name and one or two salient details about their history and story arc, for possible use as Fortunes in Part Two.

Introduction

In the months since the destruction of Shiro no Fukuro at the hands of the Spider, Unicorn, and Phoenix, the surviving members of the Owl have largely reassembled in the ruins of Zakyo Toshi, sheltering in the protection of the Scorpion Clan, while the Crab Clan have claimed the former lands of the Owl as a "protectorate" until the remaining enemy forces can be driven out.

The loss of Kobe weighs as heavily on the Clan as the loss of their lands, perhaps moreso, and the mood of the yumemusha in the makeshift refugee camp is morose to say the least. Sezarū has still not returned from his personal research journey with his wife Yanako and her assistant Asako Jane, leaving the small Clan almost leaderless at a time when it needs it the most. Under the leadership of Hanashi and Seizoku, the Clan has merely been attempting to reassemble itself and take stock of its remaining resources in anticipation of Sezarū's return, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a sense of hope in the face of these mounting hostile conditions. The Sukune and Kobe Hikaru, acting as family daimyo for the Kobe, in the absence of a properly appointed daimyo, have attempted to secure Zakyo Toshi against any further strikes from the Owl's enemies, but it's not clear where or when such an attack might come – or how the decimated minor Clan might survive it.

Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness:

- **TN 5-** The ruins of Zakyo Toshi, destroyed some years ago by a Nightmare Storm breakout involving the gaijin warriors called Yodotai, have slowly begun to be restored as the refugees from the Owl lands continue to make their way to the de facto capital of the Owl in exile. The Scorpion seem remarkably tolerant of this, likely in acknowledgement of the loss of Kobe while saving the life of the Scorpion Champion in the aftermath of the fall of Shiro no Fukuro.
- **TN 10-** Sezarū remains absent on his journey to whatever Realms he sought wisdom in, but not everyone believes he is going to return. Some claim he has been killed on his mission, that he went mad from his connection to the Void, or even that he has fled this reality for another, more stable one. A black market for Sezarū-themed protection charms has developed, which are proudly displayed by the superstitious peasantry; in desperation, the attitude of the heimin toward Sezarū is beginning to take on a messianic quality.
- **TN 15-** Forces of the Immortal Caliph have marched out from what was once Otosan Uchi and have taken over Shiro sano Kakita and are locked in battle at both Shiro no Yojin and the castle of the Emerald Champion. Both the Lion and Crane have sent students to the Owl Clan, in hope to learn more about the Caliph. The Ikoma in particular have sent librarians to record any and all information that the

yumemusha might have about their home realms as well.

- **TN 20-** Quiet reports are circulating of strange things occurring in the Shadowlands, some of which appear to be related to Nightmare Storm breakouts; perhaps the most worrying involve goblins that have displayed remarkably technical proficiency, including some kind of airborne battle platform suspended beneath a bag filled with strange gasses, but Lost Bushi with advanced weaponry, new types of oni never seen before, and tsukai with new types of maho have also been reported. The Crab are holding fast.
- **TN 25-** Kitsuki Ryoushi's progress has stalled and she is having difficulty moving forward, mostly due to lack of proper lab equipment. She has built a makeshift lab in the ruins of the governor's mansion in Zakyo Toshi, but the loss of much of her technology with the fall of Shiro no Fukurou has cost her irreplaceable knowledge and avenues of research.
- **TN 30-** Some of the Owl Clan members from less... hospitable realms, such as those where Fu Leng has conquered the Empire (*or worse*), have expressed concern about whether or not they will be forced to return to their home realm whenever this is finished. Though the Nightmare Storms concern them, many are not eager to see the matter resolved.

Part One: Knowledge vs Wisdom

Eventually, the PCs and Ryoushi are summoned to the largest of the few remaining intact samurai residences in the city. Hanashi has claimed this residence for herself, attempting to provide as much a sense of normalcy for any ranking visitors who have come to see the diminished Owl as possible. It is a feeble effort, in all honesty, but basic etiquette demands every attempt must be made.

The main living area of Hanashi's new residence is not large, and the room itself is not the portrait of elegance and comfort that its mistress would no doubt wish. Although cleaned thoroughly since being re-inhabited two months ago, the décor is clearly haphazardly assembled, likely scavenged from other houses in the area and repaired or cleansed as best as possible. A few decorations are quite lovely, but they were not

assembled with a single aesthetic eye, creating subtle discord. Overall, the room carries a feeling of being half-empty, as if the occupants have not finished moving in, despite the contents and samurai who crowd around the long table in the room's center.

Many samurai sit at a long table, including Hanashi, Seizoku, the Sukune, and Kobe Hikaru. The seat at the head of the table is empty, and but next to it is seated a stranger, a deeply tanned man in simple robes that belie his seat in a place of honor. A massive, scowling samurai looms behind him protectively. Although the two men are dressed in a mostly Rokugani fashion, it is distinctly influenced by gaijin. For example, the yojimbo carries a scimitar and has a wide sash in place of an obi, and the messenger is wearing a fine silk turban. The PCs are directed to their seats and tea is poured; despite the courteous rituals, however, the sense of tension in the air is palpable.

A **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** roll TN 25 will show that the newcomer wears a strangely-stylized "Brotherhood" mon, while the yojimbo guarding him wears a similarly-strange Seppun mon. Characters with any ranks in Lore: Gaijin or similar information note a gaijin influence in the artistic style of the mon as well.

The seated stranger, an elderly figure with a calm smile, thin mustache and a long beard, nods his head in satisfaction as you enter. "Ah good, they have arrived. With your permission, Hanashi-sama?" Hanashi nods and the elderly man continues. "The Immortal Caliph, in his infinite wisdom, has sent me to request a favor of the Owl Clan."

Any PC with even one rank in Courtier can tell that the advisor is likely translating the "request" into more polite terms, and not the haughty demand that it likely was.

"There is something... a portal to the spirit realms, perhaps... that has opened in the Great Caliph's throne room. For all his immeasurable power, neither he nor his wisest sahir can close it. Worse yet, it appears to be expanding. Word of Sezar-sama's expertise in these strange matters, as well as the Owl's success in other lands, have brought me here, to humbly ask for your help with this matter."

The elderly messenger bows deeply to the assembled samurai.

"Oh!" He exclaims, looking toward you. "Please forgive me, my manners are different from what you are undoubtedly used to, and I apologize for being so... forward about this subject. Either way, please allow me

to introduce myself. I am Rosoku, humble advisor to the Immortal Caliph, Jaamiyah.”

PCs who make a **Lore: History or Lore: Theology / Intelligence** roll TN 20 will know that Rosoku, was believed to be the last descendant of Shinsei, and in the normal timeline, assassinated in the year 1166.

Seizoku speaks after a brief moment. “The unquestionable honor of our gentle guest allows us to speak freely here. Though the Caliph has ‘requested’ Sezaru, we know that he is... unavailable at the moment. Though we are not as versed in the science behind this gateway as others, it is clear that whatever it might be, studying it will likely prove beneficial to Ryoushi-san’s work. As she is uniquely important to the Owl Clan’s mission, it is imperative that her safety be guaranteed, which is why we have asked our most competent samurai available to escort and assist her. Would you not agree?”

Of course, Seizoku is referring to the PCs, and his tone will depend on the general ability and awesomeness of the PCs at the table (ie confident vs cautiously worried). For those less sure of their own abilities, note that they said “best available.”

The PCs are free to ask questions at this point.

- What can you tell us about the Caliph?

“The Immortal Caliph is the rightful Emperor of Rokugan, who in his youth travelled to Medinaat al-Salaam in search of enlightenment. He found it, and this wisdom granted him immortality within this mortal realm, and he has led the Empire for 700 years of peace and prosperity. His blessed name is Jaamiyah the Heartless, but you may know him better as... Iuchiban.”

PCs who’re (rightfully) suspicious may make an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll against Rosoku’s **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness**- 10k5e (keeping low dice). Rosoku is telling the truth... from the perspective of the Caliph’s royal advisor, and is very clearly toeing the party line here (notably, in front of his highly honorable and fiercely loyal khadi-yojimbo, Seppun Musashi), but success means the PC understands that there is more to the story, but that is for a later, more private time. PCs who roll more than 20 over Rosoku’s can rightly guess that he has reservations about the whole situation, but now is not the time to bring those things up. Contrary PCs will be asked politely to hold their concerns for the moment by their daimyo (especially considering that they’ve already aligned themselves with the Tsuno as means to an end).

A **Lore: History / Intelligence** roll TN 10: will inform the PCs that Iuchiban was an incredibly powerful villain who spread terror throughout the Empire three separate times in history, including creation of the Bloodspeaker cult, initiating the Battle of Stolen Graves, and the Rain of Blood. He was eventually defeated by Hida Kisada, Matsu Aoiko, and Isawa Sezaru in 1166, after they found and destroyed his Hidden Heart (the thing that made him functionally immortal). A roll of 25 will inform the PC of three different origin stories: the first that he was a gardener in Otsan Uchi, the second as a fallen Master of Void, and the third as a member of a lost Unicorn tribe. PCs who speak of Iuchiban’s more infamous deeds will lose a point of Glory for a minor breach of etiquette, even though the context is relevant.

- Can we trust the Caliph? Do we have travel papers? Isn’t there a war?

“Though currently in... aggressive territorial negotiations with your Empire, the Great Caliph has given his word that no harm will come to the members of the Owl while on their mission. Our travel led us through Toshi Ranbo, and due to the unique nature of the subject matter, the travel papers we have obtained for this mission have been signed by your Emperor Iweko himself.”

An **Courtier / Intelligence** roll (TN 20) will inform the PC about a few things left unsaid: though the forces of the Caliph are at war with the Lion, the Crane, and the Imperial Armies themselves, the fact that *enemies of the state* have travelled all the way out here unharmed should be fairly telling about the validity of the travel papers.

- Can you tell us more about the portal?

“That is... hard to describe. Light bends around it, like... the edge of a raindrop, and it hurts the mind to look directly at it. When I left, it was about the size of a rice ball. But... anything that touches it is, well... pulled in. Nothing that goes in comes out, and it is getting larger.” Ryoushi goes to speak, but Rosoku holds up his hand. “Please forgive me, but I cannot yet give you the answers you seek.”

Ryoushi thinks for a moment before addressing the daimyo present. “With your permission, I would very much like to study this. If it is what I think it is, this will provide great insight into the problems we face. I think this must not be avoided, in fact.”

PCs with Awareness 3 or higher catch a fleeting glimpse of concern from Rosoku, specifically when Ryoushi

mentions the word “Insight.” PCs who wish to act on this, notably any who mention “Wisdom” during roleplaying, will get a pleased nod from him.

The PCs and Ryoushi will be released from the meeting to prepare for departure in the morning. Ryoushi is absolutely giddy about it, and will say the following to anyone who talks to her about it along the way to her lab:

”This is terribly exciting and opens unprecedented questions. What he described SHOULD NOT OCCUR THIS WAY. If it’s some kind of singularity, is the observable edge the event horizon? If we are already inside the event horizon, could we even tell? Why is the light bending around it like that without noticeable gravimetric effects? We have so much work to do!”

She giddily rushes to the lab, hurriedly programming a number of complex electronic and mechanical schematics into her extruder/fabricator to build the needed detectors and processing software in time for the departure the next day. PCs who wish to help may roll **Engineering / Intelligence**, TN 30, but failure means they’re just getting in the way and are asked to leave the lab. On a success, the PC’s aid in supplying extra equipment provides an additional Free Raise that can be used on any PC’s roll involving Ryoushi’s equipment later in the mod.

The PCs will have the rest of the day to collect stuff and prepare for the journey. They will be joining a caravan of supplies heading toward Ryoko Owari and Scorpion lands, and from there through Beiden Pass to Lion lands. Besides Ryoushi, Rosoku and his yojimbo, they will be travelling with an escort of twenty Imperial Legion soldiers under the command of Kakita Yoriko, a grim samurai-ko who is as little fond of her charges as she is of small-talk.

The empire continues to wrestle with the turmoil of the Nightmare Storm’s effects, and much of the news is not good. Gossip along the route:

Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness:

- **TN 5-** There is a great deal of talk about the forces of the Immortal Caliph, and none of it is good. Wounded veterans of the conflict (moved away from the front lines) give reports of incredible magic, but also that some of the fighters they face will simply shrug off mortal wounds and continue.
- **TN 10-** Many wonder if the Phoenix, as the pre-imminent shugenja of the Empire, will join the fight against the Caliph, but most are not

hopeful: the extensive damage that they suffered due to the Nightmare Storms has taken a significant toll on the small clan (which causes more than one sideways glance toward the Owl samurai).

- **TN 15-** In an unprecedented move, the Lion have opened some of their lands to Unicorn refugees and nearby victims of the Nightmare Storm. While some see it as a glaring affront to tradition, the Clan Champion, Akodo Fuyuko, insists that she looks forward to facing the Khan in combat once the Unicorn armies are back up to full strength. This has been cemented by a number of marriages between the Utaku and the Matsu, while many speculate that the move is to garner the Khan’s support in fighting the Caliph, others suggest it is to avoid second front, or even to embarrass the Crane by outdoing them in a display of Compassion. Given the attitude of the Unicorn toward the Owl, this cannot be viewed as a good thing from the perspective of the yumemusha.
- **TN 20-** The Dragon’s forces have moved into Phoenix lands to support the Shiba in keeping the peace. Some see this as a territorial land grab, but the Shiba invited them to escort refugees west toward safer lands. The Voice of the Council has made no formal offer of hospitality toward the Dragon, and Isawa shugenja have apparently set up an entire separate, parallel aid system for providing assistance to the survivors of Morikage Toshi’s destruction in a Nightmare Storm breakout. Once again, the split between the Jade Champion and the Elemental Council is clearly visible, and rumors whisper that Satomi may yet renounce Shiba’s Vow if the Council will not start cooperating with her. This also means that, aside from a token force, the Dragon are unable to assist the Lion or the Crane against the Caliph.

Philosophy Lessons

PCs who wish to use the time to speak with Rosoku may certainly do so. Though he is certainly willing to discuss philosophy, he will quietly direct the PCs, NPCs, and anyone who wishes to participate in guided meditation practice. Those who choose to do this gain up to (Void Ring, to maximum of 4) XP which they can use immediately toward the Meditation skill. The main question Rosoku will ask of the PCs is this: *“what is the nature of Enlightenment?”*

If the question is turned about and asked of Rosoku, he will simply hold up one finger and smile.

A **Lore: Theology / Intelligence** roll TN 20 will remind the PC of a parable: *Whenever anyone asked him about Enlightenment, the great master Asako Gutei would quietly raise one finger into the air. A boy in the village began to imitate this behavior. Whenever he heard people talking about Gutei's teachings, he would interrupt the discussion and raise his finger. Gutei heard about the boy's mischief. When he saw him in the street, he seized him and cut off his finger. The boy cried and began to run off, but Gutei called out to him. When the boy turned to look, Gutei raised his finger into the air. At that moment the boy became enlightened.*

Science Lessons

PCs who wish to learn about Ryoushi's brand of Engineering may read upon it on a spare data pad. However, without actual ranks in the skill, it is incredibly dense: one cannot compress such learning into a week, but Ryoushi will help them with some pragmatic shortcuts (one does not have to learn the math to understand the theory or to operate the machinery she's brought along). PCs who spend their time studying Engineering enough to help Ryoushi may gain (Intelligence Rank, maximum of 4) XP to spend on the skill.

Note: PCs can split their time between studying with Rosoku and Ryoushi, but their Void Ring and Intelligence Rank are halved, rounded up, for the purposes of the amount of XP they earn. **These skills are critical later in the module**, so it is recommended that every PC chose one of either, or both, as best they see fit. PCs may also spend any previous-accumulated XP on those skills at this point too.

Philosophy vs Science

During the trip, Ryoushi and Rosoku will discuss the issue of what they have come to call the Void Singularity, but are approaching it from two different angles. The PCs who wish to participate may do so, but this may become difficult to script out. Here is a sample conversation:

Ryoushi: *"Voidspace is a completely theoretical metaphysical construct: it is beyond time and space as we perceive it, which makes it all but impossible to measure. Some theorists point out that even now that the existence of the void kamiton is merely a*

mathematical necessity of quantum mechanics. The phenomenon of 'ishiken' shugenja would argue otherwise, but their perspectives appear to be solely internal and objective attempts to reproduce their experience have failed to produce meaningful data; the experiments themselves cannot be repeated with any degree of success."

Rosoku: *"Of course it cannot be defined. It is all and nothing. To define it as one thing means it is not something else, which destroys its nature."*

Ryoushi: *"Well yes, that is the nature of the quantum superposition. But the Uncertainty Principle aside, what is beyond experimentation and quantification is outside the purview of scientific inquiry. We can't measure it save through indirect means, but our theories must still find a way to include its effects on our observable reality."*

Rosoku: *"Truth has nothing to do with words. All of your concerns are a finger pointing to the moon."*

Ryoushi: *"...I do not understand that symbolism."*

Rosoku: *"Words are like the finger, and the truth the moon. We can point to the moon, but, the finger is not the moon. Our perceptions of this world are no different."*

PCs may roll **Lore: Theology / Intelligence** TN 25: "The finger pointing at the moon" is a Shintoist parable about the difference between learning from written texts vs firsthand experience (specifically involving religious texts involving Enlightenment). The main point of the parable is to not dwell on doctrines, creeds, or dogma, but this can be extrapolated to human perception itself: "the Truth" is fundamentally different than "our perception of the Truth."

Ryoushi: *"Every variety of human perception is a model, a simplified version that our brains can use to highlight relevant data from the world around us. Science is nothing more than a more refined approach to the same process – we model reality so that we can determine the important parts within it, figure out how it works, and increase our understanding of the universe as a whole."*

Rosoku: *"We are shadows of our timeless selves, nothing more dreams, just as this world is nothing more than a dream within a dream. When you awaken and move into the light, what happens to the shadow?"*

Lore: Theology / Perception TN 20: Rosoku is giving the PCs a warning. *Avoid the light.*

Part Two: The Mouth of Madness

Traveling from Empire lands to Caliphate lands does take the PCs past two standing armies: The Lion and the Caliph's. The main fronts are at the Palace of the Emerald Champion and Shiro no Yojin; the latter is where the PCs are sent to pass through to the territory controlled by the Caliph. Though the Lion Army is larger, nearly 50 thousand samurai and ashigaru under arms, without knowing more about the Caliph's forces, it is hard to tell why they are being pushed back so severely.

The Caliph's main checkpoint is a heavily fortified outpost in the ruins of what was once Tsuma, the village outside Shiro sano Kakita. It is here that Kakita Yoriko turns the PCs over to the forces of the Caliph to be escorted to Otosan Uchi. The less said about her expression as her eyes roam the broken walls of Shiro sano Kakita, the better. As the PCs cross to the Caliph's checkpoint on Tsuma's main road, those with Lore: Shadowlands may roll **Lore: Shadowlands / Perception** TN 30: underneath the perfume of the heavily-armored and masked Hida-gaijin checking their papers is the distinctive odor of an undead revenant. A quick headcount with a **Battle / Perception** roll (TN 25) will inform the PCs that there are about 30,000 bushi in the Caliph's army. The guard himself, as well as Rosoku, will suggest that any PC wishing to attack the revenant samurai would be incredibly unwise to dishonor the Caliph or his advisor in such a way. PCs who do attack are swarmed, killed, and raised as a revenant to fight against the Empire. Assuming there are no incidents, however, the guard assigns a detail (normal samurai, armed and armored much like Seppun Mushashi) to escort them the final two miles to Otosan Uchi itself.

The Grand Palace of the Immortal Caliph at Otosan Uchi is a sight to behold, easily dwarfing the palace that once existed there. Massive golden-domed towers and colossal white walls shine brilliantly in the mid-day sun. The city itself is surrounded by fantastic gardens and orchards, awash in opulence. Even the road itself that leads to the Palace is paved with jade and gold.

The Rokugani-gaijin architecture style is not dissimilar from that of Shiro Moto, which is immediately noticeable to any Unicorn-descended PCs.

PCs who noticed the revenant earlier, or who're aware of Iuchiban's many heresies, may notice the symbolism inherent in the roadway: stepping on the jade flagstones – each formed into the kanji for a name of a Major Fortune, the Sun and Moon, or the Celestial Dragon itself – means they are literally treading on the Heavens, and there are too many for the PC to avoid.

Peasants they pass bow deeply as they should, but an **Investigation (Notice) / Awareness** TN 10 will show that it's not out of respect for status, but fear: Mothers hide their children in advance of their passing. TN 20 reveals that though the areas adjacent to the main road are fabulous and opulent, just outside the peasants and poorer samurai live in absolute squalor. Careful eyes spot far too many destitute beggars, and at least one slave auction is visible.

The stark divide between the elite and poor within the Caliph's Otosan Uchi is even more apparent when you enter the Forbidden City. Burbbling tiled water fountains, landscapes that shame even the Doji Gardens, and streets filled with smiling faces greet you. Vendors offer delicious food, free of charge. Ascending the stairs to the Palace and moving through the open doors is a simple affair, and no matter how fantastic each layer of the city is, the next one is even more amazing.

Once inside the Palace itself, you find yourself in the guest suites overlooking the verdant Garden of Twilight, a small forest situated on a terrace attached to the western wall, overlooking the city below. Beautiful servants await your beck and call, to serve your every whim.

The servant that escorted you smiles politely: "You will meet with the Immortal Champion in one hour in the Hall of Fortunes, samurai-sama. Please, make yourself at home until then" before closing the heavy doors behind him.

Each room contains a small buffet of artfully-prepared snacks and food, as well as baths, a change of clothes, and whatever else the PCs may desire.

Investigation (Notice) / Perception:

- **TN 10-** The servants are all exquisitely beautiful, regardless of gender, the food is spectacular, and the room is opulent in ways that would make a Mantis blush. Delicate music drifts up from the gardens. There is a hot bath already drawn.

- **TN 15-** Some of the servants wear Doji mon on their kimono, and their bearing marks them as samurai. They all come and go through a side door to your suite.
- **TN 20-** No one bothered to check your weapons or scrolls. The guards noticed them, but they did not seem to care.
- **TN 25-** The garden below is a breathtaking display of red, orange, and gold as the first rays of the setting sun filter through the canopies, setting the leaves alight and casting long shadows on the grass. One thing stands out, though: each of the trees appears to have a knife buried in the bark, up to the hilt. (Scorpion PCs will know immediately what this means, though others might not: the trees were inspired by Traitor's Grove).

PCs who speak to the servants will find them compliant in every way- any demand, no matter how base, will be met with unwavering obedience. However, this willingness is not voluntary in the slightest. Any close examination of their behavior, especially of the samurai servants, will find them nothing more than broken puppets, hollowed by unspeakable mental torture and generations of crushing abuse. Pushing the servants too far will cause them to run away, possibly even diving headfirst from the balcony to their deaths on the tiles below. Not to mention being a **Major Breach of Etiquette** (at minimum).

This has the opportunity to become not only derailing but flatly disturbing for some players; it is up to the GM to be the arbiter of what is and isn't appropriate, keeping mind not only that this is a game of Honorable Samurai, but also the horror of Iuchiban, lurking just beneath a veneer of civility.

There are golden Owl Clan "kimono" laid out for the PCs, absurdly opulent beyond Rokugani standards. The servants will help the PCs put them on, which is important because the style is slightly different than they are used to. The geta sandals are replaced with curled-toe slippers, the haori jackets for the men are far too short, the courtiers' caps are replaced with turbans, the jewelry available is a vulgar display of wealth, and the women's kimono are... scandalously revealing, but it would insult the host to not wear them. PCs (of both sexes) with "Dangerous Beauty" and/or "Benten's Blessing" will find a shocking portion of their kimono to be transparent, too.

A slow knock on the heavy door signals that the meeting with the Immortal Champion will begin soon, and you are all individually escorted to the Hall of Fortunes, which opens to the Twilight Garden.

The grand Hall of Fortunes is a wide space supported by heavy stone columns, adorned as if they were strange foreign trees. The walls are lined with opulent shrines.

The center of the room itself, filled with tables and grandiose lavishment, is abuzz with servants setting up for dinner. The only stillness in the room comes from a thin bald man dressed in white and gold, looking out over the garden.

Rosoku steps forward and bows deeply, signaling for you to follow his lead. After a long moment, the man turns.

"Rosoku-san, my friend, it is good that you have returned to us safely. However, I do not see Sezarusan with you. Is there a problem?"

Rosoku speaks clearly and calmly. "Sezarusan, in his wisdom, has sent his most knowledgeable samurai to investigate these matters. May I introduce Kitsuki Ryoushi and her assistants. Ryoushi-san, please allow me to introduce you to the Immortal Champion, Jama Suru."

The PCs may roll **Lore: History / Intelligence** TN 20 to know that Jama Suru was an incredibly powerful mahotsukai and loyal servant of Iuchiban, most infamous for killing the Tenth Kami, Ryoshun, in the year 1132. In the normal timeline, he was killed in 1166 by Isawa Sezarusan.

"Of course he has," Jama Suru muses. "Tell me, Kitsuki Ryoushi, how can you remove this thing when both I and the Omnipotent Caliph have failed?"

Ryoushi answers quickly. "I cannot say, Suru-sama, for I have not seen nor examined this Singularity yet. Anything I say now would be baseless speculation, and I would not insult you, nor the Caliph, with such boastful words. I can say that I have experience with things similar to this, and, Fortunes willing, my assistants and I shall find the clues necessary to unravel the mystery."

Suru smiles politely at her surprisingly eloquent words. "A wise answer. Very well. I look forward to seeing what you can do in this matter. The throne room is closed, but I shall allow you in for a moment. You will have a small amount of time to observe the Singularity,

as you call it, before dinner, and I would suggest you have a more tangible answer before the Caliph arrives. Jaamiyah-heika does not tolerate failure.”

“Before we go, though, I wish to give you one piece of advice. The Immortal Caliph has given the protection of hospitality, but do not dishonor him or the throne by testing that. He will kill you with a blink of his eye if you step out of line, and I will ensure that you suffer for all eternity.”

To any PC with exposed jade: *“Do not think your trinkets will save you. The Immortal Caliph has mastered the Taint; displaying such things will only insult him. I would suggest tucking that away, at least for now.”*

To any PC with a Sword of Hope: *“That is a very lovely blade, but lost Yajinden still carries my Lord’s ire. Please allow me the honor of having it polished for you this evening. It shall be returned to you tomorrow morning.”*

Jama Suru will not push the matter, but he will ask *“are you sure?”* of any PC who refuses, and then lead them to the throne room. Those who do give up their sword can hand it off to a Tsi servant.

The throne room stands in direct contrast to the foreign lavishness of the rest of the Palace. It is inherently Rokugani in style, with the Throne itself situated behind a golden screen. In the center of the great hall are four more screens, shielding the singularity from view.

“I have other matters to attend, but I shall return in a moment. I trust that none of you will do anything foolish.” As Jama Suru leaves, servants rush in with Ryoushi’s equipment chests.

The servants do not know what to do with the equipment, so it will be up to the PCs to help her set up.

Curious PCs may wish to peek behind either set of screens. The Throne itself is artfully covered in small hexagonal white tiles, but an **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll TN 20 will notice something wrong with it. A **Lore: Anatomy / Intelligence** roll TN 15 will show that the white tiles are actually pieces of human skull, and the Imperial Chrysanthemum situated above is dark brown, painted with blood.

Observing the Void Rupture requires a **Raw Void** roll, TN 20, with free raises for any Void-related advantages or disadvantages. Failure means the PC develops a debilitating migraine, complete with tunnel vision and dizziness. The PC will be Fatigued until a **Medicine /**

Intelligence roll TN 25 can occur, or they get a full night’s sleep. Success means that the PC can glimpse the Singularity for a moment before being forced to turn away: light bends around it, and the rupture itself is now about the size of a person.

Setting up and calibrating the kamiton detector equipment and containment field takes about half an hour, under the direction of Ryoushi and any PC assistants she might have recruited. The equipment consists of violet-purple crystalline sensors set up in a dome about 40’ from the void singularity on staves of varying heights, all connected to a small desk (inside the radius, for better attunement), cluttered with display screens. Ryoushi will initiate the computer with *“kami, please run singularity_analysis.air.”*

Once it’s all hooked up, the power pack under the desk will hum softly, causing the crystal panels to glow. Light blue strings of kanji will appear on the previously-black screens.

The doors to the throne room slide open as Jama Suru returns and surveys the futuristic equipment. “All is well?”

Ryoushi bows confidently, “We have begun data collection, and shall have a better grasp of the details in the morning.”

The Immortal Champion nods, gesturing toward the Hall of Fortunes, where the banquet now awaits you. “Good. Let us have dinner, then.”

Ryoushi is directed to a seat of honor, next to Rosoku. As guests, you are positioned just next to her, and the other dinner attendants begin filling in as the setting sun throws deeper and deeper shadows into the room.

A heavy bell is struck. Once, twice, three times, as a bellowing voice announces:

“Even as the sun fades, the glory of the Immortal Caliph shall shine forever. All bow for the Lord of the White Throne, Destroyer of the Ivory Kingdom, Master of the Jewel, God-eater, and Eternal Emperor of Rokugan, the Shadowlands, and All Realms Beyond: Iuchiban, and his bride, Jama Kachiko.”

Anyone who does not willingly bow will be struck in the back of the knees by a Senpet-Shosuro House Guard, forcing them to their knees (4k1 damage). A harsh whisper of *“Don’t be so prideful. You’ll endanger us all!”* from behind will provide little comfort. An **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll TN 15 will allow the affected PC to hear a tremble of fear in their

attacker's voice, but the assailant will *not* be seen. Risking eternal torment by potentially insulting the Caliph does gain them a point of Honor at least, and the carpets beneath the PCs are impressively ornate- no doubt the work of the Kakita Artisan Academy.

The rustle of cloth signals time to rise, and as expected, a tall, grimly handsome man with long black hair and a white kimono sits at the head of the table, along with a devastatingly beautiful woman in a thin red Scorpion's mask. A subtle gesture is given, and dinner is served.

Dinner itself is exquisite. Perfect fish, artfully roasted meats, crystal-clear sake, beer, and dark wine flow liberally as entertainers, musicians, dancing slaves, tattooed dervishes, and knife-dueling gladiators perform for the crowd. Observant PCs will notice that *all* of the guests have weapons on them, and if they ask someone, it is because they are considered no threat whatsoever to the awesome and terrifying power of the Caliph.

Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness:

- **TN 5-** There are oni and other non-humans here in addition to the human attendees. Notable among them are Kyoso no Oni, a tattooed bakemono, a Rakshasa, a number of Ogres in Hida armor (one in black armor), two djinn, and a goblin in orange Brotherhood robes.
- **TN 10-** The White Throne is covered in the skulls of all those who challenged Iuchiban and were found worthy, including Toturi, the remaining Thunders, Daigotsu, Akuma no Oni, Hida Kisada, and Yoritomo, among others. The blood used for the Chrysanthemum mon is that of Fu Leng and Togashi, both killed by Iuchiban on the Second Day of Thunder.
- **TN 15-** The trees outside are indeed inspired Traitor's Grove – although the magic Iuchiban uses to bind the souls contained within owes more to rituals of djinni binding than Soshi prayers to the kami – and are filled with such notable figures as Asahina Yajinden, Kuni Yori, Bayushi Shoji, Iuchi Karasu the Doomseeker, Kokujin, and Iuchiban's own brother, Hantei XI. Each tree has a name, so that none may forget their betrayal.
- **TN 20-** The throne room is “under construction” and has been for some time due to the expanding rift. Neither Iuchiban, Jama Suru, nor his sahir-shugenja could close it, which resulted in a great deal of death before

Rosoku, his most trusted advisor, convinced Iuchiban to seek out the Owl Clan. Failure likely means that not only will the PCs be killed, but Rosoku will likely be stuck to a tree to suffer eternal torment.

- **TN 25-** The shrines in the room are divided in two groups: those who have earned the Caliph's favor, and those who have not.
- **TN 30-** The great bulk of the Caliph's armies were not transported over to this realm, but of the forces that are present, Yogo Junzo is leading an army against the Crane, Aurelian the Defiler, a Yodotai commander from Medinaat-al-Salaam, is leading an army against the Emerald Champion, and Thrice-Damned Matsu Tsuko is leading an army attacking the Lion, all with overwhelming success.
- **TN 35-** A team of Mantis ambassadors has recently gone home, their boats laden with treasure. Whatever negotiations took place during their stay were apparently successful, though no one will say what that entailed.
- **TN 40-** Many of the greatest servants of the Caliph are referred to as “Khadi.” It is difficult to get others to speak of it, but one can piece together that this involves ritual removal of the heart, effectively rendering the subject immortal. The only way to kill a khadi is to find their heart and destroy it- no small task.
- **TN 60:** Though the Immortal Champion, Jama Suru, is the most notable Khadi present, the most surprising is Rosoku, forced to accept the procedure by Iuchiban. Despite this, all feel that the Royal Advisor has had a very positive effect on the Caliph's infamously short temper. Even the most hardened and Tainted oni respect Rosoku for daring to critique the Caliph and live.

The Shrines

Those who wish to explore the shrines may certainly do so: the shrines on the North (Iuchiban's right side) are those he favored: Masami, Fortune of Goblins; Katagi, Fortune of Perfection; Toku, Fortune of Ambition; and Munenori, the Fortune of Penalties, among others. Those on the left are those who he despised: Satsu, Fortune of Inaction; Masayori, Fortune of Needless Sacrifice; Rei, Fortune of Massacres; Kai, Fortune of Retreat; Tai-Fu, the Fortune of Harsh Choices, and more.

The GM should feel free to include a few of the players' Heroes of Rokugan 3 characters as despised Fortunes, too.

A **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll TN 20 will show that many of these were from a recent rebellion, which of course failed against the almighty power of Iuchiban. There were about a hundred samurai in all who participated in this, and, aside from one (Musashi the Betrayer; assigned as Rosoku's khadi yojimbo), they are all dead, *or worse*.

PCs are free to pray to any of the Fortunes here, but they do not answer. A **Lore: Theology/Void** roll, TN 20, gets the sense that they are somehow absent, turned away from this Realm and their attentions elsewhere.

Advanced Technology

PCs with any sort of advanced technology (standard guns, lasers, etc) will be asked for a demonstration and given the floor. The PC can set their own TN to roll for this, but success over 25 will find the PC instructing Iuchiban personally about how the weapon works- he wants to try it out. He's not going to take the PCs "clever trinket", but feel free to let them sweat over it for a moment.

Swords of Hope

PCs brazen enough to carry a Sword of Hope in Iuchiban's presence and not bother to disguise it will be asked to bring it forth for him to inspect, and to give the tale of how they obtained it. Without asking, Iuchiban snatches any present blade away from its owner (a significant insult) and draws it. He turns the blade over and smiles. *"He was always such a master craftsman, even unto the very end. Here, come, I want to show you something."*

Iuchiban stands, walking down the carpeted aisle and out of the hall, toward the forest, stopping before gnarled tree, one punctured by a single gleaming blade, untouched by any sign of rust or other decay.

"Yajinden even insisted to craft the knife that trapped him here. See? Ever so prideful, even to the end."

He turns, addressing the tree.

"See that, old friend? Even in the dream worlds you are still a defiant betrayer!"

With a flash, Iuchiban draws the blade, catching the last rays of sun upon the steel.

"Sword of Hope' indeed!"

With that, he draws back and rams the sword into the tree.

...

But stops an inch short.

"Just kidding."

Iuchiban laughs cruelly, sticking the sword in the mud and walking back toward the party. Brash and berserker PCs must roll **Raw Willpower** TN 15 to avoid attacking him (TN 60; Reduction 60, Earth 10). Those who do so will be contemptuously backhanded for 10k10e+30 damage: survivors will be dragged to the kitchen to be cooked.

Other Guests

PCs who wish to interact with the other guests will find them all unfailingly polite and friendly, though an **Investigation (Notice) / Awareness** roll TN 30 will find an undercurrent of fear amongst the party-goers- fear of Iuchiban's temper. Despite this, they will have nothing but praise for the Caliph and the order his rule has established. It is not likely that the PCs will wish to speak to the monsters, but here are a few samples:

Hida Kayobun no Mikata, the elderly ogre daimyo of the Mikata vassal family of the Crab (wearing the black-stained Armor of the Shadow Warrior), will challenge any Large or Strength 4+ PC (with preference for Hida) to an arm-wrestling and drinking contest. Kayobun, at ~9' tall, dwarfs the Large PC in ways they normally dwarf others. These are alternating **Raw Strength** and **Raw Stamina** rolls with escalating TNs (starting at TN 15) until someone fails. Kayobun rolls 6k6 on both, and will either congratulate the PC on their Strength, or (if they last more than one round) will encourage their Little Brother/Sister to become stronger, for the Honor of the Crab (or the Empire). If asked about the armor- he claimed it after defeating Yakamo no Oni in single combat.

Jama Suru is polite and friendly as ever, though curious to hear about the fate of his alternate self from the other dimension where Iuchiban rules as Emperor (though not as Caliph). If any PC wishes to "press their luck" with him, he can arrange a 'first blood' duel.

Jama Suru, Immortal Champion, rolls 10k10e+25 while dueling, in the Kakita style, but is also Invulnerable to any weapon that is not Jade (not to mention an incredibly

talented Maho Tsukai). Success (though unlikely) earns the PC a round of applause, a rank of Glory, and outwardly a laughing congratulations from Suru, though the PC finds themselves bowing a little too low in return as the maho tsukai khadi quietly uses magic to control their body. Their laughter is not their own as they cheerfully make their way back to their seat.

The Brotherhood Goblin introduces himself as Pokku, from the Temple of Kisada, Fortune of Damnation, and will be happy to speak with the PCs about his interesting perspective on Theology. His version paints Iuchiban as the great hero, uniting Rokugan in centuries of peace, where humans and non-humans live together in harmony and the oppressive samurai caste system abolished. Politely enduring Pokku's prosthelyzing requires an **Etiquette / Awareness** roll TN 20, or risk losing a point of Glory. Attacking Pokku is socially acceptable ("he had it coming" is a valid defense in this court), but still an Honor loss for a **Major Breach of Etiquette**. Pokku will cause 5k4 damage as he fights back viciously, however.

The wildly-tattooed bakemono, in gold and green pants, introduces itself as Kokujin Ichio, Clan Champion for the Dragon Clan. He is quiet, calm, and very polite, curious to speak to the PCs about their versions of reality. PCs with any sort of spirit sight (such as Kitsu) may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Void** vs Ichio's **Acting / Void** (10k8e). Failure means something is "odd" about him, while success shows that Ichio is secretly a *tamashii*, a vessel for holding the spirit of Togashi-Kami, but this is not for public knowledge nor is readily apparent- Ichio will ask them to stay silent about the matter.

PCs of any gender who wish to flirt with or seduce Jama Kachiko will find her more than willing, as long as they have something "interesting" to offer ("Large", "Dangerous Beauty", etc). Should they pursue further *after the party*, they must roll a **Raw Earth** to resist Taint (TN 25), or gain 2k2 points of Shadowlands Taint, and should probably not ask whom else was at that particular nocturnal festivity (she is *incredibly* tainted).

Kyoso no Oni, the Rakshasa (Astrilax), and the two djinn (the names are unpronounceable, but translate to "The Lord of Sorrows" and "The Mistress of Glass"), will ignore the spectacle of human PCs- they are beneath notice. Nonhuman PCs will find them quite polite and friendly, discussing whether or not the *oni-sumai* league will be able to continue, now that they're in another realm. Impressively large nonhuman PCs (such as ryu) will be asked if they wish to participate.

The Caliph is quietly speaking with Rosoku about the Void Singularity. A **Stealth / Awareness** roll TN 20 will allow the PC to subtly listen in on the conversation, and thus pick up a few important tidbits amid the noise of the room itself. The most notable of which is that the Caliph insists upon participating tomorrow- not only is the Void Singularity a source of incredible power, but he is *very* interested in learning what he can about Ryoushi's futuristic "science."

The end of the conversation with Rosoku and the Caliph:

Rosoku smiles politely. "My teachings are easy to understand and easy to put into practice. Yet your intellect will never grasp them, and when you try to practice them, you fall short. My teachings are older than the world. How can you grasp their meaning? If you want to know me, look inside your heart."

The Caliph pauses for a moment. "I value your wisdom, but do not test me, Rosoku-san." The Caliph, frustrated by the quote from the book of Shinsei and the insult, stands and retires early, obliterating a servant on the way out with a wave of his hand. The party quickly picks up after he exits.

After Iuchiban leaves, the party continues without him. A **Raw Awareness** roll TN 15 lets the PC notice a palpable sense of relief, but still, no one dares badmouth the Caliph, even politely- to do so risks destruction.

Heart Hunting

PCs who learn about the khadi process may well wish to try to locate Iuchiban's heart within the Imperial Palace. Unfortunately, this effort is doomed to failure: his heart is not hidden in this building, or even in this world. It remains in the universe from which he and his followers arrived. Allowing the PCs some time to search is not an issue – **Investigation (Search) / Perception** rolls are appropriate, and hitting a TN 50 does allow the PCs to find a hidden niche (located wherever in the castle the GM deems suitable) that contains a single urn, about the size of forearm, topped with a jackal's head cap and sealed with wax. Anyone who can read Senpet, who casts Commune with the Earth kami in the urn, or uses other suitable magic (such as Reflections of Pan Ku or the Inner Gift of Spirit Touch) can learn that the heart within belongs to one of Iuchiban's champions, Hida Amoro. Destroying this heart produces no meaningful effects on the outcome of the adventure, as Amoro's death is not reported to Iuchiban before the adventure's other events overtake him. (Parties who destroy it from ignorance, hoping it is Iuchiban's, will be quite disappointed later.)

Otherwise, though, they will not be able to locate any khadi's heart within the Palace. Before the party can grow too frustrated, however, Astrilax the Rakshasa will intervene. The tiger-headed demon from the Ivory Kingdoms wears the same style of gaijin-cut kimono as the rest of the court, and it presses its backward-facing hands together in a bow as it approaches the searching PCs.

"I know what it is you seek, my friends. I assure you, I have sought it high and low in this Palace myself," Astrilax hisses, smiling in way that shows its fangs. "But Jaamiyah the Heartless does not keep his most prized possession within this building, or indeed within this world. Some of his lessers' hearts are without a doubt here, but destroying them will gain you nothing but the wrath of the Immortal Caliph, and that is not a thing even I dare risk. Cease your search, and rejoice the revels here. Your death may indeed come tomorrow, might it not?"

Wise PCs will be wary of a rakshasa's advice, but in this instance, Astrilax is indeed being honest. If the PCs choose to challenge him on why they should trust him, Astrilax's smile only grows wider. ***"A lengthy, fruitless search might eventually cause you to set aside your desire for bloodshed and your fear of death at Iuchiban's hands. This does not suit my purposes."*** If the PCs claim to have already found Iuchiban's heart, ut have instead found Amoro's, Astrilax chuckles a soft, coughing chuckle and sets them straight as to the urn's owner's identity.

The Morning After the Night Before

PCs who stayed up too late or were drinking too much will have Fatigue penalties, but this can be fixed by drinking lots of water and coffee (or strong tea), which is available on a nearby buffet table (along with a wide selection of breakfast foods). Any PCs who wish to stay awake with Kitsuki Ryoushi may do so (she will stay up late, double and triple-checking the machines), but they will need to have meditated sometime in the evening to regain their Void.

PCs who (smartly) turned over their Swords of Hope will find them expertly polished and resting in a place of honor in their room whenever they get back to it. The next morning:

The throne room is dark except for the soft glow of the sensors, a ghostly holographic whiteboard filled with arcane equations, and a few strategically dimmed lanterns. Kitsuki Ryoushi is working furiously on her

calculations as Iuchiban, Jama Suru, and Rosoku look on.

"This isn't what I expected."

A **Engineering / Intelligence** roll TN 20 is necessary to interpret the collected data (shown onscreen and linked to the datapads): it is a haphazard mess, with all sorts of information radiating from it on the quantum level. The only reliable data available is that it is indeed growing.

"Can you explain the problem in simple terms?" Rosoku asks, taking a sip of his coffee.

"Singularities pull things in, and this isn't doing that." Ryoushi mutters to herself, chuffed at the constraint. "Put simply, this is a tear in the fabric of the universe. Even with the containment field, the information I am getting has been already affected by our reality... in other words, not helpful. We have to collect data from the inside."

"Is that safe?" The voice of concern comes not from Rosoku, but, from Iuchiban.

"Certainly not. Anything that goes in will not come out."

"How, then?"

There is a long, pregnant pause before Rosoku speaks. "Meditation allows us to connect to the Void. Maybe that will allow us to enter. I do not suppose any of your equipment can detect thoughts, by chance?"

"I did bring some VR headsets, but they're not designed for that sort of-"

Iuchiban interrupts. "This equipment is based on the kami, correct?"

"Yes, but-"

"I will make them work. Mind-reading magic is trivial. Show me the spells you use for your nemuranai."

Ryoushi makes a quick glance toward Rosoku, but quickly produces a headset for Iuchiban to examine. He turns it over for a moment, quite unsure of what to make of it. Ryoushi presses a button on the side, lighting up the visor. "Ah, there they are." Iuchiban smiles. "This little trinket is quite fascinating."

Ryoushi will hand a headset to Jama Suru and any shugenja PC who wishes to examine them. Detecting the kami in the headset will find a variety of them available

(Earth, Fire, Air), and they can be communed with easily (“kami online: please input command.”)

The spell Iuchiban uses to “reverse the kamiton polarity” is fundamentally based upon maho mind control, but between him, Jama Suru, Ryoushi, and any other shugenja PC with Engineering of 3 or higher, they are able to modify all of the headsets in about two hours, and the PCs involved do not gain Taint for participating (they are not using kansen, but simply giving the Air kami inside the headsets different instructions). Once put on and activated, the thoughts of any wearer are shown onscreen beside an icon for the user (PCs with mental disadvantages that might cause problems, like Lechery, will need to make a **Raw Willpower** roll TN 20 to avoid embarrassing themselves, otherwise losing Honor for a **Minor Breach of Etiquette**).

Rosoku, Iuchiban, and whatever PCs wish to participate can don headsets to create baseline measurements. Ryoushi will operate the computers, along with any PC who does not wish to meditate. It is recommended that the PCs do not sit this out: Ryoushi needs “standardized” data points (Iuchiban and Rosoku’s minds are anything but normal), and PCs with Void 5+ or any other Void-related advantage or disadvantage is encouraged to meditate. Jama Suru is not participating, but watching carefully.

Baseline readings and “attunement with the localized plane” (to compensate for the individual PC being from another realm) can be created with a **Meditation / Void** toll, TN 15.

Those who insist on not participating, or who try to meditate and fail, can use their **Engineering / Intelligence** to roll each time the PCs roll, to help ensure that the data is captured and interpreted properly.

As they meditate, any NPCs that have been interacted with positively within the Palace will sneak in to observe the process (taking advantage of the breakfast spread, sitting in the back and observing, whatever fits the character). Kokujuin Ichio will arrive whether he was spoken to or not, sitting back to quietly observe. Neither Kyoso no Oni nor the djinn will come.

Those observing Iuchiban’s thoughts will find them surprisingly calm, with the occasional spike of *phenomenal* violence.

Diving In

Once baseline measurements are established, the real work begins. The screens are pulled back, allowing the

PCs to get as close as they can without touching the Rift, and the void exploration session is guided by Rosoku’s calm, measured voice. In order to achieve the proper mental state, each PC must roll **Meditation (Zanji) / Void**, TN 35, with a +9 Cooperative Skill Roll bonus from Rosoku. Any PC who is aiding Ryoushi with her equipment rather than meditating may make a TN 20 **Engineering/Intelligence** roll to reduce one PC’s Meditation roll to TN 25 instead. Failure means the PC awakens with a headache; as long as at least 2 PCs reach the meditative state, any failures are regretfully informed by Ryoushi that their minds do not seem compatible with the image-sharing technology she brought along, and they will need to aid her rather than Rosoku. NOTE: Any PC with Dark Fate succeeds on this roll, regardless of the result of the roll.

Ishiken PCs have unique advantages in dealing with the Singularity. Any roll made by an ishiken while meditating on it or within it can be made as a Void Spell Casting roll ([School Rank + Void]kVoid) instead; Void spell slots may be spent to grant a 1k1 bonus to any roll made this way. This does not otherwise consume spell slots, as the spiritual energy of the Void is almost overwhelming in the Singularity’s presence.

Did you fall asleep? Are you awake? It is impossible to tell, there are no inputs to your mind whatsoever. No darkness, no light, no vision; words and ideas flash into your mind, but are gone before the memories form.

There is light. Well, something that your mind translates into light. It is behind you, casting a shadow upon what appears to be a featureless gray wall. The shadow is amorphous, like the spots in your eyes that develop when you stare at the sun for too long.

There are other shadows forming nearby. Your mind builds a three-dimensional room to hold them, an echoing space with vague backdrops of dimly-glimpsed reality – a faint sky, a distant castle, a shadowy tree in a field.

Traditional samurai will likely interpret this scene as something like the stage for a kabuki play, but more modern samurai might see it as a television studio or even some kind of holographic projection. The background details are fuzzy, indistinct, and change even as the PCs try to focus on them.

Most of the objects that are casting the shadows are softly glowing - the “soul” of the person the PCs are observing. The only one that has a recognizable face is Rosoku, plus any PC who is “enlightened”, but they still appear hazy- it appears more as the “idea” of Rosoku, or more accurately Shinsei, than Rosoku himself. PCs who

are not human show their True Self here. Iuchiban's "glowing form" is a heavy black stain, trailing thick oily blood behind it.

Because "Time" is irrelevant in the Void, looking at a PCs' shadow shows the observer all the kharmic manifestations of their soul as they have *and will have been* expressed throughout history, all at once. PCs will immediately recognize their own faces among a seemingly infinite number of others, as well as every other variant of them from every moment in time that has existed, does exist as a dream realm, or will exist in the future. Characters from other Heroes of Rokugan campaigns are the brightest and most distinct, notably the Spirit of Bushido campaign.

They also see the shadow of anyone whom they (at *any* point) have had kharmic ties with, but those are faint reflections standing behind their own figure.

A crackling, thundering voice breaks the tranquility. "Can you hear me? I repeat, this is Kitsuki Ryoushi. Can anyone hear me?"

Outside, in the real world, things progress slowly. Food is brought and empty plates later taken away. Hours tick by with no meaningful change in the instruments or the viewscreens; as dusk begins to set in, a clearly exhausted Ryoushi shakes her head and starts moving to end the experiment. "Something has clearly gone wrong," she says, shaking her head. "We need to-"

"No." Jama Suru cuts her off with lethal finality. "While the Immortal Caliph pursues this plan, we will continue to go forward. Only when he awakens or otherwise indicates that he wishes to end it will I permit you to turn off your machines." Ryoushi stares wordlessly, unsure how to answer the threat in the Immortal Champion's voice. Suru studies her for a moment, then shakes his head. "You are of no use in this state, Kitsuki-san. Return to your rooms for rest. I will remain and watch your machines. I may not know what I am looking at, but I will know if there is a change, and you will be summoned. Go now and sleep."

Unless any of the waking PCs are somehow immune to fatigue, Suru gives them similar commands. Although the night may not pass restfully for all PCs, nothing happens that night, and the following morning finds Suru and the equipment as it was left.

Finally, a few hours after dawn, ghostly images appear on the viewscreens, as the minds of the meditators begin to make contact with the Singularity. Ryoushi is rejuvenated by this, and begins eagerly studying the

data her detectors are producing. Although there seems to be little of it, she is nonetheless already hard at work, scribbling notes and equations on her whiteboard as the data comes in. She also attempts to use the communication function of the headsets to speak into the meditations of Rosoku, Iuchiban, and the others, but to no apparent effect. "Our modifications were effective," Suru reassures her gravely. "More patience is required."

Late in the afternoon, first Rosoku's view, then Iuchiban's, then the PCs viewscreens all start to change, revealing visible but still undetailed shadows being cast forward somehow. More data begins to flow through, and Ryoushi tries the communication setup again, and again there is no response. Checking on the meditating characters confirms that they are still as healthy as they were when the process began, and show no signs of noticing their lack of food or water at this point.

Finally, about two Rokugani hours after midnight, the PCs and Ryoushi are summoned from their beds by Suru. The viewscreens have changed dramatically, revealing the strange theater-like settings the meditating PCs themselves saw, and the strange glowing forms of the other characters meditating within the Singularity. "How are they... are they actually perceiving one another?" Ryoushi gasps, astonished. She dashes to her equipment, glancing from one set of readouts to the next, shaking her head in surprise. Finally, she reaches once more for the microphone, activating it to speak to the meditating characters. "This is Kitsuki Ryoushi. Can you hear me? I repeat, this is Kitsuki Ryoushi. Can you hear me?"

Controlling the volume of the communicator requires a focused, well controlled thought, as does speaking back. Each meditating PC must roll Raw **Willpower**, TN 20. If this roll fails, the PC cannot actively communicate, but is simply shouting at the void itself. It does not respond. They can hear snippets of conversation, and can try again in a moment. Rosoku and Iuchiban have no difficulty speaking back.

"We are here, Kitsuki-san," Rosoku replies.

"Oh thank the Kami. You've been under for two days now. Anyway. Can you tell me what's going on? My instruments are going haywire out here."

The Immortal Caliph speaks, his voice quiet, almost reverent. "Yes, I am here. This is... exquisite beyond words. The power here is... indescribable. I can taste it with every fiber of me. I must have it."

Rosoku: "Great Caliph, please do not. It is too great a power, even for you."

"Silence! Your foolishness is no longer amusing to me. I am Iuchiban, God among Men. I carve my own destiny. With this power, THE STARS THEMSELVES WILL BOW BEFORE ME."

The dark shape of Iuchiban turns, moves toward the light... and evaporates, dissolving spectacularly into nothing.

There is inaudible cursing on the other end of the headset. "Hold on..." and then a long pause of silence.

A different voice speaks. "How do I work this thing? Hello? This is the Jama Suru. Hello?!"

["we're here"]

"Can one of you tell me what the hell just happened?"

Rosoku: "How best to explain this... the Immortal Caliph joined with the Void. He has ascended beyond the universe itself."

"Ascended to where? Can he come back?"

"He did not go to Meido, Jigoku, or even Tengoku- he bypassed them all. He is no more: a teardrop lost in a boundless ocean. He will live forever beyond time, but even if he were to return, the soul known as Otomo Jama, Jaamiyah, Iuchiban, and the Immortal Caliph is gone forever. What happened out there?"

"He... collapsed and appears dead."

"Then the Caliph is dead. Long live the Caliph. Can you put Ryoushi-san back on the line, please?"

Static rustling occurs before Ryoushi speaks: "I'm getting incredible Kamiton readings from the Caliph. This is amazing. I can't wait to report this to the Kitsuki Interstellar Academ... oh."

"Do not fret. Enlightenment is indeed a wonderful thing, but here it is deadly. We must focus on the task at hand if we are to succeed."

Investigation / Perception TN 25: There are sounds of cheers and joyous yelling coming from behind Ryoushi. PCs not meditating will hear this from the servants' entrance to the throne room.

If a PC doesn't ask, Ryoushi will: "How do we investigate the rift?"

Ryoushi: "You must look past the source of the light to see the shadows it casts. Do not look at it directly or you may be pulled in, just as the Caliph was."

Turning toward the Void is like turning toward the sun on a cold day: it is warmth, it is life, it is *everything*. It smells like... *home*. Around the light a wheel turns, infinitely thick

and infinitely complex. A **Lore: Theology / Perception** roll TN 15 will let the PC know that this is the kharmic wheel itself, and that they themselves move along it. Anyone who is not "Enlightened" (or a nonhuman made of the Void itself) must roll to resist the temptation of going into the light, just as Iuchiban did; this is a Raw **Willpower** roll, adding the PCs' Honor to the total, with a TN equal to 5x (the PC's own Void Rank). There is a +5 TN penalty for each "selfish" mental or spiritual advantage/disadvantage: Lechery, Greedy, Fascination, Compulsion, Phobia, Brash, Contrary, Paragon of Shourido, Failure of Bushido, Seven Fortune's Curse, each rank of Taint, etc. Likewise, the PCs gain Free Raises for each "unselfish" advantage/disadvantage: Paragon of Bushido, soft-hearted, haunted, kharmic tie, Seven Fortunes' Blessing, etc. GM discretion applies.

Positive and negative Void-related advantages may hold similar penalties or bonuses at GM discretion (Touch of the Void, Ishiken, etc).

If the PCs have no related advantages or disadvantages, ask them directly: is your character selfish or unselfish? A free raise or penalty will be given accordingly.

PCs with the "Leadership" advantage may give one or more of their free raises to another PC in support, and they gain two points of Honor.

Failure means they must ask themselves what their character would do- become enlightened and "win", or "fail" and continue living, knowing they will likely *never* come this close again.

Those who fail but do not go into the Void gain the disadvantage: "Driven: Achieve Enlightenment."

Those who willingly go into the Void gain the advantage Enlightened and are now one with the universe... but cannot return to the world. They shouldn't leave the table just yet, however.

NOTE: Characters with Dark Fate cannot enter the Void and become Enlightened, but neither do they gain the Driven Disadvantage for not doing so.

Part Three: Inside the Second Day of Thunder

Looking past the Light of the Void is not unlike looking toward a roaring campfire, but not at it directly. Once adjusted, it becomes easier to navigate the bright twilight haze.

Rosoku's voice crackles over the headset. "Look for something that stands out. You'll know it when you see it."

Investigation (Notice) / Void:

- **TN 20-** There is a distortion in the kharmic wheel, not unlike the one in the physical world, where a seemingly-infinite number of significant "strings" floating in the twilight of probability collide. Though the Void Space moves around it, one can see inside, as if looking through a keyhole. The scene unfolding is blurry, similar to a PC looking at their own shadowy reflections, but this is much more discernable.

A glimpse in the keyhole shows the Imperial Throne Room (as the PCs recognize it), with 9 figures, represented by distinctive sets of colors, swirling about each other. Without further study, trying to spot any given figure is nigh impossible; just as trying to remember the face of a person in a dream, the details are incredibly blurry and vague, except for two: one glowing with bright purity, the other radiating darkness.

- **TN 25-** the Bright and Dark forms appear as Dragons.
- **TN 30-** The distortion appears as one of a sequence of about ten similar vignette keyholes along the wheel, but only this is the only one that appears different- none of the others appear to radiate or fluctuate. An **Engineering / Intelligence** roll TN 20: will inform the PC that these are "fixed points"- events that occur in every dimension, and that "something" is wrong with this particular one. All are tied to Rosoku by an almost-invisible but impossibly-bright string (he will just smile if it is brought up).
- **TN 35-** The distortion is the third, or forth, in the sequence of keyhole vignettes (it's hard to

tell), but they appear to move in an infinitely long circle, connected by (something your mind interprets as) a vibrating string... or they may just be different iterations of the same event, playing out slightly differently throughout time.

Once a single PC makes the roll to notice the unusual "keyhole," Ryoushi can adjust the other meditating PCs' perceptions to help them focus on it as well, allowing them to automatically spot it. All the PCs should gain the info in the TN 20 level, but no more. If no PC makes the roll, Rosoku locates the distortion and directs everyone's attention there.

Because three dimensional space is an illusion here, the more the PC looks into the keyhole, the larger the scene becomes, eventually expanding to "fill the room", in a way that the PC would expect it to look like (since it is filtered through their own personality). More traditional PCs would find themselves on a Kabuki-style stage, while others may see something different. Each PCs perspective is self-constructed, and therefore unique. Once inside, they are free to move about the "stage", but cannot interact with the events. Also, the Light from the Voidspace appears as a bright, distant spotlight, again casting riotously-colored people-shaped three-dimensional shadows on the stage. Though the individual details are hard to make out, there is certainly a pattern to the blurry, swirling colors that make up the ghostly figures (Technically, these are 4+ dimensional shadows, but non-futuristic Rokugani samurai characters are not going to understand that).

Investigation (Notice) / Perception TN 20: The sources of the ghostly shadows look similar to the PCs, but the PCs themselves are not casting shadows themselves.

A Lore: History / Perception roll, TN 10 will create more information about the event: It's the Second Day of Thunder. Specifically, *every* Second Day of Thunder, from every reality, and the more you watch it, the more the individual figures stand out. The glowing figure is Togashi-Kami; the dark form is Fu Leng; the others are, once you recognize them, the other Thunders. (note: this is only the "Second" Day of Thunder that directly involved Humans- at least one other preceded it in prehistory).

The scenes of the other vignettes are other Days of Thunder, set in different locations and times throughout history. These appear similar to the Second Day of Thunder (i.e. very blurry), but PCs who choose to explore those must make a **Raw Void** roll, TN 20 (with the TN increasing by +5 for each roll): PCs have *one chance* to fail before they are "Lost in the Void"; effectively out of the module and potentially dead

(technically comatose, separated from their bodies). There is no “silver string” to lead them back if they get lost.

Just as the faces of the Thunders are blurry, the action is blurry too, as if ten-thousand versions of each event were overlaid upon each other and viewed all at once. Since such forth-dimensional things do not translate into the human mind well: looking at any given action from different perspectives allows time to play out backwards or forwards, and the more the PC focuses on one singular action, the more solid it appears (while the rest fade back).

Ryoushi’s voice crackles. “I’m getting some readings now, but they’re erratic. This looks... fractal in nature. Is this... the Second Day of Thunder? If you can get closer, we can adjust for finer detail.”

Rolling **Raw Void** TN 15: Success (and raises) allow for more fine-toothed control, effectively sharpening the image. Failure means the PC gets a migraine and takes 2k1 damage (and a nosebleed).

PCs outside Voidspace can help by adjusting sensors manually, with an **Engineering / Intelligence** roll TN 20. At this point however, word of the Caliph’s death has begun to spread (by servants), and others are coming in to see the corpse (to confirm the rumor). These PCs will also have to run crowd control with Jama Suru by making an **Etiquette (Sincerity) / Awareness** roll, TN 25. Any other NPCs here (besides Ryoushi) will be helping as well, in their own way. Iuchiban’s corpse has been carried to the other side of the room and covered with a sheet (to avoid any interruptions with the experiment). Eventually the doors to the room will be barred by the Seppun, but the crowd outside is definitely getting anxious. A **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll TN 25 will inform the PC (via a servant) that powerful servants of the Caliph, such as Kyoso no Oni, are coming to take the body to claim its power. A distant explosion shakes the floor.

If an outside PC does not send a servant for their equipment (armor, horse, etc.), Jama Suru will do it; things are going downhill fast.

Ryoushi’s voice crackles: “I’m going to highlight the one aligned with the local kamiton frequency; perhaps that will help determine the problem. You should be able to adjust your headsets from there to match. Hold on.”

Meditating PCs may make a **Meditation / Intelligence** roll to highlight “this” Day of Thunder events in their

mind. There is no TN, but keep track of whomever rolls *lowest*.

Ryoushi: “You should be more attuned now, so any inconsistencies should stand out better. Don’t get too close though, there might be a chrono-spatial event horizon, and I don’t know what would happen if you cross it.”

As you become more attuned to this particular iteration of the Second Day of Thunder, and become more familiar with how your perception of time within the Void works, the scene that plays out on stage becomes significantly more tangible and ‘real’. Hitomi pulls the Black Scroll from Togashi Yokuni’s chest. Isawa Tadaka hurls the Jade Throne at Fu Leng, but the Dark Kami reverses the effect and sends it hurling back at him. Bayushi Kachiko stabs Fu Leng with her hairpins. Toturi and Doji Hoturi strike Fu Leng at the same time, killing him together.

Moving about the stage and observing the scene from different angles can fast-forward or rewind the action.

Investigation (Notice) / Perception:

- **TN 10-** This reality’s version of the Second Day of Thunder” glows softly, appearing more solid against a ghostly haze of the transparent alternate versions.
- **TN 15-** The connection with Ryoushi is beginning to crackle with static. Looking into the shadowy alternate realities, one can quickly spot a surprising number of “Iuchiban Kills Fu Leng” Second Day of Thunder variants. The PCs can find their own realities in the background as well without becoming lost.
- **TN 20-** Across the infinite echoes of this moment, large “patches” of blankness – not darkness, not even the glow of the Void, but something somehow beyond even those concepts – erase universe after universe, and even those who at first appear intact disappear into an area of nonexistence when the PCs look “forward” and “backward” across time. Peering deeply into the endless stretch of worlds, they can see absolutely no universe that is intact from “beginning” to “end” – all are swallowed somewhere by the blankness. This is the destruction wrought by the Nightmare Storm across the Spirit Realms.
- **TN 30-** One of the ten-thousand ghostly versions of Fu Leng is watching [the PC who

scored the lowest on the prior roll]... followed by two, then four, then eight... until the “real” one begins blinking, confused...

The feeling of light, dreamlike timelessness within the Void gets suddenly heavy; the events of the Second Day of Thunder begin to slow and solidify, as if you were swimming through molasses.

The glowing, tangible Fu Leng, quickly followed by all other versions of himself, turns to you (point to the PC with the lowest Meditation roll), and speaks.

“Well hello. Who are you?” A light of understanding fires in his eyes as he looks around. “Interesting.” The Dark Kami shifts slightly, observing the outcome of events, just as you had only a moment before. The scene you were watching speeds forward, and then back again. The Dark Kami smiles.

“One moment...”

The Void trembles as the glowing form of the Fallen One artfully dodges what should be his killing blow before striking down Toturi. Almost instantly afterward, every version of Fu Leng strikes down their version of Toturi.

“That’s better.”

PCs outside the Void can only watch as the equipment readings go haywire and the headsets screech. The Earth trembles and pieces of the ceiling start to fall. Senpet-Seppun bushi rush to defend the body of their Emperor as fighting outside rattles the doors and walls.

The earthquake isn’t stopping, but is getting worse. A column topples, crushing the buffet. Kitsuki Ryoushi is staring at the readouts in complete shock.

“Oh shit.”

All characters (PC and NPC) feel an eye-rolling migraine approach, followed by a confusing rush of memories. Their history is... being duplicated. The PCs remember two distinct versions of history- theirs, and one of hopelessness and darkness, where the Fu Leng defeated Toturi and the Thunders. Every PC now remembers similar events within history. PCs from the “Thousand Years of Darkness” timelines are unaffected.

“It’s a cascading breach! We have to contain the rift before this world is torn apart!” Ryoushi shouts into the intercom over the rising noise, typing furiously. “Find a reality where Fu Leng is defeated and lock it in! We need an anchor!”

The PCs within the Void must look deeply into the alternate realities to find an appropriate version, all while Fu Leng looks smugly on. This requires an **Investigation (Search) / Void** roll, TN 25, and an **Engineering / Reflexes** roll TN 20 by those outside the Void. At least half of the PCs must succeed on this roll, or the “new” realities begin to set into place. One PC, chosen at random from among those whose worlds did not previously have a victory by Fu Leng, gains 1 Rank of Taint, the Disadvantage Cursed by the Realm: Jigoku, and forgets their original history, permanently – they now only remember a Tainted version of their history (Fu Leng’s victory may or may not feature prominently in that history – in some worlds, the Dark Kami deliberately fades into the background to run the Empire from behind the scenes). The PCs may roll again, with the same consequences for failure each time, until either all the PCs have been affected or the roll finally succeeds.

NOTE: If the PCs include any characters that possess Dark Fate, they cannot succeed until all such characters have been afflicted by the Taint and memory change – such PCs are affected first. Don’t worry, though. They won’t have to suffer with those drawbacks for long.

Fu Leng hisses as events change dramatically; instead of the normal Thunders, there are different figures within the scene. A Phoenix fire tensai immolates himself, incinerating everyone. A large Hida, survives, however; holding a Naga pearl aloft, he quietly says, “The Mountain Does Not Move” and cuts the wounded Kami down.

As Fu Leng lies dying, he regains focus on you [a different PC]. The action rewinds to just after the explosion: “I’ll take that, ‘Hiroku’-san” he says, snatching the Naga Pearl from the confused Hida’s face and using it for himself. “Even mountains crumble,” he states, grabbing the Hida by the throat and crushing his esophagus.

The PCs must once again look for an alternate reality with an **Investigation (Search) / Void** roll, TN 30, and an **Engineering / Reflexes** roll TN 20 by those outside the Void. If none are outside the Void, Ryoushi will make the roll. Success conditions and failure consequences are as before.

Outside, the walls are crumbling and flying apart. Bushi battle oni as both are torn asunder in a tempest of debris. NPCs present and the servants sent to retrieve the PCs equipment (and any significant animals, such as pets or Utaku horses) rush into the containment field as the palace crumbles under their feet.

Looking within the action again finds the events to be uniform: in every reality, Fu Leng is killing the Thunders... except one, which looks... surprisingly normal.

“Enough of this game...”

Just as Toturi and Hoturi’s killing bows land, Fu Leng closes his eyes, and as the body of Hantei the 39th is cut down, his soul steps backward, dodging the strikes completely. What was once the shadow of a tall, pale human figure is now a bright black Dragon with glowing green eyes, standing in the Voidspace beside you.

The light of the Void flickers, trembles, and dims. The stage falls away as you are all thrown violently back into your bodies, awakening in the eye of a maelstrom ripping the palace apart.

A pale man in a black kimono lays sprawled upon the floor. He is strongly built, darkly handsome, and a halo of power visibly ripples around him, making each of you fight an urge to kneel at his sheer grandeur. Ichio moves quickly to help him up. “Come, Brother. There isn’t much time.”

Fu Leng looks about, incredibly confused. “Who ARE you? What is going on?”

“I am Kokujin Ichio, honored tamashii of Togashikami. This is Rosoku, descendant of Shinsei. This is Kitsuki Ryoushi of the Owl Clan, and these are her friends.”

Attempts to attack Fu Leng are largely pointless, and the Fallen Kami treats them as such. He has an Armor TN of 50, and is Invulnerable to everything except potent nemuranai weapons and weapons wielded by someone with the Soul of Thunder. If such an attack actually strikes him, he does notice long enough to use a maho-like effect to draw blood from his attacker into himself, healing his wounds while inflicting the same amount of damage on his foe. That foe also gains 1 point of Taint for every Wound Rank they lose in this fashion. Any lesser strike against him he simply ignores, proceeding as if it did not occur.

The players should introduce their PCs at his point, and reinforce the narrative of the story- the spirit worlds of Rokugan are being destroyed, and now this one is as well. As they speak, the yumemusha notice that the red auras that surround them are pulsing erratically, flaring and almost fading out before flaring again. All the PCs’ auras are pulsing in sync with one another.

PCs who cannot express what is going on may make a **Engineering / Intelligence** roll TN 20 instead: the timelines have been changed, interfering with the prescribed order of events (causality), creating a paradox loop. This has fatally weakened the rite performed by Sezaru and the PCs at the first moments of their arrival in this reality, the rite that has thus far protected this universe from the Nightmare Storm. Now it is about to destroy this world, and with it, the last chance of the yumemusha to stop the Storm from destroying all that ever has been and ever might be.

This will be a loose narrative requiring roleplaying on the GM’s part. A sample of this dialogue is listed below:

“I am a Kami. Will I survive this?”

[PC answer- probably not]

“How can we stop this?”

Ryoushi interjects- “Perhaps if Fu Leng-sama returns to the moment of the breach and re-enters the timestream, it can be sealed...”

Fu Leng looks to Togashi, and then toward the PCs. *“Why would I do that?”*

This is directed at the players themselves, and is a roleplaying challenge. They may choose to roll **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** if they wish, but some kind of actual answer must occur. Any meaningful or heartfelt answer will be enough to sway Fu Leng.

NOTE: If any PCs have Dark Fate, before Fu Leng returns to the Void, he shakes his head. *“I am too weak to attempt this after my transition here. I require... yes. You are mine. I claim you now.”* He stretches out a hand, and the PC(s) with Dark Fate only have time to open their mouths to scream before their souls are ripped from their bodies and into Fu Leng’s massive form. Where there was once a PC, there is now an undead revenant, like the ones fighting alongside Iuchiban’s armies. These PCs are irrevocably dead, and their undead remains are NPCs for the campaign now.

Returning to the Void involves a **Meditation (Zanji) / Void**, TN 25 roll, though it does not take nearly as much time as happened previously. The stage within the Void is in shambles as howling winds shake the walls. The light, once gentle and warm, is now a raging bonfire in a hurricane.

Investigation / Void:

- **TN 10-** Any PCs who could not previously see the “blankness” caused by the Nightmare Storms can see it now... because it is somehow moving directly toward them, in a sense that defies the traits one would normally associate with movement. Somehow it is both distant, coming closer, and already upon them.
- **TN 15-** From within the heart of the Nightmare Storm, the PCs can see their own world, from one edge of the Empire to the other. A storm of darkness is roiling at the Empire’s edges, the Great Walls in the north and south already fracturing and crumbling, the debris swept upward and disappearing into the seething black shadow-clouds. Something seems to be holding it back, something that pulses in a rhythm that matches the auras that surround them, but as the PCs look “ahead” in time the Storm eventually sweeps forward and consumes the world.
- **TN 20:** Somehow, across the gap between the universes, and only from within the Storm, you can see the Storm’s heart. It is one particular universe fragment, almost completely destroyed, only the barest handful of remaining instants still visible: a woman is cut down by a shining katana as, behind her, a dragon made of stars shatters into ten thousand pieces; a geisha stabs Toturi and blood bubbles from his lips while in the shadows behind him his brother Arasou laughs and falls from a waterfall; a battle with Dragon and Crab banners on opposite sides is suddenly interrupted by an army of black-furred wolves lead by a roaring lion; and a gloating man with a diadem of flame on his brow, clad in the Armor of the Shadow Warrior, leads an army of blank-faced heroes wrapped in red light in a charge across the Empire. (If no PC makes this level of the roll, Ryoushi detects the relevant data via her detectors.)

Fu Leng will meditate and attempt to “re-enter” the hole, but it is too late: what is broken cannot be fixed so easily. The PCs cannot move forward, either.

Ryoushi, staticy: “How’s it going in there?”

[it’s no good!]

Ryoushi: “Well it’s a hot mess out here! If my calculations are correct, judging by the gathered information... a sufficiently strong individual should be able to shelter and contain the paradox breach from

within the Void. It won’t fix it, but it should buy us some time.”

Rosoku, shouting over the celestial wind: *“We must guide Fu Leng-kami between the Void and the breach! He can shelter it within his shadow!”*

PCs may suggest that Togashi-kami help Fu Leng, but the latter brushes them aside. *“I am Fu Leng! I alone must do this!” Ichio nods. “Brother is correct- I did not make the hole!”*

Guiding the dark kami between the Void and the pinch point accurately is no easy task. This requires an **Meditation (Zanji) / Void** roll, with consecutive TNs starting at 15 and increasing by 5 per player. (ex: Player 1: TN 15; Player 2: 20; Player 3: 25, etc. Max TN 40). Enlightened PCs may gain a free raise. The order is up to the players themselves. Failure on any roll means the next player may attempt it, but with each failure, Fu Leng’s attention is drawn to the burning light of the Void itself, and after 4 he will be pulled in.

PCs who went into the Void earlier in the module may roll **Honor**, TN 60, with one Free Raise per Rank of Willpower: success means they will emerge from the Void (at the last minute) and can assist aligning Fu Leng, with the free raise for being Enlightened.

Once in place, the long shadow of the Dark Kami pushes the roaring winds away. The cracks within the kharmic fragments do not recede, but they do stop growing. Those cracks, however, blacken at the edges as the Taint corrupts reality.

Turning toward the Dark Kami, you see him holding back a roaring inferno of chaos and fire. “I can only hold this for so long. Go find a way to fix this. Quickly!”

With a thought, he throws the others out of the void.

Conclusion

The PCs awake in the eye of incredible destruction, protected by Ryoushi’s kamiton containment field. The storm has calmed, raining debris and great chunks of earth onto the ground. A ray of sunshine pierces the dust cloud. The breach is still there, but it has shrunk some.

Rosoku and Jama Suru collapse, breathing their last breaths, as their hearts have been destroyed in the chaos. None rush to Jama Suru’s side.

“You must... find a way to undo the damage you have caused. Ichio can guide you. Pray for Fu Leng, and remember, the longest shadow falls when the light is to your back...”

Other NPCs who made it out (limited only to those the PCs have achieved a positive rapport with) will immediately ask swear fealty to the Owl, focusing their request on whomever they spoke to most. Most will likely be suited to taking up a place in the Sukune family.

Returning to Zakyō Toshi involves careful travel - a 10-mile radius of the countryside around Otosan Uchi has been utterly destroyed by the Nightmare Storm. The castle’s destruction and the Nightmare Storm it unleashed have taken a significant toll on Iuchiban’s forces (most notably, the khadi champions he had placed on the front lines are dead, their hearts lost in the Palace’s annihilation) but the mop-up will nonetheless take months at least. Shiro sano Kakita and Shiro no Yojin have both been lost in the storm as well, and reports suggest that the sudden appearance of the Nightmare Storm on the northern and southern borders of the Empire has badly damaged both of the Great Walls that defend it. The small saving grace is that the Shadowlands beyond the Kaiu Wall has likewise been scoured clean to a depth of more than fifteen miles – but it will not take long for the horrors further in to fill that void.

When the PCs return to the Owl, word immediately reaches them that Sezarū has at last returned to the Owl from his mission in Realms beyond. Although he left in the company of his wife, Sezarū Yanako, and the recently-arrived Asako Jane, the rumors indicate Sezarū returned alone, and badly injured. The PCs quickly have the opportunity to see for themselves, however, for they are summoned with Kitsuki Ryoushi to present themselves and their findings to Sezarū himself.

Sezarū is resting in one of the larger intact rooms of the small castle at the heart of Zakyō Toshi. This is the same building Ryoushi has been using for her laboratory, so her equipment is ready to hand for the presentation Sezarū has requested – but when you enter the room where he is waiting, you have to take some effort to maintain your face. It is a sick room, and Sezarū – ageless and powerful Sezarū – looks like he has aged two dozen years in the handful of months he has been gone. He is sitting on a futon, tilted up so he can look around easily, but his torso is swathed in bandages, and the air of decay hangs thick in the air. It is a smell most hardened bushi know all too well: an infected wound, one gone septic. Such wounds are mortal save for the intervention of a skilled shugenja. That Sezarū, here among his followers and himself

possibly the most powerful shugenja in the Empire, should still bear such a wound... You note the presence of Hanashi and the Sukune here, in addition to several other Owl healers, but they all look extremely grave.

The questions are apparently visible in your eyes, for Sezarū nods as though he has heard them. “I was attacked,” he murmurs. His voice is strong, steady, but there is a thread of pain and tension beneath it. “Yanako had become Tainted, as you know, but was apparently far more Lost than I suspected. The same happened to Asako Jane, very quickly after her arrival here, it would seem. The visions... the visions that sent us to retrieve Jane and that I followed on this most recent trip were apparently lies. Lies told by Yanako to expose me to an attack, leave me vulnerable. As you can see... it was almost successful.” Sezarū grimaces, although it might be a smile. You cannot readily tell. “Almost. Yanako’s plan was excellent and well-executed, but she still underestimated me, even as I did her. When her initial strike failed... Well. I have returned, and she and Asako Jane will not. I have seen to that.”

Sezarū stops talking, seemingly winded from his tale. After a few moments, Hanashi steps forward smoothly. “Kitsuki-san,” she says with complete composure, “Sezarū-dono awaits your report on the events in Otosan Uchi.”

Ryoushi blinks a handful of times, exchanging a look with the rest of you, then shakes her head as though clearing it and steps forward. “Hai, of course,” she begins. “As you know, my initial assumption was that we had been asked to examine some kind of singularity...”

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

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

Experience Points

Surviving the adventure: 2XP

Good roleplaying: +2XP
Stopping the Void Storm: +2XP
Returning Data about the Storm's
Source to the Owl Clan: +2XP

Total Possible Experience: 8XP

Honor

Honor gain or losses listed in the module.

Glory

PCs all gain two ranks of Glory and a Rank of Infamy for working with Fu Leng.

Other Awards/Penalties

Jama Kachiko will ask to marry the highest status male PC among whoever personally rescued her (if applicable). However, she is *incredibly* tainted (Taint 4.0); sharing a home or bed with her will result in a gain of 1k1 Taint Points at the end of this and every adventure hereafter, reduced to only 1 Taint Point with a TN 20 Earth Roll.

Module Tracking Sheets

Nothing of note.