

Edict of Judgment

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

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[Investigation, Travel]

A missing caravan threatens the fragile peace between the Crab and the Crane. Can the PCs discover the truth, and what will they do with it if they do?

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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

Kaiu Shingen is devoted to destroying the Shadowlands Taint wherever it appears. A few months ago, a maho-tsukai passed through the lands of his cousin, the provincial daimyo of the Kuda Province. Shingen tracked the blasphemer to the border outpost of Kyokai, and was surprised to discover that the tsukai was particularly weak and unskilled, but has somehow managed to summon an oni. The creature exhibited several dangerous qualities, and Shingen decided that study would be necessary after containing the Taint undoubtedly spread by the tsukai who barely commanded it. Unfortunately, the tsukai had been in Kyokai for several weeks, and it was impossible to determine exactly who had been affected by the touch of Jigoku.

So he destroyed Kyokai.

If a Crane caravan had not been present, this action probably would never have been noticed or challenged. However, the Daidoji guards naturally fought back, resulting in casualties among the outpost's guards that Shingen had ordered to assist him. Thus, one error in judgement led to another: Shingen publicly blamed the destruction of the town on bandits (a perennial worry around the Shinomen Mori), and attacked a nearby wayside inn located over the border in unaligned lands to lend more credibility to this cover story. The surviving Crab troops were sent to the Wall, and sworn to secrecy with commendations and promotions.

Unfortunately for Shingen, this matter was not likely to be overlooked for long: the Crab are always in need of supply assistance, and their relations with the Crane have been awkward enough since the war that both clans are cautious about the tensions between them. As a matter of crime involving multiple clans, an Emerald Magistrate has been tasked with investigating

the situation. Because Doji Makibesu is both Emerald Champion and the Crane Clan Champion, he selected one of his most loyal and politically-astute magistrates (who is not a member of his clan) to both discover what happened and to reduce the tensions between his clan and the Crab. In turn, Bayushi Tamaki used her network of contacts to draw in a group of samurai (the PCs) to allow her to work on both elements of the case at once, in order to overcome the delay caused by the winter months.

It is up to the PCs to investigate the caravan, and discover what happened. Though Shingen is a powerful shugenja and connected to an influential political family, he is not a particularly practiced political thinker and his straightforward approach to problem solving has resulted in his leaving several clues. Furthermore, his attempts to cover up the first act have not only confused the issue but provided more opportunities for the inevitable investigation to get closer to him. The PCs will need to confront him in order to get to the truth, and then their reaction may shape the outcome for both clans going forward.

The mystery the PCs are tasked with is not terribly complex, as such things go, but they are the first persons to actually look into it. The focus is less about what they can or cannot learn, and more on what they choose to do once they have a direction, and how they will prove it once they think they know what happened.

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. The following are of importance to the events of the module:

- 1.0+ Ranks of the Shadowlands Taint
- Social Position in either the Crab or Lion military
- Status 3.0+
- Any PC in possession of a nemuranai weapon (it would probably be best not to directly inform the players that this is something of note for the plot of the module, if possible)

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.

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. **Each PC loses 3 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** is 20; failure causes them to gain a point of Taint. 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 a TN of 15. 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 new year is only a few days old as you present your travel papers to the guards at Jokaku Eihei Koganu, a small Crane fortress on the western border of the Daidoji lands. Though originally little more than a defensive fortification where the Imperial road crosses the River of Gold, a small town has grown up to take advantage of trade to the west and along the river. The fighting between the Crab and Crane a few years ago drove many of the outlying villagers to the relative safety of the town, and many of them have not returned to their former lands. All of this is to say that the town is a crowded, busy place, with far more military and commercial business than might be otherwise expected for a normally-utilitarian border outpost.

Your lords have sent you to meet with Bayushi Tamaki, a well-connected Emerald Magistrate. Rooms have been arranged for you at the local inn, which proves to be a surprisingly spartan establishment for the Crane lands called the "Blue Lotus Inn". While the furnishings are simple and the quarters somewhat cramped, the staff nonetheless provides you a warm welcome and warmer water to wash the dust of the road off, and to banish the chill in your bones from the early spring weather. You are informed that you are not the only arrivals, and that Tamaki expects you to join her for dinner that evening.

The PCs should have a little time to see to their equipment and rooms, meet each other if they wish, but not to do more than a cursory exploration of the town. Those who are curious about their companions should be able to learn a little, including about the Emerald Magistrate herself if they so choose.

The town of Jokaku Eihei Koganu is built around a small fort guarding the Crane border. Under normal circumstances, there are perhaps 200 peasants serving 100 samurai on garrison duty; with the coming of spring, however, and the distinct possibility of war in the area, the Daidoji have sent troops to practice in the field. The daimyo of the Ichigun province, Daidoji Tetsukazu (originally Kakita Tetsukazu, he may be

known to PCs who played the court interactive Final Rites) is one of the Crane's most skilled military commanders and is overseeing the training. As such, there are significantly more people in the area than is usual; the PCs (and the Emerald Magistrate) are the only guests at the inn, however, since even the Crane legion's commanders are expected to remain in the field with their troops.

Any PC who expresses an interest in Bayushi Tamaki can learn from the inn's staff that she is a beautiful, elegant courtier who arrived the day before, accompanied by a pair of yojimbo. Those with five ranks in the Courtier Skill are aware that she is a very well-connected in the Imperial Court, though she tends to use her influence sparingly. Those who succeed at a **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** roll (TN 25) recognize her as one of the Emerald Champion's more trusted political agents, typically responsible for overseeing negotiations between clans when an Imperial perspective is required.

When you are escorted to a private room for your evening meal, you find yourself face-to-mask with a graceful, elegant woman in silks of black and red: Bayushi Tamaki. A fine mesh of golden chains falls below her eyes, shifting as she speaks and punctuating her words with a quiet, melodic chime. "I give you greetings and thanks for your prompt response to my request. Your lords do me much honor by sending such worthy samurai to my assistance. I am Bayushi Tamaki, and these are my yojimbo, Soshi Tsuya and her husband Heizo." She gestures toward the slender woman sitting by the door, then to the burly figure kneeling in the corner. Her hand moves on, to indicate the laden table in the center of the room. "Please, let us enjoy the repast our kind host has provided, and tell me of yourselves and your journeys."

This is an opportunity for introductions, so that the players may learn about the other PCs at the table. Tamaki is a refined conversationalist, even in the relatively humble surroundings, and over the course of the dinner, she will gently extract basic information from the PCs (like their Schools, major fields of interest and ability, major goals and drives, etc.). This is not an attempt to pry out their secrets, nor should she use any of her courtier Techniques, but simple, friendly chat over a meal. Her yojimbo are not brought into the conversation, giving every evidence of being "on duty" and more than happy to let their superior have her way.

Eventually, the food is cleared away and a fine, light sake is served – the warm drink a welcome contrast to the cold winds outside. Tamaki takes a sip, the dangling chains casually moved aside with the assurance of long practice. "Ah, a pleasant evening with convivial comrades... alas that I must interrupt it with matters of duty. I requested assistance from your lords with an investigation that requires my attention in two separate locations. Every year, the Crane Clan provides a gift of rice to the Crab Clan, a tradition that has lasted for very nearly as long as the Empire has existed. The Crab, of course, graciously provide gifts in return, but as their need for food staples is almost always greater than their lands' capacity to provide, these gifts are of significant size. The shipments from the Crane are broken into several caravans, and are sent throughout the year, from different locations. The last such shipment for last year departed from this province four months ago. Unfortunately, the Crab report that it never arrived in their lands."

She pauses to take a sip from her cup. "Four months is a long time, to be sure, but the winter months prevented travel until now – even the reports were delayed, due to the particularly inclement weather this past season. Understandably, both clans are quite concerned with the disappearance. The Emerald Champion has sent me as a neutral party to prevent the issue from causing any unnecessary tension between the Crab and Crane, and to determine what actually took place. The first task can best be accomplished at Yasuki Yashiki to the south, the second necessitates following the trail of the caravan west. Therefore, it is my intent to send you west, to see what you can learn as my yoriki for this case. I do not expect or require you to make any arrests, and of course you should cooperate with the local authorities where there are any. I would, however, greatly appreciate it if you can provide me with the location of the shipment itself. If it has been destroyed, some confirmation of that would be necessary. The fate of the samurai tending to the caravan is important as well, and if you were to, say, locate their personal effects, that would go a long way toward setting the minds of the Crane at ease."

Tamaki has little information beyond these basics; the winter months have prevented any previous investigation from taking place, and the PCs will be the first on the scene. She can tell them that the caravan master is one "Doji Kinmochi, by all accounts quite experienced with this task and his route", and that the caravan would have left from this town in the last few weeks of the Month of the Dog (the last month of autumn), but she has few specifics other than that. "By all means, make some enquiries before you leave."

The Emerald Magistrate will provide the PCs with travel papers and badges of office for their temporary positions; any ronin PC who does not feel that doing a favor for the Emerald Champion is payment enough will be offered 2 koku. She intends to depart the next morning, and head south for Yasuki Yashiki. The PCs are expected to travel west, following the caravan's route on the Imperial Road; while she does not give them a hard and fast time limit, Tamaki does express some hope that they can accomplish their task swiftly and efficiently.

If the PCs wish to ask around town to gain information about the caravan they are supposed to look for, they can easily do so the next day. Between the local merchants, garrison samurai, or even peasantry, a moderate amount of information can be learned.

It is assumed locally that the caravan was more than adequately guarded, and that anything that might have happened would have taken place in the unclaimed territories beyond the Fox lands. The Shinomen Mori is known to hide groups of bandits, though most of such activity in recent year has been on the northern side of that great forest. A group of bandits both willing to and capable of making off with the shipment would be almost impossible to hide easily, and since no word has been heard of such a group either locally or in the Fox lands, the belief is that the Crab should know more. (And, it goes without saying, that since the rice is intended to support the Crab, they should be cooperative with any attempt to discover what happened to it.)

Additional information can be gained with a roll of **Investigation (Interrogation)** or **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** to gain the following information:

- 5: The caravan led by Doji Kinmochi is a regular, annual occurrence. They typically leave the town of Jokaku Eihei Koganu in the last weeks of the Month of the Dog, then spend the winter months in the Crab village of Maemikake before returning.
- 10: The caravan was made up of ten wagons of rice, with two peasant laborers each and a contingent of a dozen Daidoji guards – just under forty people, in total.
- 15: Doji Kinmochi actually served as an Iron Warrior in his youth, before taking a minor place on the Daidoji Trading Council. He is an experienced warrior as well as trader, and always insisted that even the peasants staffing his caravan be experienced in combat (former ashigaru or doshin).

- 25: The commander of the caravan's guards, Daidoji Michinaga, is a Heavy Regular commander who has spent three tours of duty on the Wall. He gained a reputation as a fearsome warrior there, standing shoulder to shoulder with the doughtiest Hida and plying his ono against the Empire's foes. Even following the war between the clans, he maintains good relations with the Crab and was no doubt selected by Kinmochi in order to keep help the peace.
- 30: Doji Kinmochi is well-known for his trade acumen and his military skill, but there are whispers that he has a somewhat unorthodox relationship with the magistrate of Maemikake, Yasuki Tameyoshi. Kinmochi is known for bringing back more goods than expected, and his wealth has grown significantly over the last few years.

Part One: On the Road

While they should have every opportunity to gather information and prepare for their journey, the PCs' mission does eventually lead them west along the Imperial Road, while Bayushi Tamaki heads south.

It is early spring still, and the weather is chilly, even in the southern part of the Empire, The road is clear of heavy snow, and the frost melts away relatively early in the morning, but the temperature does drop below freezing during the night. It is not dangerous like it would be during the actual winter months, merely somewhat uncomfortable. The first day sees you crossing the River of Gold and entering the lands of the Fox Clan, allowing you to make your first stop at Kyuden Kitsune.

The Fox are welcoming, though the Minor Clan has evidently been increasing the ranks of their lands' protectors with ronin. Most of the Fox lands are north of the River of Gold, and the vibrant Kitsune Mori is visible over the waves where the Imperial Road runs along the water. During the day, a verdant glow almost hangs over the fabled forest, but the locals take it in stride and your second day's travel takes you to Kaia Osha Mura, a village on the western border of the Fox lands.

There is almost no new information that can be gained along the first part of their travels, though the locals do remember the passage of the Crane caravan (and, in fact, expect it to come through any day now, as they have not been informed of the disappearance). There was no sign of any trouble with the caravan, nor of anyone who might have been sizing it up for attack.

This does provide a chance for the PCs to gather information they may have missed in Jokaku, but if they already learned it all, the only thing that they will pick up on is that the Fox and people in the unaligned lands are perennially worried about bandit activity. However, if a PC succeeds at a **Courtier (Gossip) / Intelligence** roll (TN 20), they realize that there are no substantive claims – the worry is due to their relative vulnerability, but there has been no actual major bandit activity for quite a while. (Certainly nothing of the scale that would be required to provide a danger to the well-guarded caravan.) These local concerns are, in fact, just rumors – the only confirmed bandit activity around the Shinomen Mori has been far to the north, around the Unicorn and Scorpion lands.

Past the Fox lands, there are a couple of days worth of unclaimed territory called the “Quiet Wind Plain” for what becomes obvious reasons after a few hours of nearly-constant breeze – quite chilly in the early spring air. These lands are sparsely populated, with no clan to provide protection, but there are still a few peasants or merchants who maintain wayside inns along the Imperial Road. These scattered communities are welcoming of anyone with money, and in turn have secured protection from ronin. The locals share the same concerns for bandit activity that the better-protected Fox do, but it remains hearsay until the group’s last day of travel; those still trying to gather information will hear that the next wayside inn (just outside of the Crab border) was destroyed at the start of last winter, after the Crane caravan had gone through. (PCs wanting more information will be directed toward the site of the attack, where the previous innkeeper’s brother is rebuilding.)

A short distance outside the Crab Clan’s borders, you see a wayside inn under construction by a small group of peasants. Nearby, charred timbers and broken foundation stones are providing some of the raw materials for their project, evidently building a replacement for the original, now destroyed establishment. As you near, the peasants stop work to bow politely and eye you with wary curiosity.

One of the peasants, a stout man in his early thirties, will approach the samurai if they show any interest. He introduces himself as Takanibu, and though his manners are a little rough, he is very respectful. He is the brother of the last innkeeper, and has the following information for the PCs, if they ask:

- His brother’s inn was destroyed on the fifth day of the Boar, the first month of winter. It was about a week after the Crane caravan came through, which he remembers.

- Takanibu wasn’t present when the inn was destroyed – he was on the road to Maemikake, getting supplies for the winter. He remembers that Kyokai, the Crab border fort town, had been attacked too, when he passed through, but he never really had anything to do with the people there so he didn’t stop to talk to them.
- As far as he’s concerned, it was a vicious bandit gang. He had not heard of any that brutal or that big in the area, but he’s going to learn from his brother’s misfortune and try to hire more ronin protectors when he gets the inn rebuilt. (PC ronin will be offered 2 zeni a week, if they’re in the area when he’s done.)
- He says that all eight of the people who were at the inn were killed, including his brother’s family (and three children) and the two ronin they had hired for protection. The bodies were burned and buried in a shallow mass grave, that he had eta and a monk from Maemikake dig up to ensure that the proper ceremonies were performed. He is a bit disturbed by this, and success on an **Investigation / Awareness** roll (TN 20) picks up on a slight oddity; a little pressure will get him to recount that the bodies had already been given their last rites, if very hastily. More, the eta reported that the bodies were decapitated before their cremation. Takanibu does not understand any of this (“Why perform ceremonies for bodies you’ve already mutilated?”), and is understandably distressed about the deaths of his family.
- Not much seemed to have been taken by the attackers, though the burning of the building made it hard to know for sure. Most of Takanibu’s brother’s money was still secure in a “secret spot” that he thinks they just didn’t find, so Takanibu thinks that the brutal slaying was due to the lack of profit.
- Takanibu will not offer the fact that he sold the ronin defenders’ swords after their deaths without prompting, but curious PCs should be able to get it out of him with little effort. This is a very grey area where the law is concerned: as a peasant, he should not be handling such things, but battlefield cleanup often involves doing so; and, as ronin, the dead samurai have no one to be insulted by the would-be-innkeeper’s actions. PC cruelty toward the peasant using this as a pretext should earn an Honor loss at the GM’s discretion (anywhere from D4-D0).

Takanibu and his helpers will of course stay out of the PCs’ way if they wish to look around the site of the attack. It has, unfortunately, been four months of harsh winter weather since the attack, and there is little

left in the way of physical evidence. Nonetheless, an interested PC can roll **Investigation (Search) / Perception** to learn the following things. (A PC curious about tactics of the attack may roll Battle instead, but at a penalty of -5 to their total.)

- 20: The inn was burned by an exceptionally hot fire, applied after the front wall of the main room had been smashed in with a pair of trees used as improvised battering rams (though the wreckage does make it hard to tell exactly how that worked).
- 25: It appears as though the attack was performed by a relatively small group (a dozen or fewer). They made their point of entry and pulled the inhabitants from the interior, before killing them outside, which implies that the purpose of the attack was not just profit.
- 30: It is impossible to see any single point of ignition, but whether this is due to the passage of time or something else cannot be determined.
- 35: The patterns of the burns on the timbers and the shattering of the foundation are, in fact, not natural even for a deliberate fire. It was certainly caused by a magical effect of some sort.

Shugenja PCs who wish to Commune with the elements may of course do so, though only the Earth kami in the area and the Fire kami of the burned building can provide any useful information. (It has been too long for any Air or Water kami in the area to have been here, with the changing of the season.) Without any Raises for clarity, they can reveal that the spirits destroyed the inn at the behest of a shugenja (i.e., magic was used). Both Fire and Earth spells were cast, and either type of spirit can report that. With one Raise for clarity, they will specify that the shugenja was very powerful, but no more than that. Due to the time frame, even three Raises for clarity will not get more information than that the shugenja was very angry (“possessed a vast rage” might be one way to put it) and that they were accompanied by “a few” warriors who helped kill the inn’s staff. They cannot say which way the attackers went, nor will they be able to identify them as clan samurai or ronin.

If the PCs wish to examine the graves or the bodies, despite the typical Rokugani taboo, they learn that all of the resident’s bodies are accounted for. Last rites for the deceased were performed, which any shugenja or monk can determine with a **Lore: Theology / Perception** roll at a TN of 15. Physically examining the bodies causes a D0 loss of Honor (halved if someone else, like an eta, is actually handling the corpses), but with a successful roll of Medicine / Perception (TN 20; Lore: Anatomy or another such niche skill may also apply) will determine that the bodies were killed by swords and clubs, decapitated

after death, and burned with hasty ritual before their burial. Crab bushi and Kuni-trained shugenja will recognize this as fairly standard Crab military procedure in hostile territory (i.e., the Shadowlands).

What Actually Happened: Kaiu Shingen decided that he needed to come up with some support in the area for the idea of a bandit group to blame for the attack on Kyokai (see below). So, a week after that event, he gathered the surviving bushi of the garrison and fell upon the closest wayside inn along the Imperial Road, unconcerned about the legalities of the matter. They surrounded it and attacked under the cover of the panic instilled by his invoking the kami for an Earthquake; the weakened walls were easily demolished by improvised battering rams, allowing the troops to access the interior rather than pass one at a time through the door. After dragging the peasants out into the winter air, he ordered them executed, then decapitated and disposed of the bodies using standard Crab field doctrine. A Fist of Osano-Wo destroyed the remains of the building.

It is only a few more hours to Kyokai; if the PCs spend more than about an hour investigating (i.e., if they search the ruin for clues or dig up the bodies), then they arrive at the Crab town after dark. Camping out at the site is not terribly comfortable, but probably better than travel after dark. Takanibu and his helpers, while they don’t have enough structure built for shelter, will still gladly provide hot food.

The Crab town of Kyokai was at one point a reflection of Jokaku Eihei Koganu, where your journey began: a small village of about fifty peasants supporting a fort on the clan’s border. Now, all that remains is the fortress. The hamlet’s buildings are burned and blasted, though the full company of Crab troops bivouacked on the field nearby appear to have recently begun expanding the fort’s walls. Your approach is noted by a pair of heavily-armored sentries, who examine your travel papers stoically but with full attention to detail.

The guards, just doing their jobs, will show due respect along with their due diligence, and allow the PCs to pass through. Unfortunately, as they only recently arrived at this post, they have no information on what happened here, but are willing to escort the PCs to the commander of their forces if the “acting yoriki” have questions.

The commander, a grizzled chui by the name of Kaiu Chikafusa, has little more information to share. He knows nothing of the Crane caravan, having led his

troops here just three days ago. His initial briefing included a report that the village had been attacked by bandits, with all of the residents slain; the only reason the fort survived was due to the garrison being warned by one Kaiu Shingen, an advisor to the provincial daimyo that was in the area. Even at that, half of the garrison fell during the fighting, and they likely would have been lost but for Shingen's magical power. The chui has heard that the local clan magistrate had been investigating the matter; Yasuki Tameyoshi is at Maemikake and would undoubtedly wish to know that the Emerald Magistrates have an interest in the area.

If the PCs wish to look around the battle site, they will largely get the same sort of information as at the wayside inn; magical inquiries provide the same answers, though with "many men fighting" rather than a "few" (meaning "around a hundred", between the villagers, the Crane caravan, and the garrison). There are few clues as to the fighting to be gained from the ruins; the Crab have begun demolishing the remains for what raw materials can be gained (and a legion of Crab troops are far more efficient than a half-dozen peasants when it comes to urban renewal); all that can be learned on that score here is that a large skirmish took place, something on the order of a hundred people fighting and dying.

The bodies have been given a fairly hasty burial, but even a cursory examination of the burial ground (and success at a **Lore: Theology or Battle / Perception** roll with a TN of 20) lets them estimate that almost a hundred bodies are interred there, which is double the population of the village. As Rokugani usually treat their dead with more reverence, this stands out as more like something that would happen on a military campaign, or in the course of a major catastrophe.

A more thorough look at the corpses can be facilitated with the Crab unit's eta assisting (armies do have to deal with bodies occasionally); with only a few exceptions, the same information - and Honor loss - as at the inn ensues. The people were slain, predominantly with blunt force trauma and lacerations, then the bodies decapitated and last rites hastily performed. With a 35 on the Medicine / Perception roll, the differences between peasant and samurai become clear, allowing them to count fourteen dead samurai here - one of them quite large; there is, alas, no way to determine that they were not ronin. (These are the Crane, as the Crab casualties were given full honors as part of Shingen's attempt at covering up the truth.)

What Actually Happened: Kaiu Shingen, pursuing reports of a maho-tsukai through the province, came to Kyokai while the Crane caravan was there, in the last few days of the Month of the Dog. He discovered the hapless, inept tsukai in short order, and was surprised that such a weak practitioner had been able to summon an actual oni; he was even more surprised when he attempted to destroy it with magic, only for it to consume the spirits sent after it and escape. Deciding to capture the tsukai for study before his inevitable execution, Shingen then learned that the man had been in town for several weeks, and became concerned that the Taint had spread. So he used the authority of his position to command the local garrison (after testing them for the Taint, of course) to help him exterminate everyone in the village. They objected, but he left them with little choice. The Crane caravan was taken during the night, but were still able to fight back, and of the twenty-four bushi of the garrison, eleven died in order to wipe out the guards and peasants. Shingen then used his magic to destroy the village, and eliminate as many traces of the fighting as he could.

Part Two: Maemikake, a Quiet Lakeside Town

Maemikake is less than five miles away from Kyokai, enabling the PCs to arrive with about an hour's walk.

The Crab settlement of Maemikake on the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow is more like a small city than the village it is often named. As one of the clan's northernmost holdings, it is spared the majority of the strain of their efforts to the south. Instead, the community has been looked upon as a simpler, less-stressful posting in the Kaiu lands. With Akodo Shakato's declaration of war on the Crab Clan, however, this sleepy agricultural province has begun preparing for war. Work has begun to circle the town with a wall under the supervision of dozens of Kaiu engineers, and a full legion of Crab heavy infantry is engaged in training on the nearby fields.

The town is populated by more than 1500 peasants and around 100 samurai, almost exclusively Crab. Most of the business of the town revolves around lumber from the nearby woods, with some additional agriculture taking advantage of the relatively fertile lands in the area. Additionally, the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow draws pilgrims from across the Empire every year to observe one of the greatest Cherry Blossom Festivals in Rokugan.

The PCs have a few leads they may try to follow up on. No roll is required to learn that the Crane caravan never arrived last winter, or to find the locations of Kaiu Shinsen (at the governor's mansion with the provincial daimyo) or Yasuki Tameyoshi (at his house about a block away from the governor's mansion).

Rumors

The following information is available with a **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll. A Crab Clan PC gains a Free Raise on this roll.

- 10: The main concern of the city is the expectation of a Lion assault come the summer months; Kaiu Yaeko, the provincial daimyo, has recently arrived in town to oversee the construction of new defenses.
- 15: The destruction of Kyokai is mentioned in baffled tones, though Kaiu Shingen is lauded for his heroism – the valuable fortification was saved even with the village was destroyed. A powerful shugenja who served with distinction on the Wall, when his cousin Yaeko was given her position, she provided him with a position as a warden in the Kuda Province. His duties take him through the entire area, keeping him away from court (where he is uncomfortable and shares that feeling with others). Shingen has one of the private estates on the lakeshore.
- 20: The local clan magistrate, Yasuki Tameyoshi, has a somewhat negative reputation among the nobility of the city, though he is popular with the merchants. Though no one would openly claim that he is guilty of impropriety, his personal wealth seems to be in excess for his station and speculation as to his probity is somewhat common.
- 25: Toritaka Hanae, Tameyoshi's yoriki, is considered to be somewhat more reliable, though she is not terribly skilled in court. Her honesty is unquestioned, perhaps because her somewhat rough manners put the predominantly-Kaiu local samurai more at ease than the magistrate's more polished attitude.
- 30: After driving off the bandit attack, Kaiu Shingen remained in Maemikake for the winter, though he spent almost no time in the city itself. Instead, he stayed in seclusion at his estate for most of the season, though he did not take on any servants to tend to his property. He only returned to the city when the daimyo arrived last week, and has been traveling back and forth regularly.

It should be noted that the PCs do not have the authority to make any arrests; they have not been given

an Order of Appearance by their Emerald Magistrate (which would require backing from either the local clan magistrate or the local governor even if they had it). As Tamiko stated at the beginning, the PCs should work with the local authorities.

The Magistrate

Yasuki Tameyoshi is, despite the rumors about him, not particularly corrupt. He is wealthy, both from family money and his own business acumen, but the worst he really does is curry political favor from his superiors and a bit of what might be called insider trading with Doji Kinmochi (a minor abuse of his position that has no legal position in Rokugan beyond "good business sense"). The rumors stem from the combination of his position and his wealth, mixed with a certain lack of popularity from the local Kaiu for his manner (combining displays of wealth with a slight lack of courage). There is, however, simply not enough crime in this remote province to provide him with opportunity for graft.

Tameyoshi has a very nice residence a block away from the city governor's mansion, with more than enough room for him to work out of. The house is surprisingly well-to-do, even for a clan magistrate. There are cells in a small side building (essentially a converted stable) so that questioning criminals, on the rare occasions it comes up, won't disturb his family. He has a large office that looks out over the garden, and can likely be found there unless he is actively in an audience with his daimyo (sucking up).

If the PCs approach him, they have no difficulty securing an audience as long as they inform the house servant at his gate that their business is related to their mission as yoriki. (Trying to be sneaky for whatever reason just impedes their progress, but only in that it takes more time for them to be acknowledged.) Tameyoshi will be found in his office, going over paperwork. He is a short, slight man with a ready grin and a thinning hairline, and somewhat better-dressed than one would expect for someone sitting around in their own home. He greets the PCs politely enough, curious as to their business, and answers their questions about the caravan soberly.

The magistrate's eyes move over to his garden, and he answers heavily, "I have been hoping that my friend Kinmochi-san had not left, or returned home before the winter, but it sounds as though he may have fallen victim to the same group that attacked our border village. I am greatly saddened by this; he was a good man, and I will miss his company and counsel."

Tameyoshi is sincere, as he and Kinmochi were fairly close friends and business partners; for several years, they both have been making a healthy profit on goods traded between their clans in addition to the annual rice shipment. This was a somewhat gray area in the eyes of the law, as Tameyoshi was assessing the taxes and tariffs on wares he himself had an interest in, but it is not actually illegal.

As far as the “bandit attacks” are concerned, he knows little beyond the public cover story: that Kaiu Shingen was on patrol in the province, discovered that Kyokai was about to be attacked, and roused the garrison in time to mount a defense. The village was destroyed in the process, but the fort was saved and the bandits driven away.

If the PCs mention any suspicions about Shingen, Tameyoshi frowns pensively. “I have heard nothing that would cause me concern about Shingen-san... he is my daimyo’s cousin, and holds a position of trust with her of equivalent station to my own, but of course is rather more in her favor as a close relation.” The magistrate is not a bad man, really, but he is definitely not a particularly brave one and does not wish to move against a member of his lord’s direct family without a solid reason. He also really does not want Shingen to have been involved, both for the larger political implications and because he doesn’t want his friend to have been killed by a man he’s afraid of.

If the PCs have learned magic was involved in the attacks, he can justify requesting an audience with the most powerful shugenja in the province, or, if they have learned about the strange happenings around Shingen’s estate (either from Hanae or on their own), he will admit that something strange is going on that warrants investigation. Otherwise, convincing Tameyoshi to directly involve himself requires a roll of either **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** (at a TN of 30) or **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (at a TN of 40). Any failed rolls increase the TN by 5 each, but any Crab PCs gain a Free Raise (this bonus only applies to their own rolls, not to rolls made by other PCs they are assisting with a Cooperative Roll).

If the PCs do convince him to petition for an audience with Shingen on their behalf, Tameyoshi will give a small, slightly put-upon sigh, and tell them to expect word in a few hours. They are escorted out of his house for the brief time it takes for him to start arranging things. Unfortunately, when he sends them a message to meet him again at his house, he reports that the Kaiu shugenja has left the city. “Immediately

upon the request for an audience,” Tameyoshi says uncomfortably. “I’m not prone to jumping to conclusions, particularly when such well-connected samurai are concerned, but it’s hard not to find the coincidence disturbing.” While Tameyoshi cannot force a confrontation with Shingen in town, he has gained authority for the Emerald Magistrate’s yoriki to interview Shingen at his estate by order of the provincial daimyo.

The magistrate will escort the PCs to Shingen’s estate. Moreover, Tameyoshi has arranged for a trio of heavily-armored guards to accompany the group. If the PCs wish to wear armor themselves, they need to ask politely and convince Tameyoshi that there is a legitimate chance of danger with a **Sincerity / Awareness** roll, TN 30. Crab PCs are allowed, though not expected, to be wearing armor if they wish. Otherwise, wearing armor in the province without permission from the authorities is a Breach of Etiquette causing a D1 Honor loss.

The Yoriki

Toritaka Hanae is Tameyoshi’s yoriki, a relatively young samurai who is far more comfortable in the wilderness away from the city walls. (She has something of an aversion to the Wall itself, as it happens, and has worked for her current position in order to be of service to the clan without being put there.) She and Tameyoshi have a good working relationship: he is quite deft with the nobility and the administrative tasks of his post, while she handles the more practical matters. However, her discomfort in court and her unease with her superiors has led her to remain silent about the things she has seen around Kaiu Shingen’s estate. It is worth note that she does not think Tameyoshi is corrupt, but readily admits she wouldn’t be able to tell if he was. Hanae has never had any issues that make her think he is, at any rate.

Hanae is more than willing to speak with the PCs, yoriki to (temporary) yoriki, and depending on what they’ve heard, may seem more approachable than her superior. She is a fairly pretty young woman in her early twenties, with a rangy, athletic frame and her hair chopped into a practical, no-nonsense style. She can provide any of the Rumors the PCs may have missed, though she is very nervous when speaking of Shingen; if all else fails, this can be noticed with an **Investigation / Awareness** (TN 20) roll. Getting her to open up is a bit more difficult as she does not want to speak ill of her superiors – a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (TN 25) roll is necessary to get her to open up about some strange things she’s seen recently. (This roll is not necessary

if she approaches the PCs, as noted below, but carries other consequences with it instead.)

“I am, like most of my family, more comfortable in the wilderness and open air than surrounded by walls. Even in the winter, I take some time to visit the wilds and relax. This last season... I have noticed several disquieting things around Kaiu Shingen-sama’s estate. There are always silly, overwrought tales about Kuni shugenja, but I honestly don’t know what to make of what I’ve seen. The wildlife that should normally be around the area has gone still. I have found slaughtered deer, bodies torn apart but with none of the flesh consumed. After the lake thawed, I found several dozen dead fish floating in the waters just off his property. It’s all unsettling, and I have no idea what to make of it.” Hanae shudders slightly, a look of trepidation and disgust on her face.

She is willing to take the PCs to the area, though not to confront the shugenja without direct orders from her superior. Hanae is a highly skilled hunter who is familiar with the area, so she can locate the place she has noticed the issues (see the “Shingen’s Estate” section of Part Three for specifics).

If the PCs are utterly lacking in direction after their first day in the city, Hanae will eventually approach them herself with her concerns about Shingen. This should be of some assistance in getting them back on track but does come at the cost of giving the shugenja more time to plan and prepare for a confrontation, as noted in his character notes appendix.

The Warden

Kaiu Shingen can likely be located at the governor’s mansion, at least initially. Once he hears that there are representatives from the Emerald Magistrates in the city, he will depart and head for his estate outside of town; this is what will happen if the PCs send Tameyoshi to arrange an audience. Cornering him for an audience in the mansion before he leaves is possible with an **Etiquette (Bureaucracy) / Awareness** roll (TN 20), but doing so results mostly in frustration for the PCs.

An interview with him in the governor’s mansion will have him stalling and uncomfortable. He will be uncooperative and careful of his words, not admitting to his deeds and attempting to avoid any direct lies. **Investigation / Awareness** (TN 20) does give the PCs the distinct impression that he has something to hide, but he should be as evasive as possible. His story is that he was in the area of Kyokai when he saw an armed troop on the road heading toward the fort town

after cover of night; he claims to have warned the fort’s garrison, and they fought off the attackers (who he implies are ronin and bandits, but will avoid directly calling such). Crab PCs who treat his position with the respect he feels it deserves (bearing in mind that nothing to him is more important than the clan’s duty of destroying the Shadowlands) should be given the impression that he isn’t speaking much on the matter because of the nature of his duties, or “operational security” if there are only Crab PCs present for this first conversation. (Even this clan solidarity will still result in roused suspicions from succeeding at the above roll.)

If Shingen is forced into a corner, he will cut the audience short, standing on his Status and relation to the daimyo to get him out of the situation, and retreat to his estate. The PCs have no legal recourse to prevent this, and attempting to do so would constitute assault on the daimyo’s cousin in a Crab municipal building, with consequences involving unamused Hida-trained bushi with tetsubo in addition to Shingen’s magic.

The Daimyo

The PCs may wish to approach the governor or provincial daimyo themselves and circumvent the possibly-corrupt magistrate. Doing so requires waiting for three days after they request an audience; this time can be reduced to a single day with a successful **Etiquette (Bureaucracy) / Awareness** roll with a TN of 40. This will still give them time to pursue other avenues.

If they are just patient enough to wait, they will be granted an audience with Kaiu Yaeko, the provincial daimyo (even if they requested the city governor Kaiu Zentobu). Yaeko is somewhat concerned about the presence of Emerald Magistrate yoriki in her lands, and herself is quite concerned about the missing Crane shipment.

Kaiu Yaeko is a tall woman, though not as massive as most Hida. She wears her formal court robes as comfortably as any of her cousins would their armor, and while her face is composed, there is genuine warmth in her greeting. “Welcome to the Kuda Province, samurai. I am pleased to make your acquaintance, though I hope you understand that I wish it could be under better circumstances. What can I do to be of help to yoriki of the Emerald Magistrates?”

(Even if the PCs did not leave that referral with their request for an audience, she will know who they are; she's looked into the matter before the meeting.)

The PCs can explain their mission at this point; Yaeko will ask intelligent questions, drawing out their initial assumptions and suspicions. If the PCs mention concerns about her cousin, she frowns, but does not immediately deny the possibility as long as they make any attempt to remain polite about it. (Rudeness or implications of collusion on her part will earn a gentle but stern reproof of "I would ask you to remain courteous in my court, samurai." Continuing on that vein will see the audience brought to an end immediately and a loss of G1 Glory for all PCs involved.)

As long as the PCs are reasonably polite when talking about her cousin, Yaeko will hear them out. Convincing her to allow them to interview Shingen does not require a roll – she hopes that he is uninvolved with any chicanery, and thinks that he deserves a chance to prove it. Unfortunately, he is at his estate on the lakeshore and she will not be convinced without testimony to have him arrested. She is willing to give them an order requiring his cooperation, however. If they petition her for permission for armor, she will deny it, believing (and hoping) that violence can be avoided and unwilling to sanction it from the PCs. Non-Crab PCs wearing armor anyway suffer a D1 Honor loss.

Slower, if more certain, this route for access does allow Shingen time to prepare, increasing the difficulty of confronting him as noted in the Appendix.

Part Three: No Peace with the Darkness

Kaiu Shingen's estate is located outside of town, about a half-hour's walk along the lakeshore. There are several samurai estates on the bluffs overlooking the lake, luxury houses built by the Kaiu for higher-ranking samurai and wealthy pilgrims attracted by the Cherry Blossom Festival. Shingen's is not the largest, but is relatively isolated – his nearest neighbor is a quarter mile away. The area around it is wooded and quiet – as they approach, PCs may roll **Hunting / Perception** (TN 20) to realize that it is too quiet, as there is none of the wildlife from the rest of the area within a half-mile of the shugenja's house.

Further investigation into the area will require either a **Hunting / Perception** roll of TN 25 or having Toritaka Hanae's guidance, but allows them to realize

that something has spooked the animals away from the area for quite some time. (Winter is a quiet season, but even then there is some animal activity.) This is because of the oni in the house, though the only sign of that is a few withered deer corpses that have not been disturbed since they were slain three months ago – even the normal carrion eaters have been scared away.

Trying to Commune with the kami on Shingen's estate grounds is somewhat difficult; it is his territory, and he is very familiar with the spirits in the area. One Raise must be called for clarity in order to get any useful answers out of them at all. They blame the state of nature on an "angry hunter" in the area, but cannot speak of its nature beyond that (due to Shingen's influence). Two Raises will tell inquiring PCs that the hunter has been made prisoner.

Shingen's Estate

The grounds of the estate are surrounded by an eight-foot stone wall, forming a rough half-circle around the house and its outbuildings. A fifteen-foot cliff makes up the other boundary, with a lower wall, and looks out over the waters of the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow.

The house is a sprawling three-story manor home with several viewing porches facing out into the garden or over the lake. A low stable stands just inside the gates, though it has obviously not been used in quite some time, and a small outbuilding for servants' quarters is barely visible, tucked into a corner.

The majority of the grounds inside the wall is taken up by an intricate garden. Without any groundskeepers for the winter, however, it has largely died out and the vegetation is blasted and sere. There is a strange construction of weathered shoji screens clustered near one of the house patios, closing in a section of the garden. (The oni has been trapped inside these screens, and Shingen has been gradually drawing it closer over time.)

Scouting

Sneaking onto Shingen's estate is effectively impossible. He has enacted powerful wards to keep trespassers out because of his prisoners (as well as several layers of entrapment on the grounds, that are not quite as effective as he believes), preventing anyone from physically making their way over the wall. Attempting to go under it with magic will likewise prove ineffective, as the earth kami in the area are far more loyal to him than they are to any interlopers and they simply refuse to cooperate with a

shugenja trying to bypass his security measures. Additionally, any PC with a full Rank of Taint trying to climb the wall takes 3k3 damage when they reach the top (this damage ignores Reduction and cannot be reduced with Void Points), and must roll **Athletics / Reflexes** to avoid falling back to the ground and taking another 2k2 Wounds. .

Even so, scouting out the area will give them a general lay of the land and allow them to make **Investigation / Perception** rolls (TN 25) to notice that there is something moving amongst the shoji screens in the garden. Higher rolls (35+) allow them to hear the strange, rattling hiss of the thing reacting to their presence and attention.

Approaching the Warden

When the PCs approach the gate, they will discover that there is no guard or servant on duty. Knocking on the gate or ringing a nearby rusty bell will attract Shingen's attention from the house (assuming he is here), though it will take him a few minutes to come down. As noted above, trying to climb over the gate does not work.

Kaiu Shingen is a burly shugenja in the dark gray and faded blues of his Clan; his wakizashi rides easily on his hip, but he does not bear his spell satchel here in his home. A somewhat haphazard layer of white face paint covers his unshaven jowls, and he frowns at you with a distinct lack of welcome. "What do you want?" he barks, eyes narrowed suspiciously.

If the PCs have an order from Kaiu Yaeko allowing them to interview Shingen, he will grudgingly allow them entrance. (Whatever else he has done, he is a dutiful Crab and will not disobey a direct order.) If they do not, they will need to convince him to talk to them in some fashion. There are several Skills the PCs may use, though the Trait will always be Awareness; Courtier (Manipulation) would be an attempt to persuade or fast-talk him, Sincerity might convince him of their good intentions, Lore: Law could be used to play up their status as yoriki. It is ultimately up to the GM what Skill is most appropriate, depending on the PCs' approach. Shingen is a stubborn man, but not a terribly subtle one, so the TN is 30 (25 if a Crab PC is making the roll). Success gains admittance. (It is worth repeating that the PCs do not have an Order of Appearance and cannot forcefully compel his testimony without some support from the local authorities; this can be pointed out to the players if they get stonewalled here.)

With a disgusted sigh, the shugenja rolls his eyes and casts the gate open wider. "Whatever. Come in." Leading the way toward the house, he mutters, "Remain on the path. We can talk in the main hall, I guess." A stable is visible to the right as you walk, and a garden covers the grounds to the left, plants withered and bare from the winter. A strange grouping of shoji screens blocks off view of much of that side of the house, their wooden frames and paper sides showing a great deal of weather damage.

As the PCs approach the house, they may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** at a TN of 30 to notice something moving through the maze in the garden. No actual glimpses of the creature are visible, but they catch the movement of shadows in directions not explicable by the wind. Closer examination is not possible without causing Shingen to bristle at them (and, if forced, initiate the confrontation), but even at a distance, a few moments more of perusal will allow them to pick out faded symbols painted on the screens. **Spellcraft / Perception** (TN 25) allows the PC to recognize symbols intended for warding, though not enough detail can be made out at a distance to gain any specifics beyond that.

If the PCs had brought Crab guards along with them (due to Tameyoshi being along, for example), then they will wait outside the house, nervously eyeing the garden. (They do not recognize the danger, but their instincts are warning them of something.)

Failure to gain entry peacefully will cause Shingen to tell them to leave; if they refuse, he will try to slam the door in their face. It can be forced open with a Raw **Strength** roll at a TN of 25, but doing so causes Shingen to cast Wall of Earth to give him time to retreat to his house. The spell has a duration of ten minutes, so they can simply wait it out and follow.

Interior of the Mansion

Shingen's house is a beautiful, well-designed manor that has lacked the services of a maid for the last four months. The shugenja is not a fastidious man under the best of circumstances, and has not wanted even any servants around to disturb him (or witness what is going on). The main room has clothes, dishes, and furniture strewn haphazardly about; Shingen will unroll a tatami mat with a foot and pull a table down from where it leans upright against a column to present a form of hospitality. A few other small tables or writing desks are covered with scrolls – including Shingen's ofuda and notes – and various tools or jars of strange concoctions. The hall has been divided into one large room, with shoji screens blocking out

sections. A screen about twenty feet from the impromptu seating conceals the bamboo cage Shingen has summoned to contain the tsukai.

The shugenja is brusque and dismissive, but cannot retreat any further. Shingen wants the PCs to leave him alone, and would prefer not to attack them – but his temper will get the better of him when he is pressed. Over the course of the conversation, he will continue to hold to his cover story (prompting **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** rolls at a TN of 20 for the suspicious). After the first exchange, the tsukai behind the screen works the gag out of his mouth and starts to speak, begging to be killed. This is detectable by the PCs with a Raw **Perception Roll** at a TN of 40 – success initially just lets them hear “a voice”, though subsequent repetitions allow them to make out the words “kill me.” Acknowledging deeds or actions behind a shoji screen is a minor breach of etiquette in Rokugan, and causes an Honor loss of D4, but in this situation, the PCs may well choose to ignore the proprieties. The sounds repeat as the conversation continues, with the TN lowering by 5 each time, until the PCs choose to do something about it. Shingen will note it around the 20 range, and should begin to lose his temper (shouting “Be silent!” directed not necessarily at the PCs, for example).

Eventually, the PCs will hear the tsukai, but if they choose to ignore the sounds, they will have to provoke Shingen in another fashion. Directly accusing him of lying is not really enough – he’s not concerned with their opinion of him, he just wants them to leave him alone – but being dismissive of his concerns for the Taint, or the Crab’s duties in general, will cause him to lose his temper.

If he is present, Yasuki Tameyoshi is willing to let the PCs do what they need to, but will not force anything forward himself. He is concerned that he will have to live with Shingen after the PCs have left if nothing comes of this, and is not willing to antagonize the short-tempered shugenja any more than he has to.

Forcing the issue of the sounds they are hearing from behind the screen causes the aforementioned D4 Honor Loss, and meets a flat, false denial from Shingen that anything is amiss. If they refuse to let the issue die, he scornfully informs them that they would not understand. Threatening to search the house, with or without support from the local magistrate, will send him into a fury, as will actually starting to do so – moving things on to the “Confrontation” section below.

Behind the screen, you see a withered, emaciated man huddled in a bamboo cage. He has obviously been tortured, burns and bruises covering his body, all of them visible since the only clothing he wears is a foul breechclout. A cloth gag has been worked out of his mouth to hang limply around his neck, and he turns his face to you for only a moment before flinching his eyes to the floor. One of those eyes is a normal dark brown, but the other is a swollen, glowing yellow orb. “Kill me,” he croaks, shuddering and flinching.

A Polite Chat?

It is possible for the PCs to avoid a fight here, but only if they are respectful of Shingen’s position and station, demonstrate a willingness to let him do his job, and explain the problems facing the Crab as a result of the missing rice shipment calmly and without casting blame. Many players would have a difficult time treating a suspected murderer in so gentle a fashion, so it is not terribly likely, but it is possible. Avoiding his wrath and pointing out the larger consequences for the attack requires both a **Sincerity / Willpower** roll (TN 35) and a **Courtier / Awareness** roll (TN 40). Doing so, however, prevents his hostility and convinces him to come clean with his daimyo.

The shugenja ponders your words for a moment, then nods slowly. “Let me take care of something, then I’ll come with you.” He rises and approaches the shoji screen opposite the door, sliding it open to reveal a bamboo cage containing an emaciated man. The ragged man raises his face, hair falling away from his eyes – one of which is a swollen yellow orb – and croaks out, “Kill me.”

If the PCs do not react to this, Shingen simply raises a hand and clenches it into a fist; in response, the bamboo of the cage twists into sharp spears and drive themselves through the man’s body. A triumphant shriek goes up outside, and the shugenja calmly turns, hand on his sword. “It is essentially immune to magic. Steel can harm it, though it will take some effort.” The PCs should not get a lot of time to react before the oni bursts in to try to kill Shingen.

Confrontation

When the PCs force the issue, Shingen will summon any prepared defenses (as noted in the Appendix) and move to defend his house. This also attracts the attention of the oni from the outside.

“Fools!” Shingen rages, uncaring what he sounds like. “You have no idea what dangers you face!” He snatches up a scroll, and his blade appears in his other hand as quickly as any bushi’s. A mocking shriek

sounds from outside the house, an alien, inhuman voice rattling in your ears. The shugenja clenches his teeth, and he prepares for battle.

The oni is not actually all that powerful, though it is highly resistant to most damage. The combination of Invulnerability and limited Wounds means that it can be whittled down by concerted effort. It will leave, if it can, once both Shingen and the tsukai are dead (it cannot pass through the exterior wards while Shingen is alive, and it wants to reclaim its power from Kaito).

If Yasuki Tameyoshi is present, he yelps in consternation and loudly proclaims his intention to go rouse the daimyo's forces, before running for the door. Any Crab bushi brought along will have been lost in the garden, having been lured there by the oni and confused by the wardings Shingen placed there. At the GM's discretion, they can arrive after three Rounds to help low-power tables (doing so largely ends the encounter, but the players do deserve to be rewarded for working with the local authorities as they were instructed).

Shingen does have a few pots containing jade powder sitting on tables in the main hall; if the players seem demoralized by the Invulnerability and don't realize that the creature is actually very fragile, they may roll **Investigation (Notice) or Lore: Shadowlands / Perception** (TN 15) to notice the substance. Alternately, Shingen can simply tell them about it; however hostile he is to the PCs, he hates the oni more.

If a PC does possess a nemuranai weapon, then the oni will do its utmost to avoid direct confrontation with them. It has to kill Shingen in order to escape, but it doesn't really care too much about the PCs except as a chance to kill something before it leaves.

If Shingen goes Down or dies, the cage surrounding the tsukai will burst open. Kaito has been tortured for the last four months, so he probably has no impact on the combat except for providing a threat in the mind of the players; his Earth is effectively 1, and the only action he can take is to continuously plead for someone to kill him.

Kaito no Oni

This misshapen creature looks something like a cross between an orangutan and a lizard; moving mostly on short, uneven hind legs, it stands a little less than four feet tall but has long arms ending in powerful claws. Pale translucent green scales cover its skin, and it has a wide mouth filled with short, sharp teeth that can open bizarrely wide. It has one glowing yellow eye, while the other is dark; if Kaito dies, the dark eye begins to flicker into life and it will grow more powerful. When struck, weapons do not penetrate its flesh, though bruising is obvious under the scales and it cries out in pain.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 3	Water 4
Reflexes 4	Willpower 5		
Initiative:	acts during	Attack: 8k3 (claws,	
Reactions;	does not roll	Complex)	
Init for this encounter			
Armor TN: 25 (20 for	Damage: 6k3 (claws		
low)	[5k2 for low tables]		

Wounds: equal to the number of players at the table plus two

Taint Rank: 7.0

Skills: Athletics 4, Hunting 3, Stealth 3

Special Abilities:

- Fear 2
- Invulnerability (weapons only do one Wound per attack)
- Spirit Eater: when a spell is cast at Kaito no Oni, it automatically eats the spirit, negating the effects of the magic, including Jade spells. This applies to area effects as well. It can also eat a spirit powering an ongoing effect, though this takes a Simple Action. When it eats a spirit, it heals 1 Wound, unless the spell was Jade (it coughs up black smoke and wheezes a bit, but the spell has no effect at all). (For low-rank tables, it does not heal from magic.)
- Oni Bond: if Kaito dies, the oni is freed from him and will begin to consume his soul. Every Round thereafter, it increases its attack dice pool by +1k0. When it has 10 dice in its attack pool, it starts increasing its damage by +1k0 each Round as well.

Aftermath

Once Shingen is dealt with, the PCs have the luxury of searching his estate (if he is alive, he will not provide any impediment or assistance). Two of the wagons have been stored in the stable, with the entire rice shipment stacked around it; the barrels show signs of having been closely examined, but are intact and unspoiled. The swords, weapons, and distinctive belongings of the Crane samurai members of the

caravan are stored in a closet off Shingen's upstairs library. (Finding the wagons and Crane samurai's personal effects does not require a roll, since the PCs can search until they find it and even if they couldn't, the magistrate or his yoriki would turn them up when they examine the scene for themselves.)

Part Four: No Truce with Jigoku

After the PCs have confronted Shingen, they will almost certainly have either captured or killed him. It will be very difficult to learn the truth of what happened without testimony from Shingen (and is impossible for the PCs in the scope of this module), but having the physical evidence of Shingen's involvement from his estate is enough to prove that he was involved in some fashion. Alive, he will be required to give testimony (allowing the PCs a chance to question him); dead, the daimyo must find another way to demonstrate her clan's innocence of the deed.

The Daimyo's Court

The PCs are called upon by the provincial daimyo to present their testimony against Shingen in her court. This is intended to be a fairly intense role-playing scene, though the PCs have the option of influencing the daimyo's decision with both their words and their Skill Rolls.

Kaiu Yaeko is a stern-faced woman in her early thirties, though the circumstances of the day no doubt contribute to her demeanor. Yasuki Tameyoshi sits at her left, with Kaiu Shingen on her right. Her voice is grave, but lacking in hostility, as she addresses you. "It is my understanding that we must discuss matters of importance for my clan, my lands, and my family. I must hear your testimony, as well as that of any other relevant parties-" here she levels a tense look at Shingen, continuing, "-so that I may pass appropriate judgement. Speak, samurai."

Yaeko is an unhappy daimyo. She was responsible for giving Shingen his current position when she was named the provincial daimyo five years ago. She has been aware that he was not happy to be away from the Wall, but had hoped he would settle down in time, and honestly believed that a more peaceful appointment would be good for him. She doesn't want to think the worse off her cousin, but neither will she allow her affection to prevent her from making a hard choice. Her decision has been made, but it is not final, and the PCs may have the option of changing her mind through their play.

Once the PCs have given their testimony, there are probably still unanswered questions. Shingen should not have conclusively admitted his guilt yet, and Yaeko is not willing to subject him to torture to elicit a confession. As the PCs don't have an Order of Appearance, they have no legal standing to demand such measures, so they need to rely on less-enhanced forms of interrogation. If they don't begin questioning Shingen on their own, Tameyoshi will quietly suggest it.

Shingen remains convinced that he did what had to be done. He took no joy in the deaths of the Crane, but he honestly believes it was preferable to allowing them to potentially spread the Taint. He does have a harder time justifying the destruction of the wayside inn and its inhabitants, but by that point things had been getting out of control; confronting him with this does shake his assurance, but he cannot let himself think that he was wrong to do whatever was necessary.

Shingen is also easily provoked; any rudeness or dismissal of his worth is met with hostility in return. He has no patience for the way that Crab are often treated in the rest of the Empire, and expresses utter contempt for anyone who thinks they may know more about the Shadowlands than he does (unless they are Crab, in which case he does believe that they may know something about it, but remains confident of his superior understanding). Note that he does not think that the Jade Magistrates are knowledgeable enough to be responsible for their duty, and even believes that the Crab allowing people with low, non-contagious levels of the Taint to live is a mistake.

His initial testimony blames the tsukai for the deaths of the Crane, though at this point his lack of skill with outright lies means that few are likely to believe him (if asked for, an **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** roll with a TN of 15 will see that he is lying; the TN is increased to 25 for Gullible PCs). The fact that he lies about it, however, does not prove that he was responsible - the PCs absolutely need some form of positive testimony, and "he's lying" does not count. PCs who wish to challenge him to a duel should keep in mind that, as a shugenja, he would have a champion, so they would at best be dooming an innocent Crab bushi to die - Yaeko would much rather find another solution. (Shugenja PCs who think of challenging him to taryu-jiai should bear in mind that he is much more powerful than they are...)

However, Shingen is not a smooth or persuasive man; confronting him directly about his deeds in a venue

that he cannot leave (in front of his liege and cousin) will push him to admit that he was responsible for the deaths of the Crane, the villagers, and the peasants at the inn (as well as, by extension, the Crab bushi who died in the fighting - pointing this out to him as well does rattle him, though he classifies all the deaths as collateral damage).

“There was a tsukai, an abomination. It needed to be destroyed; even if that wasn’t my duty in these lands, I could not have turned away. I... regret that I had not found it in time to prevent it having the opportunity to spread its foulness in Kyokai, but there was no way I could take the chance that it had done so. I did what had to be done. I take no joy in it, but it was necessary. The villagers, the Crane... there was no way to confirm they were still pure, so I gave them the only peace I could. The garrison, I arranged to send back to the Wall so they could be under closer observation than I could provide. But they, at least, are Crab; they know the risks and the signs. I could not take the chance that the darkness would spread into the Empire.” His voice is steady, though his eyes burn with hate for the force he has dedicated his life to fighting against.

If the players notice or ask, Shingen had no proof that the Crane were Tainted; knowing that low levels of the Taint are undetectable, he chose to assume that they were, claiming that the “risk was too great.” (They were not, nor were any of the villagers. It absolutely could have happened, but it did not.)

If asked why he kept the rice and the personal effects, Shingen was still trying to decide what to do with them. Destroying the swords and other effects in a fashion that would absolutely prevent them from being a hazard was beyond him alone, and he did not trust anyone else to assist with the task. As far as the rice goes, even he recognized the value it represents and, having examined it grain by grain over the long winter months looking for morei no oni (the tiny grain demons that can disguise their eggs as grains of rice), was still trying to conclusively prove it was safe for consumption. (A task his obsession largely doomed to failure.)

If questioned on why someone so dedicated to destroying the Shadowlands would keep the tsukai alive (let alone the oni), he is somewhat less comfortable, but was trying to figure out a way to banish it given its inherent resistance to magic. “I believe it was a powerful spirit of Jigoku, constrained in its manifestation in the mortal realm by the weakness of its summoner. The chance to gain some

understanding of its qualities in a less-dangerous fashion could not be passed by.”

Once Shingen has confessed, Yaeko shakes her head. Though she looks as though she would like to close her eyes, she refuses to flinch away from her duty. “I bear some of the blame for this; I was the one who pulled Shingen-san away from his true place on the Wall. I had hoped that a calmer post would balance his spirit. Instead of peace for him and my people, I brought doom.” Shingen’s lips thin, but he remains silent. Yaeko’s spine remains straight, though doubt enters her eyes for the first time. “I will send him where he belongs, back to the Wall. There, his power and drive can serve the Empire and hopefully he will be able to atone for his crimes.” She nods, once. “I will offer my own apology for Doji Makibesu-sama, to cleanse the dishonor from my family.”

If there is a Crab bushi at the table, she will ask for them to stand as her second (highest Honor if more than one); she will ask a non-Crab if one has struck her as particularly honorable. Yaeko is more than willing to commit seppuku to prevent the consequences of her cousin’s actions from coming down on the Crab – but this allows Shingen to, if not walk free, at least return to the duty he most wishes. However, the PCs may be able to talk her out of this course of action. A rational appeal that amounts to more than simply denigrating Shingen’s actions, such as pointing out the Emerald Magistrate’s duty to oversee criminal proceedings between clans or mention that Shingen would not be significantly constrained on the Wall to avoid future atrocities, can allow the PCs to roll **Sincerity / Awareness** at a TN of 30. (If any of the PCs is publicly known to be Tainted, the TN of this roll is reduced by 5, as Yaeko will have seen her cousin’s attitude toward them first-hand.)

Success on this roll changes her mind; she will instead hold him in custody for the Emerald Magistrates to determine an appropriate punishment – likely execution, given the breadth of crimes committed. She will not turn him over to the PCs, but instruct them to take word of the situation to their magistrate. In either case, she dismisses the PCs from her court:

The daimyo nods in farewell. “I cannot thank you for your service, samurai, but I do not fault you for it either. Carry the Fortunes, and convey my respect to Bayushi Tamaki-san.”

Eyes burning, though turned down, Shingen growls, “I did what I had-“ but Yaeko coldly interrupts before he finishes his oft-repeated justification.

“You have done. Enough.” Silent, the shugenja bows his head as you depart.

The Daimyo’s Court: Inquest Edition

If Shingen was killed by the PCs (or the oni), they will be called upon to explain their actions before the daimyo. Yasuki Tameyoshi will have examined the estate and discovered what evidence was there to be found. In this instance, Yaeko is even less happy with the circumstances.

Kaiu Yaeko is a grim woman in her early thirties, the loss of her cousin clearly weighing on her. Her eyes are iron as she gazes down upon you from her dais, the local clan magistrate Yasuki Tameyoshi kneeling quietly to the side. “Speak, samurai, and tell me what you have done. And why.”

Here, there is little for the PCs to do but explain themselves and their actions. Trying to lie requires rolling **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** at a TN of 45; failure on this roll gives the PCs a full Rank of Infamy as the provincial daimyo spreads the word of their murder of her cousin through the Empire. Their temporary position protects them from legal consequence, at least, but a Status 6 samurai has a lot of contacts, even if they are a Crab. This does assume the party is united on a false story – if there is conflicting testimony, the GM should allow each side to roll **Contested Sincerity / Awareness**. If the false side rolls higher and also beats a TN of 55 (higher because of the conflict), then she believes them and no one gains Infamy. If the honest side wins, they do not suffer the Infamy and the false side does.

If the PCs tell a story that at least approximates the truth, they must roll **Sincerity / Awareness** at a TN of 30. (The Honesty Emphasis applies at the GM’s discretion, depending on how self-serving their story is.)

If the PCs cannot succeed at one of these Sincerity rolls, then Yaeko will not allow them to take the Crane samurai’s personal effects with them out of her lands. “I will turn them over myself.” There is little the PCs can do to prevent this and survive, as she does have a legion of Crab troops within ready call.

Kaiu Yaeko glares down at you for several long minutes, silent as the grave. “Inform Bayushi Tamaki that I will cleanse the shame of this dishonor from my family’s name. You will leave these lands today, so that this message will travel to her swiftly.”

Conclusion

Once they have their answers, the PCs should make their way to Yasuki Yashiki to report in with Bayushi Tamaki. The journey is uneventful, and a weeks’ travel sees them there.

Assuming they have the personal effects of the Crane, Tamaki is happy with their results. “This will make my negotiations that much simpler.” Having the truth about the attack is even better, from her point on view; she would prefer that Shingen be turned over to the Emerald Magistrates for judgment, but being able to offer either him or the token of Yaeko’s seppuku to the Crane should allow her to defuse the situation.

If the PCs did not receive testimony from Shingen (likely because they killed him), Tamaki is less pleased but the physical evidence of his deeds does indicate his involvement. She will petition the Crab to allow her to interview the survivors of the garrison at Kyokai, but lacking a single individual to place all of the blame on will lead to greater problems between the clans. The Crane have no reason to trust that Shingen’s actions were unsanctioned, and the Crab are unlikely to respond to such suspicion with equanimity.

In any event, Tamaki will thank the PCs for their service, and send them back to their duties.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module:	1 XP
Good Roleplaying:	+1 XP
Discovered Shingen's Involvement:	+1 XP
Defeated Shingen or the Kaito no Oni:	+1 XP
Total Possible Experience:	4 XP

Favors

If the PCs were able to correctly provide Bayushi Tamaki with the fate of the rice shipment, they each gain 1 Favor. (This is highly unlikely if the PCs were not able to secure Kaiu Shingen's testimony.)

Honor

If a PC assists Kaiu Yaeko with her seppuku, they gain H8; this is increased by one if the PC is Crab (even if they would otherwise not gain any Honor for having a high Honor Rank, they can still gain that one point).

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

Successfully completing the mission provided to them by the Emerald Magistrate gives the PCs a reward of G5. This is lowered to G3 if the PCs do not provide Tamaki with the personal effects of the Crane samurai.

Allies and Enemies

If the PCs allowed or encouraged Kaiu Yaeko's seppuku and Kaiu Shingen survived, they gain Shingen as a Sworn Enemy (4 points).

GM Reporting

- 1) Did Shingen provide the truth?
- 2) Did Yaeko commit seppuku?
- 3) Did the PCs return the Crane belongings to the Crane?

The GM must report this information by (6/17/2018) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: the Driven Shugenja

Kaui Shingen

A powerfully-built shugenja standing a little under six feet in height, Shingen is generally ill-kempt in appearance, with scraggly hair, wrinkled clothes, and a simplified mask of white paint haphazardly applied to his unshaven jowls. His attitude matches his appearance, and he has basically no patience for the social niceties. His temper is barely kept in check by his strong will, but his frustration with being away from the Wall and the Crab's eternal war against the Shadowlands is palpable. Shingen forgets propriety at the drop of a hat when thwarted, or worse, when confronted by the Taint: he thunders insults, freely uses profanity, and shows no reluctance to directly broach the taboo topic of the Shadowlands even in open court. If any of the PCs are openly Tainted, taking their Jade Petal Tea or not, he will subject them to verbal abuse and hatred at any opportunity.

Air 3 (Reflexes 4)	Earth 5	Fire 4	Water 3 Strength 4	Void 4
Honor 1.2		Status 3.5		Glory 5.8

Initiative: 8k3+5 (9k4+5)

Attack: 9k4e (wakizashi, Complex) or by spell

Armor TN: 20 / 32 in Defense Stance
(25 / 38 in Defense Stance)

Damage: 7k2 (wakizashi) or 5k5 (EBS)

Reduction: 0, initially

Wounds: 25 (+0), 35 (+3), 45 (+5), 55 (+10), 65 (+15), 75 (+20), 85 (Down, +40), 95 (Dead)

(Earth 8) Wounds: 40 (+0), 56 (+3), 72 (+5), 88 (+10), 104 (+15), 120 (+20), 136 (Down, +40), 152 (Dead)

School/Rank: Kuni Shugenja 5 (4 if low-rank table; reduce Spell Casting Rolls to 10k5 Earth, 9k4 Fire, 8k3 Water)

Technique: *Gaze Into Shadow:* +1k0 to all Spell Casting Rolls when the target is any non-human creature, and any spell that inflicts damage inflicts an additional +1k1 damage when used against a target who possesses the Shadowlands Taint. Gains a Free Raise on any spell with the Jade keyword.

Affinity/Deficiency: Earth/Air

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon; (Earth:10k6) Jade Strike*, Earth Becomes Sky*, Force of Will, Be the Mountain*, Bonds of Ningen-do, Essence of Earth, Armor of the Emperor, Earthquake, Tomb of Jade*, Wall of Earth*, Major Binding, Essence of Jade; (Fire: 10k4) Extinguish, Fires of Purity*, Hurried Steps*, The Fist of Osano-Wo, Light of the Sun; (Water: 9k3) Path to Inner Peace, Reflections of P'an Ku, Reversal of Fortunes

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Defense 6 (7), Kenjutsu (Wakizashi) 5, Lore: Shadowlands 8, Lore: Theology 4, Spellcraft 6

Battle 5, Engineering 4, Etiquette 2, Heavy Weapons 4, Hunting 5, Intimidation 5, Investigation 4, Jiujujutsu 5, Medicine 4, Sincerity 1

Mastery Abilities: +3 to ATN while in Defense Stance, (may make a Simple Action while in Full Defense); +1k0 sword damage, may ready swords as a Free Action; +1k0 Spell Casting Rolls; +5 Initiative,

Advantages/Disadvantages: (Strength of the Earth), Wary / Driven: Destroy the Shadowlands

Shingen is a very powerful shugenja, and is intended to be a challenging fight for a full table of PCs. If the table is particularly high-ranked (half of them School Rank 3, an oversize table, or otherwise at the GM's discretion), he should have the higher stats in parentheses. If he has time to prepare for the possibility of a fight on his estate, he will start the combat with Reversal of Fortunes and Be the Mountain (the spells go into effect at the start of combat; fighting a prepared shugenja in their base of power when they've had plenty of time and paranoias to ready themselves is not to be undertaken casually). His most effective spells (Essence of Earth to increase his Earth to 8, for example) should only be used at particularly powerful or oversize tables, however, as a high-Earth shugenja, the PCs should have to do a fair amount of work to actually kill him. Shingen does not go quietly into that good night, he will spend Void to reduce damage if necessary to remain alive. Killing him should not be an accident unless the PCs and players are showing no concern for it at all.

On the other end, if the table is under strength, there is no need to hammer them particularly hard; Shingen is fairly arrogant and will hold his greatest powers in reserve.

Appendix #2: Other NPCs

Most of the other NPCs appearing in the module should not require full statblocks, but here are a few guidelines on them, in addition to possibly-important stats should they become necessary.

Kaiu Yaeko

The provincial daimyo of the Kuda Province is a dedicated, honorable woman in her early 30s. Her talents in leadership and logistics earned her position six years ago when the last daimyo of the critically-important agricultural province died without an heir. She is glad to be away from the front lines, not because she is a coward, but because she enjoys using her talents to create rather than destroy; the impending Lion assault has her concerned and focused on seeing to her lands' defenses.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 4	Void 3
Awareness 4	Willpower 5	Intelligence 4		
Honor 6.9		Status 6.0		Glory 4.8

School/Rank: Kaiu Engineer 4

Skills: Battle (Mass Combat) 6, Courtier 4, Engineering (Construction) 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 6, Investigation 3, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Sincerity 4

Advantage: Leadership

Yasuki Tameyoshi

Clever and efficient, Tameyoshi is by no means the bravest samurai of the Crab but is quite good at his job. His cowardice is known to his superiors, but they appreciate his results. He is dedicated to keeping the peace in his quiet town, and does not see a problem with earning a little profit in the process.

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3	Void 3
Honor 3.8		Status 3.0		Glory 3.6

School/Rank: Hiruma Bushi 4

Skills: Athletics 3, Commerce (Appraisal) 7, Courtier 4, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 5, Investigation 5, Hunting 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Lore: Underworld 4, Stealth 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Crafty / Greedy, Failure of Courage

Toritaka Hanae

Hanae is pretty much what she appears to be – a slightly awkward young woman more comfortable out doors than in court.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 2
Reflexes 3				
Honor 5.1		Status 2.0		Glory 2.4

School/Rank: Toritaka Bushi 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Etiquette 1, Hunting 6, Investigation 4, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Sincerity 1, Stealth 4

Advantages/Disadvantages: Silent / Antisocial I