

Seeking the Way

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**A Mid-Rank Adventure for
Heroes of Rokugan: Champions of the Ivory Throne
Month of the Horse, 1342 (Early Summer)**

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Investigation, Politics, Supernatural

Where paths cross, conflict often ensues.

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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 kitsune spirit Kirameki (from CIT03 'Legacy of my Ancestors') has been wandering since her last interaction with the PCs, trying to find a way back to her home realm of Chikusudo. In the interim years, she has learned from her 'sisters' Inari Themself has forbidden her to return until she can demonstrate that her spirit is once again balanced; at this point, Inari considers her too full of the Sin of Regret to be worthy of returning to Their side.

After several months of meditation and learning, Kirameki has made her way to an area of spiritual unbalance, hoping that she might use the opportunity to ease the land and people as a way to ease her own spirit. Since she has fond memories of the PCs, and precious few other allies, she sends for them by name and begs that they join her in the village of Kagoki in Yuma Province, just south of Beiden Pass.

The PCs will observe a town seemingly ordinary, if a bit downtrodden, when they first arrive. Kirameki, who has been here for a while, will have her own conclusions (which while logical are completely false, something she is lead to by her prejudices) about what the situation is (She suspects another evil, abusive Governor, when in truth Azumi is another victim of Shima's lies) but will encourage the PCs to investigate further.

It will be obvious early that the local Governor is not doing a great job at her task. There are crop problems and livestock problems and yet she, seemingly, does nothing about them, leaving her two subordinates (the Karo Soshi Shima and the young Emerald yoriki, Yogo Ihara) to more or less rule by proxy. While Ihara is a genuinely dutiful samurai, he has the misfortune to be in love with Shima, who is most definitely NOT a good samurai (but instead a greedy, clever opportunist who isn't at all who he says he is) and

whose orders he accepts without ever thinking too hard about them, so long as they fall within the believable realm where 'but the karo said so' is a viable justification.

Shima has been masterminding a light amount of graft (a 3 on a scale of 10), carefully never touching anything that might get him in real trouble (read: things that would affect the Imperial Taxes) but taking enough from the rest to live the lifestyle he prefers. He has, occasionally, had to eliminate someone who refuses to pay the 'fees' he imposes, but he easily covers it up either by ordering Ihara to execute them (if they are peasants) or by arranging 'accidents' for them (in the case of ronin who turn out to be distressingly honorable when asked to look the other way). Recently, the Hetman has gotten greedy, something Shima is on the verge of punishing him for when the party arrives.

All of the samurai know about the crop and livestock troubles that have turned up this year; they simply haven't done anything (successfully) about it, though not for lack of trying by Ihara. None of the samurai know yet that the peasants are sick and suffering the same fertility problems as the livestock (which they haven't reported out of fear of a purge). The PCs will learn this as they explore, however, and will then have a source to track down.

There is a possibility that the party, having past experience with Kirameki and how she affected a village while under samurai control, might believe she is at least partly to blame here. Many of the signs are similar; women hiding away, general fear of samurai in the populace, and a sickness that is resistant to mundane remedies. IF she is accused, she will be hurt but will understand why, but that will mean she does NOT offer to help with a 'solution' for the monk Sharyo in Part 3.

There is a source, of course; the Eta of the town are paying host to a monk, Sharyo, who serves Ekibyogami, Fortune of Disease and Pestilence. He has been here since mid-spring and, after receiving genuine hospitality from his former brethren, has lingered instead of moving on as he would more habitually do. He has been acting as healer for the eta since the death of the midwife and, out of gratitude, they keep silent about his presence and feed him the best of what they have. In turn, he has asked for his lady's 'blessing' to bypass the eta, restricting itself to the heimen and, eventually, the samurai as well.

Finding the eta will depend on either going to the eta village or following the man from a visit to one of his victims' house back to his own temporary lodging (a dugout old soddie long abandoned just outside of

town). When the party confronts him, he will remain passive to anything but departing; he considers his current work to be a holy mission, based on the fact that his smallpox has ‘bloomed’, becoming contagious as it only periodically does. He will willingly die in his Fortunes’ service (something the kitsune will be more than happy to help him do, if she is informed that the man is present), and trying to find another way to get him to leave is the major moral quandary of the module. If the party has already dug into the matter of the graft and it has resulted in the loss of Yogo Ihara (either by believing it when Shima tries to frame him OR if he falls defending Azumi from an accusation of negligence if she is accused before the plague is discovered), they will require a PC Magistrate or else they will not have any legal way to restrain/force the monk to go except by killing him.

If the party manages to stop the graft (by running off Shima one way or another) and then finds the monk of Ekibyogami and deals with him (one way or another), Kirameki’s part in the process, and her trust in samurai once again proved, she will be at last cleansed of the last of her resentment and will be able to go home at last. If the party only figures out half the problem (don’t find Sharyo OR leave Shima in power) Kirameki’s burden eases somewhat but she feels compelled to go on again after the new monks come, not yet having succeeded in cleansing herself. If the party stops neither problem, Kirameki’s suspicions against humanity will be proved and she will Fall, losing herself to the dark aspect of Inari’s Service (The Frost Dragon).

There are options in the conclusion for what will happen if the monk Sharyo is allowed to complete his work (either because he was missed or the party decided to let it happen).

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.

- Disbeliever
- Kitsune’s Boon (The possible reward from CIT03)
- Inari’s Curse (the possible penalty from CIT03)
- Cast Out (Thousand Fortunes)
- Greedy
- Status 3+ {Merchant Track} and/or IR 3+ in a Merchant School (Yasuki Courtier, Kasuga Courtier, Ide Merchant Path, Daidoji Trading Council Path)

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. The time between modules will see a slow drain of Glory from the PCs, with the amount of time generally relating to the amount of Glory lost at the beginning of each module – as a general rule, between one point and five points. 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.

Glory loss for this mod is .3.

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.

The TN for this check is 15.

Crafting

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

Preparation Techniques

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

Ronin Survival

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

The Roll for this Module is TN 15.

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 Message

For PCs that have completed CIT03 but did NOT get Inari's Curse:

The module begins with a letter, carried by a member of the Barefoot Brethren, directed to each individual PC, not their Lord or their Clan or whatever other sort of commander a given PC might have.

The monk arrives with little fanfare in the middle of the afternoon, bearing a small packet for you. On top is a simple scroll written on a rough handmade paper, the ink a faded reddish brown most often made from boiling the hulls of nuts. The message itself is equally simple, direct and to the point.

‘You helped me once. My future, and the future of others, rests on your choice to do so again.

In Inari’s name, I beseech you: Come to Kagoki with all haste.’

In lieu of a signature, there is simply a chop of a stylized fox and a single dried maple leaf.

If the PCs want to question the Monk, a cheerful middle-aged lady named Aisa, they are welcome to do so, though she doesn’t know much.

- Who gave you the letter? “It was passed to me by another Monk as I was moving South through Biden Pass. A pretty thing, she was, though clearly troubled.”
- Did she give you a name? “Ije, we barely spoke. She simply gave me the names of the people she needed to reach, their locations, and then urged me on my Path.”
- Can you describe her? “Young, probably temple-born were I to guess. Black hair with a white streak over the left temple, amber eyes, and wearing the typical robes of one of Inari’s followers. I’d have pegged her for Benten’s service, but who am I to tell another what Path to walk?”

The rest of the packet is travelling papers, allowing for passage into Scorpion lands for the purpose of ‘a spiritual pilgrimage’. The seal belongs to the Thousand Temples order and, as such, has a caveat that under NO CIRCUMSTANCES are the bearers to engage in any sort of violence except in preservation of their own lives. The papers do allow for a ‘+1’, in case an individual PC has a servant or similar {or if a PC hasn’t played CIT03, this allows them to be brought along}.

{ {GM Note: This means a substantial honor loss will occur for any NPC deaths during this module that are a result of PC direct actions. In addition to the honor loss, this will also negate the travel papers the PC in question carries, something that Shima will happily exploit as a way to remove them from being a problem (by way of locking them up for the duration of the mod) if PCs become too persistent or annoying. } }

For PCs that completed CIT03 and earned Inari's Curse:

These PCs MUST be invited as guests of another PC with at least some reasonable justification beyond 'that's my friend'. Kirameki will refuse to speak to them, or in front of them, but she will grudgingly accept the results of their hard work.

For PCs that have NOT completed CIT03:

If a Clanmate is at the table who has completed CIT03, they can go along with that PC as an appropriate sort of assistant (yojimbo, spiritual advisor, political advisor, etc.)

If there is no easy tie the PC in and they are some sort of Clan samurai, they will instead receive a letter from their Lord/superior telling them that a Temple of Inari has requested aid in Scorpion lands and they have been selected to go.

If the unconnected individual is a monk, they will have a dream which will be incredibly vivid in the night but almost forgotten by the time they wake, leaving behind only a sense of urgency and where to go.

If the unconnected individual is a ronin, they can of course just show up, looking for work.

The Journey

Travel is at its easiest in the early part of summer, with plentiful food, ample water, and clear, well-repaired roads. The heat is high enough that the slightly cooler weather as the road begins the slow, gradual rise toward the foothills that lead to Beiden Pass. Only the frequent stops by Scorpion patrols, readying for war as they are, mar the journey.

At last, however, you arrive at your destination: Kagoki, a large village spread across low hills. Sunlight winks from many stepped terraces, glittering off the shallow waters which support the growth of rice, and beats down warmly on the backs of the laborers that you can see, here and there, tending to their crop. Oddly, several of the paddies lie empty, and those that are worked seem to be less robust than those crops and bushes that you rode past in former days.

There is a village center of sorts with a cluster of buildings. The Governor's Manse, at northern edge, is as far as the properly maintained road goes. This little cluster houses all of the main buildings: besides the manse, there is a large Temple, a small market square

with a number of permanent shops as well as tents and rolling stall wagons, an Inn, and a few large buildings which are most likely used for storage.

When the party arrives, it is late Afternoon. PC's will generally go to either the Temple (below) or the Inn. If they try to go to the Governor, they will be politely told it is too late for visitors and to come back tomorrow.

Note that the descriptions of the Temple and the Inn are both in Part 1, but there will be new things happening at them which will be briefly mentioned in Part 2 (that happen on the first real day the party is looking around).

Meeting up with Kirameki at the Temple

The village Temple is, compared to most of the other buildings in town, on the larger and more elaborate side. From a distance, it shows all the hallmarks of a Temple that has been established and operational for many centuries, with minute shifts in styles happening here and there as maintenance inevitably replaced pieces over time. As you approach, however, it is clear that the beauty of the building is like that of a stage actor: fine at range, but growing more pitiful the closer one comes.

Out on the front steps, a single monk struggles to do the work that should have the help of many hands; ritual purification of the arches and temple steps and floors.

The monk, upon approach, is obviously Kirameki {for those who know her from CIT03}. There have been a few changes since the last time the PC's saw her.

- She has graduated from miko to full vested monk, complete with the golden saffron robes of the Brotherhood, with the sash that indicates leadership of a particular Temple.
- She has also seemed to age, with fine lines about her eyes and a lock of hair over her left temple, as wide as a child's palm, is now snowy white.
- Her eyes, which were a standard dark brown, are now a much more striking golden amber color.
- {{Those with special aura sight/spirit sensing school techs only:}} Her hidden nature, which shows as an overlay of a multi-tailed fox, has a full nine tails now. The coat is somehow blotchy, with snow white patches here and there.

Kirameki is very glad to see the party so long as at least one person present is someone she remembers from Phoenix lands. She is much less reserved than when

the party first met her, quicker to smile, frown, cry, or anything else...she has stopped trying so hard to blend in.

The party will be invited into the temple, which will be in a bit better repair and state of cleanliness, but which is still obviously not as great as it once was. Kirameki offers the party a place to stay, if they don't have one already...the temple was meant to house many more monks than just her, so there is ample space, albeit nothing fancy.

Once the party has had a chance to stow their gear and wash up (if they wish to), Kirameki waits in the small kitchen at a low table, stacked high with cloth-covered dishes. These, she explains, are mostly offerings that the villagers give her when she has the rare opportunity to go to town for such things. The rest (vegetables and fruit and nuts) are things that she was able to gather from the temple Garden. Notably, she has a surplus of rice...she herself cannot eat the stuff, given one of her Taboos, and is delighted to have guests who will enjoy it instead of seeing it go to waste.

Once the party has had a chance to get a plate, she will explain her problem and the reason she has asked them

here (and a bit about how she got here).

Around sips of tea and bits of a rich fish stew, Kirameki explains the situation as it was when she first came here.

“After I left the lands where you found me, I wandered far and at my leisure for many months. My mind was troubled by all that I had seen and done and I found a peace in my other form and movement that most of you would find in meditations. In time, however, I knew that I must return to my service, and so I sought to do so. Eventually, my efforts lead me here. I arrived just as fall became winter last year and found a temple nearly unmanned.”

She then details the trials of the winter, her attempts to keep alive the aged Abbot as his Earth failed him and her eventual assumption of his duties.

“Of course, I sent word to the nearest Temple I knew, so the Brotherhood knows we need help. Alas, training enough suitable people for a posting this important is not a simple matter. I have been told it will be nearly Harvest season by the time new monks can come and take over the work here. I sense something wrong here, more than just the failing of the Temple, but my duties, as sole priest, are so demanding I cannot keep up alone, much less go out to find what lies behind the strange felling of imbalance I feel here. I have my theories, but that is all they are. You have all proven resourceful seekers of truth before: I hope you will be so again.”

It is expected that the party will have questions. The most common that she can answer are as follows:

What are your theories? “I have noticed that, though there are samurai here, they never come to the temple themselves. I know Scorpion are less pious than Phoenix, but I expected them for at least the spring festival. The young one, the magistrate, came and gave his respects, as did the other man, the karo, but the Governor did not come.” Amber eyes narrow thoughtfully. “In fact, I have never seen her. When I went to report the loss of the Abbot, as is proper, I found only her servant. I was assured that the Governor would send any word I wanted via the next caravan out, but nothing more. Such lack of respect, of

attention, to ones only Temple, in the one who rules?
” Kirameki’s head shakes, slowly, in disapproval.
“How else could a town fair but ill when such a one leads?”

What has gone wrong? “As I said, I do not have many chances to go out, but it used to be that others came here.” Idly, the fox maiden runs a finger along the edge of her teacup. “The heimen villagers came for all the expected seasonal offerings. Sometimes the two samurai came. Even the eta came, when their duties allowed. Some of them did more, two hands or so. The carpenter helped with the repairs, before he died a month or so ago. Several of the wives helped with the cleaning. A few younger men helped bring in new stone for the garden wall, and two of the eta women who had been acting as midwife and assistant used to help with the gardening and herbs, earlier in the year. Then, of course, they killed the midwife, and all the eta stopped coming. Then, a fortnight or so ago, everyone stopped coming. It wasn’t all at once, just one less, than two...but within a hand of days, it was only me again.”

Did you ask what happened to those people? “I did, after the heimen stopped coming. The eta...well. I didn’t blame them, really, but the women seemed so dedicated it was odd when they first stopped. The Headman told me that they had been required to go on to more productive tasks than my temple when I asked after them, but I haven’t seen any of them since...not that I have much time to look.”

Who killed the midwife? Pointed canines flash in a dark, humorless smile. “Why, the samurai did. The young man. He did not wish to, it was clear, but that was the judgement for her failure. There has been difficulty with some of the livestock, I heard, and since she had the most healing lore they charged her to fix it. Her failure is no surprise...the response of the samurai was, also.”

Who would know more about the livestock issues? “That would be the leader of the heimen, a man named Tommo” Her voice grew softer, darker, an indicator of her distaste. “He is a greedy, lazy coward who gains confidence when he needs it from the bottle or the fear of his wife. He keeps the records of such things, though the karo comes down often and likely keeps copies.”

What do you know about the samurai here? “I have never seen the Governor. I am told she is a brilliant logistics manager and part of some sort of trader’s guild among her Family, but I do not pretend to understand such matters. She is a Yogo, I am told,

called Azumi. The local magistrate is Yogo, too...Ihara, he is called. He is the newest samurai resident, I understand, and the villagers seem to find him the least worrying, even if he is the one who wields the blade or the lash when it is required. Then, of course, there is the karo. I see him, sometimes, if my duties take me to the village center...he spends a good part of each day in and around the storage units and, if there is one, with the caravan masters, overseeing the exchange of goods. He is...” She pauses, trying to find a proper way to describe the man, and then shrugs. “He would have made a fine fox. He is always just where he wants to be when he should be and always has answers before a question is asked.”

Why are their so few crops? Kirameki’s brow furrows with genuine distress as she glances down at her cup. “In truth, samurai, I cannot say. I have prayed for guidance in this matter, but my Lord continues to send none.” {{{PCs should make an Investigation (Notice)/AW vs a TN 25 to detect that she is trying to hide serious distress; if she is pressed about it, Kirameki will confess that she has a worry that perhaps it is her presence that is causing the issue. }}}

Why would you think this is your doing? This question makes the kitsune flinch before hanging her head in shame, pulling the white lock of hair forward to stare bitterly at it. “As soon as I left what had once been both home and cage, I tried to go back to my own Realm through the gate I first took. I was blocked by my own ‘sisters’, who said that one such as I was not fit to cross over. They could see that my spirit had been twisted. I worry that Inari, too, has turned away from me and that distaste might have followed me here...” {{Priestly types can meditate on this question in the temple later if they want, trying to feel if the Temple feels unbalanced from the presence of the fox maiden. Doing so requires fifteen minutes of uninterrupted meditation in silence and then a Meditation/Void roll vs TN 20. Success will give the PC a sense of wholeness that would be expected in any fully sanctified temple, an indication that, it nothing else, Inari is not actively displeased with the town and the temple. Convincing Kirameki of this is a contested Sincerity check; successfully reassuring her will give the PC in question a free raise on any rolls against Kirameki going forward.}}

If the PCs offer to help her with the Temple, Kirameki will gratefully accept, though she emphasizes that she is much more concerned in rooting out the underlying source of imbalance than having the Temple repaired a bit faster. Any offer of magical repair (Such as Fires from the Forge) will be gratefully accepted, since that tends to be quick.

IF the PCs ask for a list of the names of her helpers, Kirameki will provide it. It contains ten names in total, with two of those already accounted for: One is a missing eta woman (the executed midwife, Teruko) and the other the recently deceased Carpenter, Tokumaru. Of the rest, two names belong to eta, fiber belong to farmers and their wives, and one (Maki) to the Innkeeper's wife.

The Sugi Inn

The Sugi Inn is the second largest structure in the city, second only to the Governor's Manse. In addition to the long, two storied main building there is a large stable of nearly the same size tucked along behind. A vast fenced yard is currently host to a dozen wagons, neatly parked and covered, and twice as many placid draft oxen.

Inside, it becomes clear that at least half the business of the Inn comes in serving food and drink to visitors and locals alike. The common room is vast but well appointed, paneled with lovingly smoothed boards of the fragrant cedar that gives the Inn its name. Sleepers stay on the floor above; there are no private rooms here, only a shared sleeping space above the common room divided by the usual screens. The bath, though simple, is comfortable enough, especially for what is effectively a caravan stop.

If the PCs present themselves looking for rooms, they will soon learn that they are going to be displacing quite a few people. The Inn is full of a visiting merchant band, a group of nearly thirty. The Innkeeper, Hoshi, upon hearing the party's request, will blanch but then offer them immediate baths and meals with a promise to 'rearrange matters by nightfall.' If this happens, the party will observe a game of dice in progress when they go downstairs, designed to determine who ends up in the barn. This is all done in good humor, as far as the party can tell; the ones who remain after their fellows go are happy enough to let the PC's join their game.

If the party comes just for food or drink, they find the situation much the same as above, except the dicing is being done for zeni for fun.

Hoshi, the Innkeeper, moves through the room at a pace just this side of a run, barely managing to get his trays on the tables without spilling something in his haste. The other residents of the inn, a mixed group of heimen and ronin, kindly ignore his obvious distress and, for the most part, wait patiently for their turn to receive meals or drinks. All of them share a badge, shaped like a kite with a short tail, on their person somewhere...for the ronin, it takes the form of a tied-on armband. For most the heimen, the symbol appears on the right sleeve in simple ink, neatly painted on. For one woman, however, the pattern is embroidered in fine silk thread around the collar of her kimono. Where they others have the kite on their sleeve, she instead has what appears to be a chop embroidered in crimson thread. She has the instant respect of all of the rest, even though she shows no sign of samurai status.

This is the caravan of one Shosuro Aneshi, one of the quartermasters of the First Baysuhi Army, under the command of a woman named Tansu. They travel throughout Scorpion lands, ferrying needed goods from one province to another. Tansu is a personal servant of Aneshi's, which can be determined by a Lore: Heraldry (INT) vs TN 30 to identify the chop. This information can also be gained simply by asking her about it; Tansu is very proud of her master and her service to him. Though she is a peasant, she is a highly trained and valued one. Killing her, or harming her save on accident, would be a massive insult. Because of this status, the woman is quite comfortable with people above her own station and is perfectly willing to socialize with those who are able to look past the difference in rank. They will cheerfully play Fortunes and Winds (5k2 for the ronin, 6k3 for Tansu) with anyone who wishes, but not for any real stakes; it is the joy of the game they want, not profit.

If asked, Tansu is more than willing to show her travel papers as well as the log which shows all of the goods in the wagons; by her reaction to being asked, this happens a lot and she is no longer phased by the interaction. She also has a few interesting stories of travel to share if asked: she has been traveling with the traders, in some capacity or other, for every summer of her twenty eight years. She will not, however, detail her reasons for being here this trip; Business, she explains, is an enterprise that does not pair well with alcohol. She will agree to speak with the party the next day if they wish to, however.

Part One: A Town in Peril

This part of the mod is for general exploration and rumor gathering starting the first full day. It contains all of the fact gathering and scenery descriptions for the village (except the Inn and the Temple, which are described in the Intro), rumors (below), and also a section for Shugenja shenanigans.

When the party starts to confront problems (Either with the samurai or the monk of Ekibiyogami) go on to Part 2 and Part 3 respectively.

There is no time limit, but if the PCs take more than two days to conduct their investigation and act against Sharyo, they will not be in time to contain the spread of plague (see 'Ekibiyogami's Gift' part of the Conclusion). They will still get the XP as expected, however.

Rumors

The following information is available with a Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness roll. Anyone with Hero of the People or Blessed by the Fortunes: Ebisu gets a free raise: anyone with Curse of the Fortunes: Ebisu OR who is a Scorpion PC subtract 5 from their role {all the gossip is from heimen/eta, none of whom are particularly fond of samurai at this point}.

- 10: The rice doesn't seem to be doing well this year...perhaps the seed went bad in storage over the winter?
- 15: The new wainwright hasn't arrived yet and the people are very worried that something might have happened to them on the road, they were supposed to have gotten here ten days ago.
- 15: The latest batch of hopeful would-be caravan guards wasn't here for very long; it seems HE is being as fussy as usual in making hires.
- 20: Poor Teruko...she tried so hard. Such a shame. Who really expected a midwife to be able to work with animals, anyway?
- 25: Some of us are going to go and help at Eji's tomorrow. Can't risk the crop just because he's got a summer fever.
- 30: The Hetman is proof that the Fortunes don't believe in actual justice. If they did, surely they'd have long since cursed him for how he treated that wandering Monk, much less how he treats his wife...

There are also rumors for the less scrupulous. These rolls rely on a Lore: Underworld /Awareness roll.

Making this roll causes an L3 Honor Loss, even if it is not successful.

{{GM NOTE: If a PC tries the Underworld route and fails the roll, that person will come to the attention of Shima by the following AM. IF the party has not yet sought out Yogo Azumi, the local Governor, doing so now will result in repetitions of 'She can't see you until tomorrow', which is the polite samurai way of saying 'go away, we aren't talking to you.' This makes the Courtier roll to get in to see Azumi go up by 10.}}

- 10: The Karo was down at the storehouse again with his newest batch of hired guards, readying for the latest shipment. It's one of the regulars with the expected 'gift', which is good for us...he'll be in a good mood for a while.
- 15: There aren't as many eta in town doing their tasks as usual. Fortunes help them if they fall behind...
- 20: I heard that the youngster may have a spine after all...Sugo overheard him threatening the Hetman that if he caught him raising a hand to his wife again he was going to see he regretted it, Karo's favor or not.

Locations

The _____ Sugi _____ Inn

The inn appears the same as it did the first night on the second day and evening. Visiting it during the afternoon will find it largely empty; the bulk of the caravan have gone to the market, leaving behind only a few heimen to exercise the draft beasts and a few ronin to watch the cargo stored in the big barn.

Tansu will be out, too, unless she has arranged with the PCs to meet them at a certain time, but will return at dinner and will be able to answer a few questions.

- She was sent here this time to pick up a shipment of tanned hides to take back down south to supply the Scorpion tradesman.
- She is still here because the hides were not available as expected...there was apparently an issue with the livestock in the spring that severely curtailed the leather supply.
- She just came in through Beiden with a lot of grain seed (a special order from Dragon lands) and a few smaller crates which were earmarked for samurai further down her route as well as one for the local Karo, Soshi Shima. If pressed, she will admit that these are the 'gifts' that a few of the samurai require when suffering the indignity of

having to deal directly with a heimen instead of a samurai.

In the evening, things are much more lively. Poor Hoshi is struggling even more tonight to keep up with the crowd, which contains not only the caravan but several local men as well.

There are a number of things one can learn at the Inn in the **evening only**. These will be attained via Investigation (Notice)/ Perception unless otherwise noted.

- TN 15: When the Inn fills up with townfolk trying to relax at the end of a long day, the vast majority of them are there for the alcohol.
- TN 20: Every single patron who is local is male.
- Medicine (Disease)/Perception TN 20: Several of the patrons are ordering their sake hot and then surreptitiously adding a small sprig of plant matter to their cup after Hoshi puts it down.
- TN 25: All of the men in question appear to be visibly more exhausted than their fellow villagers. They are sitting together, and no one else local will sit near them.
- TN 30: Hoshi seems to be slowed by more than just exhaustion; once or twice, you see him mop his brow and then his neck with a trembling hand, flashing a patch of reddened skin for a moment at his collar before bustling on again.

Follow-up on the above can provide the following information, depending on how it's looked for.

Physical Examination of the cup: Medicine (Herbalism)/INT vs TN 20 will let the PC identify the herb as ashitaba, aka Tomorrow's Leaf. This herb is used for many medicinal purposes but most commonly to fight infections and speed healing. Among the peasantry of Rokugan, it commonly comes into use as a universal remedy when an illness appears that can't be immediately classified for treatment.

Observation/examination of the ill: Merely watching the sick men for at least ten minutes will allow for a second Investigation (Search)/Perception (TN 30) OR Medicine (Disease)/Perception (TN 20) check. Success will result in the PC observing that in addition looking tired and sweating more than others, the men also show flashes of red, inflamed skin at the collar when they move. They are also, quite clearly, trying to hide it.

If a PC tries to get a sick person to let them treat them medicinally, they must first make a Sincerity (Honesty)/Awareness vs TN 20 to convince the peasant in question that they actually want to help. The peasant will attempt to further extract a vow 'not to tell HER' {{the Governor}} about it before they will consent to treatment. This roll can only be attempted ONCE; as soon as someone tries it and fails, the locals will all leave the Inn ASAP and will be much more difficult to question going forward (+5 to all Social Rolls with Peasants for any PC in the Inn at the time for the rest of the mod).

The party can of course literally pin down a peasant and FORCE them to accept an examination...this will require an additional PC to assist by making a Jujitsu (Grappling)/STR vs TN 15 to hold the patient down while the healer examines them. This will result in a loss of honor for both PC's {it is a breach of etiquette and, due to the ill nature of the person, unclean touching as well} of D4.

Once a PC does examine the wound, they should make a Medicine (Disease)/Intelligence vs TN 25 to identify the skin rash as some sort of pox (of which there are several varieties in Rokugan).

It takes a TN of 40 to identify the specific one in play here: Dainashi Bibou, most commonly known as the "Destroyer of Beauty" or "Benten's Sorrow". The disease typically presents first with fever and nausea, followed by the rash which spreads along the node pathways, growing over few days from simple irritated skin patches to full red circles with open indentations, very prone to secondary infection and scarring. If the person infected is truly unfortunate, the disease sinks into the nodes and rots the body from inside them, leading to massive black sores in the groin, armpit, and sides of the throat; this is almost always lethal.

Handling anyone infected with the disease is very dangerous; the disease is quite contagious. Unless a PC healer is very explicit in their care not to touch the patient, they will need to make a Raw Stamina resist the disease. The bonus/penalty from having the Blessing/Curse of the Fortune: Jurojin DOES apply here. Results vary based on roll:

- 15+: No ill effects
- 10-14: Slight fever and a rash that can be treated with a successful Medicine (Disease)/INT vs TN 20.
- 5-9: You catch the less virulent version of the pox in full. You are Fatigued for 1d10 days while your body fights the infection; The person attempting the Medicine roll MUST possess either the Disease emphasis or at

least three ranks in the skill to make the attempt; the TN goes up to 30.

- <5: You suffer Dainashi Bibou in full. You are Fatigued for the module. At the end of the module, you may choose which of the following Disadvantages to receive as a result of your sickness: Disturbing Countenance; Bad Health; Weakness (any physical attribute); Cursed by the Fortunes (Jurojin); Bad Eyesight; Blind. If the PC possesses one of the following Advantages, the player may elect to lost that instead: Blessed by the Fortunes (Jurojin); Dangerous Beauty; Bland; One rank of Luck; Quick Healer

If the PCs wait until they get him alone, they can of course question Hoshi. He will try to explain it away as 'just a rash' but will crumble at the slightest hint of pressure and answers a number of questions.

- *How long have you been sick?* "Not so long, -sama." Hoshi doesn't look at you. "A week, perhaps a day or so more."
- *Where did it come from?* After a hesitation, the man wilts before whispering his answer. "My...my wife, -sama. She's been sick with it for weeks."
- *Have you told anyone?* "Oh, no, -sama!" The man's face, already pale, fades still further. "We've hear the stories, what samurai do if their peasants grow sick..."
- *Have you called a healer?* "There is no healer to call." Regret flashes across the man's face. "The midwife was the best we had, but after she died, her apprentice was all that was left. Now she has stopped coming to town, like so many of the other eta."
- *What happened to the midwife?* Hoshi looks surprised for a moment, then seems to remember that you are strangers. "Ah. Yes. She was executed by the Magistrate months ago. Failure of her primary duty, they said. "A shudder ripples through the man. "At least it was swift."
- *What duty?* "The matter of the calves, of course...they started coming with two heads. Since she knew babies, she got the order to learn why. Everyone knew it was the Fortunes, but they insisted she try anyway. "

If the party tries to heal Hoshi's illness, they will find it responds well to mundane treatment (Medicine (Disease)/INT vs TN 25). Magical treatment that works on curing illnesses will also work, but pure

healing will only relieve the rash for a day or two before the underlying infection brings it up again.

If the party wishes to see to his sick wife, Hoshi will be deeply reluctant to bring them. A social roll (Intimidation, Courtier, Sincerity, etc.) vs TN 30 is required to get him to take you to his home; if that TN is not met, he will instead lead you to the Hetman and beg his intervention instead.

Hoshi's House

Hoshi's small home is not far out of town. A wreath of red flowers, roughly braided and tied, has been hung on the door. Hoshi, after begging our indulgence, hurries in to warn his wife of your coming before returning to gesture you in.

The home is one large room, divided with a single paneled screen woven from reeds. On the side farthest from the draft of the door a woman lies on a futon. A blanket is drawn up to her chin and her head is swathed in bandages, leaving only her right eye, the right side of her mouth, and the right cheek exposed. The scent of astringent is nearly overpowering here, but not so much that it can cover the scent of wounds gone bad.

Hoshi sits beside her, his hand on her shoulder over the blanket. His gaze rests on her face, worry and fear and love all too easy to read on his face.

Hoshi's wife, Maki, is one of the initial victim's of Ekibyogami's priest, chosen for her service at the Temple of Inari to be one of the first. She has been sick for nearly three weeks and is nearing the end of her life. She is very weak and cannot speak more than a few words, that at a whisper.

Examining her without touching or shifting anything with Medicine (Disease)/Perception reveals the following:

- TN 15: Along the edges of the bandage, the skin has the curled, peeling edge of flesh trying to regrow but doing so very slowly.
- TN 20: All of her exposed bandage have an unpleasantly moist look to them, especially over or on the inside of joints. The tint is too dark for it to only be sweat or water.
- TN 25: By the lay of the bandages around her head, it is likely that most of her hair is missing.

If the party insists on removing some bandages:

With obvious care, Hoshi rolls back the blanket, exposing a long, slender arm, swathed shoulder to fingertip in bandages. Despite his efforts, a small, pained sound escapes from Maki's lips as he carefully moves her hand to lie over the edge of the futon. Murmuring apologies, he bends and pulls a cloth from a bucket at his side. He wrings it slowly over her bandaged hand, letting the liquid sink into the soiled fabric. He waits until fabric sags slightly before pulling gently, unwinding sodden, stained layers to reveal the ravaged skin beneath.

Once pale skin is marked with dozens of raised red circles, each centered with an oozing, sunken sore. Some bleed, but far too many more issue forth noxious pus. Hoshi, coughing, begins to blot at the marks with the cloth, his eyes welling up in response as tears begin to run from Maki's one visible eye.

Anyone with at least one rank of Medicine will be able to determine at a glance that this woman is doomed, barring serious intervention by the kami or the Fortunes. Medicine (Disease)/INT will give more information:

- TN 10: There is very little Fire left to this woman. Her life will flicker out within days if things do not change.
- TN 15: From the damage that can be seen here, it is clear that infection has settled in. Even if the disease itself does not kill her, the wounds will.
- TN 20: Her infection seems to be much worse than her husband's. Hoshi's rashes seem contained to arms and chest; more than eighty percent of the flesh you see beneath the bandages is covered in pocks.

Actually attempting treatment is again quite dangerous: Maki's wounds are far more infectious than Hoshi's. Healers make a Raw Stamina resist the disease. The bonus/penalty from having the Blessing/Curse of the Fortune: Jurojin DOES apply here. Results vary based on roll:

- 20+: No ill effects
- 15-19: Slight fever and a rash that can be treated with a successful Medicine (Disease)/INT vs TN 20.
- 10-14: You catch the less virulent version of the pox in full. You are Fatigued for 1d10 days while your body fights the infection; The person attempting the Medicine roll MUST possess either the Disease emphasis or at least three ranks in the skill to make the attempt; the TN goes up to 30.

- <10: You suffer Dainashi Bibou in full. You are Fatigued for the module. At the end of the module, you may choose which of the following Disadvantages to receive as a result of your sickness: Disturbing Countenance; Bad Health; Weakness (any physical attribute); Cursed by the Fortunes (Jurojin); Bad Eyesight; Blind. If the PC possesses one of the following Advantages, the player may elect to lose that instead: Blessed by the Fortunes (Jurojin); Dangerous Beauty; Bland; One rank of Luck; Quick Healer

Treatment is again Medicine (Disease)/INT.

- TN 25: You are able to craft an ointment that should ease the infection of the flesh. It seems to be working, though slowly.
- TN 30: You are able to brew a drink that helps bring the fever down. This is much less effective than you feel it should be.
- TN 35+ You are blessed enough to have been taught an extremely obscure remedy that you are certain should work on this affliction. The fact that it seems to do nothing is decidedly irregular and indicates other factors are in play.

If there is a shugenja in the party who attempt to cast any spells with Jurojin in the title, they will be flummoxed. The kami will come as called, attempt to do what they are asked, and then retreat, leaving the shugenja with a spent slot and a feeling of apology from the kami. Any questions to the kami inquiring about if this is a curse (maho variety) the kami will be quick to deny the presence of the Ninth; if the water kami are called after a fail healing cast, the shugenja must call at least two raises for clarity before they will admit that they are yielding to the 'pressures of a vaster current' ((IE, the orders of Ekibyogami, a Fortune and thus a Kami more powerful than themselves)).

Ultimately, there is nothing that can be done for Maki except to ease her from this world. Hoshi must be convinced of this before he will accept any offers for mercy (whichever social roll seems appropriate, TN 20). If he accepts it, he will be disconsolate; the Inn will be understaffed (and the samurai and others forced to fend for themselves for meals and laundry and so forth) from that point onward as Hoshi take to deep mourning.

The Temple

After the first day, any time the party returns to the Temple they will find an anxious Kirameki trying hard to keep up appearances. She will listen to any new

reports and offer opinions, based on what she is told. Some things that might come up:

- The illness among the people: Kirameki doesn't realize there are any sick people; after the first time someone brought her a sick child and she had to explain that she didn't know much about medicine, they ceased to mention such things to her. She shares the PC's concern.
- The issue with someone taking goods: Since this isn't a temple to Daikoku, Kirameki has only marginal interest in this, though she does confess that finding greed in a samurai isn't exactly a surprise...many of the descendants who had enslaved her for generations suffered the sin to some degree or another.
- Suspicions of a servant of Ekibyogami: This makes Kirameki lose quite a bit of her already questionable composure. Full on vulpine reactions: Hopping to crouch, bared teeth, fingers curled like claws, etc. She will joyously offer to kill the man if the PCs voice concern about how to get rid of him (unless the party has offended her somehow, in which case she'll enjoy watching them squirm)...it would be a stain on a samurai's honor, but as a spirit she has no such concerns.

The Market

The market of Kagoki is fairly large, given that it lies at the end of a road. It seems rather full, bustling even, until you realize that most of those present are part of the Caravan staying at the Inn.

Goods on offer are overwhelmingly of the practical variety: Tools, cookware, foodstuffs, and the like. A few stalls sell food: one in particular, a cart with a green umbrella, seems to be especially popular.

There is very little interesting here, unless a PC needs something very basic for their kit, at least commercially speaking. The caravan people are here shopping for travel rations; if the party has interacted pleasantly with them at the Inn, they greet the PCs in question with smiles and bows.

The biggest draw is, of course, the popular stand. It is serving a fish-based ramen which has exactly the right balance of flavors. The operator, a man named Chigaru, is not one for conversation, simply serving out bowls and collecting his fee for them (2 zeni a bowl) without comment.

Some of those who are eating here are ronin: not only the ones from the Inn, who you recognize by their

badges if nothing else, but another pair with actual mons on their sleeves. A Lore (History): Int VS TN 30 or a Lore (Heraldry)/INT vs TN 20 will identify it as the mon of an Otokodate of ronin based in the lands of the Dragon. Once guardians of the city of Nanashi Mura, they were sent wandering again when that city was lost of the Phoenix in war. With no city to protect, they instead took up the practice of guarding travelers through what was at the time a remote and sometimes dangerous land. In the centuries since, the band (now called the Eyes of the Mountain) has gained a good reputation as hired protectors, famous for their loyalty to their employers.

If approached, these two will introduce themselves as Hideyori (a rugged individual in his late thirties who is actually the more social of the two) and Ichijo (a samurai-ko in her early twenties, who happens to be Hideyori's niece and more than a bit mistrustful). They had come because they had heard that the local Karo was looking to hire guards familiar with Lion lands. After an interview with the man (Soshi Shia), they were politely but firmly dismissed from consideration. Both samurai were surprised by the decision; they had papers of reference to show from a number of prior employers and a clean record with the Magistrates (as confirmed by the local representative of the law, a yoriki named Yogo Ihara.) Ichijo will even comment, if pressed for her opinion, that she thought seeing the references made the Karo's opinion of them WORSE somehow.

If asked about their future plans, they explain that they are staying in town for at least a few more weeks because Hideyori (who has travelled guarding wagons for his whole adult life) has been offering his carpenter skills to the local merchants. He is much slower than a trained wainwright would be, but the farmers and merchants in need are grateful enough for the work that they are willing to pay him handsomely (relatively speaking) for his work.

The Warehouses

There is only activity here during daylight. It is possible some of the PCs may have met Soshi Shima already, if they have been to the Hetman's house in the evening; it is possible to meet him both places.

Two long, broad buildings are settled on the west edge of the market square, backed up against one of the steeper hillsides. Broad doors with heavy metal banding stand open in the sunlight, illuminating the dust motes that fly up from the bushels currently being unloaded from a large cart. Two placid oxen eye you as you approach, more interested in the water buckets before them than strangers.

Off to the side and out of the worst of the mess, a woman in practical traveling clothes stands with an elegant man in black and crimson. She is smaller in both height and presence, fawning obsequiously as she extends a small wrapped bundle. With a smile just visible below a smoothly sculpted black mask in the shape of a raven, the man accepts the offering and tucks it into his robes.

If the party approaches without reacting to what they have seen, the man will meet them graciously enough. If the party has already been to the Governor's Manse, he will be aware of who they are and will greet each by name, with perhaps a quip or two at the expense of any Owl who have any convenient reputations to use. If they have not been to see her, he will issue the invitation himself for lunch (either that day or the next), and will appear at that meal if the situation warrants it, wherein he will sit and be charming but useless.

If the party hesitates at all, or if the party has come to his attention because they attempted Lore: Underworld and botched, he will be more wary, though still charming (that is the persona of Shima, after all). He is very clever in how he uses Sincerity; he will avoid untruths with careful word choice as much as possible. He always introduces himself as being 'known as Soshi Shima' or 'called Soshi Shima', carefully never claiming the name as his. If he is asked about his training, he will say that 'all of his adult life has been spent in or around courtly endeavors, save for some needful travel'.

Some expected questions and answers are as follows.

- *Introductions.* "This one is called Soshi Shima, Karo to the Gokenin of Kagoki."
- *What does he know about the livestock problem?* One hand twists at the wrist, then flicks open, as if casting the very idea to the winds. "Some unpleasant deformation. I did not ask for details, only that it be handled. And so it was."

- *Does he know about the sickness?* {{Investigation (Notice)/AW or Courtier/PER vs TN 35 to catch a moment of honest surprise}} "...what sickness?" {{After the report, during which he will press for details, all while feigning being disgusted by them, he will urge the PCs to go to the Magistrate with the matter while he goes to warn the Governor; depending on how risky he thinks the area is, and how close he thinks PCs are to making his life difficult, he may choose to run that very night rather than risk being infected}}
- *What does he know about the issue with the Temple?* "It should be improving. I...arranged things, so that a few of the villagers could free up time to see to the business of repairs while we await whoever else the Brotherhood sees fit to send." {{If told this is not the case, his eyes narrow and he will murmur something about 'needing to investigate' and 'another example' which he will refuse to explain.}}
- *What was up with the package?* The man's lips curve into a small smile, a bit higher on the right side than the left. "Simply a gift from the peasant's master. A courtesy of sorts." Commerce/INT or Lore: Underworld/INT (this use is not considered grounds for honor loss) TN 25 will allow the PC to recall that it is fairly common for samurai dealing with peasant merchants to add bit of an unwritten tax or fee to compensate themselves for the 'terrible strain' of having to deal with the lower classes. How acceptable this is depends on the Lord of the land. Lore: Law/INT TN 25 will allow the PC to remember that this is a matter of Clan Law as long as Imperial Taxes are not being affected {{{In this case, that is exactly why Shima has stopped short of taking from that particular till; it's easier to escape from the Clan than the whole Empire, if it comes to it}}}}

Someone does patrol the area (Ihara and the two doshin take it in turns) at night, but not with much urgency unless there are especially valuable goods inside. As this is not the case, going in at night is easy: A Stealth (Sneak)/AG vs TN 20 is enough to get one in unseen. If the party is spotted, have it be Ihara on watch and have him be all sorts of suspicious, unless he is already on the party's side for some reason OR the person he catches is a fellow Scorpion (in which case, he will ultimately agree to pretend he never saw the PC, with the understanding that the PC remember

the favor); if the party looks around inside, they will find nothing out of the ordinary.

The Heimen Hetman's House

If the PCs come here in the evening, they will have the chance to encounter Soshi Shima here instead of at the Warehouses. It is possible to meet him at more than one place. During the day, the Hetman is actually in the fields, so the party won't find anyone at home unless they visit Early AM or Evening.

The home of the leader of the heimen villagers is modest by samurai standards, stately by peasant ones. It is large enough to have a separate private space and a larger common one, used as a meeting room on the rare occasions when the villagers feel the need to have private discussions.

If the party comes in the morning, the hetman, Tommo, will be bidding goodbye to his wife (by which it is meant that she is serving him and he is mostly ignoring her unless she messes up, in which case he yells at her and belittles her).

Tommo himself is a man who would be retired if he were a samurai, white-haired and beginning to get a bit of a hunch to his shoulders and a paunch at the gut. He is well dressed for a peasant, though it must be said that he presents his relative wealth in a less than tasteful manner.

If the PCs are samurai, he will instantly become VERY helpful, though he will always tailor what he says to match what he thinks what the samurai want to hear. He is greedy and cowardly and wants nothing more than to feel important and respected; players that play into these failings can easily manipulate him into giving away more than he should.

Tommo knows a great deal; he has been helping with the 'skimming' for several months now in return for a cut. He has actually begun to go beyond what even Shima is comfortable with, which is why Shima will be found there in the evening, discussing the books. If the party interacts with Shima for the first time here, see the section about the Warehouse (starts PG 12) for his description/behavior/Q&A suggestions.

The books in question can be inspected by a PC (something Tommo will be powerless to prevent if the PC in question has gotten the Governor to back their investigation OR if the PC is a Scorpion or an Emerald Magistrate...Jade Magistrates have no authority over taxes, so they will not be able to use that authority lawfully, though they can of course lie to Tommo that they do; he is a TN 20 for detecting lies).

The Records: They contain all of the records of births, deaths, crop harvests, and other data that would be in the 'resources' side of a ledger. The math is quite wrong, since Tommo is not nearly as clever at this as he thinks he is; A Commerce/INT vs TN 20 will reveal that something is wrong with the numbers, while a 30+ will reveal that what is wrong involves artificially lowering the output numbers in the hopes no one will notice that the discrepancy is ending up in Tommo's pockets (quite literally, since he wastes most of the extra funds on his wardrobe).

If the party finds this while Shima is there, he will immediately go all in on letting Tommo take the blame. He is well aware that as a peasant, Tommo's testimony means nothing in the court of law, but still might lead samurai to question him sufficiently to make his own life difficult. He will let 'slip' himself that the man is terrible in other aspect of his life (mainly, that he abuses his wife and beat his children so that they left as soon as they were old enough) if he thinks that will help nudge the PCs into executing the man (and even Shima, villain that he is, doesn't hold with beating people who are already broken).

Outside of the 'fixed' book, Tommo can provide some other useful information:

- *What does he know about illness among the peasants?* {{Tommo will try to pawn this off at first as 'just a small matter, nothing for samurai to worry themselves over'; his own deceit skill isn't very good (TN 25 on Investigation (Interrogation)/Perception if someone is checking for lies). If anyone pushes him at all (esp. with Intimidation) he will fold like a deck of cards and admit that 'a few of the farmers are sick, and there was that odd wave of miscarriages, but that's passed now so surely it's fine?'}}
- *Does he know folks are dying?* At that question, he blusters about 'leaving that to the eta' and 'as long as the crop comes in, well, it's sad, but it isn't really MY problem...'
- *Did he somehow interfere with people helping at the Temple?* "Naturally not! I petitioned the Karo myself that we should help!" His chest puffs up in fairly convincing display of indignation. "But that was when we had the spare manpower, of course...naturally now that we need more people in the field, well, that's where they're assigned." {{{If Shima is present, he will be less than pleased by that}}}
- *What's this about a priest turned away?* Tommo blusters but can't meet your gaze.

“We don’t let just anyone stay here. We’re a nice community, a safe community. He said he was a monk, but he wouldn’t even do us the courtesy of showing his face! So I sent him on, just like I would anyone being so...so...difficult.”

- *What exactly is going on with his accounting?* “If there’s aught wrong with it, it’s her fault.” {{He will gesture angrily toward his wife, who he is so used to blaming for everything that it isn’t a lie; he genuinely believes it}} “The one thing I thought she could be trusted to do, and of course she fails.” {{He will shoot the wife a glare if she’s there which promises a bad time for her, based on how hard she flinches}}.
 - If confronted about this without Shima there after a PC makes the Commerce check, he will bluster about ‘just doing what the Karo wanted’.
 - If confronted in front of Shima, he will shut down, more or less babbling as he tries to make an excuse, which he can’t, because he’s gone too far and knows it.

If someone tries to talk to Tommo’s wife (Hana), they will find her a broken, terrified woman. She will only speak to women, and then only if she is out of sight and hearing of her husband. This is most easily accomplished by taking her into another room on the pretense of ‘making tea’. She is, while not exactly simple, certainly a bit ‘fey’ in her mannerisms, as if she isn’t all the way in the conversation at any given time. She knows something of what is going on (She’s been doing all of the calligraphy work, as her handwriting is far superior to Tommo’s). She won’t talk about or name her husband, but she will talk about the other villagers. She knows about Ihara and Shima (“Such a pretty pair they make”) and also about the loss of the heimen children (“Little sleepers who will never take a breath, poor dears.”) She doesn’t know the details about the cattle, and will burst out crying if anyone mentions the Midwife (of whom she was fond) to her.

Farm Fields

The fields around the town center are lightly tended. One in five is empty of rice, reflecting back blue patches of sky above in the day, sparkling stars at night. Here and there, small homes rest atop isles of dry land between the paddies, sometimes with a child or two playing on the porch or land outside. Red wreathes adorn many doors, and the farmers, far too few and far too often female, look up warily as you pass.

The peasant farmers have begun to have to work in concert to keep up with what crops they have been able to grow; too many of them are sick (Everyone who helped at the Temple from the farms (five people) and their families are staring to go that way as well). The women who would usually tend the children are left trying to tend crops instead, something at which many of them are barely trained, if trained at all, which is part of why the crops aren’t thriving as they should.

The women, if approached, will be cautious but obedient to samurai questioners. They keep their eyes down, their heads bowed, and dart nervous glances at any children that might be around if they feel worried that the samurai may be leaning toward the purge approach.

The farmers are also the ones who will try to sneak out of town, if and when the party gets to the point of trying to quarantine the zone. Stationing at least one PC bushi with an NPC as guard (or at least two PCs) will be enough to stop this.

Shugenja/Spiritual Shenanigans

Kami

There are a few things that spiritual types might look into in various places. GMs should adjust their answers to reflect the questions and locations, but the overall attitude of the kami is as follows:

- Fire kami: Perfectly content, as usual, if not even a bit happier. They enjoy the fact it is high summer and that this village has given them good offerings this year {because of all of the funeral pyres for livestock}
- Earth Kami: Just as slow and steady as anywhere else in Scorpion lands.
- Air Kami: Happy and enjoying dancing through the growing rice. They like the games in the town; they especially think that the Karo is good at games, though sadly he can’t hear it when they offer him advice.
- Water Kami: The closest to ‘unhappy’. Summer is usually drought season and there

hasn't been a good rain in weeks, making the kami surly and stagnant. They also sense that some of the humans' water is 'unbalanced', but they do not act as if this is something that upsets them too much.

- Void: There are no void kami as such, but the Sense spell can still be used with this element to glean some information. This will reveal that there is a bit less strength in the Temple than one would usually feel, though it is by no means corrupt, simply weak. Despite this, the overall spiritual energy in the area is surprisingly high.

Divination

If anyone attempts to use Divination, common questions and results are below:

- *What is the source of the imbalance?*
Symbols revealed: Secrets, Justice, and Opposing Forces
- *What is the source of sickness?* Symbols revealed: Secrets, The Heavens, Weakness
- *Who is responsible for the theft/graft?*
Secrets, Death, Prosperity
- *What will happen if we kill the monk?*
Weakness, Justice, The Heavens

Part Two: Human Frailty

This section is meant for when the players interact with the three Scorpion Samurai. The main locations for them (The Governor's Manse and the Magistrate's Home) are in this section.

The initial descriptions (for first time meetings/visits, before confrontations) are in the first section; confrontations have their own section toward the end (see page). Note that it is possible that the PCs might meet both Soshi Shima and Yogo Ihara in the village before going looking for them; descriptions for those encounters are in the appropriate location. If it affects interactions with others later, it will be reflected here.

The Governor's Manse

The property set aside for the Gokenin of Kagoki is handsome, if a bit small. A low wall surrounds a two-story main building and a second smaller single-story structure. The gardens are full of cool, fragrant plants in full flower, lovingly tended by an older heimen woman who bows low as you pass.

The party's reception will vary, depending on the nature of the PCs and if the party has already met with Soshi Shima by chance in town.

If the party has never met Shima and hasn't failed any Lore: Underworld rolls: If there are any Scorpion in the group, the servant will allow them in without hesitation, though she will show some surprise at their arrival unless they sent their chops the night before. If there are any PCs who are on the Merchant patron status track of at least Status 3, they will also be welcomed at once, as will members of Merchant schools of Insight Rank 3 or higher (Yasuki Courtier, Kasuga Courtier, the Ide Merchant path, and the Daidoji Trading Council Path).

Anyone else will need to make a contested Etiquette (Bureaucracy)/ AW vs TN 30 to be permitted inside. Samurai from Allied Clans (Dragon and Lion) only need to make a TN 20.

If the party has somehow insulted Shima or failed a Lore: Underworld check badly enough to tip him off: The young servant will firmly tell everyone that they should 'come back tomorrow'. Getting past this requires a successful contested Etiquette (Bureaucracy)/ AW vs TN 40. The only exception is anyone with a Magistrate position (Emerald or Jade) which they prove to the servant. This will get them in regardless, but when Azumi arrives she will be much less inclined to being helpful.

If the party has met Shima but didn't have a bad interaction with him, resulting in him inviting them up to share a meal: The servant woman will be expecting the group (though if the party had split up and the PCs there didn't mention they had friends, she will be momentarily anxious about them if they come along) and will usher the party into the same room.

Shima will enter a minute or two after Azumi does (See the description of 'inside the manse' below for her entrance), bringing along another bottle 'that he just happened to remember seeing in the cellar'. Azumi will look a little startled but will then nod and praise him for his thoughtfulness toward their guests. This drink, Shima will explain, is made from Forbidden Rice, grown exclusively in Yogo lands and once reserved for the Emperor's table alone, though that was changed centuries ago. It is called "Last Sunset" and is rarely seen outside Scorpion lands. The rice itself is black and some of that color leaches into the sake when it is brewed, resulting in a red-violet nigori sake with a uniquely umami layer over the expected undertones of melon, florals, and banana.

Inside the Manse

The tasteful opulence of the manor's exterior ends the moment you step through the front door. The space has been stripped bare of all the small niceties that are so common in samurai homes: pieces of artwork, martial trophies, fine furniture, plants...all of these are missing. Someone has pared this house down to the essentials, giving the interior an oddly monastic feel.

The tea room to which you are taken is much the same. Though the table at which you are seated is a lovely red maple, it is barren of cloths or ornate settings. The view of the garden, which should be lovely, is hidden away behind screens of the same timber, set so that light can come in around them but no exterior sights can be seen.

The young servant takes your preference for tea or sake, bows, and takes her leave. She has had time to return and for you all to be considering a second pour of your drink when the Governor enters.

Tall, lithe, and elegant, Yogo Azumi should by rights present an intimidating figure. Certainly her mask, a carefully sculpted gold rat with its tail winding around to form part of the eyepiece on the right, inquisitive ruby eyes seeming to watch behind the wearer at all times, is fine indeed and indicative of great wealth and influence. The effect is rather ruined by the rest of her, however...Azumi is wearing robes that are visibly mended in a few places and which are several years out of style besides. Her black hair, marked with a touch of silver here and there, is tied into a simple braid, not pinned up with ornate sticks or jewels. She bears nothing with her, not even the scroll satchel that one would expect from a shugenja.

After a long moment of looking at each of you, she nods once, then takes a seat. "Welcome to Kagoki. I am the Gokenin, Yogo Azumi. What brings you to my village?"

Azumi will be a distracted but otherwise pleasant host; it is obvious she is not accustomed to visitors. If Shima is present, he will do the lion's share of the talking and hosting duties. Only matters of commerce and trade interest Azumi in the slightest; any other topic, even religion, leads to polite answers delivered by rote.

The first time the PCs meet her, at the start of the investigation period, she can answer some questions but not many...a lot of them she defers to her Karo

(either just saying he handles them or by simply looking at Shima if he is at lunch with them).

- *What does she know about the livestock issue?* "Ah, yes. Birth defects, I was told. The kami were not disturbed, so I concluded another factor must be to blame. The most logical is that the blood has gotten too close; I have already begun arrangements for an infusion of new stock from a contact in the Matsu."
- *Does she know about the fertility issues with the villagers?* "No. I didn't." Her lips furrow into a frown. "I certainly wouldn't allow such a thing to go unchecked. The numbers will have to be replenished now..." Eyes distant, she begins to mutter names of neighboring leaders under her breath, counting on her fingers and obviously already lost in the mental effort of logistics. {{If Shima is present, he will cover for her, if not, she will actually get up and leave if no one tries to stop her with an Etiquette/AW check vs TN 25}}
- *Does she know about the illness in the village?* "No, but it is not a surprise. There is usually a summer fever. It is a hazard of the lowlands where Earth and Water war for seniority. I know that we have a supply of the usual herbs which has been laid by in anticipation of another occurrence. Certainly the heimen should use them, if it is needed. The Karo will see to it." If she is told it is more serious than that, Azumi will frown but nod. "Write up a description, if you would, and I will send one of my fastest to Beiden. They are the nearest place with a sufficient number of healers to be able to spare one."
- *Does she know about the low crop yield?* "Yes." Azumi looks annoyed, yet determined. "We were experimenting with seeds from a number of new sources in a few of the fields. I was informed that at least a few fields were lost due to failure by the farmers to alter their cultivation methods appropriately. As for the overall productivity, I am informed that it is not meeting expected parameters. I was doing the new projection figures when you arrived..." {{At this, she will give the party a pointed look of 'so stop wasting my time'}}
- *Why doesn't she go to the Temple?* "I delegate such matters." Azumi's voice remains steady, but her fingers flex and her knuckles whiten around her tea cup. "My work is here and it is work of the mind, not

the soul. The priest of Inari has her task and I have mine.” An Investigation (Notice)/AW vs TN 20 will determine this is a clear part-truth; while it is true, it is not the main reason. If pressed further about it, Azumi will grow sullen and unhelpful, doing her best to end the meeting right then and there. Only Scorpion in similar rank (Status 4+) can effectively bully her into admitting that she hasn’t actually left her estate in years; she suffers from an extreme case of agoraphobia, making it all but impossible for her to go outside without the shelter of a palanquin or closed wagon.

- *Why is she so slow to resupply the Temple?* “The financial support of the Temple is only partially the responsibility of the Lord of the land in which the Temple stands. I cannot simply create priests from the ether. That the Brotherhood failed to plan for fluctuations in manpower is their poor planning, not mine. I gave a runner for the woman’s message, but that is the end of my obligation so long as the Temple remains operational. I refuse to release materials that she cannot immediately use; they are best used elsewhere for the time being.”
- *Does she realize that the Headman’s books are wrong?* Azumi’s eyes immediately narrow in annoyance. “This is what comes of trusting peasants to do important tasks.” She sighs, then waves to the servant, sending her scurrying for paper and writing materials. “I will have Ihara-san investigate, of course. If he concurs with your assessment, naturally we must replace the man.”

The Karo’s Home

There is no good legal reason to go into the second building in the grounds of the estate, but if anyone asks about it, they will be informed that it ‘is the legal residence for the Karo’. Depending on who is asked (most of the guards/merchants will be carefully respectful and won’t explain further, but the locals, especially older male ones, will be more than happy to dish on the fact that ‘of course, he’s never there now, is he...’ with various levels of disapproval.

If PCs decide to break into it, however, they will find all sorts of interesting material inside if they search well enough. They will need to get in unseen (A Stealth(Sneaking)/AG vs TN 20) and then use Investigation (Search)/PER to look around.

- TN 15: There are enough personal effects here to indicate that Shima probably still

comes here from time to time but doesn’t consider it his main residence.

- TN 20: One of the packs in the room seems to be a ‘go’ bag; it is pre-packed with rations, a change of clothes, tent, and other supplies that would be used to travel on short notice. The rations are still good.
- TN 25: There is a potted plant which is actually able to be removed from its planter (a smaller planter has been nested in the larger, leaving a clean space); in the space is a handful of trade bars (worth approximately a hundred koku), in various Clan stamps (but not, interestingly, Scorpion).

The Magistrate’s Home

Yogo Ihara will be at home in the early morning and then the evening; during the day, he patrols, as one in his position should. If the party asks when to meet him, the morning is the recommendation and would result in the following.

The building set aside for the use of the town magistrate likely began existence as an early storage building or perhaps even the original Inn, long since outgrown. It is an uneven shelter, lacking the harmony of most samurai dwellings, but has been well tended and surrounded by elegant gardens that do much to make up for the lack of architectural appeal.

Beside the house, a sandpit has been laid out in the fashion of a training yard. A thickly built middle aged man in a simple yukata and heavy hakama sits on a bench along one side, busily whistling, while a younger, lither man moves through a martial kata, his red and black kimono marked with the sweat of effort.

If the party comes in the evening, they will find instead that Ihara is inside, enjoying a meal. If no one in the party has met Soshi Shima yet, it may be useful to have him at supper as well (since he is more or less living with Ihara at this point).

The Magistrate’s home is blessed with the service of a rather good cook (one of the first things Shima changed when they came to their arrangement). Courtesy will compel him to invite the party in, whether they accept or not.

Regardless, he will introduce himself.

Bowing politely to each of you in turn, the young man lays a hand over his mon. "This one is Yogo Ihara. I welcome you to Kagoki. I hope this is not official business..."

If the party has already begun to uncover matters and come to him in a professional capacity, he will quickly insist on doing things 'the proper way'. This involves going into the 'working' side of his home, which serves as office and, at need, jail. Once he has settled in with writing materials and parchment, he will listen to any report the PCs wish to make. He will also answer questions in turn, so long as the PCs remain properly respectful. Out of all the local samurai, Ihara is by far the one most eager to be of help to the PCs, so if they seem to be struggling for information of where to get it, have him feed them things like the village Hetman and the Eta Village.

- *Does he know about the illness?* The young man frowns, looking up from his writing to study you carefully. "I had noticed some oddities with the villagers, but nothing enough to act on. Tell me about it."
- *Does he know about Shima taking bribes?* "It is the prerogative of the Karo to administer any additional fines or taxes at the provincial level as they see fit to, so long as they do not take those taxes until after the Emperor's Tax is paid." {{It sounds like a quotation, because it is, verbatim, from Saibankan's 'Sochoku's Travels', a tome regularly studied by members of the Soshi bloodline or who were trained at a Family school.}}
- *What does he think of the Governor?* "My Cousin is a brilliant tactician in the battlefield of commerce." Ihara looks thoughtfully down at his hands for a moment. "It is not the place of a samurai to question those far above themselves in the rank, but as one who has travelled a bit, and who has met with many from other Clans on those travels, and who now wears the Emerald badge, even at my humble level, I feel obliged to take a wider view. And I wonder...what could be the purpose of stationing a master, a general, of a craft at what is, in that craft, more or less a minor outpost?" He shrugs. "Besides that? Like many gifted people, other things have been set aside in the balance. Social interests are one of those things. If you wish to meet with her, my best advice is to be polite, detailed, yet concise."
- *What does he know about the losses among the livestock?* "It was very odd." For a moment, unease shows on his face. "I've

never seen any creature born so twisted, much less so many. I was sure it was some ill magic, and had halfway written the report I was going to send off to Biden, when the Governor sent down word that there was no need. She had asked the kami and they reported no such thing. And, sure enough, it passed, though we did eliminate the mothers that survived, of course, in case it was something wrong with them."

- *Why did he execute the midwife?* {{PCs should roll an Perception (Notice)/AW or Courtier/Per (their choice. And no, that isn't a typo, the stats are flipped) to observe him flinch}} "At times, it is considered necessary, for the purpose of maintaining order and a proper respect for the celestial order and our places in it, to be firm in the punishment of failure. This was such a time." {{{If the party presses him, and the person pressing him is either another magistrate of some description or has been friendly enough so far to warrant a confidence}}}. "You see...this is the first time in my tenure here that anything like this, a failure among the villagers, has happened so...publicly. It was suggested that I should...establish the right tone. That I show there is steel under my 'youthful exterior'." {{Nothing will make him admit just who gave the advice other than 'a respected friend'}}
- *Why has he stopped coming to the Temple as often?* "It is the busy season for law keeping, samurai." {{If there are any magistrates in the party, he will nod to them in recognition, allowing them to back him up (or contest, if they want to be jerks) before explaining, "Roads that are not seen to be well patrolled are more often targeted by bandits. Bad enough that the crops are not coming in well...to have our reserves damaged or stolen would make it much worse."}}
- *What does he know about the state of the crops?* "Not much, I'm afraid." Ihara looks appropriately chagrined at having to confess his ignorance. "I understand that, since last year's crop was so fruitful, my Lady determined that it might be an acceptable risk to try another crop type that a contact of hers suggested. But that was only meant to be a few fields. I suppose there could have been a mistake when the seed was shared out..."
- *Who might know more about the farming?* "That would be Tommo." Dislike darkens the young magistrate's tone for a moment. "Though I doubt if he knows even half of

what he claims to. I do not like dealing with him. Shima-san generally does me the favor of doing so to spare me the annoyance.” {{If pressed, or if confronted about the rumor.}} “Only a coward beats a partner, samurai. I am no holy man, but I do wonder why Cowardice is not placed beside Regret in the list of things which are considered Sins in the eyes of Heaven.”

Confrontations

Eventually, the PCs are likely to suspect one of the samurai of abuse of power and skimming off the top. How things go depend on who is approached and who gets blamed.

Blamed: Azumi

- If she is accused directly of embezzling but the issue of the plague hasn't been proved yet (by finding Sharyo), she will call for her champion without hesitation. She will be (quite rightly, since she is innocent of all graft) infuriated and won't bother with even a hint of good manners the moment a challenge has been issued and/or accepted. She will be serenely confident that the Fortunes will prove her right until the very end; if Ihara loses, she will commit jigai as proper, but will do so with an expression of lingering disbelief, still unable to really understand how this happened.
- If someone brings their suspicion of Azumi to Shima, he will try to downplay it with deceit. If that fails, he will try to shift the blame on to Ihara (saying he was trying to 'protect' the boy and generally playing up the role of 'disappointed sempai' as much as possible). If that, also, fails, he will fall in with whatever story the PC's have, well aware that he is probably going to have to run.
- If someone brings their suspicions to Ihara, he will appear genuinely aghast (which he is, because he didn't expect anyone to notice what was going on). If the evidence is strong enough and the party determined to see Azumi take the blame, Ihara will be put into the position of having to request that he be allowed to handle the matter with a report to his sponsoring Magistrate back in Beiden, with all the emphasis he can muster on how it would be best since it is an internal Clan matter. He will allow the PCs to observe the drafting of the letter and its departure with Ihara's doshin that same day and will also allow the PCs to give formal testimony

(which he will witness) to go in the packet if they see fit. This action will make him ineligible to be her Champion; if a duel is called for at that point, it will have to be deferred until after the mod (where it will be summarily swept under the rug by the Scorpion). If this happens, the GM should mention that there is a lingering challenge in the Notes section.

Blamed: Shima

- If the accusation is against him directly and the amount of evidence is solid, Shima will pretend to be contrite and will even permit himself to be arrested by Ihara if he is brought in. He will then escape (He has, after all, been living at that house for more than half a year and has long since made advance preparations for this possibility) and disappear in the night. Likewise, if the party tries to challenge Shima to a duel, he will ask the night to meditate on the matter and will disappear in the night. If the evidence isn't there or the PCs appear to simply be 'fishing', Shima will admit to accepting the occasional 'gift' from caravan masters who want to have the nicer lodgings or access to town repair facilities but will maintain that he has done no worse (with deceit). He will try to initially blame the headman and his own comparatively low skill with numbers compared to his Lady, being quite Sincere about his inferior ability, while regretting that he did not notice sooner how incompetent the hetman was.
- If the accusation is against Azumi and looks credible, Shima will immediately throw in with the PCs, though he will make a show of (actually genuine) regret for the probable loss of a gifted mind. He will push for the PCs to find a solution that doesn't require her to die, but only so hard; he can't help but realize that if Ihara loses a duel, it removes the risk of Ihara's curse from Shima's life.
- If the accusation is against Ihara and looks credible, Shima will again let his sorrow show; he will also react enough to get the party to 'drag out' his relationship to the boy to further engage the party's sympathy for him as a betrayed party. He will push for the boy to 'only' be stripped of his Sash; one so young should surely be granted another chance to redeem himself, perhaps in the front lines of the coming war with the Owl.

Blamed: Ihara

- If he is confronted directly with his own actions (the suggestion from several merchants that he has been perhaps forging evidence), Ihara will say, with as much Sincerity as possible, that he has simply followed orders, none of which harm the Clan. If he is pressed, he will demand the right to prove his innocence in the dueling circle. He will not push for a Shi duel for such a matter, but if the PC pushes it, he will do his best to win. If he does kill a PC, he will lose any rapport he might have had with the PCs (if they don't ostracize him first) but will treat them with calm respect the rest of the module. If he loses, he will die well, not looking for any sort of mercy or appearing afraid. If the PCs should go to his office afterwards (looking for clues or what have you) they will find a wax sealed letter addressed to the karo on his workdesk and all other files neatly filed away; Ihara is too tidy a person to leave things to chance.
- If he is confronted with the suggestion he is the one profiting from the 'diverted' goods, Ihara will indicate the state of his residence, then sardonically ask just where exactly it is that the PC in question thinks he's using his ill-gotten gains. If the party keeps on, he will say, in careful, clipped tones, that he has not profited a single zeni from the people he protects besides the generous stipend that Azumi gives him in accord with the will of the Clan. Have him roll Intimidation if it seems that a firm stance will be of use.
- If the party goes to Azumi with the suggestion that he is planting evidence, she will ask what about; if the party has the (bad) books from the hetman, Tommo, she will glance at a few pages and then nod before tucking it away. She will make no further mention of what she intends to do about the matter, but after the mod ends, if she is still in place and Ihara is also still in his role, she will commend him on his initiative but condemn his lack of subtlety and will, in effect, send him back to his sensei to learn how to Scorpion 'the right way'. This should also be noted in the Notes section if it happens.
- If the party goes to Shima, and they seem to have credible evidence but only the 'small stuff', he will go into his 'disappointed sempai' mode at once. He will lament that he had set the man a poor example (with perfect Sincerity), parading the rewards of his own wealth so freely and perhaps giving the

young man a taste of things too fine for his stipend. He will suggest recommending to Ihara's superior that a transfer to a more regimented, military sort of posting might work the Sin of Desire out of the boy before it sinks in too far to be removed.

- If they go to Shima with evidence of lots of graft but somehow believe it to be Ihara behind it, Shima will immediately fall in line with this. He will allow his On to break and display genuine regret before detailing all of the activities which the boy had been involved with (the actual ones) that the party might not yet know about before confessing that he had 'looked the other way'; he will allow the party to 'get it out of him' that the two are lovers to further use the PC's sympathies, if he thinks that will get him anywhere.
- If Ihara is ever told, Sincerely, that Shima has turned him in, the party will have the opportunity to observe Ihara's Yogo Curse being lifted. People with mystical abilities (Kiho or Spells or Tattoos) may make a Meditation/Void vs TN 25 to feel the ripple in the flow of energy as something essential inside him shifts; any Yogo who happen to be in the area when it happens do not need to make the roll, since they will feel the echoes regardless (the curse is shared at the root). He will blanch, sit down, and have to collect himself for several minutes, but then he will gather himself and his dignity together and will quietly give over to the PCs all of the blackmail that he has quietly collected over the last several months; it is more than enough to accuse Shima outright. He will then offer to arrest his lover, if the PCs allow it. He will remain quiet and withdrawn but helpful until the party leaves; if this happens, the GM should note the lost Curse on the Notes section.

Part Three: Divine Machinations

This section is for the confrontation/meeting with the monk of Ekibyogami, Fortune of Pestilence, Sharyo. It is divided up based on if the party has managed to clear up the embezzlement problem or not at the time of confrontation.

The Eta Village

The eta village is about an hour's steady walk from the village center.

As it is in most places, the land given over to the eta for their own living quarters and meager farming efforts is the worst land in the area. This is true swampland, too thick and too tangled to tame for the growing of rice. Over the centuries, the eta have adapted well. Their village, built up on stilts, is accessed by following a series of hammered-in stumps, stepping stones between the rare dry hummock of land. The sound, and the stench, is incredible...in the heat of the day, the swamp is at it's liveliest, and far too many of the things here seem to have a taste for humans...

So long as the party follows the path, they will get to the village with a few mosquito bites but no worse. If anyone goes off the trail (such as by riding their horse in), the legs of anyone/anything moving that way will have several leeches attached by the time the party gets out.

Depending on what time of day it is, the party will find various numbers of eta around. Morning is the busiest; the ones whose job it is to clean chamberpots are headed out to do the that task, while those who work with animals (such as mucking their stalls or doing the unclean work of breeding or butchering them) are also beginning to make ready to leave. The party would have had to leave at dawn to catch them at this time.

Through the day, the village is mostly empty. The few who are in town are very old, very young, or mothers to the latter. They will vanish inside their houses the moment they see any samurai coming. Only monks can expect any sort of real welcome, and then only if they come alone; anyone with Hero of the People should have the chance to roll a single social effort using an appropriate skill (Sincerity of good intent, Acting for looking harmless, etc.) to lure them out again if they wish to.

Only the leader of the eta will be willing to face the party. He will be alone unless it is late in the day (Dinner or later). If it is late, then Sharyo will be with him; he will simply watch in silence as Goshen and the PC's speak, simply nodding recognition if he is greeted but not introducing himself or doing anything else. Goshen, notably, will not introduce him even if asked; he will simply say 'I am below him' as his reason not to do so. This will be arguably the most Sincere thing he will say the whole encounter, except/unless he is asked about his wife and his

feelings about her death.

The leader, Goshen, is a man who has the peculiar sort of bravery that only comes when a man has realized that he has no control over his own existence while also realizing that he no longer cares if he exists at all. It shows in his eyes even as he falls into the properly servile bow to greet visitors of your station, remaining there, radiating resentment, until he is allowed to rise.

If he is alone when he is first encountered, Goshen will be extremely brusque, though he is careful never to give deliberate insult. He answers anything he is asked that doesn't pertain to his village directly fully and truthfully; if asked about his own people, he will shut down and not answer at all. If he is asked about why they have stopped going to Inari's temple, the party should have a chance to make an Investigation (Notice)/AW or Courtier/Perception check vs TN 25 to catch a hint of a smirk before he answers that 'they have been praying here well enough'.

If he is asked about Teruko, he will lose all semblance of calm and will be quick to tell the questioner that she was his wife, in a tone that suggests he very much still harbors rage for her execution. He will make no effort to hide it and, if confronted about it, will get a sort of nihilistic smile and then openly confess to his hatred of the samurai, especially the one who did the killing, and of the heimen and their regular abuses as well. He will outline how his people are regularly abused (forced to live in filth, forced to dodge the stones thrown by the young ones whose parents simply laugh, treated as less than even the precious oxen that pull the carts, etc.) and then will laugh about how the Fortunes are far wiser than men. If asked about this, he will simply retreat, still laughing, to fetch Sharyo, if he is not already there and watching, with a simple instruction to the party to 'wait'.

If the party does wait, it will take a full Rokugani hours (two actual hours) for the man to come back; when he does, he will have Sharyo in tow.

If Sharyo is there, he will wait until Goshen has the chance to say what he will, or until the samurai are looking like they might be thinking of harming the eta, before he speaks up.

Ekibyogami's Servant

The figure, swathed in the saffron robes of the Brotherhood, seems to study you behind the obscuring veil which masks all hint of age, gender, or identity from your gaze. When finally forced to speak, it is in a whisper, guttural and somehow choked, as if forced past a swollen tongue and cracked lips.

“You wished to meet me. I will hear your petition now.”

The party may at this point roll Lore: Theology (Brotherhood) Intelligence vs TN 20 to recognize the signs of an older, more traditional order. On a TN 30, they also recognize this individual, whoever they are, is dressed in the manner of a monk who is well advanced in their studies (the equivalent of a Status 5 at least).

Sharyo’s approach to the samurai will vary based on what he knows about them already. He has already guessed that they are there because of Kirameki; if the party has taken a while to get here, or has been open in why they are looking, he will be certain of that fact. If he is certain, he will consider them as ‘respected enemies’, ‘troops’ on Inari’s side in the spiritual war that he is waging over this province. The eta, in his mind, are on his side (or are at least to be protected as if they were); the heimen, who he went to first for succor and by whom he was rejected, he considers simply fodder. Those who had helped Inari who did not turn to Ekibyogami (as the eta helpers did) he also considers ‘respected enemies’; this is why he has struck at their families first.

As long as the samurai remain polite, both to him and the eta, Sharyo will willingly answer most of their questions. The one thing he will refuse to do willingly is depart, or leave off his mission.

If at any point in the conversation he is asked about his own condition, Sharyo will unveil his ‘blessing’, which is as follows (and which should cause all the PCs in attendance to make an Etiquette: Willpower roll vs TN 25 to avoid visibly flinching from, which costs them a tick of Honor. This does count as a Fear roll, so players may add their Honor rank to the total, or apply any other abilities that deal with Fear. Anyone failing this roll who has Failure of Bushido: Courage will lose two points of honor).

Slowly, carefully, the robed one lifts it’s shrouded hands. Bandaged fingertips, trembling and stained with pus and blood, pull back the saffron, revealing a scarred pate, patched here and there with a few yellowed, straw-like strands of hair. What skin that is not somehow scarred with the signs of old infection is inflamed, seeping fluids that slowly flow down the seams of wrinkles that cover what little whole skin remains. Fathomless black eyes, set deep in the skull, study you intently, even as a smile flashes perfect, even white teeth from behind split, bleeding lips.

“I am as my Lady has made me. It is my blessing, samurai, and no affliction.”

The party likely has all sorts of questions; Sharyo will grow more and more impassioned the more angered he has been by the samurai and any rude behavior they might have showed to him, the eta, or his Fortune. His accent should get thicker the more worked up he becomes, and spittle should fly and coughing fits should happen periodically as he rages.

- *Who are you?* “I am Sharyo, and I serve Ekibyogami, mistress of disease and servant of life and death.”
- *What are you doing here?* “I am living. For now. These people have given me a place to meditate, to pray, in peace, until my Lady calls me onward.” {{Note, if the party has him in rant mode, he will also add on a tirade about the failings of the samurai: “A leader too absorbed to see her people; a fool who loves unwisely; and one who live at the cost of others”}}
- *Why did you come?* “I sensed opportunity. The fields of belief here are fallow; the strength that Inari should hold is shaken. It is now a battlefield, and so it shall remain, so long as there is a field to fight on.”
- *Did you cause the cows to be born wrong?* “I? No. But I sensed Her hand in it, and it convinced me in the rightness of my choice to linger. I began my prayers that night, though it is only in recent weeks that they have at last been granted.”
- *Are you why the villagers are sick?* “Of course. It is my gift, and my blessing.”
- *Why did you target the ones who helped Inari?* “They are fighting on the wrong side of a sacred war, whether they know it or not. It is only right they should be targeted. Ultimately, those who are strong survive and in time life is renewed, as it should be.”

- *Did you go after the eta, too?* Sharyo spares a glance for Goshen, if he is still looming there, before answering slowly. “No. They have given all that one should to a priest of any sect...shelter in their homes. The best of the food they had. Even medicine, if I had asked for it. When I told them who I served, they offered prayers easily, as easily to Her as to any other Fortune. For this, I thought, they deserved Her mercy. I asked that Her blessing pass them by and seek out the others, the ones who did not honor Her. She consented, though they and I know that Her will is as changeable as the wind.”
- *Will you leave?* “No.” This is said firmly, though it costs a racking cough. “I have been called. So long as my Gift blooms, I know that it is Her will that I remain.” {{No matter what social rolls the party throws, he will not waver from his decision, though he will show a certain amount of resignation in lieu of fear if/when the threat of death gets thrown around.}}

Dealing with the monk is a whole different problem than finding him. There is no blasphemy in what he is preaching, or in his practices: Ekibyogami is a recognized Fortune, not some sort of dark entity or oni, and so worship of her is well within the law as well. Sharyo’s approach is rather unusual, since most priests of his faith prefer to take the approach of appeasement over outright veneration and respect, but that very fact is part of why She favors him so highly.

It is legal to arrest the man (Lore: Law/INT vs TN 25 to remember the appropriate justification); he has no travel papers to be where he is (mostly because no one tends to ask such things of monks of his rank) and that is enough reason, though flimsy, to use to bring him in. One must be a full Magistrate (Jade or Emerald) to be able to use this power, however; if there is no PC with that status track, then the party will have to rely on Yogo Ihara (if he is still around and the party has a good relationship with him) to do so instead.

It is also legal, albeit terribly dishonorable, to simply kill the man. Monks have a unique status, but they are certainly not the legal equivalent, socially, of samurai; murder of one will cause social consequences, certainly, if the brotherhood finds out about it (Cast Out: Jurojin (and sub-Kami) is appropriate if anyone else in the party reports the matter.), but will not result in anything worse than incarceration if the arresting officer is operating purely on the basis of the letter of the law. Note that doing this also violates the PC in

question’s travel papers: depending on how the PC has interacted with the local Scorpion so far, they may end the mod under arrest, being run out of town, or being quietly issued new papers by a grateful Scorpion (GM should choose as seems appropriate, given the variables).

If the party ultimately decides that they can’t (or won’t) interfere with what is ultimately a spiritual matter, the conclusion will include the bit about the plague spreading. If the party has become friendly with the merchants from the Inn, by all means ad lib something about them being the transmission vector as they go off in a direction of the GMs choice (ideally wherever one of the twitchiest PCs is from).

Conclusion

The ending will depend upon how the PCs resolve the two problems:

- Fix neither: Kirameki’s Fall
- Kill or arrest the monk Sharyo but leave Shima in place: Status Quo
- Drive off the Karo but not the plague: Ekibyogami’s Gift
- Fix both problems: Balance Restored

Kirameki’s Fall

This happens only if the party doesn’t drive off Shima AND don’t ever find and deal with Sharyo {IE, fail the module utterly}.

The morning of your departure never quite brightens, instead laboring under eerily green skies that promise terrible weather to come. Kirameki meets you on the edge of town. She looks much the same, yet something about the energy she gives off has changed completely. When she greets you, it is with merely a nod of the head and a feral, merciless smile.

“Thank you. My mind has cleared, and all conflict is gone. I know the path my lord Inari has chosen for me. Pray we do not meet again.”

The storm unleashes on a crash of thunder that shakes the ground beneath your feet. A cold rain, paired with sharp pellets of hail, pours down in torrents. Through obscuring sheets of water, you see a flash of gold as the kitsune sheds her human garb for the last time, followed by a dark ripple. You see a fox, as white as snow, for only a moment, before all nine trails flick in your direction and the spirit disappears.

If any of the PCs have Inari's Curse and get this ending, their Player must speak to Admin.

If any of the PCs possess the Kitsune's Boon, they have another bit of flavor.

Several days later, you suffer from restless slumber. You rise, disturbed but unsure of the nature of the dreams that so disturbed you. As you look about your quarters, you spy a familiar figurine, inexplicably now set in the middle of the floor. What once gave warmth and comfort now causes the fiery ache of ice held too long to burn through your fingers and palm. When you open your hand, it is empty, but now marked with the sigil of the frost dragon, scarred into the flesh.

Those PCs lose the Kitsune's Boon certificate and instead gain the Frost Dragon's Mark certificate. This cert provides immunity to natural cold but adds +5 to the TN of any effort that requires fine motor control.

Status Quo

This occurs only if Yogo Azumi or Ikoma Ihara take the fall for the graft, leaving Soshi Shima still free, but with the monk Sharyo either dead or arrested.

As your group prepares to leave the village, you are met on the road by a single mounted samurai. Soshi Shima bows to you all, somehow managing to add a flourish despite remaining a horse. "A sad end to a samurai's service. Still, you have my thanks in this matter. I will report the actions of the monk Sharyo to my superiors. I am confident I speak for the Clan when I thank you for the service you have done us. Had he succeeded, many of our people would have been lost to famine and disease." "

It takes only a few minutes after he leaves you for Kirameki to join you instead, her expression sad. The white stripe in her hair has grown and you could swear she has aged a year in the brief time since last you saw her.

"We have done my Lord's work here, and yet, I sense that my own path has not yet been fully travelled. Thank you, my friends. You did all that you could, and I am grateful. If I do not see you again, know that you have my blessing."

Bowing a last time, the earth-bound spirit turns and makes her slow way back toward the lonely Temple and her endless labors there.

Several weeks later, you overhear two Scorpion in conversation. Soshi Shima has taken over as Governor of Kagoki, but even with new leadership, there is little hope of a reversal of the dark fortunes so late in the growing season. All the Scorpion can do is pray that next year will be more fruitful...

Ekibyogami's Gift

This only occurs if the PC's don't find Sharyo at all, take more than two IC days to do so, or let him finish his work, but do manage to get Shima to leave town.

Your last conversation with the fox maiden is a somber one. Though she is glad to have assisted the people of the village by removing the one responsible for much of their suffering, she is clearly still troubled.

“We have served the Fortunes here, samurai, but I fear that it is Daikoku-kami that has most profited in this.” The attempt at humor falls flat, as does the temporary flash of smile. Kirameki looks tired, even drained somehow. “Still, I thank you for your help. I will wait for the new servants to come take over the temple, and then...well. We will see what Inari wills.”

Several weeks after you leave Kagoki and its samurai to begin the needed restoration, you hear the first rumors: A wave of sickness, swift and terrible, has taken root in the lands of the Scorpion. Rumors vary wildly as to the cause, but it is widely believed that the caravans, all unknowing, brought the disease with them. What is known is that throughout northern Scorpion lands, purges have been initiated....

If any of the players at the table have the Kitsune’s Boon certificate and get this ending, they get an extra little bit of text/effects:

A month to the day after you left Kagoki, you notice something missing from your gear. It takes some time to identify the loss, but you ultimately realize that the charm which the spirit gave you is no longer tied in its usual place. Somehow the world feels just a little smaller, and a little sadder, as if something precious has been lost.

Balance Restored

This only occurs if the party manages to drive off Shima AND the monk Sharyo is either dead or

arrested.

Kirameki greets you with a warm smile as you return to the Temple at her request. Her hair, sleek and shining black again, swirls as she takes your hands for a moment in turn. “My friends, welcome! I am beyond overjoyed at the successes you have enjoyed here. The people here owe much to you, though few of them will ever know it. Know that I will remember, and bear that knowledge with me when I return to my Lord.” The smile that breaks over her face is no less beautiful for showing a pair of delicately pointed canines. “He will allow it. I have only to wait until the new keepers of the temple arrive.”

Growing solemn, she steps back, bowing.

“Go, now, my friends. My prayers for your safe travels will go with you.”

Any PC that does not already have it will receive the certificate The Kitsune’s Boon and a small netsuke of maple wood that grants +5 to sincerity when carried.

If a PC already has the Boon, destroy it. Replace it with the Advantage: Inari’s Blessing. If the PC already has that, they should talk to Admin to decide a suitable replacement.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module: +1
Good Roleplaying: +1
Getting rid of Soshi Shima: +1
Finding Sharyo: +1

Total Possible Experience: 4xp

Favors

As long as at least one of the subterfuges going on is discovered and stopped (either the grift by Shima or the plague from Sharyo), PCs receive one favor.

Glory

If the PCs successfully end the plague and did not do so by virtue of a PC killing the monk Sharyo, gain H8 honor.

If the PCs kill Sharyo and it is reported, Gain I10 Infamy (Murdered a Holy Man).

If the PCs successfully get rid of Shima, gain G8.

Allies and Enemies

If the PCs successfully run Shima off and she remains Governor, gain Yogo Azumi as an Ally (3 Influence/1 Devotion).

If Yogo Azumi is no longer in charge but the plague is stopped, gain Soshi Shima as an ally (2 Influence/ 2 Devotion) if he is still in town.

If a PC kills Sharyo, they gain Noticed by: ??.

Other Awards/Penalties

Certain endings result in Certs, please read them carefully.

GM Reporting

- 1) Did Yogo Azumi stay Governor?
- 2) Did Soshi Shima leave town?
- 3) Did Yogo Ihara survive?
- 4) Was Sharyo killed?
- 5) Was Sharyo allowed to carry on his sacred duty OR not found out at all?

Also, please use the Notes section to report any unusual one-off endings (Either Yogo curse triggering, If Ihara kills someone in a Shi duel, and so on, as mentioned along the way in the appropriate sections)

The GM must report this information by (date three months after release) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

If any NPCs require statblocks not listed elsewhere in the module

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 3
(INT 5)

Yogo Azumi

Yogo Azumi, the Gokenin of Kagoki Village for the last decade, is a brilliant woman and one of the most important members of the Yogo Trading Consortium. Widowed and in her late thirties, Azumi is still lovely but could not care less about it; she regularly wears patched, mended robes several seasons out of style or simple peasant garb, with only her ornate gilded mask (shaped like a rat) reflecting the wealth which she could, by rights, claim if she so wished. She is also so pale as to appear unhealthy, a direct result of her intense agoraphobia which keeps her largely contained to the basement (where there are no windows).

Like many brilliant people focused intensely on work, Azumi is rather deficient in social areas. Her view on heimen and eta is low; she sees them as slightly smarter beasts of burden, not really as thinking beings with actual personalities, lives, and interests. She is also heavily agoraphobic and so relies on others to be her eyes and ears, which is why things have gotten so bad (Shima doesn't report everything, and Ihara is too cowed by her to risk talking to her at all).

Her position is hereditary, and one she does as well as she can but which she is honestly ill-suited for. It has never occurred to her to complain to her superiors, or to suggest a replacement, but if the option is ever presented she will be amenable, even grateful, to go back to advising her Lord as she did before her father died a decade ago. She has hopes of passing the post to her eldest son (currently away at training)

If she is confronted and accused of graft, she will be annoyed and immediately call for a champion. It is only if she is consulted with testimony about not only the petty theft *as she sees it* by her karo but also the slow spread of plague among the people she was meant to be overseeing that she will trip her Yogo Curse (Betraying the Clan economy she has so sworn herself to). This will cause her to immediately offer seppuku; it will take good RP and social rolls to convince her otherwise, if the party is so inclined.

School/Rank: Yogo Wardmaster 2

Initiative: 6k3

Armor TN: 20 **Reduction:** 0

Wounds: 15 (+0), 6 (+3), 6 (+5), 6 (+10), 6 (+15), 6(+20), 6 (Down, +40), 6 (Out)

Honor: 1.5 Status: 5.5 Glory: 5.0

Primary Skills: Commerce 8, Courtier 2, Etiquette 2, Lore: Theology 1, Investigation 2, Stealth 1, Spellcraft 1, Calligraphy 3, Defense 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Insensitive, Small, Great Potential: Commerce, Languages (Ivindi, Sempet, Dahabi, Yobanjin), Ascetic, Driven {Increase Scorpion Profit/Supply}, Obtuse, Yogo Curse, Max Phobia : (Outdoors)

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

Soshi Shima

The man currently operating as Soshi Shima is an opportunist of the highest order. He is, genuinely, a Scorpion; he simply isn't living as the man he gempukku'd as. Born into the Shosuro and truly called Shosuro Daiwa, he spent his early career as 'yojimbo at need' at minor courts throughout Scorpion lands. This introduced him to a number of expensive vices; opium, fine sake, fine clothes, and fine 'entertainment'. One such charge was the REAL Soshi Shima. Daiwa spent almost a year as the man's yojimbo, learning much of his mannerisms, habits, and the other things he would require to steal the man's identity. As soon as it was possible to do so, Shima was eliminated by means of a freak fall into the River of Gold. As far as the Scorpion know, Shosuro Daiwa drowned to save his charge and he is recorded as honorably dead in his Family rolls; in truth, it is Shima's body that was washed out to sea.

Five years later, Daiwa is comfortable in Shima's role. He has been carefully skimming from the harvest and trade coffers for years to fulfill his vices, securing the funds in a safehouse he has established in one of the old tracks off the Shamate Pass. He has been doing this slowly enough, and in enough different ways, that Azumi hasn't ever tied the losses to him, instead ascribing them to any number of issues: Bad weather, ill-chosen caravan staff, and simple misfortune.

He has, over time, grown fond of Azumi to a certain extent; she has, after all, made him rich (even if she doesn't know it). While he won't intercede if she falls

under suspicion if the alternative is his own downfall, he will act in her favor up to that point.

He is romantically involved with the young yoriki assigned to the village. For Shima, this is largely a matter of convenience; a magistrate, even one that is technically only a yoriki, is a useful friend to have; it is simply a happy benefit that the young man in question is also physically appealing and good company. Shima doesn't love Ihara, but is all too aware the young man is in love with him, which he finds (understandably) concerning, given his Family. Because of this, if it comes to a question of allowing his lover to take the fall vs he himself having to run, Shima will (with some genuine sorrow, just enough to be believable without deceit) allow Ihara to take the fall for all of the graft and embezzling.

School/Rank: Shosuro Infiltrator 3

Initiative: 7k4

Armor TN: 20 (23 in armor) **Reduction:** 1

Wounds: 15 (+0), 6 (+3), 6 (+5), 6 (+10), 6 (+15), 6(+20), 6 (Down, +40), 6 (Out)

Attack: 8k3 w Emphasis (knife, simple); 6k3 (katana, complex)

Damage: 4k1 (knife); 7k2 (katana)

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 3
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Honor: 1.0*0.0 Status: 3.0 Glory: 3.0

Primary Skills: Sincerity (Deceit) 5; Acting (Disguise) 5; Investigation 3; Stealth 5; Kenjutsu 3; Knives (jitte) 5; Iaijutsu (Focus) 5; Athletics 5; Temptation 3; Commerce 3; Slight of Hand 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Dark Secret: Stolen Identity; Silent; Ally (1 inf/3 dev): Yogo Ihara, local Yoriki; *Perceived Honor 1

Special Mechanics: *Self-Preservation:* If at any time Daiwa/Shima thinks he will be discovered (either for being an embezzler or for the murder and assumption of Shima's life) he will leave within hours of learning of this fact. He is utterly honorless and will have no compunctions about lying about anything, up to and including accepting challenges to duel that he will never turn up for.

Yogo Ihara

The local doshin is a young samurai, only having taken his gempukku the spring year before this. He technically reports to the Magistrate at Beiden, but has never actually met that august samurai. He was assigned to Kagoki (by request) upon receiving his sword and has not left since.

Ihara is a remarkable duelist and passable warrior, even doing well enough to gain an invitation to the Topaz Championships last year. He didn't win, but he

did manage to place higher than any other Scorpion, carried largely by his excellent Iaijutsu score (He was second, bested by the eventual winner of the Tournament, a Kakita). Sadly, he isn't much at all for the more courtly sort of arts. He was middle of his class, at best, in all social subjects; worse, at his gempukku party, he was all too quick to indulge in the sake provided and subsequently failed the 'test after the test'. The resulting simple silk mask he received from his sensei remains a source of tremendous embarrassment, which is why he often goes without it entirely.

In his time in the village, Ihara has grown far too fond of the samurai he knows as Soshi Shima. From the start, only Shima has really welcomed him (Azumi is polite but frankly reminds Ihara a bit too much of his own mother, making her uncomfortable company at best), first as companion and then, last winter, as a lover. Ihara has a good idea what Shima is up to but, because he loves him, has willingly gone along with the skimming, even to the point of fabricating evidence or testimony to protect his beloved. He rationalizes this to himself because he has never been asked to do anything that would harm any actual samurai thus far.

He knows the location of one of Shima's caches (the smaller one), but he knows nothing of the man's secret, or his larger, more lucrative hideaway. Because he is a Scorpion, he has enough copies of what he's done to establish Shima's guilt; if Shima tries to frame him first, Ihara's curse will trigger when he hands the evidence over. This won't break him as it does Azumi; instead, after a night of being very, very drunk and very, very destructive, Ihara will renew his dedication to his role and will be all too eager to prove it by helping the PCs finish anything that is left.

School/Rank: Soshi Magistrate 2

Initiative: 5k3

Armor TN: 20 (25 in armor) **Reduction:** 0 (3 in armor)

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

Attack: 6k3 (Katana, Complex), 6k3 (Unarmed, complex)

Damage: 8k2 (Katana), 4k1 (unarmed)

Air 3	Earth	Fire	Water	Void 4
(AW	3	2	2	
4)		(AG	(STR	
		4	3)	

Honor: 2.5 Status: 1.5 Glory: 4.0 Infamy: 2.0 (Scorpion Only; Failed Gempukku Test)

Primary Skills: Kenjutsu 3, Iaijutsu (Focus) 5, Investigation 1, Intimidation 3, Jujitsu (grapple) 3
Advantages/Disadvantages: Yogo Curse; Blackmail (Soshi Shima); True Love (Soshi Shima), Prodigy
Special Mechanics: +1k0 Intimidation rolls (+2k0 vs those of lower status); +1k0 to melee damage (already in stats). +1k1 to Control a grapple. Roll Athletics/AG vs TN 20 while prone as a free action to get up.

Sharyo

Few people think of eta as having actual careers (or at least what they think of as careers), much less of retiring from them. Yet that is precisely what Sharyo has managed to do. After spending a lifetime as a Torturer for the Emerald Office, based in Balishnimpur, Sharyo elected to go into the service of the Fortune who most closely shared his views on pain and suffering (IE, that these things are good and right and are quite fun to inflict on the unworthy) on his 40th birthday. He has spent the last three decades in that service, wandering the Colonies as well as the Empire Proper in service to Ekibyogami. His stay in Kagoki has gone on since Spring, during which time he has enjoyed the hospitality of the Eta. He spent his first weeks in study of the local populace and the land and prayed, earnestly, to his Fortune to be able to punish what he considers impiety and improper behavior by most of the residents (but not the eta, who he has asked Her to pass over). Her initial gifts (the sickening of the livestock and fertility challenges) convinced him of the rightness of his cause, increasing his fervor. It has only been in the last few weeks that he has been granted his prayer: His own passive infection has ‘flowered’, enabling him to go about infecting the area and the people. Because he sees them as enemy forces, Sharyo has chosen as his first victims those individuals among the heimen who helped at the temple of Inari. He has every intention of targeting the samurai in time, but is waiting until the heimen are fully exposed before he changes his targets.

Sharyo himself is a carrier of Smallpox, known in Rokugan as Dainashi Bibou, “Destroyer of Beauty”, among other diseases. He no longer suffers the debilitating effects, thanks to his patron’s blessing, but remains quite contagious at Her will. The initial afflicted are always highly contagious and spread the disease from there, often well after Sharyo himself has gone. These first victims usually die, but those they infect generally live on, heavily disfigured and weakened and carrying the seeds of a new infection in their blood.

Perhaps surprisingly, Sharyo is a remarkable healer; this makes much more sense when one realizes that long-term suffering, mental or emotional, is the end goal, which one cannot feel if they are dead. Because of his status as a monk of some standing within the

Temple (he is, effectively, the highest ranked of all Ekibyogami’s servants on the rolls), he is never assaulted, but he has been thrown out of more towns than he can easily name. This time, however, he is determined to stay: he considers it a holy mission to spread the ‘gift’ as long as his own infection ‘blooms’.

School/Rank: Temple of the Thousand Fortunes 4

Initiative: 6k2

Armor TN: 15 **Reduction:** 0

Wounds: ~~20 (+0)~~, 8 (+3), 8 (+5), 8 (+10), 8 (+15), 8 (+20), 8 (Down, +40), 8 (Out)

Attack: 7k4 (Fist, Complex)

Damage: 3k1 (Fist)

Air	Earth	Fire 4	Water	Void 4
2	4		2	

Honor:	Status: .5 (In the	Glory: 1.0 (in
3.5	Brotherhood,	robes)/ Infamy:
	Status 4)	3.0 (out of robes)

Primary Skills: Meditation 5; Medicine (Wound Treatment, Disease, Antidotes) 5; Lore: Theology 5; Defense 3; Lore: Anatomy 3; Jujitsu 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Balance, Disturbing Countenance (**only when seen without full robes**), Bad Health

Kiho: Earthen Fist, The Mind’s Fire, Unbalance the Mind, Mind/No-Mind, Sense the Balance

Significant Dice Pools: Atemi attacks 7k4

Important Note: Thought Sharyo will fight back to an extent if he is attacked, he isn’t actually concerned with his own life so much as spreading as much of his infected blood around as possible before he is killed. He will NEVER use Void to reduce Wounds taken or to boost his own Armor TN.

Special Mechanics: Touching his bare flesh requires a check vs disease, but with the high TN of 20 instead of 20 like with Mika.

Kirameki

The 'monk' Kirameki, is in fact a centuries-old kitsune spirit who had been enslaved to Isawa Eguchi's family for generations and was released only a few years ago with the assistance of chance-met samurai {Legacy of my Ancestors, CIT03}. In the years since, she has sought only to return home to Chikushudo. Because of her residual anger and hatred toward humanity (and samurai in particular), however, Inari has refused her entry until she regains her balance. She has been given a year to prove herself or else be cast out to Ningen-Do forever, a situation that leaves her desperate and erratic. If forced into combat, she will attempt to Possess anyone with Cursed by the Realm of Sakkaku first and will otherwise try for the one she perceives as the weakest-willed or most powerful and will force them to hinder their companions long enough for her to flee the battlefield. She never fights in human form; her first Free Action will always be to change back to vulpine form.

Air 3	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water	Void
(Ref.			1 (Per	3(In
5)			4)	human
				form}

Honor .5 Status .5 Glory 1.0

Armor TN: **Reduction:** 0

30(Human form) 25

(Fox)

Attack: Claws **Damage:** Claws 2k1

2k2(Complex)

Initiative: 6k5

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

Taint Rank: 0.0

School/Rank: None (Shapeshifter)

Powers: *Possession:* Once per day, Kirameki can attempt to possess another as a Complex action; this requires a contested Willpower roll; if the target fails, they are taken over until the next sunrise. The only restriction in actions that may be forced is that the target cannot be forced to harm themselves or any loved ones.

Humanity: Kirameki can take on a human form in which she has a Void ring and can spend Void the same way as any other human can. Changing between forms is a Free Action.

A Panther's Moves: +3k0 to all Stealth rolls

Skills: Stealth 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Defense 3, Theology 5, Courtier 3, Temptation 5, Acting 3

Advantages/Disadvantages:

Taboos: If Kirameki violates any of the following, she loses all Powers until the next sunrise.

- May not drink alcohol
- May not cross running water
- May not eat rice
- Must lose the Black Sheep disadvantage within one year or else lose all mystical ability, forever trapped as woman or fox (Inari's choice)

Black Sheep: As long as Kirameki suffers from the sin of Regret and wrath towards her own descendants in the Isawa and, by extension, the samurai of the Empire as a whole, all of Inari's Chosen shun her. This includes not only other monks but other denizens of Chikushudo as well.

Player Handout #1: News From the Empire

This is simply a short list of the major happenings of the last few months or weeks for the Empire. This is common knowledge; no rolls are required. They should be written with a fairly impartial viewpoint, though having them in the “voice” of the wandering herald Otomo Yusuke provides a certain amount of continuity.

Appendix 1: Index

For ease of finding locations, the list below shows what page things are on.

- Temple (First night): Pg 4; (Second night onward) Pg 12
- Inn (First night): Pg 7; (Second onward) Pg 8
- Hoshi's Home: Pg 10
- Market: Pg 12
- Warehouses: Pg 12
- Heimen Hetman's House: Pg 14
- Farm Fields: Pg 15
- Governor's Manse: Pg 16
- Karo's Home {Manse Compound}: Pg 18
- Magistrate's Home/Office: Pg 18
- Eta Village: Pg 21