

Seeker of Knowledge

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**An Introductory-Rank Adventure for
Heroes of Rokugan: Champions of the Ivory Throne**

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Combat, Investigation, Travel

The Owl Clan calls itself the “memory of Rokugan.” But some things are perhaps better left forgotten.

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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

When the Owl Clan was first founded, the newly-formed clan served two functions: first, it was a place for the Empire's many returned spirits to gather under a single banner, providing a community for the time-lost samurai to share and for those who still held loyalty to the Hantei line to maintain those oaths in their new lives; and second, it was to build and maintain a storehouse of the knowledge and historical perspectives that the returned spirits brought back to Rokugan from their previous lives. In pursuit of that second objective, the founders of the Owl created the Owl Archives, a monumental collection of journals, letters, personal reminiscences, and more, contributed by every member of the Owl Clan to the Archives as a condition of their fealty. (Even now, the Owl Clan *gempukku* requires the submission of a personal journal to the Archives, and many Owl Clan *sensei* insist upon an update to the Archives as part of their students' testing for a new School Rank.) This collection of personal histories spans the entire lived history of the Empire, from the first years under Hantei-no-kami through the modern era, and includes stories from every Great Clan and many lesser ones as well. Secrets lost to history everywhere else can be found within the Archives, and the Owl jealously guard the most sensitive tales for their own consideration and occasional use.

Consequently, seekers of lost knowledge sometimes come to the Archives and petition to be allowed to research their interests among its miles of scroll racks and shelves. The Owl approve or deny these requests largely on the basis of the information sought, maintaining access to the Archives as a precious resource that can be leveraged for political purposes when needed. Some requests, though, would never be granted. One example is the lost secrets of "pure" maho, practiced by Isawa himself before the Dawn of the Empire. Unfortunately, it is precisely this

information that is sought by the villain of this adventure, Gennai Choryo.

Despite the reputation of the Phoenix Clan, Choryo does not come from a long line of Phoenix *tsukai*; he is a historian with more ambition than wisdom who stumbled on references to "pure maho" in his research into pre-Empire cultures. Already possessing an unhealthy interest in maho, the knowledge that blood magic was once separate from the Taint was excuse enough for him to start turning to *kansen* for education about maho, education they were all too willing to provide. However, Choryo quickly exhausted the resources he had access to in his search for more information about "pure maho," and of course the blood magic he learned from the *kansen* was anything but pure. After a few months spent in desperate search through the libraries and archives he could access, he hit upon the idea of searching the Owl Archives – records of several early Phoenix, even Isawa's own son according to some rumors, can be found within. Surely, he thought, there would be a trace or lead he could follow!

He recruited a ronin bushi named Koi, already Tainted due to time spent on the Wall and perfectly willing to serve any master who offered her power, including Fu Leng, to aid him. Koi used her Tainted abilities to secure a position in a Crab trade delegation, even as Choryo did the same within the Phoenix, and together they laid plans to kidnap one of the high-ranking Owl Archivists right out from under the noses of the Owl.

Their plot begins during a trade conference hosted by the Owl in their burgeoning seaport of Azuma no Miru Mura, and it is there that they cross paths with the PCs. During a banquet hosted by their intended target, Hantei Ryunosuke, Choryo summons some manifested *kansen* to distract the attendees and then uses powerful maho to take control of Ryunosuke's mind and force him to aid the *tsukai*. Choryo, Koi, and Ryunosuke then flee the city, heading for Toshi Ranbo, where the Owl Archives are to be found. Along the way, Choryo and Koi question Ryunosuke and learn that their Taint will prevent them from safely entering the Archives; in response, they develop a second kidnapping plot, this one aimed at a powerful *shugenja* named Chise Moruno. Moruno can overcome the wards on the Archives while Ryunosuke uses his authority to gain Choryo and Koi entrance – or at least, such is their plan.

The PCs are present at the banquet and are first among those who take action against the manifested *kansen*. This earns them the respect of a well-connected Owl samurai named Hantei Chouwa, who recruits them to

track down Ryunosuke and his captors (hopefully without embarrassing the Owl in the process). The tsukai's trail leads them first to Shiro Heichi, where the PCs meet with the Heichi daimyo, and then to Shinden Chise, where they learn of Moruno's kidnapping and potentially speak with the kami of an ancient volcano, earning spiritual approval for their quest. Finally, they confront Choryo and Koi inside the Archives themselves, battling once and for all to end the threat of the two Tainted samurai.

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. Any of the following NPCs might interact specifically with the PCs in certain ways, based on their attitude toward the character:

- Sworn Enemy or Ally: Kakita Okiku, Agasha Shumei, Akodo Tetsui, Matsu Teryu, Yoritomo Shigochiyo, Bayushi Akanishin, Shosuro Retsuko, or Shinjo Kei

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. Before this adventure, the PCs lose 4 Glory pips. This cannot reduce a PC's Glory Rank to less than their Insight Rank, and the Fame Advantage increases their Insight Rank by one for these purposes.

Taint Progression

If a PC possesses the Shadowlands Taint, they will need to roll at the beginning of the module to see how much it has grown over the intervening time since the last module. The TN of this raw **Earth Roll** will vary depending on the time frame. If a character is growing close to being Lost (Shadowlands Taint Rank 4.5+), it is recommended that the player have another PC ready to replace them.

Crafting

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

Preparation Techniques

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

Ronin Survival

Life is difficult for ronin in the Empire at the best of times. PC ronin are no exception to this. At the start of the module, a PC ronin must roll **Hunting (Survival) / Stamina** at a TN 10. 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

PCs are minor members of a trade delegation from their Clans at Azuma no Miru Mura, hosted by the Owl Clan. It's a prestigious moment for the Owl, who rarely have the political influence to get many Clans to visit the comparatively small and young Clan. Even the Owl's political and military rivals, the Scorpion

and the Crab respectively, have chosen to attend the meeting. Azuma no Miru Mura itself is a fairly young (as Rokugani cities go) trade port, built at the mouth of the Kintani River, in a relatively narrow gap between steep cliffs along the oceanside. Once a tiny fishing village, the Owl invested heavily in the town as their only seaport, a vital element for trade; the narrow beach along the feet of the cliffs was expanded with dredged silt from the river, and an artificial bay and seawall were built with a combination of hard work and magical assistance, in a project that lasted more than a decade. It's still not large or prosperous as compared to many ports of other Clans, but the Owl treat it as a prized holding and an example of Owl ingenuity and progress.

Although the PCs' attendance at the negotiations singles them out as rising stars in their various Clans, at the moment they lack the Status to really have meaningful roles in the discussions. Thus, many of the purely decorative functions, such as attending banquets thrown by local samurai with more political ambitions than they really have the influence to sustain, are assigned to the PCs. The story begins as they are attending one such banquet, the latest in more than half a dozen such in the previous two weeks, hosted by a member of the Owl Archivists, Hantei Ryunosuke.

Ryunosuke, an older man with greying hair and a scholar's demeanor, is a prominent member of the Owl Archivists, especially after uncovering the reincarnation of the Kami Shinjo in the body of the current Unicorn Champion just a few years ago and the publicizing it to an astonished Empire. Despite his renown, however, he has very little actual influence in the courts, and has found that his attempts to earn additional respect for himself and his organization have borne little fruit. Consequently, Ryunosuke has begun a kind of public relations campaign for the Archives, trying to earn cross-clan support for the Archives' purpose and efforts among philanthropists and potent politicians all over Rokugan. His most recent effort in this regard is to rent a small but well-appointed samurai's residence in Azuma no Mizu Mura for the duration of the trade conference, and to host a festive meal with any Clan representatives he can manage to get to arrive.

As they are the "honored" guests at the banquet, the PCs are seated together, along with a small number of other guests, including the host himself; Kakita Okiku, the renowned Crane sculptor; Agasha Shumei, an alchemist and naturalist of the Dragon; Matsu Teryu, a tactician of the Lion out of favor with her Champion for opposing the coming war with the Crab; Yoritomo

Shigochiyo, an infamous Mantis "trader" who is widely – and correctly – believed to be a pirate; Hantei Chouwa, a bushi and minor cousin of the Owl Champion; Gennai Choryo, a Phoenix Clan shugenja and historian; Shosuro Retsuko, a Scorpion actress known for her chameleon-like portrayals of all sorts of characters; Shinjo Kei, an Imperial Cartographer starting to go stir-crazy after weeks in the city; and a ronin named Koi, a retainer employed by the Crab trade patron Yasuki Hatsue. For more information on the guests and their general attitudes, see Appendix #1. PCs can interact with each other, the other guests, and collect rumors.

Rumors

The following information is available with a **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** roll. A PC from the local clan may be granted a Free Raise on this roll (or certain Advantages may apply).

- 10: The Owl Clan has long been in a difficult position within the Empire, attempting to maintain relationships with every Clan without becoming too closely tied to – or too estranged from – any of them. They have not always succeeded, and they have encountered long-term bitterness or even hatred from the Crab and the Scorpion Clans.
- 15: This trade conference is an opportunity for the Owl to seek stronger links of communication across the Empire, even among the Clans that have opposed them in the past. This is a great chance, but also offers substantial risks to the Owl.
- 20: With the Lion and Crab heading for war over the summer, many of the Clans are using this trade conference as an opportunity to size one another up and determine who will – or will not – become involved in the upcoming conflict. The long years of peace have strained the patience of many of the Empire's bushi, and they hunger for a chance to win Glory on the battlefield.
- 25: Two nonlethal duels between Matsu and Akodo bushi have occurred in the hills overlooking Azuma no Mizu Mura in the last two weeks. The Lion seem to be on the edge of a civil war.

Part One: A Trail of Blood

The banquet proceeds quietly, even a bit boringly, for an hour or so, until Ryunosuke rises to speak. He opens his mouth to address his guests, but only a shocked gasp emerges. The room is suddenly thrown into chaos when corrupted elemental spirits attack! At

a four-player table, there is one of each kansen. For more players, add more kansen as follows:

5 players: there are two Fire kansen

6 players: there are two Fire kansen and two Water kansen

7 players: there are two Fire kansen, two Water kansen, and two Earth kansen.

Air Kansen

A humanoid figure, made of choking clouds of brown-grey dust.

Air 4 Earth 2 Fire 2 Water 2

Initiative: 6k4

Attack: 4k2

Armor TN: 25

Damage: 2k1

Reduction: 2/jade

Wounds: 10 (Dead)

Taint Rank: 2.0

Earth Kansen

A humanoid figure, made of grey rock with yellow seams trailed through it, from which seeps a thick black sludge.

Air 2 Earth 4 Fire 2 Water 2

Initiative: 4k2

Attack: 4k2

Armor TN: 15

Damage: 2k1

Reduction: 4/jade

Wounds: 20 (Dead)

Taint Rank: 2.0

Fire Kansen

A humanoid figure, made of flickering blue-purple flame, trailing a stench-filled green smoke.

Air 2 Earth 2 Fire 4 Water 2

Initiative: 4k2

Attack: 6k4

Armor TN: 15

Damage: 2k1

Reduction: 2/jade

Wounds: 10 (Dead)

Taint Rank: 2.0

Water Kansen

A humanoid figure, made of grey-green fluid that seems to ooze more than flow.

Air 2 Earth 2 Fire 2 Water 4

Initiative: 4k2

Attack: 4k2

Armor TN: 15

Damage: 4k1

Reduction: 2/jade

Wounds: 10 (Dead)

Taint Rank: 2.0

Most of the guests just scatter and hide, but the PCs will (presumably) fight back and prevail. Some of the guests are bushi, including Matsu Teryu, Hantei Chouwa, and Yoritomo Shigochoyo; they do not react as quickly as the PCs, however, and when they see that

the PCs have engaged the kansen, they instead move to guard the noncombatants.

When the fight is over, though, it quickly becomes clear that Ryunosuke is missing, somehow kidnapped amidst the chaos! Hantei Chouwa, a tall man with a wiry build and a light brown goatee, approaches the PCs, commends their bravery in fighting back the monsters, explains what they were (if the PCs don't already know), and points out that such creatures could only have been summoned via maho. Chouwa suggests that the summoner was probably at the banquet, and the attack was a distraction to hide the kidnapping of Ryunosuke. Since the PCs fought back, Chouwa believes they can be trusted, and asks them to locate the maho tsukai and recover Ryunosuke if possible. No investigator himself and with duties to the Clan he cannot step aside from, Chouwa can provide travel papers and lend his authority/status to the investigation, as long as it remains within the Owl provinces. Chouwa suggests that's likely to be true, though, because Ryunosuke isn't really all that important or noteworthy outside the Clan. If the trail leads outside the Clan, the PCs can call upon the Jade or Emerald Magistrates to pick up the investigation from there. Some PCs may be able to make **Lore: Law / Intelligence** rolls, TN 10, to realize this is not the proper way to handle the matter – the Emerald Magistrates and Jade Magistrates should be involved at once – but Chouwa admits that, since the Owl are hosting the trade conference, he would prefer to handle the matter internally if possible, to avoid losing face in front of the other Clans. The PCs also stand to benefit by a successful investigation, as it might earn them Glory or even Status enough to avoid boring banquets like this one in the future.

Searching the area with **Investigation (Search) / Perception** or questioning the guests and servants in the house with **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** rolls, TN 10, will reveal that all of the banquet attendees are accounted for except Gennai Choryo and the ronin Koi. No one remembers seeing them since just before the attack began. **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** (TN 30) or **Lore: Underworld / Intelligence** (TN 20) can give basic facts about the two – Choryo is a Gennai-trained shugenja known for his interest in the pre-history of Rokugan, and Koi a skilled negotiator (and apparently a trained duelist) with a reputation for being willing to get her hands dirty. In addition, looking over the area where Gennai Choryo was sitting uncovers a few drops of blood on the floor and his seat cushion, but those seated near him and certain he was not in that spot during the few seconds the kansen were threatening the group. This is, of course, the spilled

blood Choryo used to summon the kansen and to cast his maho mind control spell on Ryunosuke.

According to Chouwa, if Koi and Choryo are not here, it would be reasonable to check the guest quarters they were assigned during the trade conference at the local governor's palace. If the PCs visit the palace, they may make **Etiquette / Awareness** rolls, TN 10, to discover that neither of them is there, and since the PCs have no actual authority, the PCs will not be allowed into their quarters; however, a **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness** or **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** – ask if the PCs want to take a Raise – roll, TN 15, confirms that they were seen together the previous evening, and with the Raise someone also learns they were headed to the river docks about thirty minutes before the PCs arrived, with a third man, an Owl samurai, accompanying them. If no one makes the Raise, a **Lore: Law / Intelligence, Commerce / Intelligence**, or **Etiquette / Intelligence** roll, TN 10, confirms that gate guards at the city gates would have records of any samurai leaving the city, as would the dockmaster for any samurai leaving via ship. This makes it take longer, but regardless, the PCs eventually learn that Koi, Choryo, and Ryunosuke left, headed upriver on a ship named the *Ancestor's Gate*.

Part Two: Boarish Behavior

The Kintani River is only navigable up to the middle of the Kintani Valley. Whether the PCs choose to take a boat themselves or borrow horses from the Owl, their next stop is Shiro Heichi, which was once Kyuden Kyotei, ancestral home of the Tsume vassal family. The road runs along the south side of the river, up on bluffs that overlook the valley, and passes the palace of the Emerald Champion. Owl troops and Imperial legionnaires patrol the road, and dozens of boats plod up- and downstream, laden with goods bound for the Lion, Dragon, and Owl provinces or grain and raw materials from them. If the PCs take a ship, it is the *Owl-Boar*, crewed by Heichi samurai; the ship sails day and night, and reaches Heichi Castle in two days' travel. By horseback, the trip is three days, but can be cut to two days if the PCs push their horses; this requires a **Horsemanship / Stamina** roll, TN 15, or they are Fatigued for their first day in Chikuzen, the village that surrounds Heichi Castle.

Chikuzen is the second-largest city in the Owl holdings, and is also a major trade hub, serving boats coming upriver and trade caravans heading to and from the capital and the Dragon and Phoenix lands. It is also home to the Heichi Bushi School and is the

headquarters of the First Owl Army (which is in fact the only Owl army). Although small, the Owl lands are quite fertile, and one of the major sources of income for the Owl coffers is rice sales to the Lion and Dragon Clans; much of that trade happens in Chikuzen. Indeed, as the PCs enter the city, they spot a number of merchants from nearly every Great Clan haggling with one another over the first of the year's two harvests.

Chikuzen bustles with energy and traffic, both on the waterfront where boats load and unload cargo and in the streets itself, where numerous Owl bushi can be seen making their way through the throng. The town spills across the plain south of the Kintani River, with high bluffs to the west; atop one of the nearest bluffs is a robust and well-fortified castle, and further to the west a glittering waterfall catches the morning light. In between, it's easy to make out a large military camp spread out on the plains below the castle, suggesting that the Owl legions are preparing to march.

As they pass through the city, the PCs might notice that, while weaponsmiths are common and are hard at work ahead of the Owl mobilization, all of the actual sword-makers in the city display the mon of the Hantei or Chise families rather than that of the Heichi. Instead, the Heichi smiths work tirelessly to craft the unique mai chong polearm for which they are so well known.

When the PCs arrive in Chikuzen, they may make an **Etiquette / Intelligence** roll, TN 10, to remember that they should present themselves to the city governor (in this case, Heichi Rokitsu, daimyo of the Heichi family) and bring a gift; if no one makes the roll, the gate or dock guards will remind them. The guards refuse to provide any information to the PCs without authorization from the daimyo, but the daimyo is holding court today and they can make the request from him. When the PCs climb the bluff and reach the castle, the karo asks for their personal chops and then admits them into the main court room, where Heichi Rokitsu is greeting guests and hearing petitions.

Heichi Rokitsu is a large man, square-jawed and square-shouldered, with the piercing gaze and ever-ready posture of a veteran warrior. His face, once rather bland, now bears a vicious pink scar that runs from his left eyebrow to his right cheek, giving him a continuous skeptical squint. He is sitting on a low bench-like chair in the court's central dais, and his personal mai chong leans within easy reach. Though his is clearly used to being in command, he shows little

interest in courtly finery, as his kimono is simply cut and he has no gaudy ornaments to speak of.

As you take your places in the audience line, the man at the head of that line is motioned forward by Rokitsu's karo. "Akodo Tetsui, chui of the First Imperial Legion," the karo introduces him, and the man steps into the open space in front of the dais and bows deeply. "Heichi-sama," Tetsui begins, "it is both an honor and a pleasure to see you again. I have come in the simple hope that you might welcome me into your abundant lands and spare a moment or two to share a cup of sake with an old comrade in arms." Rokitsu laughs, a deep chuckle. "Still the smooth-talker, eh, Tetsui? You know perfectly well you're welcome here whenever you like, you old hairball." Tetsui holds back a laugh of his own at the nickname, but his eyes twinkle.

"I can't accept your hospitality without offering a gift of equal worth," Tetsui replies. "On behalf of myself and my Champion, Akodo Shakato, I would like to present you with this copy of Akodo-kami's immortal text, *Leadership*, with annotations by the great Akodo Ginawa, who led my Clan when yours was founded. We both hope you will accept it as a token of our great respect."

Rokitsu does not hide his surprise, but he replies, "You clearly have overvalued my hospitality, old friend. I can't possibly accept such a treasure."

"Not at all," Tetsui answers. "The friendship you have shown me and the Lion Clan over the years alone would justify it."

"Friendship returned in kind when we served together," Rokitsu shakes his head. "You don't owe me anything more."

"Then perhaps you'll take it in recognition of future friendship?" Tetsui offers smoothly.

"Friendship is never to be taken for granted, nor bought for the price of mere goods," Rokitsu answers, waving the idea away.

"Then," Tetsui shrugs, "simply accept it because I wish to give it."

Rokitsu's skeptical look intensifies, but after a short pause he nods again and smiles. "Very well," the Heichi lord rumbles, and takes the ancient scroll. Tetsui bows again and steps aside.

The next petitioner is introduced as Bayushi Akanishin, a slim man who wears a rich red and black kimono and a beaded black and gold mask that covers his nose and mouth. As Tetsui did, Akanishin offers Heichi Rokitsu a gift, a painting that shows Toturi IX and the late shogun dying in the Shadowlands, while an unwounded Rokitsu stands helplessly nearby. (Rokitsu's scar is not visible in the painting.) Akanishin says, "I have personally commissioned this artwork as a gift to you, Rokitsu-sama, in recognition of your service and bravery when our Legions turned back the hordes in the south. I trust it will stand as a testament to all you accomplished on that tragic day."

Rokitsu looked quietly furious, but his reply is steady and even: "My gratitude for this lesson in generosity is beyond words, Scorpion. I accept your gift with the same spirit it was offered. I am confident we do not need to go through the courtly forms here – after all, who would ever doubt the sincerity of a Scorpion?"

A gasp runs through the court as Rokitsu takes the painting, and an **Etiquette / Intelligence** or **Courtier / Intelligence** roll, TN 10, will tell the players that Rokitsu just insulted Akanishin on several different levels: by not acknowledging Akanishin's family name despite knowing it (and just saying "Scorpion" instead), by not offering even a basic -san honorific, by insulting Akanishin's honesty by not going through the three refusals, and by emphasizing his "sincerity" instead of his honesty. They can also recognize that the Akanishin's painting was intended to depict Rokitsu as a coward who did not save the Emperor, and Rokitsu is well aware of that. A **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** roll, TN 20, recalls that Rokitsu was a member of the Imperial Legions and survived the Battle of Broken Jade, gaining the scar on his face in the process; he and the former shogun were very good friends.

Bayushi Akanishin withdraws, his mask concealing his expression and making it impossible to determine whether his is pleased or upset with these events. The PCs are the next petitioners, and unless they deliberately ignore the lessons they just experienced, they should have no trouble with the social requirements. Whatever their gift, Rokitsu accepts it properly and asks them their business in Chikuzen. Assuming the PCs answer honestly, Rokitsu offers his aid as they request. If they arrive after three days' travel, Rokitsu is already aware that Hantei Ryunosuke passed through Chikuzen the day before with two other samurai, a ronin and a Phoenix; his guard reports suggest that Ryunosuke was behaving very oddly, speaking and moving stiffly and in a monotone. They thought he might have been ill. If the

PCs arrived after two days, Rokitsu knows nothing personally but sends a command to his guards to answer all the PCs' questions at the gate.

As they begin to leave Rokitsu's court, Bayushi Akanishin approaches the PCs and gestures for them to step to the side of the room with him. If they do so, the Scorpion courtier offers a graceful bow and speaks in a low voice.

"Thank you for speaking with me, samurai-sans. I am Bayushi Akanishin. I know who you are, and I have some knowledge about why you are here. I think I see a way that we might be able to help one another.

"One of the people you are pursuing is the ronin Koi, yes? She is known to me. If you will do a small favor for me, I will offer you what information I have about her, and a means to influence her when you confront her.

"I encourage you to consider my offer seriously, honorable samurai. The Scorpion Clan remembers its friends – as well as those who have chosen not to be our friends."

The PCs are likely to regard this offer with some skepticism, but Akanishin refuses to give any additional information until the PCs have accepted his terms. The favor, he explains, is simple: make a public statement to Rokitsu's court opposing Owl intervention in any upcoming military actions between the Lion and the Crab. Akodo Tetsui, Akanishin explains, has come to woo Rokitsu's support against the Crab this summer; Akanishin would prefer that this did not occur. "I do not expect you to single-handedly set Heichi-sama's course," the Bayushi explains calmly, "but your expression of support has value for my aims."

If the PCs want to know how they are supposed to convince anyone, Akanishin offers a few possible arguments the PCs might use: they can emphasize the Owl Clan's traditions of neutrality in the Empire, suggest that the ancient ties of blood and friendship between the Crab and the Heichi family should prevent the Owl from marching against them, or even simply suggest that the Owl should pursue peace rather than violence. If the PCs make other suggestions for possible tactics, Akanishin supports them as long as they would not grossly violate the standards of courtly behavior.

If the PCs agree to Akanishin's demands, they may address the court, making a **Courtier / Awareness** or **Sincerity / Awareness** roll. There is no TN, as

any actual attempt satisfies Akanishin, but a PC who exceeds TN 20 on the roll earns 1 pip of Glory as long as they don't already have Glory 3.0 or higher. A player who actually delivers a reasoned speech instead earns 1 pip of Glory if they reach TN 15, or 2 pips if they reach TN 20 (the limit of having less than Glory 3 still applies).

As long as at least one PC attempts to persuade Rokitsu to stay out of the upcoming war, Akanishin approaches the group again and offers his information.

"Koi is a child of a ronin and a peasant farmer from the lands near Kyuden Kitsune. She hired on with the Crab in the lead up to the Battle of Broken Jade, where our late and beloved Emperor was killed. In the fighting, she became Tainted, though she has hidden it from the Kuni hunters. Instead, she has used her service to earn a place as a trusted retainer of a Yasuki trade lord, a thorn wedged beneath the Crab's thick shell.

"However, she has a weakness that you can use against her. Should you face her, simply say this: 'The firstborn of Atsuki has a long memory.' You should find her much more... cooperative. Assuming that is the case, I would ask that you try to keep her alive, for future interrogations."

Once the PCs leave Heichi Castle at last, they can seek out the gate and dock guards in Chikuzen with Rokitsu's command for aid. If Rokitsu did not already tell them, they can also learn about Ryunosuke's strange behavior if one of them succeeds in an **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness**, TN 10, or **Courtier / Awareness** roll, TN 15. Regardless, they learn that Ryunosuke and his companions left through the city's west gate, on the Canal Road that leads to Shinden Chise.

The Ancestor's Gate

The PCs might choose to investigate the *Ancestor's Gate*, before or after meeting with Rokitsu. They can easily locate the ship at the Chikuzen docks, moored along with close to a dozen others. While the nearby vessels all seem to be busily loading or unloading cargo or otherwise preparing for travel and trade, the *Ancestor's Gate* is quiet and still. No one answers any hails, and no one stops the PCs from boarding. If they do so, they find the five sailors who crewed the *Ancestor's Gate* all slaughtered, showing signs of the same elemental-type wounds that the kansen from Ryunosuke's banquet dealt. Any examination of the captain's ledgers or logs suggests that Ryunosuke

handled all interactions, and pretty much exclusively kept to himself and his companions during the two-day trip. The log makes note of the same odd behavior that the gate guards noticed when they spoke to him.

Part Three: Hot Water

The trip to Shinden Chise must happen on land; west of Shiro Heichi, the Kintani River is narrower and swifter, with frequent whitewater rapids signaling the presence of numerous rocks and other treacherous obstacles in the water. The road is a continual incline as the PCs slowly climb up out of the Kintani Valley. The journey is three days long, but the PCs can again attempt a **Horsemanship / Stamina** roll, TN 15, to make the journey in two days (failure again makes the PCs Fatigued while they are at Shinden Chise, and potentially for the rest of the module).

Shinden Chise does not have a robust town around it; there is a tiny village that houses the temple's servants and a handful of farmers, but most of the temple's visitors stay on its grounds, which are quite expansive. The temple surrounds a large, mineral-rich hot spring that is the source of the Kintani River, nestled in the caldera of an extinct volcano. The caldera is tilted toward the east, and the eastern third of the basin is filled with the small lake created by the spring. An ancient gap in the crater wall allows the water to spill out into the valley, eventually becoming the Kintani. Less than a mile beyond the falls, the Drowned Lion's Canal, dating back to the bold and nigh-insane vision of an Akodo daimyo of the 7th century, carves a path through the worn-down volcanic hills to the Drowned Merchant River about 5 miles to the west, linking the two rivers. The temple itself is a three-part complex, with the four-story-high central temple standing to the west; a torii arch almost twenty feet high looms over the road leading to the temple gates. To the north and south, smaller buildings serve as quarters for lower-ranking samurai, students of the Chise Shugenja School, and visitors, many of whom are pilgrims or diplomats from the Dragon and Phoenix lands.

As the PCs approach the temple, a series of small earthquakes rattle the road. If the PCs have spent a total of 4 days on the road since leaving Azuma no Miru Mura, the temblors are brief; each PC must make an **Athletics / Earth** or **Defense / Earth** roll, TN 15, or **Horsemanship / Reflexes** roll if mounted, or suffer 1k1 damage. If it has been 5 days total, the shaking lasts longer; the PCs must make two such rolls, and if they fail either, they suffer 2k1 damage. If it's been 6 days total, the shaking goes on for more than a minute; three such rolls are required and failing

any of them deals 3k1 damage. (Fatigue penalties apply here.)

The earthquakes stop quickly, and with just a few more steps, the PCs reach the temple, where a large statue of Ryoshun, the so-called Kami of the Dead, looms next to the temple's massive doors. While the main temple honors a variety of Rokugani Fortunes and ancestors, including Hantei Chise, the founder of the Chise family, Heichi, the founder of the Heichi family, and all of the original Founding Kami of the Great Clans, at first glance, there does not appear to be a shrine to Hantei Chise's husband, Clan founder Hantei Okuchoe. An **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** roll, TN 20, notices that there is in fact a shrine to Okuchoe, but it is surprisingly hidden and out of general view. **Lore: History / Intelligence**, TN 15, can tell a PC that Okuchoe's deeds were generally despised, even among many of his followers, and even now the Owl carry a sense of shame over them. There is one shrine beyond the temple gates, a shrine to the kami of the hot spring itself, placed at the lake's western edge. Three or four times a day, priests – often young shugenja in training – offer rites to appease the spirits within the spring and the caldera, to be sure that the volcano does not waken again.

As they circle the lake, they can see that the shrine by the lakeshore has collapsed, apparently during the earthquake that just passed. Several priests, many still too young to have passed their gempukku, their rite of adulthood, are scurrying about with barely-contained panic visible on their faces. As the PCs approach the open gates, they are met by Hantei Jobu, a more experienced shugenja making his way toward the shrine. Jobu is short, clean shaven, with dark eyes (even for a Rokugani), and the pale skin of a scholar. Unlike the many frightened students around him, Jobu is calm and even makes a basic attempt to offer the hospitality of the shrine to the PCs, but he is clearly in a hurry to reach the collapsed shrine. If the PCs ask to speak with the daimyo, he replies that Chise Asahime-dono is not available (she is, as is her wont, in the forests to the north and east of the shrine, communing with the spirits there), but her husband, Chise Ikase, is within the shrine. It is unlikely, however, that he will have time to see anyone today, given the unrest in the castle; Jobu recommends that PCs leave their chops and be about their business, whatever it might be. If the PCs mention Chouwa or their mission, Jobu pays more attention, as he is familiar with Chouwa and takes the Taint quite seriously. He will explain the castle's distress in that the kami of the hot spring are upset, causing the earthquakes the PCs experienced; the source of their consternation is most likely the disappearance of one of the Owl Clan's most highly-

respected shugenja, Chise Moruno. Moruno is a specialist in the quieting and subdual of spirits, and she designed the rite the Chise use to placate the hot springs kami.

If the PCs ask what happened, what they learn depends on how close behind the kidnappers they are. If they have only spent 4 days in travel, all they can learn is that Moruno left earlier that afternoon, without explaining herself to anyone; in this case, Jobu admits he's not even sure that there is a link between Moruno's disappearance and the disruption of the kami. If they have taken longer to arrive, though, some investigation has been done. With 5 days' travel, Jobu knows that Moruno left with Hantei Ryunosuke, confirming the link between the two disappearances; if they have taken 6 days in travel, Jobu also knows that maho tsukai were somehow involved, as the local kami have warned ominously of their "twisted kin." (If the PCs arrive after 4 or 5 days on the road, they can attempt a **Divination / Void, Spellcraft / Intelligence, Lore: Shadowlands / Intelligence, Lore: Maho / Intelligence, or Lore: Theology / Intelligence** roll, all TN 15, to reach the same conclusion, which Jobu will support if the idea is presented to him.) After 6 days, they can also learn that Moruno, like Ryunosuke in Chikuzen, was behaving oddly: mechanically and almost soullessly. That is all the information that Jobu has on-hand – he is willing to aid the PCs further if needed, but first has to resolve the problem of an angry kami and a volcano starting to wake up. If the PCs have a shugenja or monk among them, Jobu requests their aid in the rite, since most of the other shugenja immediately available are half-trained students; if not, he requests that they remain until the rite is done. A PC aiding in the ritual may roll **Lore: Theology / Void**, TN 20, to assist in the task. If they succeed (or if Jobu performs the rite alone), the PCs experience a vision of the kami of the mountain:

Suddenly, the clear blue skies overhead disappear, replaced with a deep purple-black, like the last trace of twilight before full night. The shrine before you is all that remains of Shinden Chise and the buildings around; inexplicably, however, the shrine's timbers and roof tiles seem to glow a strange, unnatural yellow-green, while the bare and lifeless stones all around emit a weak, reddish light. Jobu has vanished, and for an instant, you are the only ones standing before the caldera lake. After just a breath, though, a brilliant orange glow appears in the waters' depth, growing swiftly brighter as though it were moving toward the surface. Indeed, that proves to be the case, for before you can truly even react to the glow, a massive torrent of water is hurled skyward as a figure, a samurai in armor as tall as a mountain and seemingly

composed of black-cruled red lava, steps out of the lake, towering above you. The heat from the titanic spirit bakes your skin, and when it speaks, its voice is that of the volcano itself. "You seek the defilers, the twisted ones who corrupt our brothers and sisters even as their blood devours them from within. You have been given this duty, and the Celestial Heavens have laid their blessing on it," the figure booms. "Bring the defilers to justice, or to their ends, in accordance to Heaven's will, and we will be appeased." The earth begins to tremble and shake as the kami steps closer, and the heat forces your eyes closed. When you open them again, the mountainous kami is gone and the world looks as it did before, save that Jobu is staring at you with a curious expression.

Regardless of whether the PCs experience the vision, Jobu reports that the kami are calmed, for now, but he's not sure how long the peace will last. With his aid, the PCs quickly learn that no one has any idea which way Ryunosuke or Moruno went when they left, but Jobu has a theory – Ryunosuke is an archivist in the Owl Archives and would be able to gain access to the records they contain, but the archives also contain wards that would destroy Tainted intruders (and much of the records!) if any were to gain access. Moruno's skill at quieting the kami would be able to overcome those wards, though, at least for a short time. "That would allow Tainted maho tsukai to enter the Archives with Ryunosuke's authority and steal some of its secrets – secrets we can be sure are a threat to the Empire," the shugenja concludes ominously. Unless the PCs have a better suggestion, he urges them to head immediately for Toshi Ranbo and Tengoku no Sukina Kodomo no Kyuden, the Palace of Heaven's Favored Child: the ancestral home of the Owl Clan and the Hantei family. Although he would like to come, Jobu has to stay to tend the shrine to the volcano kami, as well as complete the dedication and sanctification of a much smaller shrine within the temple to a recently fallen Daidoji bushi to whom Jobu owes a debt. He wishes the PCs well and Fortunes' speed on their way.

Part Four: Night Owls

Toshi Ranbo is only a few miles from Shinden Chise, along a narrow road built along the Drowned Lion's Canal and then a larger highway that parallels the Drowned Merchant's River. Via horseback, the trip is about four hours, and if the PCs so choose, they can reach the city by nightfall after they leave Shinden Chise. Toshi Ranbo wo Shien Shite Reigisaho, the home of the Hantei family and truly the center of the Owl Clan as a whole, stands on the southern bank of

the Drowned Merchant River, surrounded by thick stone walls painted a gleaming, deathly white. Toshi Ranbo is a center of commerce and travel, linking most of the northern Empire to the Imperial capital of Otosan Uchi, several leagues to the south and east, and also serves as neutral grounds for diplomacy between representatives from every Clan. Ancient treaties with the Crane and Lion, enforced by the Owl's close ties to the Shogun of the Emperor's armies, mean that war has not touched Toshi Ranbo in more than two centuries; both Clans and the Emerald Legions are sworn to defend any direct assault on Toshi Ranbo itself.

Hantei Chouwa's name is enough to allow the PCs to be directed straight to Tengoku no Sukina Kodomo no Kyuden, where the palace guards accept their chops and send word into the castle. The PCs are told that the castle karo will speak with them later this evening, if they care to wait. If the PCs mention the possibility of maho, they should first make an **Etiquette / Intelligence** roll, TN 10, to realize that public discussions of the Taint, especially in social or courtly situations, can be dishonorable and offensive; if they choose to continue, the PC may make a **Courtier / Awareness** roll, TN 20, to pick the right words to get their point across without being gauche. Failure on the roll will cause L4 Honor loss, and result in the PCs not being seen until morning. Success, however, speeds their audience up to just half an hour after they arrive.

Regardless of when they get their audience, the person who greets them is a tall, spare-looking woman with hair just beginning to show signs of grey. She introduces herself as Hantei Shimine, the karo (chamberlain/advisor) to Hantei Kujaro, Champion of the Owl, and asks what their business is with her son. As it turns out, she is Chouwa's mother and Kujaro's aunt. After listening to whatever story the PCs tell, as long as it mentions Ryunosuke in some fashion, Shimine tells them that Ryunosuke is in the Archives, which have been sealed by his order for the last hours or days, depending on how far behind him the PCs might be. Given the urgency and Chouwa's involvement, however, she can and will override Ryunosuke's orders and permit them entrance; to maintain the sanctity of the Archives, though, she will need to accompany the group. ("I am no warrior," she admits calmly, "but if Chouwa-san trusted you with the safety of the Owl Clan, I can do no less with something as little as my life.") She bids the PCs to take up whatever arms they feel appropriate and follow her. If they ask why she does not call out the palace guard, she tilts her head as if she were an Agasha naturalist presented with a new type of moth for study. "The Archives are a collection of scrolls and

artifacts, and as such, a pitched battle within them will destroy that which we are trying to save. Should we fail, the Archives will be sealed and all within left to starve. Moreover, this task was given to you, was it not? I would not dishonor you by stripping it from you." She seems entirely unconcerned about suggesting that the PCs might starve to death – or that she might.

Shimine leads the PCs to the palace's west wing, and then down a set of stairs into a sublevel; on the way, she comments that the tunnels that house the Archive were originally dug by Crane sappers during their battles against the Lion in the 11th century. Those tunnels have been expanded and stabilized by generations of Hantei and Heichi engineers, and now comprise several miles of total tunnel space. Fortunately, while most of the Archivists were evacuated by Ryunosuke's order, a small few should still be around, and they should have little trouble finding the tunnel where Ryunosuke, Moruno, and the tsukai might be. Shimine smiles slightly as she says this. Just then, the PCs reach a large pair of doors, built of cherry wood and on thick bronze hinges. They are carved with depictions of Fukurokujin, the Fortune of Wisdom, and Tenjin, the lesser Fortune of Writing, along with more esoteric designs. A pair of Hantei bushi guard the doors, but when Shimine says, "Open it," they simply bow and open the doors. Beyond, the unlit darkness of the Archives looms, until Shimine takes a paper lantern and leads the way into the gloom. As the PCs follow, the guards close the doors behind them.

The Archives are largely what one might expect from an underground library: rows upon rows of scroll racks, each marked along the edge with kanji indicating the contents of each rack. As Shimine steps in, she lifts the lantern, looking for any sign of nearby inhabitants. When she sees none, she calls out in a soft tone, "Arkagl, are you near?" After a brief pause, the floor shudders slightly, then one of the nearby walls ripples like a pond in a stiff wind. Out from the wall steps a short, squat figure, green-skinned, beak-faced, with massive, glowing yellow orbs for eyes and three-fingered claws on each hand. It is wearing something like a kimono, though the material is strange to Rokugani eyes – it shimmers like polished copper, and in fact is a kind of woven metal. The creature bows politely to Shimine, as to a respected colleague, and Shimine responds in kind. The creature's voice is rough, stones grinding together, as it speaks in lightly-accented Rokugani. "I am, Shimine-san. We are pleased you have come at last. Darkness walks these tunnels, and we cannot bring the light."

Shimine introduces the creature as “Arkagl,” a zokujin. They are elemental creatures of earth, and longtime allies of the Owl Clan. They were once enslaved by the Lion to work their copper mines, and as such are sometimes called “copper goblins,” but since Toshi Ranbo has become Owl land, the zokujin are respected scholars, not servants. “Arkagl is one of the Archivists of the zokujin who works here, sharing in and trading in the information we store. They are masters of knowing how to find whatever is needed in the storage tunnels.” Arkagl bows politely to the PCs, but is clearly focused on other things. “Shimine-san, the Darkness. It walks here, and we cannot bring the light. It came with Ryunosuke-san, but I fear he is no longer himself. The Darkness speaks through him like a child through a venting tube. Another of the Owl came too; we do not know her, but she whispers and the earth cannot rouse against the Darkness. There is a Phoenix, and a tremor-man also.” (The zokujin have no word for “wave,” so they translate “ronin” as “tremor-man” instead of “wave-man.”) “The Darkness is wrapped around them, and the veins run through our Owl friends, deep in their strata.”

Shimine nods, gesturing to the PCs and herself. “We are here to deal with them, Arkagl-san. Tell us where to find them and we will see it done. And if you will, my friend, I ask something more from you: tell the guards beyond the door not to open them again until you have pronounced us free of the Darkness and we have their heads with us. Swear it on the Stone.” Arkagl hesitates for several long moments before replying, “By the Bloodwhite Stone, I swear it. Come, this way.” Seemingly without need for the lantern, the zokujin turns and begins to lead the PCs further into the Archives.

It takes more than twenty minutes of walking before the PCs reach the section of the Archives where Choryo and Koi are searching. It is in the section of the Archives dealing with the early history and even pre-Empire history of the Phoenix Clan, and the area is a complete wreck. Scrolls are tossed haphazardly around, one rack has actually been knocked over and partially smashed in seeming frustration, and (if the tsukai have been in the Archives for more than a few hours) the smell of smoke, as from a campfire. Indeed, at the end of the row of racks, a makeshift camp has been set up for the four intruders (whether it has been used yet depends on how long they have been there). Ryunosuke and Moruno (a plain-faced woman with her hair in a collapsing bun and a mouth carved into a permanent half-frown thanks to a stroke suffered some years ago) are standing off to one side, both looking tired, dusty, and slightly forlorn – Ryunosuke, despite not really moving, looks especially pained by

the state of his Archives. Koi and Choryo are feverishly unrolling and skimming over scroll after scroll, and it is clear that frustration is beginning to take a toll: they can be heard from a few racks away, arguing with one another. The topic is not clear, but each seems to be making sharp comments accusing the other of not having searched thoroughly enough or to leaving all the work to them. Unless at least half of the PCs can succeed at a **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** roll, TN 15, with the accompanying Honor loss (L3), they do hear the PCs approaching, however, and are somewhat prepared when the PCs and Shimine appear. (Arkagl leaves as soon as the PCs can hear the arguing shugenja and ronin, disappearing into the floor the same way he came out of the wall.) If the PCs can ambush the two, the scene moves immediately to combat, with Choryo using his maho to summon kansens to aid him and Koi in the battle (see his tactics below). If they don’t or can’t ambush the group, Choryo and Koi are waiting, and Choryo shouts into the dark, “Whoever you are, we ask the courtesy of samurai before battle! Let us speak before we fight, for the sake of the Archives!” Shimine will be suspicious but supports protecting the Archives; the PCs may do as they like, but ignoring the request will cost L5 Honor, while accepting the parley will earn the PCs H5.

If the PCs accept the parley, Gennai Choryo asks them to approach without attacking. Once they can see one another, Choryo says, “Whatever you might think of us, we are samurai, and we understand honor. We also value the knowledge in this Archive, and we would rather not risk damage to it if we can avoid it. I make you this offer: duel my champion, Koi. If she wins, you withdraw and allow us to leave the Owl provinces in peace. If your champion wins, we will commit seppuku. Either way, the Archives are protected. Do you agree?” (Koi seems shocked by this suggestion, but then smiles eagerly.) Again, the PCs can choose as they like. If they refuse, combat begins; if they accept, Choryo makes a show of stepping back and leaving Koi to face the PCs. In this case, there is an iaijutsu duel, but it doesn’t matter who wins – whether Koi makes the first strike or the PC does, Choryo launches an attack at the same time, breaking the rules of the duel. Any non-duelist PC can make an **Investigation (Interrogation) / Perception** roll, TN 20, to realize what Choryo is about to do and intervene, rolling initiative as normal. Those who fail are Surprised. Combat commences regardless (the duelist and Koi have to Strike on the first Round, and the PC duelist will gain Glory as appropriate for their victory or defeat). Note: if facing an extremely skilled duelist or a bushi trained by the Kakita or Mirumoto Bushi Schools, Koi will “embrace the Taint” on her

Assessment and Strike rolls, gaining 1 point of Taint for an additional +1k1 on each roll.

During the parley, a PC who made a deal with Akanishin and remembers what they were told to say to Koi may make use of the phrase, "The firstborn of Atsuki has a long memory," as they were instructed. Koi's eyes widen when she hears this, though she does not actually say anything in response, and if the conversation turns to a fight, she immediately surrenders. If she is instead put forward as a duelist, she is much less pleased than she would have been otherwise and chooses to keep low dice on the Focus roll. Assuming she survives the Strike, she then surrenders as described before.

Choryo cannot fight and control Moruno and Ryunosuke effectively, so the two mind-controlled shugenja merely stand frozen and mute during the battle. Instead, he uses his first action to conjure one each of the kansen spirits he used in Azuma no Mizu Mura (this requires no roll but does cost him 8 Wounds). Choryo prefers to use his magic to enhance Koi's battle prowess for the most part, such as healing her with Blood Rite and boosting her Agility at the same time, especially since her Above the Elements power gives him a Free Raise on these spells, but will use Earth Becomes Sky, Earth's Stagnation, Envious Flames, and Curse of Weakness on his foes if it seems wise. If Koi surrenders, Choryo swears angrily at her and then attempts a much riskier summoning, combining his knowledge of maho and elemental blending on the second Round to create the Corrupted Elemental Maelstrom (see below), which costs him an additional 16 Wounds. Note that Choryo's Technique can be used on his maho spells as well.

Gennai Choryo

Choryo is a short, rotund fellow with a scholarly demeanor, often with an ink smudge or two on his fingers or nose. If one were to roll up his sleeves, however, numerous light scarring – the track marks of his maho use – would be clearly visible.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 2	Void 2
	Willpower		Perception	
	5		3	
Honor 1.5		Status 2.0		Glory 3.0
Initiative: 5k3				Attack: as spell
Armor TN: 25	in			Damage: as spell
	Defense Stance			
Reduction: 0				
Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)				
Taint Rank: 2.5				
School/Rank: Gennai Shugenja 2				

Techniques: *Elements of All Things* (Spend VP to use different Ring to cast spell; costs spell slot from the selected Ring; FR on Craft spells)

Spells Known: *Air Spells* (Spell Casting 5k3): To Seek the Truth, Wolf's Proposal; *Earth Spells* (Spell Casting 5k3): Earth Becomes Sky, Earth's Stagnation, Minor Binding; *Fire Spells* (Spell Casting 6k3): Biting Steel, Envious Flames, Mental Quickness, Shining Light; *Maho Spells* (Spell Casting varies): Blood Rite (5k2), Curse of Weakness (5k2), Possession (variant version, 6k3)

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Craft: Cartography 1, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Lore: History (Phoenix Clan) 5, Lore: Maho 3, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Lore: Theology 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 2, Spellcraft 3.

Koi

Koi is tall and razor thin, with visible cords of muscle and bones that can be seen just under her skin. Her gaze is piercing and unsettling, not least because she looks as much like a walking skeleton as she does a real human being.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 3	Water 2	Void 2
Reflexes	Willpower		Strength	
3	4		3	
Honor 1.0		Status 0.0		Glory 2.5

Initiative: 4k3

Attack: 6k3 katana

Armor TN: 23 (ashigaru armor)

Damage: 7k2 katana

Reduction: 1

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

Taint Rank: 2.0

School/Rank: none (Insight Rank 1)

Shadowlands Powers: Above the Elements, Mind of Darkness, Uncanny Speed

Skills: Athletics 2, Commerce 3, Defense 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation (Control) 3, Investigation 1, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: Maho 2, Lore: Underworld 2, Sincerity (Deceit) 3, Stealth 2.

Corrupted Elemental Maelstrom

This bizarre figure seems to be composed of the black night sky formed into a vaguely human-like shape; within its form, thousands of tiny multihued lights burn. The air around it ripples and churns as an aura of fire becomes a dripping mantle of water, then transforms again into a swirling cloak of fog.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3
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Initiative: 4k3

Attack: 6k3

unarmed strike

(Complex)

Armor TN: 20

Damage: 5k2

unarmed strike

Reduction: 4/jade

Wounds: 10 (+0), 20 (+5), 30 (+15), 30 (+20), 40 (Dead)

Taint Rank: 3.0

Shadowlands Powers: *Elemental Maelstrom* (When the Corrupted Maelstrom is summoned, and every Reactions phase thereafter, roll a d10 twice. The Maelstrom gains the following powers for the next Round based on the result of the two rolls:

1-2: Smothering Breath – The Maelstrom’s Armor AC becomes 25 and its unarmed strikes become Simple Actions.

3-4: Crushing Earth – The Maelstrom’s Reduction increases to 8/jade and anyone hit by its unarmed strike is Fatigued for 1 Round. Fatigued enemies are instead Stunned for 1 Round.

5-6: Searing Flame – The Maelstrom’s unarmed strike attack roll becomes 7k4 and anyone it hits or who hits it in melee combat takes 3 Wounds of fire damage.

7-8: Swallowing Waves – The Maelstrom’s unarmed strikes ignore the bonus of armor to Armor TN and it heals 6 Wounds during the Reactions Phase.

9-10: All Elements are One – The Maelstrom gains all of the above abilities. Do not roll a second time.

Ignore any duplicated abilities if the same ability is rolled twice - the Maelstrom has only one power that Round.)

Conclusion

Assuming the PCs win, they can learn from any captives or from Choryo’s notes in the camp that they were searching for something called “Gisei Toshi,” which Choryo believed to be the mythical “lost city” of Isawa himself and potential home of “pure maho,” but there is no additional information. Shimine notes that their Archives don’t seem to have any data on the place, but she will start working to learn what it might be and if it even truly exists. She congratulates the PCs on their victory, and there is a triumphant return to the palace proper. If Choryo was taken alive, he is turned over to the Owl magistrates for proper punishment; if Koi survives, Akanishin intervenes through his allies

in the Hantei courts to have her sent to Shiro Yogo for “further interrogation,” but the PCs do not learn of this until after the module concludes. Ryunnosuke and Moruno remain at Tengoku no Sukina Kodomo no Kyuden for the time being, recovering from their experiences and being thoroughly examined by Chise priests for any signs of lingering Taint. After some recognition of their valor (vaguely worded to save Owl face), Shimine arranges for fast and comfortable travel back to Azuma no Miru Mura for the PCs, just in time to see the end of the trade discussions.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module:	1 XP
Good Roleplaying:	1 XP
Capturing or Killing Gennai Choryu:	1 XP
Capturing or Killing Koi:	1 XP
Total Possible Experience:	4 XP

Favors

The PCs gain a Favor. Owl PCs gain an additional Favor.

Honor

For defeating the tsukai, the PCs gain H5.

Glory

Defeating the tsukai also earns the PCs G5.

Allies and Enemies

Any PC who makes a speech opposing an Owl alliance with the Lion earns Bayushi Akanishin as an Ally (Influence 2, Devotion 1).

Defeating the tsukai in the Archives earns the PCs Hantei Shimine as an Ally (Influence 2, Devotion 1).

GM Reporting Questions

- 1) Did the PCs make the deal with Akanishin?
- 2) Did Koi survive?

Appendix #1: NPCs

Kakita Okiku (Status 2) Okiku does not match the appearance generally imagined for one of the most gifted artisans of her generation: her hands are strong and scarred, her arms well-muscled, and she is frequently covered in clay from her constant work as a sculptor. While as capable as any other Crane of presenting an appropriate appearance for court, Okiku would much rather be in her studio, wresting another vision of beauty from the bones of the earth.

Agasha Shumei (Status 3) Innovation is not well-regarded in most of the Empire, though the Dragon are sometimes an exception; curious minds like Agasha Shumei often have difficulties with this fact of life. A genius constantly searching for new applications of his family's alchemy, his pursuits have led him all over Rokugan seeking rare ingredients.

Matsu Teruyo (Status 3) The Lion border on every other Great Clan except the Crab, and even in times of relative peace like the last generation, still engage in skirmishes with them all. Teruyo is a veteran of military actions against nearly all of them herself, having deliberately sought the most likely postings throughout her career. She combines the typical Matsu eagerness for battle with a keen interest in the methods of war used by the other clans, and studies their ways intently.

Yoritomo Shigochiyo (Status 3) While it is tempting to call all Mantis sea captains "pirate", it is simply not the case – the entire clan could not support flagrant violations of Imperial law, particularly now that there is more ocean traffic than ever before in the Empire's history. Certainly there is no proof or testimony that would implicate Yoritomo Shigochiyo in such activity. His incredible wealth is due entirely to his masterful trading with the Ivindi, and all of the well-armed and highly skilled bushi of his crew have borne witness to these deals (even if no other Rokugani ever has). And the name of his ship, the *Inazuma Maru*, refers to the legendary connection between Osano-wo and the Mantis, not the speed that it is capable of striking out with...

Hantei Chouwa (Status 3) Chouwa is a close cousin of the Owl Clan Champion, and thus is often sent as a suitable representative in the Champion's place, despite Chouwa's own preference to serve as a bushi on the battlefield. Recently posted to the Imperial Court, Chouwa is eager to learn about all the various Clans and sees himself as having ancestral ties to families all across the Empire.

Hantei Ryunosuke (Status 4) It can be painful to see a man with very little skill in politicking try to work a room full of politicians, and therefore watching Ryunosuke has been known to be a bit torturous. He is an extremely talented researcher and works very well within his own bailiwick, but outside of the history of Rokugan and the metaphysics of reincarnation as they apply to Fortune and Kami, he has difficulty finding topics to discuss with others where he can hold his own, let alone actually be an engaging conversationalist.

Gennai Choryo (Status 2) Choryo is an eccentric historian, fascinated by the history of the land that would become Rokugan even before the Kami fell. He is ill-suited to courtly functions, and does his best to stay out of the limelight whenever possible. He occasionally expresses frustration that the Gennai family still suffers from a sense of isolation from the other Phoenix families, even two centuries after turning away from the Dragon and joining the clan of Shiba.

Shosuro Retsuko (Status 3) Retsuko is renowned for her performances in every major court of the Empire. Though she does not have the classic dark beauty of her clan, this has actually furthered her career on the stage as it has given her a breadth of roles few other actors can match.

Shinjo Kei (Status 2) The duties of an Imperial Cartographer require travel across the Empire, a perfect fit for Kei's wanderlust. While others may produce maps that are more clear, none can match the enthusiasm she brings to her duty, and few can deliver them as quickly.

Koi (Status 0) Koi is not a beautiful woman, but her appearance is striking and she is not easily forgotten. She speaks little, stares disconcertingly directly at people, and smiles quietly whenever the topic of violence comes up. Nonetheless, she has earned the confidence of the merchant patron Yasuki Hatsue, and serves her as a determined and effective tool all across the Empire. It is probably only rumor that she sometimes "convinces" other merchants to offer

her patron favorable terms through physical coercion – in fact, it must be, since she has already won two duels to disprove such allegations in the past.