

Essence of Fire

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A [Low]-Rank Adventure for
Heroes of Rokugan: Champions of the Ivory Throne

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[Investigation, intrigue, Role Play, Combat]
Part 1 of The Books of the Elements

What is worth sacrificing in the pursuit of power?

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This module is written for the Legends of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Fourth Edition, originally published by Alderac Entertainment Group.

Please refer to the *Heroes of Rokugan 4: Champions of the Ivory Throne Campaign Primer* for information on how to run official campaign modules. In addition to the basic setting information and house rules for this campaign, it details the various administrative necessities of the living campaign. GM reporting is crucial to players' ability to engage with the setting and to increase their characters' influence.

Adventure Background and Summary

The players travel to the estate of Isawa Hideki, a powerful shugenja and daimyo of a small village, to assist in a ritual that will greatly increase Hideki's power. While there they discover that Hideki has been neglecting his spiritual duties in favor of developing his own magical abilities leading to all manner of suffering. This culminates in an attack on Hideki's vulnerable village by bandits. If the players can help Hideki rediscover his spiritual purpose, they may save the village.

The GM should use the module to show the dangers of a shugenja who acts as a wizard rather than a priest. While this is written in the module text during events such as Hideki's confession, the GM should keep this theme in mind when depicting Hideki.

This module assumes that the players will have at least one shugenja or monk in their group. It is still playable without one, but the GM should be prepared to adapt some encounters (particularly in Hashitari Village) to account for different party make-up.

Note on Terminology: this module makes frequent reference to the kami (small k), also known as the mikokami, which are distinguished from the Kami (big K). The mikokami are the elemental spirits that inhabit the world and whom shugenja call upon. The Kami are the eight children of Lady Sun and Lord Moon who fell to earth and founded Rokugan. Most of the kami referenced in this module are the mikokami.

Note on Mechanics: Throughout most of the module all spells require 1 Raise to no effect (on top of any Raises the player might call) simply to cast, and Fire

spells require 2 such Raises. This is to reflect the neglect of the kami in general and the exhaustion of the fire kami in particular. We have tried to place reminders about this effect in areas where we anticipate spellcasting but the GM should keep it in mind for the duration of the module. This penalty is removed if and when Hideki atones.

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a Low-Rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party with a mix of Rank 1 and 2 characters.

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

High End Party (most/all characters Rank Two and Three): Increase all TNs (except in the ritual) by 5. 12 successes are needed in the ritual. Increase the bandits' weapon skill rank by 1.

Upkeep

The events of the modules are certainly of primary importance in the lives of the characters, but many of them will have been working on a variety of tasks in the times between modules. At the beginning of the module, several things will need to take place (though some are obviously dependent on the actual needs of the PCs at the table).

Character Notes

There are no character notes for this section.

News from the Empire

While the GM is looking over sheets, it's a good time to distribute the first player handout of most modules. The News of the Empire is an overview of the recent events of the Empire in a fashion that shares the ongoing story with the playerbase without requiring a Skill Roll or interfering with the actual plot of the module. Any plot-relevant Rumors will belong in the appropriate section of the module to be learned during play.

Inactivity

At the beginning of the module, PCs lose .2 glory. This glory gain cannot reduce a PC below his insight rank in glory.

Taint Progression

If a PC possesses the Shadowlands Taint, they will need to roll at the beginning of the module to see how much it has grown over the intervening time since the last module. The TN of this raw **Earth Roll** is $10+(\text{Current taint rank}*5)$

Crafting

The Crafting rules are detailed in the Campaign Primer, based largely on the Crafting rules in the core book (page 258). Unless explicitly indicated otherwise, a PC may only make one Crafting Roll per module, and any Void Points or other character resources (spell slots, Luck, etc) spent on the roll do not refresh for the duration of the module. Any successful roll is noted on the provided sheet with the description.

Preparation Techniques

Techniques like the Agasha Shugenja or Yogo Wards do not quite fall under Crafting, but still can benefit from pre-planning and the Upkeep is a good opportunity. However, unlike Crafting, this is not the only time these Techniques may be used during a module – this is just a chance for the GM to remind the players and get it out of the way.

Ronin Survival

Life is difficult for ronin in the Empire at the best of times. PC ronin are no exception to this. At the start of the module, a PC ronin must roll **Hunting (Survival) / Stamina** at a TN determined by the module. (Difficulties should range from 5-30, possibly higher for High Rank modules). Failure on this roll gives the ronin the Permanent Wound Disadvantage for the duration of the module. Koku may be spent on this roll to gain a Free Raise for every koku spent before the roll is made, or one Free Raise for every two koku spent after the roll is made.

Experience Expenditure

Finally, the players should be given one last chance to spend any experience they wish before the module begins. Unless the module specifically allows it, experience may not be spent during the adventure.

Introduction

You are traveling to the estate of Isawa Hideki of the Phoenix Clan, oddly located within the Mori Isawa

itself, to assist Hideki in a ritual of some kind. So far the journey has been pleasantly uneventful – the Kyuukai Province of the Asako was well-developed and safe to travel, but now as you enter the forest proper, the veneer of civilization drops away.

The players have been sent from their clans to assist Hideki in completing a ritual of some kind, though the details have not been shared. Ronin have been paid 2 koku for this service. In addition, the PCs are escorting a sealed box from the Master of Fire to Hideki. They are not to open the box until they present it to Hideki. If they do, there is a Symbol of Fire (L5R core rulebook, p. 185) inscribed on the inside of the box that will affect anyone who opens it other than Isawa Hideki. While this will probably not be enough to kill a PC, it should alert the rest of the party if someone does try to steal its contents (see “Stealing the Book,” p. XX), who would be obligated to stop the thief by any means.

This is also a good time for players to introduce themselves to each other and describe their characters. They may wish to detail their journey through Phoenix lands. All the PCs have been issued travel papers for their journey, as they will be on their own. The papers include authorization to wear armor and openly carry weapons on their journey.

Players may make a Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence check to learn about Isawa Hideki (TN 15). If they succeed they learn appropriate information; up to 3 Raises may be called to learn additional information (GMs should ask PCs if they wish to call raises on this roll).

Success: Isawa Hideki is a minor daimyo of the Isawa family. He is skilled with the kami and is well-respected by the few who have come across him.

1 Raise: Hideki is very reclusive, almost hermetic. He does not shun the world, and in fact is the daimyo of Hashitari Village, but spends most of his time in communion with the kami.

2 Raises: Hideki is very skilled with the fire kami. While the wood of the Mori Isawa is normally used for creating *ofuda*, the sacred scrolls shugenja use for their prayers to invoke the kami, Hashitari Village uses the wood to craft rare objects used in rituals.

3 Raises: Despite his power with the kami, Hideki has never achieved much glory. Some say it is because he is a lackluster administrator and others say it is because his power has not reached its full potential.

In addition, players may make a Spellcraft / Intelligence check (TN 20) to learn about the ritual by piecing together clues from who is present and the gifts they carry for the ritual. If they succeed, they figure out that this is a ritual intended to increase the Fire of the ritual's performer.

Part One: Isawa Hideki

It is a strange experience going through the Mori Isawa. Though not so alien a place as the Shinomen, there is no escaping the sense of being watched the entire time. It is as if the forest itself is aware of you. The woods are dark, sunlight only occasionally piercing the thick canopy, and the road twists and turns among the trees. It would not take much to become lost, and if you were to lose your way, who would ever find you? What would be left to find?

The GM should describe the journey through the forest as somewhat ominous, though not threatening. The woods have the normal sound of wildlife, being neither too loud nor too quiet, but as with many spiritual locations of Rokugan there is always a sense of being watched. The woods are quite dark, with the thick forest canopy blocking out most light, and wise PCs will be on their guards. Let PCs set watches and commend their wariness, but encourage them to move on if they are becoming paranoid.

If a player has an appropriate Spiritual Advantage (Elemental Blessing, Enlightened, Friendly Kami, some types of Inner Gift, etc., or even some Disadvantages such as Wrath of the Kami) allow the player to make a Meditation / Void roll at TN 15. If the player succeeds she senses the kami are very active in this area. If the player succeeds with at least 1 Raise she senses that they are restless and neglected.

A player who takes time to conduct a ritual honoring the kami may make a Lore: Theology / [Ring] using the appropriate Ring for whichever kami they are trying to soothe (TN 25). A player who describes a suitable ritual gets a Free Raise on this check; this need not be long but should be evocative (i.e. "I find a large freestanding stone and arrange the smaller rocks

around it in an orderly fashion, then thank the earth kami for watching over us.""). If the player succeeds, the kami are somewhat appeased though still restless, and she gains +1k0 to any single roll using that Ring or one of its associated Traits over the course of the module.

It is also possible to appease to the kami by appealing to their nature. This requires casting Sense to locate a kami and Commune (both spells taking into account the extra Raises required) to speak to it. All of the kami will complain of being lonely and alone for a very long time. They will be grateful for the attention, however, and will allow the PCs soothe them using alternative means. An air kami, for example, might be thrilled at the chance to race with someone (Athletics (Running) / Water), while a fire kami would be delighted at the chance to learn something new (Lore / Intelligence). In this case the TN will be the same as the Lore: Theology check.

Hideki's Estate

It takes the PCs about a day and a half travel within the forest to reach Hideki's estate.

Ahead of you, you see a break in the treeline and the sun (quite bright after so long below the leaves) shines on a small but well-maintained house. This must be the estate of Isawa Hideki. The house is beautiful, with simple but elegant and functional beams and walls, a well-crafted slat roof, and all the amenities one could hope for in a remote forest home.

The house is suitable for a daimyo of Hideki's status. Clearly he is well-compensated for his position (thus indicating favor from his own lord) without being ostentatious, indulgent, or wasteful. If players explore behind the house, now or later, there is both a meditation garden and an herb garden. The kitchen is attached to the house, as is customary in such circumstances, with a small outdoor area for preparation and for cooking in the hot summer months. An outhouse is located some distance away.

No one comes out to greet the PCs, but when they make their presence known, traditionally by knocking or calling out, a servant comes out to greet them.

The door slides open and an elderly heimin servant comes out to meet you. "Welcome, samurai-samas!

My lord, Isawa Hideki, will be most pleased to see you. Please, come in and make yourselves welcome.”

Players are not relieved of their weapons, but there is a rack outside the door for them to leave them. Polite behavior dictates they should be left there.

The PCs will be guests of Isawa Hideki while they are staying here. The estate is small and so he will arrange quarters for all of them. Traditional Rokugan houses do not have specific rooms, i.e. there is no dining room or living room or bedroom except in the case of very specific functions (there is a bathing room and a kitchen); rather, walls and screens are moved around to divide and unify the house as needed, and eating tables, sleeping mats, and the like are deployed and stored at appropriate times. As such there is no room for the PCs to refresh themselves in; instead the old servant will take their items and place them in storage, all while constantly apologizing for the lack of amenities and the insufficiency of what they can offer.

Players with at least Etiquette 1 will know that it is appropriate to ignore any inconveniences of travel when staying as someone's guests and if they ignore or dismiss such concerns will gain *honor H6* for demonstrating basic courtesy, while those who make an issue of complaining may lose *honor D1* for the same thing; a player with Disadvantages such as Greedy or Failure of Bushido: Courtesy may need to make a Willpower check to avoid complaining.

Once they are settled the old servant will come around with tea and small foods, as well as towels and water for them to cleanse themselves.

Players who make an Investigation (Notice) / Perception roll at TN 15 will realize that the way the walls are set up, there is probably another room. Because the walls are paper in Rokugani homes whoever is on the other side can no doubt here their conversation and interactions with the servant. For anyone who has ever been in a Rokugani house, which should include all the PCs, this is completely normal. The polite thing to do is to ignore conversations one can't help but overhear – a necessity in a world of paper walls – but it doesn't take much to realize that Hideki is probably observing them now.

Meeting Hideki

Once the players have settled themselves an interior wall slides open and Isawa Hideki appears.

You hear the sound of scraping wood as one of the shoji screens slides open. Standing in the door frame is a tall, thin man with a scraggly beard and long, loose hair, who looks to be in his mid-twenties. He wears a black kimono with only an orange belt to identify his clan. Next to him is a woman of similar age and features, wearing inverted colors: an orange kimono and a black obi, though her long hair is bound back in a maiden's foptail. Together they bow and the man speaks. “I am Isawa Hideki. Welcome to my home, samurai.”

Hideki introduces the woman as his sister and yojimbo, Shiba Aki, and exchanges pleasantries with the PCs. He asks about their journey and, if he makes his check to recognize them (Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence, TN 50 – (5 x target's Glory)), he asks about their past adventures. Due to his high Fire, he is very curious and eager to learn. Hideki does not ask out of simple curiosity, but will genuinely want to learn the “how” of everything the PCs have done. He will not pry and accepts polite deferment for what it is.

At last, Hideki will discuss the ritual itself. He is very excited about it and will answer almost any question. His first order of business will be to thank the PCs for in advance for their aid in completing the ritual. He cannot perform it on his own and needs the aid of others to do so. While the aid of spiritual characters is essential that is not enough. He is happy to discuss further details (see p. **XX**: The Ritual).

The following information is intended as a summary of what Hideki can discuss but it is not an exhaustive list. The GM is encouraged to embellish.

- The ritual will greatly increase Hideki's fire. The increased fire within himself will allow him to better commune with the fire kami. It will also extend their blessing to anyone who participates in the ritual.
- Fire is a misunderstood element. Destruction is only one part of fire. What matters more: the candle, the flame, or the light?
- The ritual involves every aspect of fire: change, energy, destruction, motion, illumination, creation, and knowledge.

- If the players make a good effort to get Hideki to open up (good roleplay or an appropriate social roll), Hideki will admit that Hashitari village is threatened by bandits. Without any other samurai or a sizable ashigaru force, Hideki must strengthen his magic in order to drive them off.

The Book

Finally, Hideki will open the box they have brought. Inside is a centuries-old tome book, a gaijin-like tome rather than a traditional scroll. His eyes light up when he sees it – literally, as for a brief moment a bright flame can be seen reflected in his pupils – and he reverently removes it from the box.

“Do you know what this is?” asks Hideki. “This is the Book of Fire, one of the six books through which Rosoku saved enlightenment.” Reverently he opens the book but the pages are curiously blank. “Fascinating,” he says, placing the book back in the box. “Perhaps the words will appear during the ritual.”

Players may make a Lore: Elements or Lore: History roll (TN 25) to know about this, although Hideki will be happy to show off his knowledge if asked. In the mid-twelfth century, despite being the heir of Shinsei, the prophet Rosoku chose not leave the Empire as all his ancestors had done. Instead he issued a series of six challenges to spur the Empire towards enlightenment. The Book of Fire was awarded to the warrior who could defeat a thousand enemies with a single stroke and was won by Kakita Tsuken when his duel against Yoritomo Yorikane turned aside a Mantis army and saved a village. Although Tsuken gifted the book to his sister, it had disappeared from the historical record until now.

Hideki does not know about the other books and challenges (a sign of his fire imbalance) but players may make additional checks to learn about all six books. The Book of Air went to the scholar who contained a thousand years of learning on a single page and was won by Mirumoto Masae. The Book of Earth went to the smith who could craft a helmet strong enough to shatter a thousand blades and was won by Kaiu Sugimoto. The Book of Water went to the general who could lead his armies from one end of Rokugan to the other in a single night and was won by Doji Jun'ai. The Book of Void was awarded to the sage who could perform a greater task than the other

four and was won by Asashina Hira. The Book of Five Rings went to the truly enlightened soul who could accomplish all five of these things and was won by the Jade Champion of the era, Asahina Sekawa.

Hideki is delighted and calls upon his servant to provide sake for everyone.

“Tomorrow I will begin the ritual, but for now we celebrate.”

Stealing the Book?

It should go without saying that stealing the Book of Fire is a highly dishonorable act. It goes against the PCs' orders to assist the ritual, it is a betrayal of their host, and the book was given by the Phoenix Master of Fire and thus very well may start a war with the Phoenix (thus there is no “stealing the book for my clan”). Any player who tries to steal it has their honor set to 0 and gains **120 Infamy**. In addition, both Hideki and Aki will defend the Book with their lives and other PCs should feel similarly obligated.

If that is not enough to dissuade PCs, they should be reminded that the book is currently blank. Stealing the book provides no benefit and has huge consequences. This is *Heroes* of Rokugan and stealing the book under such circumstances – when there is no justification of service to one's lord or harm to one's enemy – is the act of a villain.

Dinner

After securing the book in safety (Hideki places it back in the box and adds his own wards on top of it) his servant serves a simple but well-prepared dinner of rice, fresh vegetables, and game birds. Much of the meal is prepared by wrapping it in large leaves before roasting over open flame, giving the meal a very rich flavor.

While Rokugani are not vegetarian (they avoid red meat but poultry is quite common), anyone who makes a Lore: Shugenja or Lore: Theology / Intelligence check (TN 15) will be somewhat surprised to see that Hideki is eating it; many shugenja avoid meat entirely to keep their souls pure. Hideki will dismiss such concerns, and even claim that it strengthens his ki energy.

Shiba Aki will open up to the PCs a bit more during dinner. “The forest is very peaceful. Things are always peaceful here.” In truth she is rather bored and though she does not long for excitement – excitement might endanger her brother – she is grateful for the change provided by the PCs' visit. She will talk about her hobbies (painting) and her history (she was fostered to a Shiba uncle after it became clear she could not speak to the kami) but mostly she will ask about the PCs. She is trying to gauge their character and, if possible, will make a Lore: Bushido / Intelligence check to determine their Honor.

An Errand

Hideki awakens early the next morning, eager to start the ritual. PCs who are similar early risers for whatever reason may encounter him going through his morning exercises which consist of extensive running and other calisthenics, and performing kata with a bokken (though Hideki does not wear the katana, which could be taken as a slight against his yojimbo, he is skilled with the blade). Canny players may note that morning prayers and veneration are absent from his routine; if questioned he will hand-wave these concerns away and assure the inquiring samurai that he has too much else to do first but he will get to them later.

Hideki will begin preparing a ritual area in the meditation garden, raking sand into specific patterns and laying out various tools such as a three-ringed staff, incense, and anything the PCs may have brought, and placing the Book of Fire on a ritual altar. He will politely decline any offers of assistance for now but will encourage the PCs to have the breakfast his servant has prepared.

After all the PCs have eaten Hideki will approach them very sheepishly.

“This is somewhat embarrassing samurai-sans, but it seems in my haste to collect all the necessary foreign tools of the ritual I have neglected the local ones. Might I ask you to go down to the village to retrieve some things for me?”

It is a simple list: amulets and prayer beads carved from the great trees of the Mori Isawa, and should be easy enough to fulfill. If any players say they want to stay Hideki will point out that there is nothing for them to do until everyone else returns, that his time will be

spent purifying himself in meditation so he will be a poor host, and that he has Aki for protection. A PC who insists on staying should be allowed but there truly is nothing for him or her to do at the estate for now.

Part Two: Problems in the Village

Aki's Request

Just before they leave, Shiba Aki will approach one of the PCs. Preferably this will be someone who connected with her last night, but she will also consider a PC who has demonstrated compassion, broad spiritual understanding, a monk, or another shugenja. “Please let me know how the villagers are,” she says. “It has been some time since we visited.” Players who make a Lore: Law /Intelligence (TN 15) or Etiquette / Intelligence (TN 25) check will know that this is not the way things are supposed to be. Local lords like Hideki are supposed to watch over their domain.

Travel to Hashitari Village

Nothing happens *to* the players on the trip to the village but there are still opportunities. The “road” to the village is only just wide enough for a merchant's cart but is safe and serviceable. The players are not attacked or otherwise impeded, but the strange feeling of spiritual neglect on the journey to the Hideki's estate is even stronger here (Meditation / Void TN 15 to detect and anyone can make the roll regardless of Advantages) and cannot be so easily appeased (performing a ritual soothes the kami slightly but confers no mechanical benefit).

PCs who make a Hunting (tracking) / Perception check at TN 20 see some indications of activity beyond the normal supplies one would expect to be sent up to the estate. A branch that once extended over the path looks to have been chopped with a sword rather than broken off. A log is scratched as if someone in armor rested upon it. The players should be reminded that samurai do not normally just walk around in armor; anyone who makes an Intelligence check (TN 15) or with the Precise Memory Advantage will recall that Shiba Aki is the only other bushi in the area and they have not seen her wearing her armor.

Just as disturbing are the signs in the natural world. A second Hunting (survival) / Perception check at TN 15 reveals that the land has not been kind lately. One part of the trail looks to have been washed out by a flood, which would be odd this time of year. In another part all the trees show scorch marks, as if from a forest fire that spread up the trail towards the estate. Closest to the village, the trees are withered and lifeless, as if from drought, which again does not match the weather and certainly makes no sense given the signs of flooding.

Hashitari Village

At first you think there's a break in the trees up ahead, but then you realize the sunlight is actually filtering through bare branches. It's only as you get closer to the village that the strangely-leafless trees open up. The village is small and has clearly seen better days. The houses themselves are in various states of disrepair, and though the inhabitants of the village are diligently at work fixing them, it is with a kind of listless energy. As you make your way through the streets weary eyes turn to watch you.

Players who spend time investigating the inhabitants may notice the following observations. The GM may award it for players who roleplay their investigation or simply award it to those who make appropriate rolls (TN 15-20).

- Many of the structures in the village are damaged. This appears to be the result of natural disasters of various types (fire, flood, lightning strike, even earthquake, though nothing terribly severe).
- Nothing is growing in the village. While this is a lumber, rather than farming community, most heimin have small gardens to supplement their diet, and these are all barren.
- The people are not starving (yet) but appear very worn down.

There is no marketplace in the village as Hashitari is too small and remote to have many merchants travel to it; those that do are usually peddlers and other small-time operatives. There are a few shops scattered throughout the village but they purely functional: a blacksmith, a rope maker, and the like. There is a dingy looking sake house that a few of the heimin make use of, and whose owner will be only too happy to take samurai coin (requests for credit will be

politely declined if the proprietor believes she can do so without drawing the samurai's anger).

The sense of spiritual unease is even greater in the village than in the forest and no roll is required to sense it. If the PCs have not yet encountered the increased Raises required for spells, they learn of them now.

The players are able to locate the prayer beads and carvings in short order and without difficulty. If they call upon the village Headman he will come right away and will order them brought for the PCs; they will not even have to pay for them since they are for his local lord.

A Request for Aid

After the PCs have shown that they are not a threat, someone will approach asking for help. The encounter below is an example and assumes that one of the villagers approaches the PCs, but it could happen just as easily if the PCs start talking to a villager. Likewise, the encounter assumes the party has a monk or shugenja in their number; if there is no such character (or if they cannot be readily identified as such) the villagers will instead ask if Hideki is coming.

As you make your way through the village a man with downcast eyes approaches you deferentially. He bows, nearly prostrating himself in the dirt street, and waits to be acknowledged.

When the players give him permission to speak he identifies himself as Sen and asks the PC to bless his field. If the PC agrees they can conduct a simple ritual to do so and gain **H4 Honor** for demonstrating compassion. Sen will be profoundly grateful.

Casting an actual spell (including Communing with the kami or Importuning a unique spell to ask the crops to grow, protect the crops, or something similar. Remember the required Raises) awards **H6 Honor** as this is far beyond what any peasant could dream of. In this case Sen falls to his knees in wonder at the invocation of the kami and witnessing the works of the spirits with his own eyes.

Once the players have shown that they're willing to help, the floodgates open. Some requests are detailed below but the GM should feel free to elaborate on them or invent new ones. Make sure to include the last one, however.

- Will you bless my son?
- Please ask the kami to watch over my garden!
- Should I marry Yoshiko?
- Is this a fortuitous time to have our first child?
- Is my grandfather at rest?
- How can I calm the spirit of my hearth? Our food keeps burning.
- Will the rains come early this year?
- Will you say a prayer for me? I'm pregnant!
- Should we plant turnips or sweet potatoes this year?
- My wife is sick. Please help her.

Solving each of these issues is largely a role play opportunity. GMs should feel free to ask for rolls if the PCs are stuck on something, but for the most part the PCs should generally just have a chance to be helpful.

The players should feel somewhat overwhelmed from this. It's clear that the village has not been served spiritually. At this point it should be obvious that the neglect is causing the sense of spiritual unease. Anyone who makes a Lore: Theology / Intelligence or Lore: Spirits / Intelligence (TN 15) knows that spiritual neglect would explain all of the village's misfortunes including natural disasters, bad weather, crop failures, and the like. A Lore: Hunting (Survival) check (TN 20) might give similar information, for in Rokugan natural disasters are rarely natural.

Sickness in the Village

As the PCs help the villagers, the heimin start to give them gifts. They are simple offerings of food and home crafts but they are sincere.

The last request to aid the sick wife is extremely important. Anyone who answers it is brought to the following scene.

You are brought to a heimin's house, seemingly just like the others, but with an aura of foreboding upon it. The door opens and in the dim light you see a peasant woman lying upon a blanket-covered pallet. She shakes and convulses on the pallet, moaning in pain.

The woman is suffering from water imbalance, a disease that causes the afflicted to be wracked with

powerful spasms. Everyone in the room must make an Earth roll at TN 10 or they will begin suffering the effects within a day. Healing water imbalance requires a Medicine / Intelligence TN 20, although magic (with the required Raises) offers other solutions.

If the players are able to save the woman they gain **H8 honor**, but they will also get a push towards Hideki. As their treatment takes effect she asks them,

“Why have the kami abandoned us? How did we offend them? Why doesn't Isawa-sama help us?”

Spiritual Misgivings

If the PCs have put the villagers at ease, they will open up about what has gone wrong in the village. Because this requires speaking ill about their daimyo they will be very reluctant to do so. Getting them to say what is wrong will require good roleplaying and a social roll of at least TN 25. If the PCs helped the villagers with their spiritual requests they gain 1 Free Raise to this roll (an additional Free Raise if they helped the sick woman).

“Thank you, samurai-samas. It has been some time since anyone spoke to the spirits for us.” He looks sheepish for a moment. “Well, really spoke to them.”

The villagers have not had any spiritual guidance from Isawa Hideki in some time. When he first came to the village he was a very caring priest. He provided blessings and divinations, he was always happy to dispense advice, and would even come to visit the sick and elderly who couldn't go see him. This was a good time and the village was very prosperous. Then he stopped visiting the sick. Then he stopped talking to people. Then he stopped the blessings entirely. That's when the village started to decline. The villagers do not know why the change happened.

The last time they received “blessings” was about a week ago, but not from Hideki. A monk came to the village. They approached him the same way they approached the PCs, asking him to bless the crops and children and so forth. He agreed but he demanded they feed him first and then he demanded they pay him. They agreed and he waved his hands, said some words, and then got drunk and took a nap. Their fortunes have not improved and the monk is still here, eating their food and drinking their sake. But what else can they do?

Monk-y Business

The monk in question is named Yorokobi and is the quintessential “bad monk” of eastern literature. He is ostensibly in service to Hotei, the Fortune of Contentment, but has abandoned his Fortune and has been abandoned in turn. Yorokobi uses his position and the trappings thereof to travel to remote villages and lives on their largess as long as he can while offering worthless spiritual aid.

Currently Yorokobi is sleeping off a drunk (and is about to wake up with a massive hangover) in one of the peasant's homes. The players can find it without too much trouble (especially if they have already helped the villagers). As the players approach the house where he's staying they can overhear the following exchange from two heimin with an Investigation (Notice) / Perception check (TN 20):

“We didn't have to give him all our cash, did we?”

“Don't be silly, of course we did.”

“Yes, but now we're putting him up in our home? And he's going through every last drop of sake we have. Why did you do that?”

“Because he looked mad and started muttering and waving that staff of his. He was looking at my chickens. I like my chickens they way they are; all unexploded and alive.”

The two heimin are discussing Yorokobi who, as they say, is currently in their home. The villagers will explain that Yorokobi showed up a week ago and announced that the village was now under his spiritual protection. Since then he has been living it up at their expense.

It is easy enough to see through Yorokobi's ruse and he has no effective way to retaliate – while he is a monk none of his kiho function at the moment as he has utterly turned aside from enlightenment in favor of his own appetites – but the villagers will be harder to persuade that he is a fraud. They have their doubts, of course, but are unwilling to risk being wrong and drawing the Fortunes' wrath. They will try to defend him unless threatened with violence or with appropriate social rolls (TN 20). While the samurai

are within their right to use force, bullying a peasant is below a samurai and entails a *D2 honor loss*.

Yorokobi will shamelessly beg for the PCs' mercy – he has been beaten and driven from more than one village – and will even try to bargain by admitting a very shameful truth: he was hired to scout Hashitari Village. A group of bandits had paid him to do his act in the village in order to ascertain that the village truly was forsaken by the kami and abandoned by its lord.

The PCs may deal with Yorokobi however they wish, but they should note that there is no real effective way to imprison him and they are too far from civilization to turn him over to another authority (ideally he would be given over to a temple who would deal with him). If they keep him with them Yorokobi will cause no end of trouble and will regularly try to escape (he may even join with the bandits in the final fight). A Lore: Law / Intelligence check (TN 20) gives some guidance but is still limited in its utility.

- Monks are technically heimin and as such they have authority over him. While monks in a monastery are considered vassals of the local lord the same as any other heimin, wandering monks (like Yorokobi) have no such protection.
- Technically the samurai have the authority to treat Yorokobi however they wish, up to and including killing him. That said, mistreating true monks often brings curses from the Fortunes and spirits they serve.
- Ideally, if a monk is causing trouble, one has his abbot deal with him. That is not an option in this instance.
- Monks who defraud people are normally beaten and driven away whenever they are discovered. Brandings and tattoos are not uncommon punishments.

Canny players may ask Yorokobi to perform a ritual with them to reveal him as a fraud (Lore: Theology / Intelligence vs. his Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness). Others may Commune with the kami to ask about him (they hate him; he offends them in every way). Still others may find other means to reveal him as a fraud.

The GM should adjudicate PC responses and may give Honor awards or penalties as appropriate (Keeping in mind the standard of up to 2 honor given outside of listed mod rewards).

Yorokobei

The Worst Monk

School/Rank: Thousand Fortunes Monk/1

Initiative: 3k2

Armor TN: 15

Reduction: 0

Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 26 (+15), 30 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Out)

Attack: 3k2 (Fist, Complex)

Damage: 2k2 (Fist)

Air 2	Earth	Fire 2	Water	Void 3
	2		2	

Awareness
3

Honor: 1.1 Status: 0.0 Glory: 0.1

Primary Skills: Etiquette 3, Jiujutsu 1, Lore: History 3, Lore: Superstitions 3 (minor Fortune worship), Meditation 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 3, Theology 4 (Fortunism)

Advantages/Disadvantages: Hands of Stone, Lucky (x2) / Compulsion (Sake), Lechery, Seven Fortune's Curse (Hotei)

Special Mechanics: Due to the impurity of his lifestyle, Yorokobei does not benefit from techniques or Kiho

Part Three: Lessons for the Misguided

The Return

When the PCs return to Hideki's estate they are greeted by a strange sight.

As you turn up the path to Isawa Hideki's home, you see something strange. The outer screens of the house are open – something quite typical on such a hot day – but you see Hideki lying face down on a futon, stripped to the waist. Several of what appear to be glass balls seem stuck to his back. Hideki's old servant takes a glass ball from beside him and now you can see that the ball is cut open on one side, like a very tall bowl. Carefully, the old servant takes a ball of cloth with a pair of iron chopsticks, lights it with a candle, and places it in the ball. After a few moments he pulls it out then quickly slams the glass ball down on Hideki's back where it now sticks.

This is a very strange practice and PCs may have a variety of reactions. Anyone with Lore: Maho may make a check using Intelligence at TN 15 and will determine that it does not resemble any such practice.

When asked about it Hideki will explain that the practice is intended to draw forth his inner fire and is preparation for his ritual. Now that they have returned he is ready to proceed.

As Hideki finishes whatever it is he is doing, Shiba Aki will ask the PCs about their experience in the village. If they tell her the truth she becomes visibly distraught (Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness 10 to tell; she has little experience wearing her *on*). If pressed and the players are able to draw her out (good roleplaying and social rolls at TN 15 or more), she will admit that she is worried about Hideki.

“I have been concerned about my brother for some time. He has become obsessed with Fire, more so than any shugenja I've known. I'm worried that he is succumbing to the sin of Desire, Desire for power as he forgets himself. He treats the kami as his servants and forgets that he is to serve them and our people.”

She has tried to talk to him about this but he has dismissed her concerns. Perhaps he will listen to them.

At this point players may want to confront Hideki about his failure to see to the spiritual needs of his village. If not, proceed to The Ritual below.

Confronting Hideki

All of Isawa Hideki's warmth disappears as you proceed and he begins to smolder. “You know nothing,” he hisses, his voice hot with anger.

Hideki is out of balance and his fire has overwhelmed him, causing him to react angrily to any perceived aggression (represented mechanically by his Brash Disadvantage, but the GM should not bother rolling for it at this time; Hideki automatically fails). He will deny any wrong-doing or neglect on his part citing both the privilege of his position and ignorance on part of the PCs (“You know nothing about the matter. You think you understand the kami? You are like children compared to me, so I suggest you watch your tone.”). If pressed he will cite a need to increase his power to defend the village from bandits (note that if the PCs have confronted Yorokobei they will know that the bandits were not an issue until the Hideki began to neglect the village).

The best way to get Hideki to admit his failure is to challenge him. This may be to a duel of either taryu-

jiai or iaijutsu. If the PCs are particularly provocative – which given Hideki's nature should not be very difficult – he may challenge them. See: The Duel for more details.

A powerful social roll (using an appropriate Skill based on the PCs' roleplaying, TN at least 40) may also get him to admit his failure. Other solutions are, of course, possible and the GM should be receptive to player creativity.

Dueling Hideki

The prospect of fighting Hideki should be a daunting one. Players who do so without reservation gain **HII Honor** for demonstrating courage in facing a superior opponent.

Players may be concerned about becoming involved in a duel. While normally a samurai requires permission from his or her lord to take part in a duel, due to the risk of death, when a duel is part of their duties permission is assumed. If they are to take part in the ritual, as they have been ordered to do, they must ensure that Hideki is not spiritually compromised. As such they may assume permission from their lords.

There are two ways to duel Hideki. Normally iaijutsu is considered the most appropriate way to resolve disputes, but since this dispute involves spiritual matters, the most appropriate method of resolution is a duel of taryu-jiai, the magical dueling style of shugenja. Mechanics are included in Appendix 1. Note that the casting penalties remain in effect for the duel but effectively the two duelists' penalties cancel each other out.

If the players pursue a duel of iaijutsu, Shiba Aki will serve as Hideki's champion. Though she does not agree with her brother, and may in fact have even spurred the confrontation, she will not concede the duel out of love for her brother.

In both cases, this will be a non-lethal duel unless the players specifically ask to make it lethal, in which case Hideki will oblige though Aki will try to find an out.

Unfortunately for Hideki, his neglect of the kami has weakened him substantially and they will not stand behind him or his champion. All of his stats, including Traits, Rings, Skills, School Rank, and Honor, are considered to have a maximum value of 1 for the duel.

If Aki duels on his behalf, all of her stats are similarly lowered as the kami reveal truth through her blade. Note that this will affect Armor TN, Wounds, and Void Points, though players may reduce damage to avoid killing anyone in a non-lethal duel by either keeping low dice or choosing to keep fewer dice. Regardless, players have no way of knowing this before the duel; they should go in assuming that they are facing a powerful shugenja or his devoted yojimbo (GMs are encouraged to keep their dice hidden/roll extra dice to push the illusion).

If the players win the duel:

You see shock on Hideki's face. "I lost..." he mutters, seemingly unable to believe the truth. "But how?" Then, as illumination dawns, "I was wrong." He turns to you and for the first time his eyes see clear. "Thank you, sama," he says, stressing the high honorific. "In your strike it is as if I have driven a thousand demons from my mind. Now I see that I had become obsessed with my quest for power. I neglected my duties as a priest. I thought that I could command the kami for my own purposes but in the end that only lead them to abandon me. If you will permit me, I would ask for a chance to redeem myself."

The fact that he lost the duel at last allows Hideki to see that he has been failing as a priest and that he needs to care for his people more. He will ask the players to accompany him as he goes to see to his villagers (after they have a chance to heal and meditate after the duel, if needed).

If the players lose the duel:

Satisfaction twists Hideki's features into a mocking grin. "Now that that's settled, get up. We have a ritual to perform."

Victory makes Hideki even more but certain in his righteousness. He demands they complete the ritual immediately.

Making Amends

If the players convince Hideki of his failure, either by dueling him or Aki, or using some other method, he will be filled with remorse, though not exactly overcome. Still, he will return with them to the village and provide whatever spiritual aid he can.

You can see the gratitude in the villagers eyes as Isawa Hideki travels around Hashitari village, offering his blessings and insights to everyone within reach. The change is immediate and profound. At his command the kami repair damaged walls and homes, gardens spring into bloom, and even the air itself seems cleaner. The people openly rejoice at the miracles they witness.

Several approach you and thank you profusely for returning their lord to them.

The happy celebration goes on for some time. Afterward Hideki will ask that the players perform the ritual with him. Any concerns about the ritual (Is now a fortuitous time to do it? Is Hideki worthy? etc.) will be answered in the affirmative.

By starting to make amends, Hideki has begun to cleanse the lands. Extra Raises are no longer required to cast spells.

The Ritual

You gather in a circle around a great bonfire. The flames reach up to the heavens and waves of heat wash over you. Sparks from the flames dance around you but instead of soaring upwards they remain among you, an embodiment of the fire kami themselves visible to everyone, even those without the gift of the kami.

The ritual is a long process designed to strengthen Hideki's fire. It involves a variety of tasks not just to appeal to the fire kami but also to draw out the nature of fire in the participants. After the ritual begins each participant must undertake at least one test. At least 11 of the 13 tests must be passed in order to complete the ritual. Participants may attempt multiple tests but each participant must undertake at least one; cooperative and cumulative rolls are not permitted except where explicitly allowed. Failed tests may *not* be re-tested, even by another PC, unless the player has some ability that allows re-rolls or retries.

If the PCs have gotten Hideki to atone and make amends in the village, they may choose two tasks which automatically succeed regardless of the roll (they must choose these tasks before rolling). The GM should share the list of tests with the players before the ritual begins.

The Test of Resources (Commerce) – Though trade is considered to be the domain of water, assigning resources requires fire. The participant must arrange the tools of the ritual to last for its duration. Commerce / Intelligence TN 15.

The Test of Construction (Engineering) – Fire is not just the element of destruction but also creation. The participant must build the bonfire even higher. Engineering / Intelligence TN 15.

The Test of Meaning (Calligraphy) – Calligraphy is used to convey subtle meaning along with knowledge. The participant must draught an appeal to the fire kami and offer it in the flames. Calligraphy / Intelligence TN 20.

The Test of Adeptness (Games) – Games test both mental acumen as well as physical coordination. Two participants must each make a Games roll using Intelligence or Agility as appropriate (games that use other Traits may not be used). Their combined scores must meet a TN of 40.

The Test of Knowledge (Lore) – Fire is the element of knowledge. The participant must demonstrate his knowledge by teaching the kami of some aspect of the world. Lore / Intelligence TN 20. Theology may not be used for this test.

The Test of Wisdom (Lore: Theology) – Understanding all the lessons of the spirits is the ultimate test of this ritual. Lore: Theology / Intelligence TN 25.

The Test of Flesh (Medicine) – The body must be prepared to draw out the flame. Medicine / Intelligence TN 20.

The Test of Coordination (Perform) – While air is connected to the beauty of a performance, fire is responsible for its technical acumen. The participant must perform for the kami in a way to show off their technical proficiency (i.e. dance, musical instrument, etc.). Perform / Agility TN 20.

The Test of the Spirit (Spellcraft) – Calling upon the elements requires understanding the means by which they work. Spellcraft / Intelligence TN 20.

The Test of the Body (Jiu-jitsu) – Though there are many approaches to unarmed combat, all of them

require coordinated movement of the body. Jujutsu / Agility TN 20.

The Test of Martial Power (Kenjutsu or Knives) – No other weapons embody fire so much as the flickering movements of a knife or the sharp cut of a sword. The practiced motions of a kata demonstrate both coordination and knowledge. Kenjutsu or Knives / Agility, but players may add the mastery of any one kata their character knows that may be used with that weapon; if they use Striking as Fire, they may add double its mastery. TN 25.

The Test of Skill (Athletics) – There are as many ways to draw forth the power of the self as there are elements. The participant must perform an acrobatic display for the kami. Athletics / Agility TN 20.

The Test of Adroitness (Slight of Hand) – Though not so in need of entertainment as air kami, the fire kami appreciate amusements. The participant must perform a skillful trick for them. Slight of Hand / Agility TN 15.

Once the ritual is complete read the following:

Hideki leads you in chanting, your voices rising together almost as a song of appeal to the fire kami. At various points in the ritual he turns to the bonfire and offers gifts to them, placing the sacred objects within the flames and consigning them to ash. At last his voice reaches a fever pitch and he opens the Book of Fire.

If Hideki made amends read the following:

Words appear on the formerly blank pages, words written in flame, and he intones, “Each man and woman carries a Fire inside. It burns dimly through most of their life, carrying them through their daily actions. And yet at times of strife it can lead one to incredible feats. Learn to control that power and anything is possible. Walk as if the fate of the Empire and your soul depended on your every step, and you shall never fall again.”

In striking the “thousand demons from my mind” during the duel, Hideki has become worthy of the Book of Fire and the words appeared before him. They will fade again after the ritual.

If Hideki did not make amends, when he opens the book it is still blank. Continue reading.

As he slams the Book shut Shiba Aki draws a long iron rod from the fire, the end cast in the kanji for “flame” and glowing white hot from the coals. Without hesitation she presses it into Hideki's skin. There is the sickly sweet smell of searing flesh as his mouth opens and he screams wordlessly.

If the Ritual succeeds (11 tests passed):

As the brand is pulled away, however, the skin is undamaged. Instead, the kanji glows golden and beautiful, outshining even the bonfire.

Hideki's fire is raised by 1 and all PCs gain +1k0 to all rolls using Fire, Agility, or Intelligence for the rest of the module.

If the ritual fails (10 or fewer tests passed):

As the brand pulls away you see the sickening site of blackened, smoking flesh. Hideki collapses to the ground and Aki rushes to his side.

Hideki takes 30 Wounds that cannot be healed through magic; only time can heal this.

Regardless of its success, at the conclusion of the ritual a runner appears.

The young man is nearly completely out of breath. “Bandits!” he manages to get out. “On their way!”

Due to the timing PCs will not have an opportunity to recover any Void they may have spent on the ritual.

Bandit Attack

The bandits are a group of small raiders led by the biggest and strongest bully among them. They have no profound tactics and seek only coin to spend and rice to fill their bellies. If the players have the kami on their side and Hideki has been redeemed, this will be an easy fight. If not, this will be considerably more challenging.

A filthy man in dirty armor stands forward. “Stand aside,” he says. “There's no need to die for this rabble.”

We don't even want what's yours samurai, just let us take their rice and koku and we'll be on our way."

Any PC who gives in to such demands suffers a **D-3 Honor Loss** for cowardice and abandoning their duty to protect the peasants.

It is extremely unlikely that the bandits will back down. Due to the reports from Yorokobi they believe the kami have abandoned the village and Isawa Hideki. A powerful Intimidation roll or other social roll (TN 30) will cause one bandit to abandon the fight, plus one for each successful Raise.

The players will have themselves, Isawa Hideki, and Shiba Aki (though Aki will spend the battle Guarding Hideki). The bandits have their leader, 4 bandits, plus 1 bandit for each PC present (including non-combatants). They do not fight with any particularly clever tactics and will focus on bushi rather than the shugenja due to Yorokobi's intelligence that the kami had abandoned the village. If the leader and at least half the bandits are killed, the rest are likely to surrender.

In addition, there may be two modifiers:

If Hideki has not made amends: All spells still require 1 extra Raise (Fire spells require 2). Hideki's stats are reduced as in the duel which will affect not only his spellcasting but also his Armor TN and his Wounds.

If the ritual was successfully completed: Hideki is considered to have +1 to his Fire (and all associated Traits) for the fight. All PCs gain +1k0 to all rolls based on their Fire Ring, Intelligence, or Agility Traits.

Regardless, if Hideki did not make amends, the bandits will likely cut him down during the battle due to his low Armor TN (even with Aki guarding him) and reduced Wound Points.

Hideki will begin by casting spells to boost the PCs (Never Alone, Relentless Heat, Hungry Blade, Shining Light) on whomever can benefit from it. If the PCs look to be in trouble, he will start utilizing direct damage spells to end the fight quickly (Fires from Within with multiple raises for target, etc.)

Bandit Leader

Forest Killer Novitiate

School/Rank: Forest Killer / 2

Initiative: 4k2

Armor TN: 15 (20 in armor)

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 18 (+0), 27 (+0), 36 (+2), 45 (+7), 54 (+12), 63 (+17), 72 (Down, +40), 81 (Out)

Attack: 8k3e (Parangu, Complex)

Damage: 6k2+3 (Parangu [if the parangu deals more than 30 wounds, it breaks])

Air 2 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 2

Honor: 0.0 Status: -5.0 Infamy: 3.5

Primary Skills: Battle 3 (Mass Combat), Commerce 3, Defense 3, Hunting 2, Kenjutsu (parangu) 5, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Underworld 2

Advantages/Disadvantages: Strength of the Earth / Antisocial (2 pts), Greedy

Special Mechanics: Forest Killer Technique (+stamina to wound ranks and damage rolls)

Bandits

Cannon fodder for the big bad

School/Rank: None / Insight Rank 1

Initiative: 3k2

Armor TN: 15 (18 in armor)

Reduction: 1

Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 26 (+15), 30 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Out)

Attack: 6k3 (Yari, Complex)

Damage: 4k2 (Yari)

Air 2 Earth 2 Fire 2 Water 3 Void 2

Agility

3

Honor: 0.0 Status: 0.0 Glory: 0.0

Primary Skills: Battle 2, Commerce 2, Defense 3, Hunting 2, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Underworld 2, Spears 3

If the PCs decide to search the dead Bandit Leader (causing them a **DO Honor Loss** for becoming unclean by touching a corpse. They gain half of this honor back by undergoing ritual cleansing), or manage to capture and question him, he has a note in an inner pocket. The note is barely folded on dirty white paper and reads as follows:

"More recruits are needed. I am growing tired of weak underlings. If you do not find me worthy men, you will be the next to feel my Rage.

Gekido"

Conclusion

As the sounds of battle fade away you hear cheers from the villagers. You feel a warmth in you and know the pride of your doing your duty.

If Hideki made amends and lived:

Isawa Hideki smiles at you and speaks warmly. "Thank you, my friends, for reminding me of my true duty. In pursuing my own power with the kami I forgot that it is their strength that they share with me. Thank you for giving me a chance to make things right and standing by me today."

If Hideki made amends but died:

The eta come and take away Isawa Hideki's body to, appropriately, a cremation pyre. Though he fell, in the end, he did what was right. A prayer is whispered to Emma-O that mercy is shown to him.

If Hideki did not make amends but lived:

Out of breath, Isawa Hideki looks at the battlefield, at the fallen and the wounded, and back at you. "Thank you for being here, samurai-sans. I... I thought my power would be enough to see me through but in the end it failed me. It was never really mine, was it?"

If Hideki did not make amends and died:

The eta come forward to take Isawa Hideki's body but before they can reach it something goes terribly wrong. The sense of unease that has always been present in the village, the displeasure of the kami, becomes stronger and more palpable. Those of you with the ability to hear the kami's voices now hear them wail. They scream in pain and horror... and hunger. All of you see the sky turn red as the fire kami manifest and dive towards the bodies of the fallen.

The spiritual failure in the village is complete and the neglected kami turn towards the last source of sustenance for them: they take the blood of the fallen Isawa Hideki and become kansen, corrupted spirits that fuel maho. All players must make an Earth roll (TN 15) or gain 1 point of Taint. The village will have to be abandoned and burned, the inhabitants either

tested for Taint themselves or put to the sword just to be sure.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module: 1
Good Roleplaying: 1
Persuaded Hideki to make amends: 1
The ritual is successfully completed: 1

Total Possible Experience:

Favors

If the ritual is completed, the PCs gain 1 favor

Honor

Honor gains are listed in the module. In addition to the ones listed, if the PCs successfully complete the ritual without persuading Hideki to make amends, they gain **H3 Honor** but suffer a **D5 Honor Loss** for completing an order despite personal misgivings.

Glory

Successfully completing the Ritual gains the PCs a **G4 Glory gain**.

Defeating the bandits gains the PCs a **G3 Glory gain**.

Allies and Enemies

If the PCs successfully complete the ritual, they gain Isawa Hideki as an ally. He is Influence 2 / Devotion 2.

Other Awards/Penalties

If the PCs persuade Hideki to make amends, they receive the Book of Fire Cert as they hear him read from it during the ritual.

GM Reporting

- 1) Did Hideki make amends?
- 2) Did Hideki Survive?
- 3) Was the ritual completed?
- 4) Did the kami become kansen?

The GM must report this information by 07/29/2017 for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

If any NPCs require statblocks not listed elsewhere in the module

Isawa Hideki

Ambitious Shugenja

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Fire Tensai) / Rank 3

Initiative: 5k2

Armor TN: 20 (Defense stance) **Reduction:** 0

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

Attack: Spells (See Below)

Damage: By Spell

Air 2 Earth 3 Fire 5 Water 2 Void 3

Honor: 2.1 Status: 3.0 Glory: 4.1

Primary Skills: Battle 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Defense 3, Iaijutsu 2, Lore: History 3, Lore: Theology 3, Kenjutsu 3, Meditation 5, Spellcraft (Spell Research) 5, Tea Ceremony 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Elemental Blessing (Fire), Sage / Brash, Driven (increase magical power)

Special Mechanics: Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, **Fire** (9k5/10k6): Dearth of Flame, Defense of the Firestorm, Destructive wave, Enticing Dance of Flame, Everburning Rage, Extinguish*, Fiery Wrath, The Fires From Within*, Fires of Purity, Hungry Blade, Hurried Steps, Katana of Fire, Light of the Sun, Never Alone, The Raging Forge, Relentless Heat, Shining Light, Tail of the Fire Dragon **Earth** (5k3): Earth's Stagnation, Elemental Ward, **Water** (4k2): Path to Inner Peace **Air** (4k2): Blessed Wind

Shiba Aki

Loyal Yojimbo

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi / Rank 2

Initiative: 6k3

Armor TN: 20 (30 in heavy armor) **Reduction:** 5

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

Attack: 8k3e (Naginata, complex)

Damage: 5k2

Air 2 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 2 Void 3

Reflexes

3

Honor: 5.6 Status: 1.0 Glory: 3.1

Primary Skills: Battle 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Defense 3, Iaijutsu 2, Lore: History 3, Lore: Theology 3, Kenjutsu 3, Meditation 5, Spellcraft (Spell Research) 5, Tea Ceremony 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Bland, Quick, Kharmic Tie: Isawa Hideki, (3 pts) / Ascetic, Idealistic

Special Mechanics: +5 initiative in the first round of a skirmish. +1k0 damage against larger or mounted targets. +5 to all agility and reflexes rolls while wearing her heavy armor. Add reflexes to initiative at the end of every round until she is at the top of the initiative order.

Appendix #2: Taryu-Jiai Dueling

Full information on Taryu-Jiai dueling can be found in *The Book of Fire*, pages 61-63 and 184-185. Mechanics are summarized here.

In step one, Selection, each duelist will select a ring. In step two, Assessment, each duelist will attempt to learn about his opponent. In step three, Empower, each duelist will channel the elements and have a chance to disrupt his opponent. In step four, Strike, each duelist will channel the elements with a contested casting roll, then inflict damage based on that roll.

Elemental effects

Choosing specific elements has specific effects during the duel:

Air – A shugenja who has chosen Air, the least violent element, inflicts non-lethal wounds that immediately disappear after the duel.

Earth – A shugenja who has chosen earth, the element of protection, is considered to have Reduction equal to his Earth during the duel.

Fire – A shugenja who has chosen fire, the element of destruction, gains a +1k0 bonus to his damage roll.

Water – A shugenja who has chosen Water, the element of clarity, gains a +1k0 bonus to the Assessment roll.

Step One: Selection

Before the duel begins each duelist chooses which Element he will call upon for the duel. Void may not be chosen.

Step Two: Assessment

The two shugenja make a contested Spellcraft / Void roll. The winner learns the Ring his opponent has selected and the opponent's Rank in that Ring. If he wins by at least 10, he also learns either his opponent's School Rank or his Void Rank (his choice).

After the Assessment, either shugenja may opt to acknowledge defeat and thereby end the duel. If neither shugenja concedes, the duel proceeds.

Step Three: Empower

Both shugenja begin praying to the kami and gathering the energy of the Elements around them. This is often accompanied by fantastic visual effects. During this stage of the duel, both shugenja are considered to be in “full concentration” and may only take Free actions. They can potentially be disrupted by outside distractions, enemy attacks, etc.

During this step, duelists may attempt to disrupt one another's energies. Each duelist makes a Contested roll of Spellcraft / [Element], using their chosen element. If one duelist beats the other by 10, she gains a +1k1 bonus to the Strike roll.

Step Four: Strike

Both shugenja make a Contested Spell Casting Roll using the Element of their choice. Affinity/Deficiency apply as normal, and spell slots are likewise used. Other aspects of School Techniques do not apply since the shugenja are

unleashing raw Elemental power rather than using specific types of prayers such as Illusion or Jade. The only exception is Isawa's Gift which applies to all spells in an element.

The shugenja who wins the Contested Roll inflicts 2k2 damage on his opponent, plus an additional 1k1 damage for every 5 by which he beat the opponent's total Spell Casting Roll. The shugenja who lost the Contested Roll inflicts half as many dice (rounded down) of damage on the winner (i.e. if Iuchi Akiko wins by 27 she inflicts 7k7 dice on Tamori Iwao. Iwao then inflicts 3k3 dice on Akiko).

If the duel is non-lethal, the winner is whoever inflicts more Wounds in the Strike after applying other effects such as Reduction or reducing the Wounds through Void Points. If it is a duel to the death, the shugenja will continue to Empower and Strike until one opponent falls. Any duelist who is reduced to Down or out in a lethal Taryu-Jiai duel will be immediately overwhelmed and slain by the opponent's kami.

Player Handout #1: News From the Empire

“Excellent news, Samurai! As the promising youth of our Empire return to our Empire, so too are we blessed with a great gift. It seems that some great treasure, enough to fill out many Miya’s Blessings, has been brought to us from many a Brave Samurai who had spent their time in Balishnimpur. We must all thank Ide Shusendo for his generosity and bravery in the face of what must have been terrible danger.

“It seems that the Honorable Crab Clan have earned themselves the majority of this treasure and, while I am not given to understand many of the details regarding matters South of the Wall, it seems they will be focusing their efforts on those... South of the Wall-y projects. I suspect in the next few months we will hear more from the Crab about these endeavors.

“The Crane were also able to obtain a significant portion of this treasure, but the reports I have received suggest that they have chosen to present the treasure to the Imperial Families to start another Miya’s Blessing, with treasures committed by the Crane, Dragon, Mantis, and Unicorn, along with the personal shares of one of the brave Samurai who committed to the excursion proper.

“One wishes that there was more to speak of regarding the Empire proper, but it has been quiet thusfar. The Dragon have brokered peace between themselves and the Lion and Unicorn, and so it seems that the next summer will be another quiet one if the current path pushes forward.”

-Otomo Yusuke