

The Ring of Air

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

Month of the Horse, 1340 (Spring)

**Module Number: CIT11
Release Date: 05/12/2017**

Investigation, Combat, Court
Part 1 of In Search Of Enlightenment

In the serene lands of the Crane, a festival welcomes dedicated young samurai to relax.

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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

Kyuden Kurogane-Hana is an almost idyllic example of Crane lands. Nestled at the heart of the prosperous Seto's Valley, it has served for centuries as a retreat for Daimyo and Emperors. This Spring, lord Doji Seto holds a Chrysanthemum Festival attended by samurai of both great and little renown. Seto's Valley contains many spiritually significant spaces, the greatest of which that is known to most samurai is the home of Shinden Emma-O, the chief shrine to the Fortune of Death. What is not known to most is that Seto's Valley is the location of the Ring of Air, the earthly manifestation of the element and the Air Dragon itself.

The PCs are sent to Kyuden Kurogane-Hana for Seto's Chrysanthemum Festival, as a reward for their service and an opportunity for them to rest as they face the new year. They arrive as the cherry blossom trees are blooming, and the festival is under way. They have an opportunity to commiserate with the court and its attendees as well as enjoy the city, but on the day after their arrival a Jade Magistrate (also sent by his lord to enjoy the Crane's hospitality) requests their assistance. A series of unfortunate events have aroused the Kuni's suspicion, but his orders preclude him starting an official investigation. He calls on the PCs to look into the many strange occurrences around the castle and town, and see if there's anything that would involve his normal duties.

The investigation uncovers a series of strange events, but nothing related to the Shadowlands Taint. The old abbot of Shinden Emma-O is dead from a heart attack. The members of the Order of Silence have been acting strangely. There are dire omens of calamity spreading amidst the joy of the festival.

In the end, nothing amounts to substantial enough to involve Kuni Tokimasa, but what the PCs uncover does reveal to the monk Shijin what the Order of Silence is planning. He will gather the PCs and take them deep into the forest of Seto's Valley, where they confront the Order of Silence as they attempt to destroy the Ring of Air.

After the fight, the monk will beg the samurai to keep the location of the Ring hidden, to ensure its safety

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

The GM should take a few minutes to examine the players' character sheets in order to have an idea of the nature of the PCs at the table. It is frequently helpful to have a list of specific mechanics that come up in the course of the module determined at the start of the module so the GM does not have to slow down play to check and see which parts apply to which PC. These can be Advantages, Disadvantages, Schools, Skills, or any other particularly relevant mechanics.

- Allies (Kakita Okiku, Kuni Tokimasa, Togashi Inori, Matsu Teruyo, Yoritomo Shogichyo. Asako Montaro, Bayushi Akinishin)
- Elemental Blessing (Air)
- Friendly Kami (Air)

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

Time passes, and though the PCs' deeds will earn them a reputation, the Empire is a large place and lasting

fame is a long-term goal not easy to achieve. All players lose 2 points of Glory. This cannot reduce a PC's Glory Rank to less than their Insight Rank, and the Fame Advantage increases their Insight Rank by one for these purposes.

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** will vary depending on the time frame. If a character is growing close to being Lost (Shadowlands Taint Rank 4.5+), it is recommended that the player have another PC ready to replace them.

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 TN15. 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

The PCs are sent to Kyuden Kurogane-hana by their daimyo as part of a clan contingent to their regional Cherry Blossom Festival.

The cherry blossoms from Kyuden Kurogane-hana are renowned throughout Rokugan. Said to be a symbol of an auspicious start to a new year, samurai from all over Rokugan gather for the annual spring festival. Invites were dispatched to your lords months ago, and in recognition of your efforts in the city of Balishnimpur they believe that a week of relaxing Crane hospitality is just what you need.

Arriving by the low road into the Kagami no Tengoku Mura, the first thing that greets you is the city's rice and tea fields. Fragrant aromas of Shincha tea reach your noses as you walk through fields of peasants hard at work. Some, doubtless braver than their companions, stand up from their work to wave at you.

Once past the fields, the village of Kagami no Tengoku Mura is much like any other Crane village. The high walls of Seto's Valley stretch up around you, covered in leafy greens and the cries of distant birds. The village is stretched out, leading in almost a straight line to Kyuden Kurogane-hana. There is a row of Cherry Blossom trees just beginning to blossom lining the main road. Peasants and lesser vassals of the castle's lord hustle through the city, setting up everything from festival decorations to street stalls.

The players have arrived just a day before the festival begins.

The town is busy, chatty, and active with news from throughout the region and Crane lands. All players make a Rumors roll to learn the following things:

- Lord Seto took the name of his ancestor at the completion of his Gempukku, and legend has it that the ancient Lord Seto speaks to his descendant still
- Seto's Valley is temperate year round, despite being in the northern part of Crane lands. Most believe this is due to the exceptional blessings of the valley itself, while some think that the Valley is where Bente herself was born in ages past.
- Increasing tensions between the Crab and Unicorn clans have led to a whirlwind of suspicions throughout the Empire. The darkest of these center on the presence of

infiltrators, powerful Lost samurai not seen in the Emerald Empire in generations.

- The old abbot of Shinden Emma-O recently passed away. Jinran was a well-liked older man who spent time equally among heimin, hinin, and samurai. A visiting order of Brotherhood monks has taken up residence in the shrine until a new abbot arrives from the capital.
- Kyuden Kurogane-Hana is actually built around a much older structure: Shinden Emma-O, itself said to contain the spot where the ancient Fortune became the Fortune of Death.

Part One: The Wind Whispers

Once your chops are presented, the guards lead you to the magnificent court room of Kyuden Kurogane-Hana. They stop at the entrance, announcing each of you by name.

The court comes to a halt until the announcement is over. At its conclusion, a man seated on a large dais in the center of the room stands. His hair is long and black, cascading in an almost regal manner around his shoulders, but his face is young, not yet 30 summers old. His eyes, even hidden behind the happy smile of a greeting “My friends, welcome to Kyuden Kurogane-hana! My name is Doji Seto, and it is my honor and duty to be the lord of this estate and province. Many other fine samurai have also arrived early, and while the cherry blossoms won’t bloom for a few days yet, please, enjoy the hospitality of both my home and my clan.”

Around the court room, the players can see the following attendees, identifying an attendee takes a Lore: Heraldry roll, specified in brackets. Succeeding on the Lore: heraldry roll should inform the player of the NPCs name as well as the basic information listed alongside them. Impressing the character will gain G3 glory, but that raise can be increased by 1 for each raise, to represent samurai of greater Glory or higher Status speaking well of them during the course of the Festival. **GM Note:** This segment is intended for PCs to get to know the various attendees of court, and each should be run as a short 1 on 1 scene with the PCs, but this should not take a large amount of time in the module (aim for an hour or less):

Doji Seto (no roll required): Doji Seto is the lord of Seto’s Valley, and while his wife and children are off to the summer courts in Kyuden Doji he is taking the time to run the traditional Cherry Blossom Festival. He hasn’t had much time to travel recently, and anyone who can bring him news from across the empire will impress him, or someone displaying significant knowledge of the clans (Lore: Their Clan TN 20).

Kakita Okiku (35): Kakita Okiku is known more for her work than her appearance. Dressed in a plain blue kimono, her white hair tied back in a simple ponytail, she is quiet and unassuming. She is happy to make small talk on events around the empire, and is quite curious about any happenings in Balishnimpur. Players can impress her with descriptions of occurrences in Balishnimpur, or if they recognize her as one of the pre-eminent artists of the empire they can discuss their art with her with an Artisan/Awareness roll needing a TN20 for the same gain.

Kuni Tokimasa (20): A Jade Magistrate, Kuni Tokimasa is not attending the festival in an official capacity. Rather, the experienced Kuni shugenja has been ordered to take a respite from his duties hunting the Taint throughout the empire, and has begrudgingly agreed. He is notably interested in learning more from other experienced samurai, particularly about threats from beyond the borders of the empire. Players can impress Tokimasa with a Lore: Shadowlands/Intelligence or Lore: Gaijin/Intelligence roll, TN20. Particularly well roleplayed scenarios may allow for different skills to be used.

Togashi Inori (15): Togashi Inori is, perhaps, the most famous member of the Tattooed Order in Rokugan. Stories of her single-handedly defeating gangs of bandits, of quelling a potential uprising with words of wisdom from the Tao, of a seemingly impossible descent from the peaks of the Dragon Mountains are fairly common throughout Rokugan. She is fairly uninterested in the ways of court, though, and would love to see a display of the more physical arts that these samurai have learned abroad. Athletics/Strength or Athletics/Reflexes, TN20

Matsu Teruyo (20): A veteran of many border skirmishes with nearly every Great Clan, Matsu Teruyo attends the Cherry Blossom Festival with no little difficulty. A lifelong campaigner, Teruyo is very interested on news from the clans abroad. It’s not often that the Lion Clan hears news from Balishnimpur, and any information the PC can provide would be enough to impress him. He also has a particular interest in the

Gaijin ways of war, and a TN 20 Battle/Intelligence or Battle/Awareness roll would impress him.

Yoritomo Shogichyo (30): Shogichyo is long and well used to the journey between Rokugan and the Ivory Kingdoms, and he's heard tales of an ancient temple that was pillaged by the Unicorn. He's curious about what was taken there, and about how the players survived their journey across the sea. Perform Storytelling/Awareness TN20

Asako Montaro (35): Montaro is on one of his seemingly endless journeys out of the libraries, searching for knowledge the Phoenix have yet to possess. Revealing a depth of knowledge on any Lore (Lore/Intelligence TN20, must have the skill) will impress him, but if the PC is bold enough to share Forbidden Knowledge they will gain Montaro as an Ally. Succeeding on

Bayushi Akinishin (20): Akinishin has spent most of his adult life in courts throughout the empire. From the esteemed halls of Kyuden Doji to the majesty of the Imperial capital itself, Akinishin has found friends across the empire. Though here at the festival to relax, he's ever keen to keep his skills sharp, and a suitably impressive younger samurai can engage him in conversation fairly easily. Courtier/Awareness TN 25, but Courtier(Manipulation)/Awareness TN20 will impress him with the young samurai's skill.

The Order of Silence (50, or 35 if the PC has Lore: Theology or 10 if they have Lore: Brotherhood): The Order of Silence is one of the more well-known orders, founded only within the last 50 years along a particularly strange path of enlightenment: No Voice. Simply put, the brothers of this Order believe that enlightenment can come only in quiet, personal contemplation of the Tao. 5 members of the brotherhood sit cross-legged in a star pattern near the door.

Shijin (50): A minor monk of a smaller Brotherhood order, Shijin is a travelling monk known for his services to the peasantry and, oddly, the eta, with some rumors speaking of him rendering aid to the dark skinned Gaijin in Balishnimpur. He is typically seen with a peasant aide, but obviously the peasant is staying out of the court proper.

The players may also explore other areas of the castle, though for today the Star Observatory is closed to guests (***“There was an unfortunate incident, I'm told. Something about a peasant spilling ink on the walls?”***)

“If you're interested, and the stars are quite lovely at night, the tower will be reopened soon,” explains Doji Seto). The list of areas around the castle can be found on page XX, but the Star Observatory is closed off.

Part Two: Know the Truth

The following day, you each find a letter in your rooms embossed with the symbol of the Jade Magistrates.

“Samurai, I have an urgent matter to discuss with you. Your past experiences may prove useful in answering a question.” - Kuni Tokimasa

Kuni Tokimasa's guest room is large, befitting one of his station. Facing the rising sun, light fills the spacious, well-appointed room. Works of fine art line walls, from sumi-e paintings to carvings of jade samurai in the midst of battle. Biwa music hums through it, though there is no player visible.

Three figures sit at a long table in the center of the room, steam wafting up from cups of tea in front of two of them. You recognize the scowling figure of Kuni Tokimasa easily enough, but seated alongside him is a short, older man in the weatherworn robes of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. Tokimasa inclines his head, while the monk offers a deep bow.

(Crab players or characters with Lore: Shadowlands will notice that Tokimasa isn't wearing the war paint of the Kuni, typically put on by members of the Kuni family when they face Shadowlands threats)

“Samurai,” Tokimasa begins abruptly, “please take your seats. I have no patience for the wasting of time when discussing work.”

After the players are seated, Tokimasa begins without waiting for customary introductions.

“I arrived in this sickeningly sweet village, with its sickeningly sweet Lord, two weeks ago. My superiors in Otosan Uchi believed I needed a brief reprieve of my duties, and of course the wisdom of the Jade Champion is beyond question. Since I arrived, I have met the other “honored guests” (air quotes emphasis) here for the Festival, but instead of relaxation from my duties I instead find myself finding what I believe to be signs of the Taint this far north.”

He inclines his head to the monk, saying “It was Shijin here who aided me in this realization, hence the

monk's presence here.”

The magistrate scowls. “For those of you unaware, my chief duty is investigating threats presented by the forces of Jigoku within the Empire. I am not attending this.... Celebration as part of my duties. My lord has required that I ‘relax’” Tokimasa says with no small amount of disgust. “Still, there have been a series of strange incidents since the arrival of the Brotherhood Order of Silence for the festival. The abbot tending to Shinden Emma-O, a monk named Jinran was found dead in the Kuruwa Pathways. One of the monks had... some form of attack in the Star Observatory, some grip of madness. Shijin's servant.” Tokimasa says, indicating the silent third man in the room, “has informed me that the peasants have seen odd behavior as well. I am certain, too, that other guests have seen more...”

Tokimasa scowls again. “Until this is found to be a matter related to my duties, I would be derelict in my service to my lord if I conducted a more formal investigation. I am not here to ‘work’. Word of your histories has reached me, though, and I believe that you may look into this matter with more freedom than I, and doubtless while offering less insult to the smiling Crane host.”

If the players agree, Tokimasa opens up to the PCs for questions. If the players do not agree, proceed to the Conclusion. Some likely questions below:

- What do you think is happening? “It has been said that my family has a history of paranoia, but it would only be paranoia in truth if we were wrong. I believe these monks could be Shadowlands infiltrators, but if they are they will have left signs of it.”
- What does Shijin know? The old monk speaks after a long sip of tea. “I know that the last known members of the Order of Silence died fifty years ago. I know that these monks have offered no introductions, and I trust my servant Shinzon when he says the peasants have seen them speaking to one another.”
- What can you tell us about the Order Of Silence? Shijin inhales slowly, closing his eyes for just a moment as if recalling something. “They are an old order, founded some time before the Clan War. They believe enlightenment to be an intensely personal journey, one made all the more difficult through interactions with other people. Their Path is one of No Voice, believing that if they

keep the wisdom of the Tao in themselves it cannot leave them. Never a large order, their last members died more than fifty years ago. It... wasn't something samurai concerned themselves with.”

- Where should we start? Tokimasa rubs his chin in thought for a moment. “There are any number of places. The Order of Silence has been staying at Shinden Emma-O, perhaps there would be clues there... There was the incident with the Star Observatory some few days ago, where one of the monks had some form of attack and the building was closed off thereafter. The peasants in the city may know something, as would samurai gathering in the more social areas of the castle... It is hard to say which of these would be the best place to start.

After their discussion with the Magistrate, the players are free to explore the castle.

Sections of Kyuden Kurogane-Hana

Shinden Emma-O:

The great halls of Shinden Emma-O are silent. Even with the structure of Kyuden Kurogane-hana built around it, there's a silence and solemnity inside the shrine that is breathtaking. Perhaps in mimicry of the Realm of Waiting, the silence in the air is almost physical. The walls are lined with depictions of the Fortune of Death. Statues, paintings, tapestries... and all seem oriented to the center of the shrine.

As you proceed inwards, you come across a massive iron statue of Emma-O, spear in hand, under a great Torii arch. Past that, you see an ancient willow tree. No leaves adorn its branches, and its bark is a nearly pure white.

There are no monks in the shrine, as its last abbot (the monk Jinran) recently passed. The shrine has remained open to visitors, however, as it is believed the protection of Emma-O still falls on the shrine. The sacred willow tree at the heart of the shrine is believed to make the exact spot where Emma-O ascended to his status as a Fortune. Inspecting the tree reveals it to be withered, but a Lore: Shadowlands (TN20) roll

uncovers nothing related to the Taint. Lore: Nature or Lore: Theology (TN20) or Sense Earth can tell that there is some spiritual affliction affecting the tree, as though it were starving for something.

If the players move towards the tree, they have an unsettling notion that the iron statue is watching them. Meditating on death and the nature of mortality at the foot of the tree (Meditation/Void TN15) attracts the attention of the Fortune of Death. Any PCs who do so will gain a free Void Point to be used during the module (this void point does not refresh per day, and once spent is gone).

The Reflection Pool:

Dotted with floating lotus leaves, the reflection pool casts a wide arc around Kyuden Kurogane-hana. A popular spot for relaxation, many samurai recline near the pool in conversation. Some occasionally toss rice into the pool, quickly eaten by koi fish.

Here the players can meet Asako Montaro. Montaro is enjoying the first day of the festival, and doesn't know much about the order of silence... but he did have time to spend with the monk Jinran. If the players have already impressed Montaro, he offers the information freely, but if they haven't they will need to roleplay a scene and make a TN15 Courtier (Manipulation)/Awareness roll.

"I knew Jinran, and I found him to be a dedicated man. Even as old as he was, he had no difficulty performing his duties at Shinden Emma-O, and we spoke often. Just before his passing, though, he told me of strange omens and portents he had seen. The breaking of rings, he said... It wasn't long after that he was gone." There's a moment of sorrow in his voice. "Such a man will be difficult for the temple to replace, I fear."

There are also several Kakita and Daidoji guards keeping an eye on the guests of the Crane. If asked, they will say that they saw the Order of Silence leave early in the morning heading into the city.

The Kuruwa Pathways:

The well-manicured gardens, crafted stone walls, and great gates that form the Kuruwa Pathways are a natural maze. Attendees of the festival, and even some peasants, wander the pathways, an ideal spot for discreet meetings. A recent rainfall has left puddles of water throughout. About halfway down the pathways,

between the city and the castle, an area of the Pathways has been marked off by simple silk. This is the area where the monk Jinran died.

The cordoned off area is a simple stone pathway with carefully manicured brushes lining it. If not for the silk around it, there would be nothing to differentiate it from anywhere else in the Pathways.

An investigation of the area will turn up not very much, save a chalk address for Eta cleaners in the city. However, communing with the Water will reveal the following:

You see a man in dark clothes hurrying through the night, the sound of his sandals the only noise. He stops for a moment, turns his head, then clutches at his chest. He falls forward, into a puddle of water, his mouth gasping for air that won't come.

The Star Observatory:

The observatory is closed off, with a pair of Daidoji guards posted in front of it. Once the PCs approach, they will bow and politely explain that the tower has been sealed after an incident involving one of the monks. They apologize, but until the tower has been cleaned, no guests are permitted. The guards still wish to be polite and welcoming to their guests, though, and players can make an Etiquette/Awareness TN20 to allay the guards' concerns.

Once inside the Observatory, the PCs can see walls covered in ink, with signs of some walls missing and some brand new walls. The ink is scrawled haphazardly along the walls, floors, and ceiling, and is mostly indecipherable, but as the players proceed through the Observatory they can see phrases repeat and begin to recognize them: "The Mad Monk Was Right." "The Wheel Turns, but where does it lead?" "Reincarnation is our path, above all" Recognizing the phrases is Lore History or Lore Theology roll at TN20. Lore History reveals that the Mad Monk could refer to many questionable monks throughout Rokugan's history, but was primarily used to describe Kokujin, an apostate monk of the Dragon Clan. Theology reveals that the phrases referencing reincarnation and the wheel refer to karmic reincarnation; the idea that the souls of the living are reincarnated after death according to the actions they took in life.

If the players search the Observatory, a successful

TN25 Investigation (Search)/Perception roll discovers a hidden map concealed behind a compartment on the highest level of the Observatory. The map seems to show points of interest throughout Seto's Valley, but there is clear mystical influence on the map. Trees seem to animate, there are symbols showing the presences of various individuals as they move through the city and castle, and to the west of the castle a symbol marked with the symbol for the element of Air. Sense Air can reveal the ink on the map is actually Air kami, and that the map itself is an illusion though one of a more permanent nature than has otherwise been seen..

Kagami no Tengoku Mura:

The city is alive with activity, as the cherry blossom trees finally begin their blossoming. Music, the shouts of vendors, and the sound of laughter fill the air. Children and their families fill the streets, marvelling at the once-a-year event.

As the players proceed through the city, eventually the player with the lowest status or Glory or the People (or the player with the lowest Glory in the event of a tie) is approached by a disheveled old woman.

She comes suddenly out of the crowd, her kimono old and stained. She grabs you by the kimono, and with milky eyes stares into you. "Without air the blossoms can't fall." She repeats the phrase, over and over never looking away...

Players can respond in any number of ways to the peasant, but if they push her away or draw steel on her she will flee back into the crowd. She has every appearance of a minor seer, an untrained peasant woman. She cannot explain her visions, or even herself.

After encountering the peasant woman, the players are most likely to head to the eta district.

The eta district is as disorganized as the rest of the city is organized, and it has every appearance of being left largely to fend for itself. There's an unclean smell in the air that should be offensive to the sensibilities of nearly any PC (Ronin and members of the Sparrow Clan excluded).

The mortuary, such as it is, is a mostly dilapidated structure with thick black smoke pouring from a chimney behind it. Here, they can meet the eta Isho.

Isho is an eta in his late 30s, bald, overweight, and slovenly. Isho has kept Jinran's body since the monk's death, with it being considered unlucky to burn the body during the festival.

Players can inspect Jinran's body at the mortuary, if they so wish. This act, especially if they touch the body themselves, is dishonorable and leads to a D2 loss. However, Jinran's body has bruising on the front of his chest and his back in the same, five pointed pattern. A Lore: Anatomy/Intelligence roll, TN15, reveals that the monk died of a heart attack, but has no explanation for the bruising.

The Tea Room Tower:

The Tea Room Tower is a short tower on the eastern grounds of the castle. As you walk through it, you see many parties of samurai enjoying one another's company, cups of steaming tea in hand. On the second floor of the tower is a massive window, facing the sun and bathing a large tea room in warm light. Scores of samurai sit and talk, enjoying the afternoon's refreshments and company.

Inside the Tea Room Tower are three significant characters: Bayushi Akinishin, Togashi Inori, and the Crane Clan Magistrate Doji Yuko.

Akinishin is taking the opportunity to gather rumors from around Crane lands, but he has taken notice of the players' activities so far and is curious as to what their aims are. If the players have already impressed him, or they are honest with him about their task (Sincerity (Honesty)/Awareness TN20), he will open up to them about what he knows:

"The monks left for the forest some time this morning with some kind of map. Perhaps there's some forgotten shrine they seek? Certainly nothing to do with me."

Togashi Inori is taking a break from experiencing the festival. He scandalously bare skin has a thin sheen of sweat as she nurses a pot of tea that's gone cold. She seems troubled, and a Courtier/Awareness roll (TN15) can get her to calm down. If the players ask about her disquiet, she responds:

"I saw a member of the Order of Silence in the Kuruwa Pathways a few nights ago, when Jinran died. Not a hundred steps from the spot. I wonder what it means?"

Finally, there is Doji Yuko. She is a Crane magistrate of middle age, experienced and local to Seto's Valley. Her investigation into the monk's death concluded yesterday, and she's taking the opportunity of the first day of the festival to enjoy herself. She's not quick to discuss the recently concluded case, but a successful Courtier (Manipulation)/Awareness roll, TN25, will get her to speak up.

"I was called in when Jinran's body was found. He was an older man, though he had been in good health, I could find nothing remarkable about his death. We all must greet our ancestors eventually, neh? That being said, there were reports of chanting coming from Shinden Emma-O on the night of his death, but the only people staying at the Shrine are the Order of Silence. With the reports coming from the servants, it didn't bear looking into. They can be so superstitious, after all."

DIVINATION: If the players choose to use a Divination skill roll, the results can vary depending on the game. The general TN for getting useful information with a Divination roll is 15, and success will grant one piece of information from the following list. Raises on the Divination roll can gain more pieces of information. It is suggested to the GM that the information be provided in a way that is most helpful to the players.

- There will be a great revelation of knowledge soon
- A great calamity is foretold, the breaking of rings
- The ending of a divine wind
- What once was unknown cannot be forgotten

After gathering various clues, the players may wish to speak again with Kuni Tokimasa. Tokimasa is "enjoying" the view from the upper levels of the Team Room Tower. Neither Shijin nor Shijin's servant are within the Tower. He is more than pleased to hear that the PCs have something to discuss, and greets them eagerly. As they reveal what they have learned, though, Tokimasa will look dejected.

"Happenstance and curiosities are not enough to work with. My lord, the Jade Champion, would take a very dim view of my taking up an investigation while ordered otherwise. Nothing you have found compels me to action here. I thank you for your efforts,

samurai, and I hope that you can put these matters out of mind and enjoy the remainder of the Festival. Someone has to, I suppose."

After meeting with Tokimasa, as the players leave the Tea Room Tower, they will be approached by Shijin (having heard that the PCs gave their report to Tokimasa, he came as quickly as he could).

"Ah, forgive an old man his tardiness, samurai-samas. Please, if you would not mind discussing with me what you uncovered?"

Should the players accept, and especially if they have the map from the Star Observatory, Shijin will grow visibly concerned. After they have concluded, Shijin states:

"I believe my fears are confirmed, then." The old monk bows low to the samurai, and continues, "Please, my lords, if you would beg an old man's indulgence, I would ask a favor of you. Please, I can explain once we are past the walls of the city."

The players are faced with a choice here: there is no Imperial investigation occurring, and the instructions from their lords don't quite support further investigation work. However, they should by this point have a strong feeling that something is going wrong, potentially something very calamitous for Rokugan. The decision whether to stay and help Shijin or simply enjoy the festival is ultimately up to them. If they proceed with the monk, go to Part Three, if not proceed to the Conclusion.

Part Three: Essence of Air

After the players and Shijin are clear from the city, Shijin leads the players down an unfamiliar path and then into the forest. He pauses next to a tree and says,

"Before we continue, samurai, I must uphold my end of our agreement. You should know what the Order of Silence, if that is what they are, is after. There is a legend of five great Elements that comprise our world. Air, Earth, Water, Fire, and Void. Each embodied in the five great elemental dragons, each the source of all life there is. Yet..." He pauses for moment, reading each of you. "That is not all there is. When Lord Moon and Lady Sun made the world, so the story goes, the first names were those of the elements. Each name created the dragons that we know of today. Yet, as they created the world, they needed a way to bind the

elements to it. To create from nothing, you must first have something. To do this, Amaterasu and Onnotangu took from the great dragons five rings. These rings they brought to our world, and from them came all that we know. They are the physical manifestation of the will of the Heavens, and the sources of all life. They were bound to five secret sites, and kept from the knowledge of all, that no one living or dead could threaten the balance that sustains our world. At least," he says with a smirk, "That is what the stories of my order say." He takes a moment to draw symbols in the earth, and a ring around each of them, then a ring finally around all five. "These rings are Ningen-do, and Ningen-do is the five rings. For all their age and power, though, the five rings are no less fragile. They can be affected by the wills and knowledge of humanity. They can be... destroyed," he says finally. "Jinran had a duty beyond the temple to Emma-O. He was also the Keeper of Air, the protector and guardian of the Ring of Air. His death was no accident."

The players should have some questions for Shijin. Here are some examples below of questions and possible answers. For any other questions, keep in mind that Shijin's aim is to get the samurai to trust and follow him to the Ring.

- What order are you from? "I am a simple man of the Four Temples, samurai, charged with this duty." (This is a lie, uncovered by an Investigation (Interrogation)/Awareness roll of TN50. If discovered, Shijin will say, "The truth of the matter must wait for another day, samurai. There is more pressing business today.")
- What happens if the Order destroys the Ring? "I cannot say. Such an event has never happened before. If my teachings are accurate... it could unmake the world."
- How did they find out? "I do not know, samurai. Jinran would not have told them. That is a mystery that I shall solve, after we have ensured the safety of the Ring."

Locating the Ring of Air with just Shijin's guidance will be difficult. He will lead the players hurriedly through the forest, following a trail he at best half-remembers. This is a long run, resulting in an Athletics/Stamina roll TN20 to avoid being Fatigued in the next scene.

If the players have the map from the Star Observatory, it will guide them to the location of the Ring easily

enough, and no Athletics roll is required.

Finally, you come across a clearing in the forest. Around you, a wind blows calmly but insistently, picking at the hems of kimono, the laces of armor, the tassels on the hilts of katana. You hear birdsong that seems to come from every corner of the empire, of voices in conversation, and finally, of a low, rhythmic chanting.

You see (PCs-1) monks gathered in a circle. And between them, floating in the air, a sight that begs disbelief. The kanji of Air, seeming to be solid and yet composed of nothing but wind itself, twists and turns. Before you, it seems to be growing faint, leaking strands caught in the breeze.

"No!" shouts Shijin in surprise, and the chanting stops. The monks rise quickly, one of them with a wicked smile on his face.

"So an old man finds young fools to do his work for him. I've heard that story before," the smiling one says. "You lead them down a false path, Shijin."

"Benkei, I-" is all Shijin can manage to say, before the monks launch into an attack.

The heretic monks fight with a fanatic's furor. They believe that if the Ring of Air is destroyed, they will aid all of the world in walking a path towards enlightenment and reincarnation.

Benkei seeks primarily to escape. He is older, and knows that loyalty and the wisdom of monks can stand only so long against the steel of a samurai. He will not attack unless targeted, and his primary goal is to escape and bring word of the Ring of Air back to his brethren.

All Air spells receive a Free Raise during this combat. All PCs with Elemental Blessing (Air) Receive gain a +5 bonus to their ATN due to their connection to the element. All PCs with Friendly Kami (Air) reduce the Mastery Level of the Air spells they cast during this combat by 1.

Heretic Monks

Walking a False Path

School/Rank: Thousand Fortunes Monk / 2

Initiative: 5k3

Armor TN: 20/25

Reduction: 0

Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 26

(+15), 30 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Out)

Attack: 7k3 (Fist, Complex)

Damage: 5k1 (Fist)

Air 3 Earth Fire 3 Water 2 Void 3
2

Reflexes 3

Strength 3

Honor:

Status:

Glory:

Primary Skills: Jujutsu (Atemi) 4, Lore Theology 5

Advantages/Disadvantages: Quick / Gullible

Special Mechanics: Kiho [assume The Great Silence and Way of the Willow are active before any combat]: The Great Silence (Mystical) (Kiho must be delivered via atemi, if successful, target is unable to speak for monk's air ring in rounds), Way of the Willow (While this kiho is active, if you have not taken your turn, you may spend a void point to immediately interrupt any opponent who declares a melee attack against you. You may either make an immediate simple move action to get away, or make an unarmed attack against them. **ADMIN RULING: use of this technique constitutes using the action used for your next turn**) (Internal) Soul of the Four Winds (internal) (While active, ATN is increased by insight+air)

Benkei

The Abbot of Air

School/Rank: Thousand Fortunes Monk / 4

Initiative: 9k5

Armor TN: 30/39

Reduction: 0

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

Attack: 10k4 (Fist, Complex)

Damage: 6k2 (Fist)

Air 5 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water Void 4
4

Honor: 2.4

Status: 0

Glory: 0

Primary Skills: Jujutsu (Atemi) 7, Stealth 3, Lore: Theology 5

Advantages/Disadvantages: not all NPCs need either
Special Mechanics: Benkei has all air kiho that he qualifies for. He usually will activate Soul of the Four Winds on the second round of initiative to keep his ATN high while he flees, and will use Steal the Air Dragon to aid his hiding once he's gotten some distance away

Significant Dice Pools: Stealth (7k4/10k10)

After the fight, Shijin spends time healing the Ring, Players can see strands of ephemeral energy exchange between the monk and the Ring, making the Kanji of air more solid.

Once the players have recovered and the Ring has been healed, Shijin will speak to the samurai as a group.

“Before we return, honorable samurai, there is one final matter. It is one of grave importance for both your duties and mine.” He pauses, takes a breath, and continues. “I would ask one final favor of you: tell no one what you have done this day. The greatest protection the Rings have is secrecy. I believe the next Keeper of Air can still defend the Ring if all they will face is what we fought today... but they will not be able to prevail against armies of samurai bent on claiming the Ring for themselves. Knowledge of this nature spreading too wide can endanger the whole Empire, samurai. That being said, there is nothing I can offer you in exchange for your discretion in this. I understand that you have duties beyond yourselves, and I will abide by whatever decision you make. Without your intervention here today, the Ring of Air might have been destroyed, and for that I am in your debt.”

This is primarily a roleplay challenge for the players. Shijin will maintain that the Keepers are sufficient guardians against the threats presented, but in truth he cannot stop the samurai from doing as they will. If the monk Benkei escaped, the players may have some difficulty crediting Shijin's request, but this is a matter of honor and duty and should be up to them to decide.

Conclusion

If the players refuse Tokimasa's request OR they refuse Shijin's request for continued investigation:

The cherry blossom festival is as enjoyable as advertised, though after the first day of it both the monk Shijin and the Order of Silence fail to attend any events.

All is going well until the third day of the festival, when a sudden, powerful gust of wind blows down through the valley. It increases in strength until it is ripping bark from trees and toppling buildings. Only the halls of Kyuden Kurogane-Hana offer any respite from the powerful gusts of air, which persist for a day and night.

Afterwards, you emerge to see that Kagami no Tengoku Mura has been all but wiped clean, with

Title of the Mod

pg. 11

almost nothing of the city still standing. Impossibly, the cherry blossom trees still stand, with not a leaf having fallen.

If the players choose to reveal the location of the Ring of Air to Kuni Tokimasa

The news of a powerful mystical artifact in Crane lands soon overwhelms the peaceful cherry blossom festival. Within three days of Tokimasa being notified, an entire Jade Legion descends on Seto's Valley, The armor-shod foot of thousands of samurai trample the delicate cherry blossom leaves, and Doji Seto finds himself negotiating with Jade Legion commanders demanding to create a defensive structure around the so-called "Ring of Air."

The festival offers no respite to its attendees, as the sudden weight of the world rushes in.

If the players choose to keep the location of the Ring hidden, or only tell their lords:

The Cherry Blossom Festival is all that it was claimed to be. The renewal of the spirit is felt by all in attendance, even the most irascible of Crab. As the festival concludes with the falling of the last leaf, a great gust of wind blows through the streets of the city. The fallen cherry blossom leaves twist and spin in the air, creating a beautiful white-pink haze that slowly drifts back down to the earth, coating samurai, heimin, hinin, and eta alike.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module: 1XP

Good Roleplaying: 1XP

Discovering the nature of the Order of Silence: 1XP

Saving the Ring of Air: 1XP

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Favors

Each player gains 1 Favor. for completing the Cherry Blossom Festival.

Players that only reveal the location of the Ring of Air to their lords gain 1 additional Favor.

Honor

If there are any Honor gains beyond those already mentioned in the module, they go here. Using the Rank-based system as specified in the Campaign Primer makes a useful shorthand.

The GM may grant up to 2 extra points of Honor to a PC for actions not detailed in the module, though no PC should gain more than 2 points in this fashion.

Glory

If the PCs tell Kuni Tokimasa, they each gain G5 Glory. Otherwise, Glory gains are listed in Act 1.

Allies and Enemies

For conducting the investigation, all players gain Kuni Tokimasa as a 1 Devotion/2 Influence Ally. If they already have Tokimasa as an Ally, they will gain a point of Devotion for that Ally.

If the players agree to keep the location of the Ring secret, they will gain Shijin as a 3 Devotion/0 Influence Ally.

GM Reporting

- 1) Did Benkei survive the battle?
- 2) Do the players reveal the location of the Ring of Air?
- 3) Whom did the players impress during court?

The GM must report this information by 8/18/2017 in order for it to have storyline effect.

Player Handout #1: News From the Empire

Samurai,

News from the Emperor's court intrigues, to say the least. Tensions between the Crab and the Unicorn are beginning to mount after the Crab publicly announced that some of their Witch Hunters will be going to Unicorn Lands to... advise... the Unicorn on matters relating to hunting gaijin. As one might expect, the Unicorn have taken to insult over the matter, and I hear tell that Shinjo Hazumi-dono has already sent word of her offense at the issue to Hida Oturi-dono. I suspect we may well see a duel before the season is out, if not war.

“However, not all news coming from the Winter Court was bad! Bayushi Otozatsu-dono, in his infinite wisdom, has announced that at the beginning of the fall season, there will be a special gathering of the clans to coincide with Toturi Kazetora-dono's arrival in Kyuden Bayushi for his tour of the Clans. Such an event is the sort that only happens once a generation! I do so hope that I am invited to such a grand affair.

“Curiously, there is word from Balishnimpur that the unrest in that city between our Rokugani and the terrible Gaijin that are allowed to work for us is hitting an all time high. From what I have heard from Samurai who just came off the boat, the Ivindi have heard about our acquisition of something called the ‘Crown of Ah-Roohn,’ and are rather unhappy that it has been placed honorably in the Imperial Treasury instead of being handed to their... ‘Maho-Russian?’ Personally, I find this whole ordeal to be rather silly, but I am sure things will quiet down before it all is said and done.

-Otomo Yusuke