

# **The Price of Failure**

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

Month of the Dragon, 1341 (Spring)

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Travel, Roleplay, Combat

The word of the Emperor is as the word of Heaven. For better or for worse.

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

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

## Adventure Background and Summary

The Emperor of Rokugan, Toturi X, is one of the more read Emperors when it comes to history outside of the Emerald Empire. It is a consequence of his love of other cultures that surround Ningen-Do and the Emperor of Rokugan. It was in the pursuit of this knowledge that he discovered a small bit of ancient history tucked away in the imperial archives: the history of the Yobanjin. Upon learning that the Yobanjin were originally from the land that would become Rokugan, Shin-Zhu resolved that if it was in his power to bring them into Rokugan, he would do so.

Shin-Zhu originally discovered this a year ago. When he brought the information that he found to Makibesu, Makibesu counseled that it might be wise to send someone to the Yobanjin territories, that they might be able to discern if such a thing was even a thing of interest to the yobanjin themselves. Shin-Zhu saw wisdom in this, and quietly arranged for the Asako daimyo to send a young Asako woman to meet with the Yobanjin.

The meetings, ostensibly, went well enough. Asako Tomoko, the chosen representative, was a descendant of those who originally governed Yobanjin Mura. Her generally calm demeanor made her an exceptional choice to make those inroads, not to mention the fact that she actually spoke the language. The council of elders of the Yobanjin were skeptical at first, but the words of Batul, chieftan of the Carriers of Fire, persuaded the tribes to give the matter a chance. The tribes agreed.

One year later, and word has come to the Emperor of Rokugan that the Yobanjin were willing to meet to see the Empire that Shin-Zhu believes that they could become part of. Shin-Zhu, without consulting his Emerald Champion, excitedly announced the meeting to the Imperial Court... who did not in any way share

his own excitement. Three different Shisha were chosen to lead the group of Samurai that would meet with the Yobanjin. All three committed Kanshi in protest. Finally, a young Shisha named Miya Hachi agreed to take on the task, and a group of Samurai were sent to join him.

The yobanjin are at best skeptical of the potential of the Rokugan's call. If this meeting were to go poorly, it would be a bad look upon an Emperor who already does not have any particularly successful ventures to his name...

## 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.

- Language: Yobanjin

### 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. PCs lose 2 points of glory at the beginning of this module. 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 5+(Taint Rank\*5).

## Crafting

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

## Preparation Techniques

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

## Ronin Survival

Life is difficult for ronin in the Empire at the best of times. PC ronin are no exception to this. At the start of the module, a PC ronin must roll **Hunting (Survival) / Stamina** at a TN 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 middle of the month of the Dragon finds you in the Imperial City, Otsan Uchi. Snow is still melting off the top of some of the nearby buildings, but the sky is clear and the weather crisp and mild. Indeed, the Sun shines brightly over the city, a good sign of favor from the Heavens on such a beautiful day.

Normally, you would have an inn arranged by your Lord. However, your path this time takes you a different way. Towards the Forbidden City.

The PCs travel to the Forbidden City under the direct command of their Family daimyo, to answer a request made by the Emperor of Rokugan, Toturi X. If PCs are curious as to what would have caused them to specifically be chosen, explain that because of their previous experience in handling these sorts of odd requests, their Daimyo have decided they are the best for the job.

Entering the Forbidden City is not a swift process. Seppun Guardsmen pour over the PCs travel papers exhaustively, and ask questions about their business besides. Still, once they seem satisfied that none of the PCs are assassins in disguise, one of the Seppun steps away from the guard post to lead the PCs deeper into the Imperial City.

The grand doors of the Imperial Palace open slowly to welcome you. The Imperial Guard post themselves in flanking positions around you, leading you into the large, winding Imperial Palace. The guards lead you through a dizzying number of twists and turns, almost as if they were intentionally trying to prevent you from being able to get a good understanding of where you are.

This insistence on taking roundabout ways to a destination lasts for several minutes before stopping in front of a single door, somewhat distant from anything else in the palace. One of them moves to open the door and bids you to enter. Inside is a large meeting room, with a full meal and tea already sitting at the table. It is unoccupied for the moment, save for two people dressed in unimpressive brown kimono. The first one is [Description of Kyouji and Ryoko]. The pair of Ronin bow to you as you enter, waiting for you to bow and acknowledge them before they rise. “Ah, Samurai-samas,” Kyouji speaks with a cheerful voice, “I am glad to see that this... whatever it is... will be joined by such august persons.”

As the PCs get comfortable, Kyouji will take the opportunity to encourage PCs who may not know each other to introduce themselves. He is not particularly pushy on the matter – he is a Ronin, after all – but does try to at least encourage some amount of camaraderie in the people who will be working together for what sounds to be some amount of time.

If asked about the nature of the duties being assigned, Kyouji admits that he has not been told anything yet.

If pressed, Ryoko will note that the Imperials were looking for ronin to serve as guards for what was described as a “long trip,” but that no other details were provided.

After about an hour of conversation and tea, the door opens again. Entering is a slim young man, no older than his mid-twenties, wearing the Mon of the Miya. He smiles at the assembled samurai, bowing with a certain level of practiced grace before slipping into the room. Just behind him, several servants enter and set down trays of food on the table. “Ah, Samurai-samas, I am glad to see that you already have made yourselves comfortable,” he glances over to the Ronin, who are eyeing the food presented on the table as if they had not eaten in days, then continues. “My name is Miya Hachi, the... acting head Shisha under the guidance of the Imperial Herald Himself, Miya Nobuhiko. I am honored to be in the presence of such august persons.” Noting that willpower has appeared to give out to need and that Ryoko had grabbed a piece of fruit off one of the trays, Hachi shakes his head and chuckles. “Please, let us eat. We can discuss the purpose of your presence once you have been properly refreshed, and the stresses of the day have calmed.”

Hachi will ask pointed questions to each PC. Largely, these will have to do with their experiences in Balishnimpur or their opportunities to meet with some of the more august personages of the Empire. In particular, he is interested in learning more about their experiences with Toturi Kazetora. If asked about his curiosity regarding Kazetora, he will chuckle in reply. “Kazetora-san and I have known each other for many years, Samurai-san. Before his father’s death, he and I used to discuss the issues that plagued the Empire and how we might be able to solve them all. You know, the things that people discuss in their youth.” If someone expresses that this was not something that was often discussed in their youth, Hachi will seem quite surprised, but will not comment on it further.

Once everyone has eaten and etiquette observed, Hachi takes a breath and speaks. “Samurai-sans, I do not wish to step around this issue, so I wish to explain our purpose as efficiently as I may. The Emperor is, as we are learning, something of a student of history. In his studies, he seems to have discovered a historical notation that links the Yobanjin tribes that live north in the Mountains outside our borders to us. In his excitement to have learned such a... fascinating discovery, he has decreed that messages be sent out inviting the tribes to take their place as people of Rokugan... as Samurai.”

Waiting for the reactions to subside before continuing, Hachi takes a breath. “This decision has not been... popular among the Samurai of the Imperial Court. But the Word of the Emperor is law, and if it is his wish to see the Yobanjin join Rokugan, then it is my duty to do everything in my power to see his will done. As such, we will be meeting the leaders of one of these tribes, a...Bah-Tuhl? Of the tribe known as the Carriers of the Fire. It is our duty to provide he and his chosen representatives through the northern part of the Empire, so that he might see the lands that his people could one day join.” He takes a deep breath. “In light of this, your official duties are to serve as my yojimbo. Beyond the obvious duties of being required to assist in my protection for the duration of this duty, you are being asked as well to interact with these... yobanjin. It is our Emperor’s hope that you may be able to teach them enough of our ways as to entice them to bring theirs into the fold of Rokugan.”

Hachi takes a breath and continues once more. “It is important, Samurai-sans, to stress that we are protecting these Yobanjin as much as guiding them. Though their ways are strange, attacking them without true cause is tantamount to betraying the Emperor, and will be dealt with appropriately.”

Hachi has no doubts that, at the least, the Samurai will have some questions on the matter, and Hachi will gladly answer as best he can.

“Do we know how many Yobanjin there will be?”

“Not an exact number. Our notes requested that the initial meeting stay with fairly low numbers, but just as we are bringing Samurai of our own, I would not be surprised if Bah-Tuhl brings half a dozen of his closest warriors with him.”

“What if they attack us?”

“If we are personally attacked, the Emperor has given us leave to defend ourselves. However, violence against them is to be treated as a last resort. We are trying to treat with these people, after all, and the Emperor has decreed them to be guests of the Throne.”

“Why were we chosen for this?”

“For better or worse, you have developed some reputation for treating with Gaijin, some of you even in constructive ways. There is something to be said about being able to perform a duty despite... reservations, and the Emperor is counting on your ability to do exactly that.”

“Where are we meeting them?”

“We will be riding to Phoenix lands, to the ruins of an old village where the Phoenix used to apparently do regular trade with the Yobanjin. From there, we will be showing them around the Dragon Heart Plains, and perhaps moving into Dragon Lands, should the Yobanjin have determined they wish to see more. I have been given explicit instructions, however, not to take them any further south than the Tonbo Border. Too much room for misunderstanding, as I am sure you could surmise.”

“Does the Emperor intend to give them our lands?”

“The Emperor has no intent on depriving the Great Clans of their lands. Instead, he would seek to have a clan take them in as vassals, that they may learn our ways properly.”

“How did this meeting get arranged?”

“The Phoenix had vassals that once dealt with the Yobanjin on something of a regular basis. Some of their vassals maintained the knowledge base that was maintained there, and one of them was sent out to treat with them. It was due to this success that this meeting was arranged.”

“Who is this Samurai?”

Her name is Asako Tomoko. She is a Courtier of some skill, though no great renown. Apparently she is descended from those who once tended to Yobanjin Mura, and has kept some of the records still alive.

Once you have had your chances to ask questions or express reservations, Hachi rises and bows. “I would advise a good night’s sleep. We will be riding hard for the next few days.” Hachi steps out the door, and servants step in almost immediately after to remove empty plates and show you to your rooms.

The next morning, Hachi meets you just outside the north gate of Otosan Uchi. Kyouji and Ryoko are already there, with pack mules and horses at the ready.

Hachi approaches you and bows swiftly, somehow managing a polite smile. “I am glad to see that you are well rested and ready for this... duty. Please, there is much riding to do, and I would prefer to rest in a village and not a tent tonight.”

The journey from the Imperial City to the northern lands of the Phoenix is time consuming, but ultimately uneventful. The PCs are very clearly expected in every city that they stop in, with the finest rooms available provided for them as they arrive.

Unfortunately, because of what has been determined business of an urgent nature, the PCs are given little time to truly appreciate the area around them.

### Rumors

The following information is available with a Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness roll. Phoenix PCs receive a free raise on this roll.

- 10: Several Phoenix Samurai are disgruntled at the idea of Yobanjin in Phoenix lands. Even at the best of times, the Yobanjin never had any access to any significant part of Rokugan, and their presence in Phoenix and Dragon lands is a large break from tradition.
- 15: The Master of Water, Isawa Norimichi, is incensed at what he is rather publicly calling a ‘breach of security’ in the Phoenix lands. While he will not go directly against the Emperor’s orders, few believe it is coincidence that he has arranged a legion of the Shiba Army to perform practice maneuvers just a few days travel from the former Yobanjin Mura.
- 20: Shiba Korishiko, on the other hand, has publicly advised patience on the matter. While certainly skeptical about the intentions of the Yobanjin, she was personally responsible for limiting how many troops Norimichi could commit to these training exercises.
- 25: Negotiations are beginning for Isawa Eguchi, governor of Momiji Sato, to take a wife. Being something of a busy body when it comes to his duties, he has had no time to personally speak to Nakodos, and so his Lord has ordered that this be done.

Kyouji and Ryoko will be fairly chatty throughout the entire trip. The two are apparently being compensated very well for their time, and are eager to be working with Samurai that they have interacted with before.

Ryoko, in particular, once she gets over the shyness that comes with being a Ronin graced with the presence of an Imperial Samurai, will talk to Hachi in great deal about the PCs and their “heroic efforts to save Kyouji-kun from those dastardly cultists.”

## Part One: Distant Relatives

Kyouji, on the other hand, is more interested in talking more with the PCs themselves. If they are willing to speak with him in return, he will happily talk at great lengths about their previous journeys.

The journey to the site where Yobanjin Mura once stood takes just under a week. After passing Seido Jurojin, a short trip along a fairly subtle mountain path takes you into a small village, clearly having seen only sparse use over the last century. Most of the buildings have largely been reclaimed by the elements, with moss and even small trees having long started to grow in and around the buildings.

PCs who are interested may roll Lore: Phoenix and TN 25 or Lore: History at TN 30. Phoenix PCs receive 2 free raises to this roll. With success, PCs will know that the city of Yobanjin Mura was long a secret to the rest of the Empire, until it was accidentally discovered by a small group of Samurai in 1144. Once those Samurai revealed the place's existence to the rest of the Empire, Yobanjin Mura was slowly, but surely, abandoned.

Walking to the central square reveals a small number of tents. Despite what one might expect from Rokugani tents, these ones seem, upon closer inspection, to be made out of the skins of animals. Hachi tries not to show an immediate reaction to it, but is clearly somewhat perturbed by the sight.

Coming out of the largest of these tents as you approach is a towering man, gripping a wide blade adorned with rings along the back. Dark eyes greet you intently, ready to strike at a sudden movement. They relax, however, at the sudden chatter of Yobanjin from the tent itself. Out of it comes a short, round woman of middle age, wearing the red robes of the Phoenix clan. She moves herself between you and the large Yobanjin, hands up in the air as if to show that she is unarmed.

Read this section only if a PC has Language: Yobanjin:

"No, no, Lord Batul. These are the Samurai who are to be escorting us through the Lands of the Emerald Empire."

"Tomoko, you are certain? They come with their weapons at their sides, as if expecting a fight."

"No, no, Lord Batul. The Samurai always wear their swords. I swear they mean you no harm."

Regardless, after a few moments, read the following:

The Large Yobanjin watches you carefully, then carefully places his sword in a strap hanging loosely at his side. He speaks again, but this time he speaks in a rough Rokugani. "Greetings, Samurai. My name is Batul, Representative of the Council of Elders for the Carriers of the Fire who survive in the mountains to the north. The Council of Elders is honored by your... Emperor's invitation." The man imitates a bow, rough and entirely without grace.

The woman bows shortly after. Hers is a more practiced bow, as one may see from one practiced in the ways of the Court. "Ah, greetings indeed, Samurai-sans. I am Asako Tomoko, assigned as the messenger between the Rokugani and the Yobanjin. I do hope that your journey was a pleasant one."

As Hachi makes introductions, six other Yobanjin step out from the other tents. Their eyes focus warily on the newer arriving Samurai, but a brief word from Batul in Yobanjin seems to calm them.

Once everyone has calmed down, Tomoko calls you into the large tent, telling Batul to stay outside with his for the time being (for those who speak Yobanjin, she refers to him as her "dearest" as she does so). The inside has a small table with fur made cushions to act as seats. Tomoko seats herself on one of the fur cushions, beginning to motion for you to do the same before she realizes the implication. "It is good to see you, Miya-sama, Samurai-samas. This last year of work has been... trying at times, but I do believe I am starting to get a better understanding of the Yobanjin."

Hachi nods calmly, seating himself carefully next to one of the cushions without standing directly on it. "The Emperor wished me to thank you for your dedicated service." He nods to the other assembled Samurai. "He also wishes you to know that you are released from your duty, should you wish to return to Kyuden Asako."

"Thank you," she shakes her head, "but I fear that were it as simple as that, Miya-sama. I am certain it has not escaped your notice that Batul still does not trust the Rokugani as a whole. While I am thankful for the offer, it will simply be wiser for me to stay to assist in allaying any... misunderstandings."

Have the PCs roll Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness at TN 25. Bayushi Courtiers earn a free raise on this roll. On success, the PCs get a sense that

her reasons for wanting to stay are not entirely professional. Still, she is fairly insistent on staying, and Hachi is fairly disinterested in caring.

Regardless, Tomoko will continue.

“There are a few things that you need to know about the Yobanjin. Those of you who have dealt with the Crab probably will notice some similarities. They are, by and large, more blunt than what you may expect from most Samurai. As such, they might give off an impression of being somewhat barbaric. With that in mind, I thought there were some... oddities that you might want to keep in mind.

“First, much like the Unicorn, they do not have any taboos against eating red meat or wearing the skins of animals.” She nods to the seats made of fur. “They have not been as blessed with their land as us and have been forced to adapt to survive.

“What’s more, they also do not have the same taboos about touching that most Samurai do. It is likely that you will see them do things like greet each other with physical embraces of various forms. I have found that calmly holding up one’s hand will dissuade them, at the least. Not that it should be an issue as they do not trust you.

“Finally, of note... I should remind you that these are not yet Samurai, and while I have tried to teach Bushido to them, it would be wise to use a gentle hand in teaching them more about our ways.” She takes a breath and nods to the outside. “Anyway, we should not keep our guests waiting, neh?” She rises and moves to the tent opening.

Tomoko will not answer questions about the Yobanjin. According to her, it is a matter that needs to be experienced on its own.

As you step out of the tent, the yobanjin cannot be found near the tents. Looking around, it does not take long to discover that the Gaijin have set a small fire just outside the ruined village. Each man seems to take a certain level of responsibility in seeing to the fire. Where one man goes to collect wood, another begins to stoke the flames, while another begins taking supplies and provisions out of their packs to begin preparing for food.

When Batul notices the Samurai, he motions for them to join, telling one of his men in Yobanjin to find rice and vegetables for the Samurai.

Kyouji and Ryoko gladly accept whatever food is offered. While Kyouji is somewhat quiet, Ryoko actually surprises the Yobanjin as she speaks to them in their language, and after that moment of shock from the yobanjin, they cheerfully settle into chatting with her. Outside of Batul, the other Yobanjin will largely try to ignore the Samurai unless they also have languages: Yobanjin.

If a PC does have Language: Yobanjin, then instead the Yobanjin will actually take some interest in them. The second in command, who introduces himself as Edigu, will invite such a PC to sit next to him. He will offer an odd fermented drink, then motion for the PC to join him.

Once you seat yourself with him, he will smirk and raise his glass. “So, you are the escorts, hm? I did not expect the Samurai to send someone who may actually know anything about our culture.” He raised his drink and nodded, “Well met.”

Once introductions are done, Edigu will begin asking some basic questions about Rokugani culture. This should mostly role play, but some good example questions are:

**A note on this section:** This section is largely to provide some context for the Samurai to interact with the Yobanjin. If the Samurai are bringing their own ideas, feel free to ignore this section and work with that instead.

Batul, on the other hand, will take anyone not being accosted by Edigu and sit them down, making sure that they have some food and drink and are comfortable.

Batul leans back, eyeing you with an appraising gaze. “So, you are here to show us your Emerald Land. I have heard many stories of this Emerald Land, and how it is a land of Heroes. But I only hear them from Tomoko, who is wise, but does not have many Stories.

“So please, I wish to hear stories from you. Tell me of your Emerald Land. I wish to hear a story of your Heroes, the ones that most exemplify your Tri... Clan.”

Batul will expect each PC to tell them stories from their Clan’s history. He does not particularly care about the details of the story, but expects every Samurai to participate in some fashion.

Once everyone has made their story, have each of them roll Perform: Storytelling / Awareness. The PC that rolls the highest will be met with a look of notable approval from Batul.

Batul is specifically looking for stories of great feats of heroism. He is interested in hearing of war heroes, and is generally interested in stories of battle as opposed to stories of courtly victories or spiritual

Once every PC has had their opportunity to tell a story:

Once the last story has been told, Batul looks to Hachi. “Now then, Hachi. What story will you tell me?”

Hachi blinked a moment, then nodded slowly. “Hai, of course, Batul-san.” He considers for a few moments, then begins.

“There are many forms of heroism, Batul-san, but the form of heroism of the woman I am thinking of is not heroism won of steel, but heroism won of a heart that is prepared for sacrifice.

“Since we happen to be in Phoenix lands, I am reminded of the story of Shiba Toriiko. Shiba Toriiko was the Champion of the Phoenix, considered a woman of wisdom and grace. While she was a Bushi, a warrior just like you, she was also a woman of grace and poise, a woman who believed in peace.

“The Clans of the Lion and the Crane were at conflict with each other during her time leading the Phoenix. Their fury towards each other has always been high throughout their history, and the conflict that was to come then was no different.” He sighed, “Toriiko could not stand by and watch the two clans destroy each other, she marched the Phoenix army directly between the other two clan’s armies.

“The Lion general believed that the Phoenix marched to join the Crane and ordered an attack. But as arrows fell upon them and Lion steel struck, no Phoenix so much as moved. Even as they attacked and killed, not one Phoenix so much as lifted a hand, steadfast were they in their duty. The shame of the action was so great to the Lion than their commanders fell on their Sword, preferring death to continuing to attack those who would not fight back.

“The Crane, however, was more cautious. Their general rode to meet with Toriiko and demand that she quit the field. Toriiko refused, stating that she will not gaze upon a world devoured by pride. As she rested her hand upon her sword, the Crane thought this to be preparation for a duel and struck her down. But as he

did so, he came to realize that she was making no opportunity to duel him. Shiba Toriiko died, and two clans were shamed, with her never needing to draw her blade.”

Batul seems confused at this story and tilts his head to the side. “I apologize, Hachi, but I am confused. I asked for a story of a hero, and you give me a woman who could not draw her blade to save her life?”

Hachi smiled gently and shook his head, “Ah, Batul-san, I think you misunderstand. The measure of a hero is not in a great battle, but in a death that serves a greater purpose.”

Though Batul seems confused by this, the lateness of the hour causes him to note that it is perhaps best for them to go to bed.

## Part Two: You Can Bring a Yobanjin to Water...

In the morning, the Yobanjin swiftly strike their tents, most of them having apparently woken up and prepared their meals in advance of the dawn. Once everyone has eaten and any sign of their presence in the small village stricken, the yobanjin and assembled Samurai prepare to head off towards the Dragon Heart Plains.

By midday, the travels south find you on a single twisting road. It is harrowing at points, the drop from the face of the mountain next to you providing an easy view of what is down the chasm below. After another hour’s walk, you find yourself confronted by a small village, all set in front of a rather large shrine.

As Hachi leads you to the shrine proper, three monks step out, offering polite bows to you before regarding the Yobanjin. “Ah, you must be the esteemed guests that we were appraised of. Please, join us.”

This is Seido Jurojin, one of the largest shrines to the Fortune of Longevity. The PCs do not need to roll for this, as despite it’s remote location, pilgrimages to the place are well known to occur from Samurai of all clans, and tales of the main shrine are legend.

The monks motion towards the shrine, leading the PCs and the Yobanjin through the small village. The Yobanjin look around, and fascination is evident on their face, as if they are completely unaware of the concept of On.



Once at the shrine itself:

The three monks step forward to the Shrine, kneeling and praying quietly. The Yobanjin, and Batul in particular, seem confused by this, and Batul looks to Hachi so he can loudly wonder, “Are we here to watch old men pray?”

The monks seem to ignore the man, and Hachi shakes his head. “It is our duty to teach you, not theirs. I thought that, perhaps, seeing some of the daily rituals of our Clergy might be a useful lesson, but perhaps that is not the lesson that I need to be teaching.” He turns to you, tilting his head. “Still, it is imperative that you learn more about the realms beyond Rokugan itself.”

Hachi turns to you, tilting his head. “Samurai-sans, as you have plenty of practical experience, I do believe that you are more qualified than I am to speak of these matters.

Batul will, of course, lead the yobanjin side of any conversation. This is largely a role play opportunity, where PCs will have a chance to discuss the differences in Theology. A brief summation of the Yobanjin beliefs:

- The Yobanjin largely come from the Tribe of Isawa, and as such have developed their own offshoot of Fortunism. They more or less believe in the Seven Fortunes, though their names have shifted over the years.
- Where Samurai tend to be very pious and stop at shrines often, the Yobanjin are far more practical. They offer their thanks to their Gods in the morning, then pay it no more mind.
- The Yobanjin do not recognize the Kami. While they are certain of the power that the Kami once gained, their ancestors left because they were not sure that the Kami were worthy of veneration. Because of this, most modern Yobanjin question whether the Kami were truly divine at all.
- Instead, the Yobanjin believe in the Four divine beasts of the Winds.

All of this being said, Batul is generally disinterested in stirring the pot too hard with the Samurai. GMs should be encouraged to question anything a PC says, or to try to turn it on its head... respectfully, of course.

If the debate begins to get overly heated, or if a PC seems like they may prepare to inject violence into the matter, Asako Tomoko will step in.

Seeing that the debate is pushing past civility, Tomoko steps in front of Batul, her hands again raised in the air. After speaking to him for a moment in Yobanjin, she turns to you. “Ah, Samurai-samas, perhaps this was not the wisest area to discuss at this time. Shall we perhaps instead look into another line of discussion?”

Reluctantly, Batul will relent at the request of Tomoko. He will bow and offer an apology for any offense that may have been rendered.

Once the monks have finished their prayers, they rise and bow to you, as well as the Yobanjin. “We thank you for visiting, Guests of the Emperor,” the center monk speaks in a calm, pleasant voice. “We hope that you find something of value in these lands.”

Batul eyes them warily, then bows as well. “I thank you for your hospitality,” he says, looking momentarily over to Tomoko for approval. “I am thankful for the blessings that you offer me and to my people.” The monk seems surprised at just how collected Batul seems but smiles after a moment and bows in return.

Once the monks finish their blessings to the Yobanjin, Hachi is quick to insist that they should continue, noting that he hopes to be north of the Shrine of the Ki-Rin before nightfall so they could get to their next destination swiftly.

Much of the day passes without further incident. The Gaijin will continue to ask questions and make conversation as appropriate (see Appendix 2, “Questions for Samurai”).

Towards the evening, however, Hachi requests a halt, about an hour’s travel north of the Shrine of the Ki-Rin. As the Yobanjin and Samurai both begin to prepare camp for the evening, a sudden interruption interrupts the normal pace of things.

From the east, the tell-tale sign of dust being kicked up by horses can be quickly seen. Any doubt is quickly dispelled by the sounds of hooves and, soon, the view of horses, riders wearing the brilliant orange armor of the Phoenix riding upon them. Their approach is halted mere feet from you, their hands holding naginata that they keep casually at their side.

Noting that the yobanjin are tensing at the sight of weapons, Hachi steps forward quickly. “Ah, noble Samurai of the Phoenix, this one is honored to see that you are being diligent in your patrols. Is there, perhaps, something this humble servant could help you with?”

The head phoenix, his eyes never leaving the Yobanjin, bows politely. “Miya Hachi-san, this one is honored to make your acquaintance. This one is Isawa Hatchio, Gunso of the First Shiba Army. I had scarcely believed that one would allow the savages this far into our home, but it seems here we are.”

Hachi flinches at the statement but shakes his head. “The Emperor’s orders explicitly require us to bring them to Shiro Chuda, and I am certain that you understand the necessity of obeying the Emperor’s words.”

The Phoenix takes his eyes off the Yobanjin, grinning widely as that was mentioned. “Ah, yes, of course. One should not disobey the words of the Emperor. But, of course, if an accident happened to the savages, it certainly could not be the fault of the good Miya-sama.”

Hachi stares at him in shock, entirely without words on what to say...

In order to avoid conflict, the PCs will need to step in in some form or fashion. This does not necessarily have to end in combat, but will without fail do so if the PCs do not speak up.

#### Persuading the Shiba to leave peacefully

This would be Hachi’s preferred path, though he is far too shocked at their audacity to speak it himself. In order to take this path, the PCs have to be able to stress how much more trouble the death of the Emperor’s guests’ death would be to the Phoenix than any satisfaction that may be gained by killing them. A PC can also stress the divine word of the Emperor, though mentioning this increases the TN by 5. Appealing to duty, or Bushido in general, will not work. Hatchio believes he is following the desires of the Master of Water and will not be swayed by arguments that he sees as contradicting the Master of Water’s words. The TN of this social roll is 30.

If the PCs fail the social roll, a PC can either challenge Hatchio to a duel, or the PCs can move to the combat section.

#### Dueling Hatchio

Though not the preferred path, this is still preferred by Hachi to violence. Hatchio will automatically force this path if he feels insulted by the PCs (GMs should adjudicate this, but Hatchio isn’t terribly quick to anger and will take insults to himself in stride). Hatchio will spend 1 void in the assessment phase and 2 in the Focus phase.

If he wins, Hatchio will move to attack the Yobanjin. Move to the combat stage.

#### Combat

This should be considered the last resort. The Phoenix will not fight to the death, each individually surrendering if their wounds pass the crippled wound rank. That said, they also are only interested in killing the gaijin, and will make active efforts to knock out and incapacitate PCs instead of killing them, utilizing disarms and knockdowns to dissuade them.

Though there are a number of Phoenix equal to the PCs+Yobanjin as well as Hatchio, only a number of Shiba equal to the PCs will fight the PCs, plus Hatchio. If the PCs do not incapacitate the Shiba they are fighting in 5 rounds, they will find that three of the gaijin were killed while they were fighting.

#### Shiba Guard

Loyal Yojimbo

**School/Rank:** Shiba Bushi / 3

**Initiative:** 6k3

**Armor TN:** 20 (Y25 in armor)      **Reduction:** 3

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

**Attack:** 9k4 (Naginata, Complex)

**Damage:** 6k2 (Naginata)

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
3	3	4	3	3

Honor: 6.1      Status: 1.0      Glory: 3.0

**Primary Skills:** Polearms 5, Horsemanship 3

#### Isawa Hatchio

Aspiring commander

**School/Rank:** Shiba Bushi / 3

**Initiative:** 7k4

**Armor TN:** 25 (30 in armor)      **Reduction:** 3

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

**Attack:** 8k3 (Naginata, Complex)

**Damage:** 6k2 (Naginata)

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
4	3	3	3	3

Honor: 6.1      Status: 1.0      Glory: 3.0

**Primary Skills:** Polearms 5, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Battle 4

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Strength of the Earth / Driven (Protect the interests of the Phoenix)

Once the PCs have dealt with the Shiba, any remaining Phoenix will head back off to the east, offering polite... if terse... bows as they leave.

As they leave, Batul approaches Hachi, a deep frown on his face. "This is the fate we are to deal with if we accept your Emperor's invitation, is it not? They do not trust us, and they do not like us."

Hachi smiles as he turns to greet Batul. "It is only a matter of time, Batul-san. Samurai are naturally resistant to change, as you must understand. But the Noble Unicorn found themselves in much the same situation many centuries ago, and now none would deny the great benefit that they bring to our Empire."

Batul seems skeptical but does not speak further on the matter. The rest of the evening passes without event, the Yobanjin quieter and contemplative now... especially if they lost some of their own.

The next morning, the Yobanjin are already up with their tents stricken and food prepared for themselves and the Samurai. Where before they seemed interested in taking their time and seeing the world, they seem quite in a hurry to get on to the next destination.

Regardless, it takes most of the day to get to Shiro Chuda Mura. The guards inspect Hachi's travel papers carefully, but once they see the Emperor's Seal they nod to allow you in. Hachi leads you to a small inn called the Inn of Second Chances.

The moment that the Yobanjin are comfortable, Hachi bows to the party. "I am going to go announce our presence to the governor. The Governor will be meeting with our Guests tomorrow, but please do your best to make sure that they are comfortable for the evening." Without another word, Hachi slips away.

The inn is entirely empty, save the PCs, the yobanjin, and the servants. As yobanjin begin to get comfortable, Batul will invite the PCs to sit at a table with him.

As you seat yourself, a young serving girl approaches your table with sake and tea. She sets the tea in the middle of the table, very careful not to get too close to Batul... or so much as look at him. She bows quickly, darting away as Batul watches her.

Batul's eyes narrow towards her, but he takes one of the sake cups and studies it momentarily. "Friends. We are friends now, no? I am finding myself with some... doubts... about how successful our attempts at integration with your Emerald Land could be. I look at those who have not been sent by your Empire and I see only Malice or Fear. Indeed, if not for you, then I would have thought this venture doomed two days ago.

"And yet, I wonder how much of your kindness has been genuine, and how much has been forced by your duty to your Emperor. It is well known to all that the Samurai are the loyal servants of their great Lord, unflinchingly doing their duties without question. How can I be certain that you are not paying service to your duty?"

How the PCs end up responding to this is, as always, up to them, but their responses will feed into their ability to talk down the Yobanjin during the final stage (should they think to do that).

Batul is looking for some form of reassurance that, if nothing else, the PCs have given him some form of acceptance. He is not looking for assurance that Rokugan will accept the Yobanjin (he is already convinced that this will not happen). Instead, he is hoping for some assurance that someone here has learned that the Yobanjin may be more than simple Savages. If a PC does legitimately try to express some sympathy for Batul and his people's plight, they can roll Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness at TN 20. A PC can call raises to increase the effectiveness of their argument, providing bonuses to any attempt a PC might make to persuade the Yobanjin to leave peacefully in part 3.

Your answers offered, Batul nods, looking down as he notes that he has had a few more drinks than he had planned. "If you will pardon me, Samurai...-sans, it would be best for me to rest soon. Tomorrow will be a big day." Without waiting for permission, Batul makes his way up the stairs.

The PCs may be paranoid for whatever reason to set up watches, allow PCs on one of the watches (preferably one of the early morning watches) an Investigation (Notice) / Perception roll at TN 30. PCs on that watch receive a free raise if they are actually outside. If they succeed on this roll, they hear a small thump from one of the side alleys. Looking in that direction allows them to notice the Yobanjin just as they are sneaking out. While they are able to track them if they wish, the yobanjin will not heed any

warnings from them and will swiftly make their way out of the city, heading towards the east...

If a PC does catch them leaving in the night, the PCs get a free raise on the hunting roll in part 3.

## Part Three: But you can't make them Drink

As you wake up, unlike most days, the Yobanjin have not woken up ahead of you. Kyouji, a bit concerned, heads up to their rooms. A few moments later, he comes downstairs, looking a bit concerned. "Ah, Samurai-samas... there seems to be a complication. The Yobanjin are gone."

Hachi looks shocked at this, shooting up out of his seat. "We must find them immediately," he states, "scour the city, do whatever you must do. We cannot lose them now."

If PCs had stayed up to take watch and seen them, the previous box text is unnecessary, and the PCs do not need to spend time in Shiro Chuda trying to find them. Otherwise, the PCs need to determine how they are going to find them. This can take several forms:

### Asking the Guards

Some PCs may think to ask the guards if they saw Yobanjin. Though the guards currently watching the gates are not the same that would have been there that night, they can refer the PCs to the guards who did. This does not require rolls, but takes time, and going this route automatically means that the PCs cannot catch them before they have arrived at the Shrine of the Ki-Rin.

### Asking around the city.

More commonly, PCs may think to ask around the city to find someone who may have seen them. Again, PCs can find someone with no rolls necessary, but a PC can roll Courtier (Gossip) or Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness at TN 20 to find the Yobanjin faster. Lore: Underworld can also be used, but causes a D2 honor loss to use. Failure means, like above, that the PCs will not be able to catch the Yobanjin before they are able to make it to the Shrine of the Ki-Rin.

Once the PCs have found out where the Yobanjin have gone, it is simply a matter of following their tracks. This being Dragon Lands and therefore less traveled than most lands in the Empire, determining which tracks match the Yobanjin is possible, though still more difficult than it might otherwise be. PCs may

make Hunting (Tracking) / Perception Rolls at TN 25. If the PCs fail, Ryoko is able to follow the tracks, but is unable to do it swiftly enough to catch them before they make it to the Shrine of the Ki-Rin.

### If the PCs catch the gaijin swiftly:

The seven Yobanjin are fairly easy to spot, none of them being terribly surreptitious in an open field. As they hear your approach, they turn to meet you, hands moving swiftly to their ring swords.

Batul steps forward, his eyes narrowing a bit. "Ah... Samurai. I had hoped that we would have more of a head start before you found us..."

Tomoko rides forward, her eyes looking to Batul with concern. "Batul..." She speaks, forgetting to speak in the Yobanjin language as she does. "Batul, what are you doing?"

The large Yobanjin shakes his head. "You remember, Tomoko, don't you? Telling us stories of the great riches in the Shrine of the Ki-Rin?" He smirks, "It was clear to me since the Phoenix tried to excuse killing us that our presence will never be accepted here in Rokugan. So why should we not take a memory to remember by... and to provide us with some extra funds, that we might be able to live just a little better."

The PCs will have an opportunity to provide rebuttal. They will not be able to persuade the Yobanjin to return to Shiro Chuda (And Batul will say as much swiftly), but they are able to persuade them to return peacefully to Yobanjin lands. If a PC was consistently rude or dismissive of the Gaijin, they will be dismissed out of hand and will not be allowed to make the attempt.

The roll will be either Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness or Sincerity / Awareness. The base TN is 50. If the PC had been generally friendly to the Yobanjin from the beginning, they earn a free raise. They also receive another free raise for passing the sincerity roll from the inn, plus one free raise for each raise they had called on that roll. Each PC who attempts may attempt the roll, but it may not be done cooperatively.

If the PCs manage to persuade them to leave in peace:

Batul eyes the PCs warily for a moment, then nods. "You are right. Even if your Empire is clearly not ready to accept those who are different... we earn nothing for our own by trying to sack your lands." He

puts his sword away, and swiftly the other Yobanjin follow suit. “We will return to our homes in peace. Tell your Emperor that we thank him for his hospitality.”

Tomoko smiles at his response, riding towards the gaijin. “Lord Batul. I will provide you safe escort back to the border of your lands. Thank you... Thank you for knowing when to stop.”

If the PCs are not able to persuade them, however:

Batul snorts as you finish speaking, gripping his sword tightly. “Enough talk! You Samurai have nothing to offer but arrogance and lies. We will hear no more.” He begins to charge forward, heedless of Tomoko’s cries.

If the PCs cannot catch the Gaijin before they arrive at the Shrine of the Ki-Rin:

As you find your way to the Shrine of the Ki-Rin, you already see smoke emanating from the shrine. Hachi orders you to ride swiftly, and soon you arrive at the Shrine to a terrible sight... the shrine is on fire.

In front of the shrine is Batul, two dead monks laying at his feet. He holds a third monk in his hand, screaming in his face in his rough Rokugani. “I told you to stop hiding the riches!” He roars. “I have heard the stories! The gold that paints the walls! Where are you hiding it?”

Before the monk can answer, he notices the hoofbeats of your horses, looking to you with a resigned look. “...Oh. I see.” He looks to his men, who are still trying to ransack the shrine. “Kill them.”

The Gaijin will, no matter what, fight to the death if it comes to a fight. Batul will face the first person who comes to him, or if no one does before his turn, the most threatening looking Bushi PC. Typically on his first attack, he will call excessive raises to try to knockdown the PC and get additional kept dice. The Second attack will always be taken without raises, or target someone else if he has two people attacking him. The Gaijin will always spread out their attacks, consolidating to PCs who have been the most damaging as their numbers fall.

No matter what, there are 6 Yobanjin plus Batul. If there are fewer than 4 PCs or most PCs are rank 1, all Yobanjin have suffered wounds up to their hurt wound rank.

If a PC would take a strike that would kill them, Kyouji leaps in the way of the blow, taking the damage in lieu of the PC. Should this damage do 58 wounds or more to Kyouji, he is killed. Otherwise, he will remove himself from the fight at Ryoko’s terse insistence.

Otherwise, during the reaction stage of every round, Kyouji will cast Path to Inner Peace on the PC who has suffered the most wounds. He rolls 7k4 on this roll, and twice can instead roll 9k6, but will only do this for a PC in the down rank or lower.

## Batul

Yobanjin Chieftain

**School/Rank:** Yobanjin Raider / 3

**Initiative:** 7k4

**Armor TN:** 25 (30 in armor)      **Reduction:** 3

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

**Attack:** 9k4 (Ring Sword, Simple)

**Damage:** 6k2 (Ring Sword)

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
3	3	4	3	2
Reflexes			Strength	
4			4	

Honor: 0.0      Status: -5.0      Glory: -5.0

**Primary Skills:** Swordsmanship 5 5

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Strength of the Earth, Great Potential (Swordsmanship) / Social Disadvantage (Gaijin),

**Special Mechanics:** if there are any special considerations, like specific Techniques, worth making note of

**Significant Dice Pools:** if the NPC is likely to be called on to roll for specific tasks, like dueling or social resistance rolls

## Yobanjin Warriors

Faithful Warriors

**School/Rank:** Yobanjin Raider / 2

**Initiative:** 5k3

**Armor TN:** 20 (25 in armor)      **Reduction:** 3

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

**Attack:** 7k3 (Ring Sword, Complex)

**Damage:** 5k2 (Ring Sword)

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
3	3	3	3	0
Honor: 0.0	Status: -5.0		Glory: 0.0	

**Primary Skills:** Swordsmanship 5

**Advantages/Disadvantages:**

**Special Mechanics:** The Yobanjin Warriors may call raises equal to their highest ring.

# Conclusion

If the PCs managed to persuade the Gaijin to leave in Peace:

Hachi watches the gaijin leave, his face ever neutral. Once they are out of eyesight, he turns to you and nods his head. "I cannot say I am sad to see them gone, but I am glad that we were able to persuade them to leave without any bloodshed. I will report the results of the mission to the Emperor. We may not have been able to see his vision complete, but I think he will be happy that inroads have been made... so that perhaps a future is still possible." He bows to you all, and you make your way back to the Imperial Capital.

If, more likely, the PCs are forced to fight the Gaijin (even if they do not necessarily kill them):

Tomoko drops to her knees as the last Gaijin falls, shock clear in her face. Hachi, though frowning, does not seem nearly as shocked, as if he had expected this inevitability. He bows to you calmly. "You did what you could, Samurai. I hold you all blameless for what has been forced to occur here today. However," his eyes close, "the truth of the matter is that we have failed. These men were to be guests in our collective home, and no matter their intentions, we were unable to perform our duties as hosts by the Emperor's wishes." He looks up a moment, "As such, I will cleanse the shame of our failure as a Samurai."

There is no persuading Hachi to not commit seppuku. He has failed the Emperor utterly in his mind, and there is no convincing him to take a different path.

No matter what happens, the Emperor is forced to acknowledge that his decision was made in haste. Upon the advice of Doji Makibesu, he rescinds any invitation that previously stood for the Yobanjin to

enter Rokugan... save for in the city of Yobanjin Mura, which he orders to be reconstructed.

## The End

### Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module: 1 XP

Good Roleplaying: 1 XP

Attempting to interact with the Yobanjin: 1 XP

Stopping the Yobanjin at/before the Shrine of the Ki-Rin: 1 Xp

Total Possible Experience: 4

#### Favors

No matter what, the PCs were allowed on an errand for the Emperor. This earns them a favor.

#### Honor

PCs may earn up to 2 points of honor for exceptional displays of compassion.

#### Glory

There is no glory gain in this module.

#### GM Reporting

- 1) Did the PCs fight the Phoenix?
- 2) Did the PCs manage to talk the Yobanjin down?
- 3) Were any Yobanjin allowed to return to Gaijin lands?
- 4) Did the Shrine of the Ki-Rin burn?
- 5) Did Kyouji die?

*The GM must report this information by June 16, 2018 for it to have storyline effect*

## Appendix #1: NPCs

If any NPCs require statblocks not listed elsewhere in the module

### Miya Hachi

Dutiful Imperial

**School/Rank:** Miya Herald/3

**Initiative:** 7k5

**Armor TN:** 30

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

**Attack:** Miya Hachi does not fight

**Damage:** Miya Hachi does not do damage

Air 5    Earth 2    Fire 3    Water 3    Void 3

Intelligence

4

Honor: 7.1    Status: 4.0    Glory: 4.1

**Primary Skills:** Courtier 5, Etiquette 6, Lore: Gaijin 1

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Benten's Blessing / Soft Hearted, True Love (Toturi Kazetora)

## Appendix #2: Things Gaijin Ask

This handout is a simple list of things the GM can ask the PCs. Examples of such things are as follows:

- “Why the two swords? We yobanjin find significance in our weapons, but I have seen samurai go into panic because someone came near theirs.”
- “Why do you all seem to dislike each other? You never embrace or show your appreciation for each other.”
- “Why doesn’t anyone around here say what they damn well mean? It’s always all this talking around each other!”
- (When Given a gift) “Oh, thank you!” The Yobanjin just takes the gift and does not offer any refusals.
- To a Crab PC: “You I like. You tell things as they are, and I appreciate that. Why can’t the other Samurai be like you?”
- To a Crane PC (especially a younger one): “Why is your hair white? Are you an elder?”
- To a Dragon PC: “Your priests fight along side you. Is not the role of the priest to proselytize?”
- To a Lion PC: “You! You tribe is said to be strongest tribe? Our tribe is also strong, so why do you look at us with such disdain?”
- To a Mantis PC: “What is the purpose of trying to command the great sea? Can not you reach other places with your feet on the ground?”
- To an Owl PC: “The historians do not sing of your clan like they remember the others. What... are you?”
- To a Phoenix PC: “Tomoko tells us that you are the clan of peace. Then would you tell us why you use the Spirits for such destruction?”
- To a Scorpion PC: “Why do you wear those masks?” (The Yobanjin will have a particularly difficult time understanding any explanations on this specific matter, and will repeatedly question the PC about anything they can think of)
- To a Unicorn PC: “You are like us, no? Why did your Tribe return to Rokugan?”



## Player Handout #1: News From the Empire

Samurai of Rokugan,

As the Winter comes to an end, it seems that the Courts of the Empire have been busy. The most notable news, which I am certain that august Samurai such as you have already learned, is that of the Emperor's proclamation requiring the Scorpion to allow troop movements from the Lion as they prepare for their Summer conflict against the Crab. This has been a chafe to the Crane, who spent much of the winter trying to negotiate terms to allow the Lion through, but what can be done in such a situation?

In positive news, the woman who will be the Imperial bride has been chosen. Kitsuki Miyabe, a daughter of our esteemed Kitsuki Daimyo, has been selected to be the Empress come this spring. She is something of an oddity, even for a Kitsuki, as her training is not in the Kitsuki school, but as a Shugenja in the Agasha school. Still, I have managed to steal a conversation with her, and she gives every impression of being a woman of great spiritual understanding.

The Ikoma have been out in force throughout the Courts of the Empire this winter. Most that have dealt with them have said that they have been friendlier even than the Ikoma usually tend to be. There is plenty of whisper that the Lion are merely trying to build allies before their war with the Crab, but the Ikoma themselves have made no such direct mention.

Things have, fortunately, quieted down in Balishnimpur since the Maharajah's uprising over the Summer. The Ivindi who still live in Rokugan are still somewhat antsy, which I suppose is somewhat understandable, but there seems to be plenty of indication that their spirit for further rebellion has been quelled.

Lastly, Shinjo Hazumi was notable by her lack of presence in the Courts of Rokugan this Winter. There are words that she road out of the Empire this Winter to repel a Gaijin element of some form in the Burning Sands. But surely the Clan Champion of the Unicorn would not need to ride out herself?

As always, I am a servant of the Throne.

-Otomo Yusuke