

# Courage in Death

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

Month of Shinjo, 1342 (Late Fall)

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[Travel, Combat, Supernatural]

A lord of the Unicorn requires your assistance on a spiritual journey.

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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

Nearly one year ago, Unicorn Champion Shinjo Hazumi was struck down by a Dragon seer trying to prevent a vision of darkness for the Empire. Hazumi survived, and only recovered after her soul was released from the gaijin artifact used by the would-be assassin. Unfortunately for her, the Lords of Death seized the opportunity to take revenge against the soul of Shinjo for ancient insults done to them.

During her incapacitation, the Unicorn armies defeated the Dragon in a surprise attack at Yamasura, but war was avoided by great effort from diplomats of both clans. When she awoke, Hazumi was angry that so little had been done to seek justice – and those close to her have noticed a dark edge to that anger. Now she seeks war, not only on the Dragon but on the Scorpion who betrayed the Unicorn.

One of the leaders of the Unicorn familiar with Hazumi and concerned with the direction her leadership has taken since her return is Moto Ogedei. Once he served as the general of the most prestigious of the Unicorn armies, the mighty Khol, but going into semi-retirement as a provincial daimyo following his father's death. His close alliance with Hazumi gave him the standing to challenge his family daimyo before the attack, but when he spoke out against her current aggressive stance, she reassigned him to command of the defensive Junghar army. "If you are so concerned with the safety of our people, then take up their defense."

While this change of position was intended to remove him from the affairs of the Unicorn Clan as a whole, Ogedei has chosen to interpret his order as a mandate to seek peace with the Dragon – starting with the possibility of greater reparations for the attack up on the Unicorn Champion. Unfortunately for his plan, the Dragon are strong enough in their position that the

lords of the mountain clan have been unwilling to meet with him. Not without resources of his own, he has asked influential samurai from other clans to join him and provide assistance.

The PCs will be sent to serve as escort and entourage for Moto Ogedei in his first real diplomatic mission. Guided by his ancestral gods, he will turn the expedition into a pilgrimage to the Shrine to the Kirin, where Hazumi's older sister Ritsuke serves as a monk, to seek her counsel. The Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, however, have recently suffered a loss and have chosen Ogedei as the best successor to their fallen comrade. This choice will see the PCs sent into Meido to confront the Lords of Death with Ritsuke to try to reclaim Ogedei's soul, where they may learn things of importance to the future of the Empire...

## 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, and note in particular if any of the PCs have the following mechanics:

- Obligation: Moto Ogedei
- Language: Yobanjin
- Touch of the Spirit Realm (any)
- Cursed by the Realm
- Disbeliever
- Lost Love
- Haunted
- Death Prevention Mechanics (Great Destiny, Dark Fate, one-use tricks)

### 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. Each PC loses 3 points of Glory. This cannot reduce a PC's Glory Rank to less than their Insight Rank, and the Fame Advantage increases their Insight Rank by one for these purposes.

## Taint Progression

If a PC possesses the Shadowlands Taint, they will need to roll at the beginning of the module to see how much it has grown over the intervening time since the last module. The TN of this raw **Earth Roll** is **15**. Failure on this roll causes the PC to gain a point of the Shadowlands Taint. If a character is growing close to being Lost (Shadowlands Taint Rank 4.5+) , it is recommended that the player have another PC ready to replace them.

## Crafting

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

## Preparation Techniques

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

## Ronin Survival

Life is difficult for ronin in the Empire at the best of times. PC ronin are no exception to this. At the start of the module, a PC ronin must roll **Hunting (Survival) / Stamina** at a TN of 25. Failure on this roll gives the ronin the Permanent Wound Disadvantage for the duration of the module. Koku may be spent on this roll to gain a Free Raise for every koku spent before the roll is made, or one Free Raise for every two koku spent after the roll is made.

## Experience Expenditure

Finally, the players should be given one last chance to spend any experience they wish before the module

begins. Unless the module specifically allows it, experience may not be spent during the adventure.

# Introduction

The northern half of the Dragon Heart Plain spent centuries haunted, and though it was cleansed two hundred years ago with the restoration of Shiro Chuda as a Dragon castle, it retains a somewhat otherworldly reputation. Travel in the province proves to be somewhat prosaic, however, as the pastoral region has become essentially the breadbasket of the Dragon Clan, and the city around the castle serves as a quiet trade hub in the north. The servants and samurai of Shiro Chuda prove quite welcoming, as guests of standing seem to be something of a rarity. Your personal effects are tended to with alacrity, you are shown to comfortable quarters, and assured that all of your needs have been arranged by Moto Ogedei, the Unicorn general that asked your lords for your service.

The PCs have been sent by their lords to assist Moto Ogedei on what was described to them as a pilgrimage in the northern Empire. As it is known that Ogedei has very little experience in the Empire at large (this is, in fact, the first time he has travelled out of the Unicorn lands in a non-military capacity), it can be expected that the traditional Moto would face adversity. The PCs have likely encountered Ogedei in the past (previous modules CIT10: Winter Court: Shiro Ide and CIT15: Treacherous Sands most significantly), though he was a provincial daimyo at that point.

## Rumors

PCs who are curious about Ogedei's change in station (or those simply seeking basic information about what they may be in for because their players are well-trained) may roll **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness**. Dragon Clan PCs gain a Free Raise on this roll, and Chuda family PCs gain two.

- 10: Moto Ogedei is on some sort of pilgrimage and has been seeking audiences with a variety of Dragon lords all autumn.
- 15: The local lord, Chuda Yoson, takes his duties quite seriously but is always eager to host samurai from around the Empire and learn what he can of their ways. He did not seem to have the sort of influence that Moto Ogedei was looking for, however, though the Unicorn is reported to have been a pleasant enough guest.
- 20: Moto Ogedei was promoted to command the Unicorn Junghar army this summer; while it is a step up from provincial daimyo, his previous military experience was as leader of the more

## Part One: Prayers Answered

prestigious Khol army. Given the current tension between the two clans, his military rank may have been part of the reason his welcome elsewhere among the Dragon has been lukewarm.

- 25: Ogedei left the castle early in the morning, informing the servants that he was expecting guests (the PCs) and that he would send word where to meet him tomorrow. There is some speculation among the locals that he is observing an old Moto tradition of never sleeping under the same roof twice...
- 30: Ogedei was a close ally and advisor to Shinjo Hazumi when she became Champion five years ago. It was likely her support that allowed him to challenge the Moto family daimyo for that position, though it ultimately proved ineffective. Since the champion's recovery, however, there are signs that their relationship is strained. His current position is thought (by those who closely observe the Unicorn courts) to have been intended to get him out of the way while still of service to the clan.

Much of this information can be shared with the PCs at the evening meal, where they are the honored guests of Chuda Yoson, the daimyo of the Chuda vassal family. Yoson is a conscientious samurai, devoted to the family tradition of providing a second chance for those who are interested in seeking absolution for their past mistakes, and is a polite and genial host. While his duties are limited to administration of his quiet province and providing much-needed agricultural support for the mountain Dragon, he is very interested in the more glorious sorts of duties that samurai like the PCs have seen. (This can serve as a means to ensure that the PCs are acquainted with each other, though if the players can be induced to share tales of their deeds, Yoson would be fascinated by their adventures.)

Players concerned about the absence of Moto Ogedei can be assured that word is expected from him in the morning – seeking him out is largely fruitless, though if a PC has a particularly well-thought out plan, they may roll **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** to ask around the town. A success at a TN of 30 allows them to speak with a guard that recalls the Unicorn leaving somewhat before midday

In any event, the next morning the PCs will receive word that Moto Ogedei will meet them at mid-day at the Temple to the Sun, a holy site overseen by the Imperial Families and Brotherhood of Shinsei a few hours' ride southeast of the city.

The mountain wind is brisk in these last few weeks of autumn, but the bright rays of Lord Sun shine down on the plains as you approach the large temple complex devoted to both Lord Yakamo and Lady Amaterasu. In fact, the “temple” is almost the size of a small village in itself, with multiple outbuildings, shrines, and gardens winding along the hills. The monks of the temple cherish their home's strong connection to Tengoku, and some amount of devotion is given to every figure connected to the Celestial Heavens. All ten Kami have shrines, as the children of Amaterasu (though to be sure one of those shrines is bound with jade and regarded as a cautionary tale), there are vast statues of the Elemental Dragons, and altars for literally every Fortune recognized in Rokugan can be found somewhere.

The monks are respectful of their guests; as the temple is a common destination for pilgrims, they are well-acquainted with samurai (and there are another dozen or so present currently). The Temple began with a focus on the Sun in both incarnations as a force of purity, but over the years its connection to Tengoku and the Sun's place as one of the primary power of that Realm has led to it expanding its purview to include all of the Celestial Heavens' residents.

Any shugenja or spiritually-sensitive PC (Touched by a Realm, especially Tengoku; Cursed by Tengoku; any reasonable mechanic the GM deems appropriate) can feel a strong connection to the Spirit Realms – particularly Tengoku. This connection is what cleansed the Dragon Heart Plain two centuries ago, and any violence or bloodshed in the Temple is likely to incur the wrath of the Heavens. (A portal to Tengoku could be opened here, but it would also be a bad idea to incur the wrath of the Heavens' Guardians.)

Moto Ogedei can be found in the Shrine to Emma-O, offering his devotions to the Lords of Death. The ancestral gods of the Moto are subordinate Fortunes to the Fortune of Death, and are honored in the Empire even if they are often not understood by more traditionally-minded samurai. Their duties involve passing judgment on the deceased and determining what punishment is appropriate for the spirits of the departed while they are in Meido – while Emma-O determines the soul's ultimate destination, the Lords of Death have a major impact on the process.

Moto Ogedei rises from where he kneels before the iron altar of the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang. A burly warrior somewhat closer to fifty than forty, he nods a terse greeting. “Good to see you. I had not thought to see my ancestors’ gods so honored in this place... If you wish to pray to your own Fortunes, we can talk after. I’d like to get back on the road sooner rather than later, though, so come find me when you’re done.”

The PCs may offer whatever prayers they wish: the Fortunes, the Ten Kami (though the shrine of He Who Shall Not Be Named is empty) and the Sun and Moon, the Celestial Dragons, and even some past Emperors have places dedicated to them. An altar for Toturi IX is under construction, following the announcement from the Kitsu that he has joined other Emperors in Tengoku. Once they are done, they can join Ogedei in a meeting room obviously used by other samurai for business while on their pilgrimages.

Ogedei sits at a table, his Moto furs and leather an incongruous sight against the traditional depiction of the Celestial Heavens painted on the screen behind him. He idly rubs the pommel of a knife, obviously of gaijin design form the skull carved into it. “Those who know me know that I worship the Lords of Death. Gods of justice, of balance, of order. There are tales of them losing their way, once, but they have joined the Celestial Order and serve in the afterlife as judges of the dead. Keep your Fortunes; I offer them no disrespect, but my worship is for the gods of my ancestors.” One side of his mouth quirks up in an ironic smile. “So well might you wonder why I am on a ‘pilgrimage’ in these northern, rocky lands. I do seek wisdom, but my meditations lead me to think it will be found from those still in the mortal realm and not from a source outside it. I have decided that my next stop will be at the Shrine of the Ki-Rin; though this land is settled and peaceful, you will be my honor guard. Perhaps when I return west, your names and glory will grant me audience with those that have so far turned me away.”

Ogedei is somewhat cautious about discussing his aims and mission – he has been attempting to guide Hazumi’s wrath following her return, to little avail. Her command that he take up the defense of the Unicorn provinces if he was so convinced any aggressive move would lead to disaster gave him a loophole that he is using to try to speak with the Dragon – this has had little effect to date, the Dragon feeling quite strongly that they owe the Unicorn nothing and are powerful enough to ignore the threat. The difficulty he’s been having has convinced him he needs some advice and assistance, and (perhaps

guided by the Lords of Death) he has decided to speak with the monk Ritsuke at the Shrine of the Ki-Rin. Ritsuke retired very early in her life, to allow her younger sister Shinjo Hazumi to take their father’s place as Unicorn Clan Champion. Ogedei is not thinking (at least yet) to supplant Hazumi, but hopes that her sister may be able to caution her where he has failed.

If asked, however, Ogedei will merely state that he wishes to seek counsel from members of his clan who have taken up a life of prayer at the Shrine – which is true as far as it goes, but suspicious players may roll **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** at TN 20 to realize there is more to it than that. Any Unicorn PC with Courtier 5, Lore: Theology 3, or any PC with an actual rank in Lore: Unicorn can recall that Ritsuke retired in her sister’s favor five years ago; these Skills may be rolled (with Intelligence) at a TN of 25 to remember it otherwise, if the PCs are struggling to come up with a rationale.

Ogedei does not expect trouble, and will not be bothering with his armor. He has a steed, his swords, and travel papers for the PCs – the fact that a high-ranking Unicorn has been traveling the Dragon lands without escort has actually been contributory to the problems he’s had being taken seriously. (His relative lack of skill with Rokugani social customs is most of it.) He will “allow” PCs to wear armor if they so choose; technically, he outranks a provincial daimyo and the PCs are serving as guards regardless. He does not suggest it as he sees little threat in the placid Dragon Heart Plain.

When the party sets out, they will quickly discover that there is no real road between the Temple of the Sun and the Shrine of the Ki-Rin. The two holy sites are less than twenty miles apart as the crow flies, and there is a rough track connecting the two, but it is little more than a footpath leading up into the mountains. Ogedei thrives in the face of the difficulties of the journey, making a joke that he had wanted some more experience on horseback in such rough terrain. (If a Dragon PC is present, he will give them a deadpan “no particular reason” in jest.)

There are no border guards on this back road, so precisely when you pass into the Phoenix lands is impossible to determine. The views grow impressive as you travel up the rocky road, particularly to the west as the sun begins to set over the Dragon Heart Plain. It is nearly dusk when the river that the Shrine of the Ki-Rin rests beside comes into view, flowing south from a high spring to the north. Very shortly after that,

you spy the torii arch rising over a peak – your destination, less than a quarter mile away.

With their goal in sight, the PCs should roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** at a TN of 30. Failure means that they are Surprise (-20 to their Initiative Score for the first Round of combat) by the gaijin raiders that swoop (quite literally) down upon them. Success means that they spot the flying, serpentine shapes and the riders upon them in enough time to prepare and give warning.

There are a number of Wyrms Raiders equal to the number of combat-capable PCs, plus the Leader and Shaman. These yobanjin are seeking glory and renown by attacking dangerous samurai, as well as the chance of valuable treasure – several other groups of gaijin have been plaguing the area in the last few months (the Phoenix being distracted with the damage from the rise of the Great Sea Spider).

This is intended to be a difficult fight; the wyrm riders will take full advantage of their mobility and the vertical options presented to them by their flying steeds. The PCs may hold their action to attack when the yobanjin come within melee range, but doing so does not interrupt the gaijin's attack – resolve the PC and the raider's attacks simultaneously, so neither side has Wound Penalties with the first engagement. The GM may, at their discretion, require the PCs to spend a full Round preparing for the first such exchange – fighting flight-capable enemies is not in the realm of experience for most samurai – but should not penalize the PCs for more than a single Round to adjust.

Unless the PCs are particularly combat-effective, the shaman should predominantly provide protection for the Raider Leader (his brother), and impose penalties to the PCs (causing Wounds in the process). The Leader, for his part, fights intelligently – targeting shugenja or obviously-dangerous PCs with caution. The regular Raiders are rather more foolhardy, seeking to make names for themselves at the risk of injury, though if the PCs have ranged options (particularly shugenja) two should remain aloft about 30' to use their oyumi (crossbows).

In order to ensure that the PCs are not overshadowed by the NPC, Moto Ogedei should take his actions during the Reactions stage and can simply be described as fighting well and tactically. If a PC is particularly threatened, he may move to defend them but is likely to be moving up the hills to where he can get in position to launch himself at the hovering leader or shaman.

The fight should continue until the Raider Leader or the Raider Shaman is killed, which triggers box text as below. If a PC is killed, they are instead left with a full Out Wound Rank and the Cursed by the Realm: Meido Disadvantage – this is temporary but will come up again. (They experience a vision of the Realm of Waiting, but a cold wind seems to blow them away from it and back into their body – this is the presence of the Lords of Death, waiting to snatch Ogedei's soul.)

The yobanjin wield Ring Swords (2k2 weapons that require an additional Raise to use the Disarm Maneuver against and provide +3k0 on Contested Rolls for Disarm) or oyumi (crossbows that deal 5k3 damage and require a Simple Action to reload in addition to the normal Complex Action to attack).

### Wyrms Raiders

Clad in leathers that provide more padding than protection, the basic raiders wield heavy curved swords that jangle with rings piercing the back of the blades and oyumi.

Air 2    Earth 3    Fire 2    Water 3    Void 2  
Reflexes 4                      Agility 3    Strength 4  
Honor 1.5                      Status --                      Infamy 6.0

**Initiative:** 6k4

**Attack:** 9k3e (Ring Sword, Complex) or 8k4 (Oyumi, Complex)

**Armor TN:** 28 (leather armor)

**Damage:** 8k2 (Ring Sword) or 5k3 (Oyumi)

**Reduction:** 3

**Wounds:** 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Out), 58 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Yobanjin Warrior 2

**Techniques:** *Son of the Steppes:* +1k0 to attack and damage with ring sword or oyumi

*Fury of the Wyrms:* +2k2 to attacks in Full Attack instead of +2k1

**Skills:** Animal Handling 2, Athletics (Climbing) 4, Defense 3, Horsemanship (Yobanjin Wyrms) 5, Hunting (Survival) 4, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Ring Sword) 5, Kyujutsu (Oyumi) 3, Stealth 4

### Dae-Hyun, Wyrms Raider Leader

A large, predatory figure gives terse commands to his men and handles his weapon with obvious skill.

Air 3    Earth 4    Fire 3    Water 4    Void 3  
Reflexes 4                      Agility 4    Strength 5  
Honor 2.1                      Status --                      Infamy 6.5

**Initiative:** 8k4

**Attack:** 10k5e (Ring Sword, Simple)

or 10k4 (Oyumi, Simple)

**Armor TN:** 28 (leather armor) **Damage:** 9k2m (Ring Sword) or 5k3 (Oyumi)

**Reduction:** 3

**Wounds:** 20 (+0), 28 (+3), 36 (+5), 44 (+10), 52 (+15), 60 (+20), 68 (Down, +40), 76 (Out), 77 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Yobanjin Warrior 4

**Techniques:** *Son of the Steppes:* +1k0 to attack and damage with ring sword or oyumi

*Fury of the Wurm:* +2k2 to attacks in Full Attack instead of +2k1

*Speed of the Hawk:* Simple Action attacks with swords or oyumi (reloading is still a Simple Action)

*Will of the Tribes:* May spend a Void Point for an ally

**Skills:** Animal Handling 3, Athletics (Climbing) 4, Defense 3, Horsemanship (Yobanjin Wurm) 6, Hunting (Survival) 5, Jujutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Ring Sword) 7, Kyujutsu (Oyumi) 5, Stealth 4

**Advantage:** Magic Resistance I

### Dae-Jun, Wurm Raider Shaman

Clad in largely the same garb as the other raiders, one wields a variety of small chains decorated with stone like weapons. (These are focuses for his spells, but not required for casting.)

Air 3 Earth 5 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 3  
Honor 2.6 Status -- Strength 4 Infamy 6.4

**Initiative:** 7k3 **Attack:** generally by spell

**Armor TN:** 23 (leather armor) **Damage:** 5k3 with Technique

**Reduction:** 3

**Wounds:** 25 (+0), 35 (+3), 45 (+5), 55 (+10), 65 (+15), 75 (+20), 85 (Down, +40), 95 (Out), 96 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Yobanjin Shaman 4

**Technique:** *Spirits of the Mountain:* when casting an Earth spell, may spend a spell slot from another element to deal 5k3 damage to target (in addition to any damage from the spell, or adding damage to a spell that does not do it) (Earth k Ring of spell slot)

**Skills:** Animal Handling 5, Athletics (Climbing) 2, Defense 5, Horsemanship (Yobanjin Wurm) 7, Hunting (Survival) 5, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Ring Sword) 3, Knives 3, Kyujutsu (Oyumi) 3, Lore: Theology (Yobanjin) 4, Spellcraft 5, Stealth 3

**Spells:** Earth (10k5) Earth's Stagnation (ML1, reduce target's Water for movement by 1, -2k0 to Agility rolls), Be the Mountain (ML2, target gains Reduction 20), Grasp of Earth (ML2, target cannot Free Move, and only moves 3' as a Simple Move, breaks free with

Raw Strength at TN25), the Wolf's Mercy (ML3, reduce target's Earth Ring by 1)

**Advantage:** Magic Resistance II

### Yobanjin Wurm

Swimming through the air with the ease of a fish in a river, these serpentine creatures bear their riders with grace and power.

Air 1 Earth 4 Fire 1 Water 4  
Reflexes 5 Agility 7

**Initiative:** as rider **Attack:** 6k6 (Bite, Complex)

**Armor TN:** 20 **Damage:** 6k3 (Bite)

**Reduction:** 15

**Wounds:** 20 (+0), 40 (+10), 80 (+20), 120 (Dead)

**Special Abilities** :

- Spirit Quality (half damage from non-jade, non-magic)
- Elemental Anguish: if a shugenja casts Sense or Commune, they must roll raw Willpower at TN 15 or be unable to act for 6 minus their Insight Rank in Rounds
- Flight: Wyrms fly at their normal speed

When either the Leader or Shaman is killed (or dropped to Out, causing them to fall from their steed and be killed by the fall), the other will react with rage and try to summon a more powerful wurm to wreak their vengeance on the party. (If a shugenja or other effect would somehow kill both simultaneously, the Shaman survives, gravely injured, but capable of taking the actions in the box text. This is a narrative event, largely influenced by the Lords of Death, so cannot be avoided.)

Roaring in pain and rage, the remaining yobanjin leader calls out what is obviously a curse in his tongue. His hand darts under the padded leather garment that serves as his armor, and he holds a large emerald amulet aloft. All of the remaining wyrms rise suddenly into an attack position, and a vibrant green energy pools around the amulet. As it starts to form into what might be the coils of a massive wurm, Moto Ogedei leaps from his horse to cleave the stone with his blade. A massive explosion shakes the valley, and there is a burst of light that blinds you for a moment. When your sight clears, you see the remaining wyrms are gone and their riders plummet to the ground and their deaths. The yobanjin leader is simply missing most of their left side, where they'd held the amulet, and Ogedei falls heavily to the ground, clutching his shattered scimitar.

A strange wind rises, the air suddenly dry and somehow cooler than the mountain breezes. For a

brief moment, Ogedei's breath is visible as a chill cloud. Then he shudders and goes still.

Ogedei is not dead, though he cannot be healed by any magic or medicine the PCs have at their disposal, and his condition is highly suspect from a spiritual standpoint. If a shugenja tries to cast a spell to cure the Moto, the spirit will do its best but provide no effect. Likewise, medicine will not wake him, though the physical injuries function as might be expected. Examining him with **Medicine / Perception** (TN 20) reveals that, though his injuries are severe, they should not leave him in this condition – mechanically, 70 Wounds will kill most samurai, yet Ogedei is hale enough that it should have left him Injured but conscious.

A PC that can roll **Lore: Theology / Intelligence** at a TN of 40 will realize that his soul has been separated from his body – this is extremely rare, but not unknown in Rokugan. (A Kitsu-trained shugenja gains a Free Raise on this roll, as the sodan-senzo do something similar to travel to other Spirit Realms; however, they do so with great caution and it takes significant training to manage safely.)

If, somehow, all of the PCs are dropped in the fight, they will wake in Meido, where Ritsuke greets them. In this event, Ogedei saved the group by essentially the same method above, and his soul is missing. Ritsuke was sent by the Ki-Rin to recover Ogedei, and found the PCs there in similar straights, and will help them return to the mortal realm if they can recover the Moto general.

The Shrine of the Ki-Rin is the closest place to find any help, and if the PCs don't move themselves, a young monk will come running up to offer help. If they get moving on their own, they will meet him on the way.

A young monk, probably in his early teens, jogs down the steep stairs leading up to the Shrine. "Oh! Samurai! What was that? Was it more yobanjin?"

The young monk, named Zeshin, knows little about the yobanjin – just that there have been three attacks in the province within the last two months, and there are concerns about the safety of the Shrine and pilgrims traveling to it. He will help the PCs get up to the Shrine, where several more monks move up to provide assistance. (Any mounts will be tended by a pair of older monks, who handle the steeds with great skill due to their previous station as Shinjo samurai.)

## Part Two: Call of the Ki-Rin

As you enter the Shrine of the Ki-Rin, you pass under a large torii arch into a wide courtyard. The main temple pagoda rises above you, across the open field, and a massive golden statue of the creature the Shrine is devoted to shines in the light of the setting sun. A tall woman, likely in her late twenties or early thirties, emerges from a nearby small hut. Though younger than many of the other monks around, she begins issuing orders in a voice of clear authority. "Another attack? Zeshin, get Dokyu and Tokone – we need healers. Shinran, see to their things." Her voice falters as she sees your Moto companion. "Ogedai-sa, sama?"

This is Ritsuke, and she will introduce herself to the PCs by that name as she asks them what they are doing, and what has happened to Ogedei – who she was quite familiar with in her pre-retirement life. She is the highest-ranking of several former Unicorn (almost all Shinjo) monks, a serious, dedicated monk who has devoted her life to the worship of the celestial entity that has traditionally guided her ancestors. She was a trained and highly capable samurai before her abrupt retirement and is comfortable deferring to the PCs due to the station issues between monks and samurai but she is more than willing to offer advice and guidance, and has the confidence to do so.

While the PCs explain what they can, the healers will tend to them and do what they can for Ogedei – any PC who is injured regains 16 Wounds, or enough Wounds to put them in the Injured Wound Rank (whichever is more). They will also determine (or confirm, if a PC recognized it themselves) that Ogedei's soul is not in his body anymore.

Troubled by this, Ritsuke will ensure the PCs are comfortable before moving to the statue to pray. Any PCs that joins her may roll **Meditation** or **Lore: Theology / Void** – the following vision is seen by all, but success on this roll immediately returns two Void Points to the PC.

A golden light flickers into view in the fading light of day. The shimmering golden aura resolves into a form shaped vaguely like a horned horse, standing near the base of the hill – not far from where the fight took place. The appearance of what is obviously the manifestation of their celestial patron attracts a great deal of attention from the monks.

Ritsuke understands that she is being summoned by her ancestral totem, and asks the PCs to accompany



her – there are not any other monks hale enough in both body and spirit for what she feels they are being called for, and she assumes the PCs have some investment in Ogedei’s recovery.

As the group approaches the Ki-Rin, it leads them back to the scene of the battle. No one has come to remove the bodies of the fallen, and the aftermath is not pleasant. However, the Ki-Rin ignores the carnage and seems to expect the group to follow. It pauses near where Ogedei fell, and places a delicate hoof on the ground. Like a screen unfolding, a gray haze rises up into the shape of a portal – nothing is visible other than a swirling mist, but the celestial creature obviously expects the samurai to enter.

Ritsuke nods. “Something has happened here, a disturbance in the Heavens. I feel that we are being called to tend to it. I cannot order you, but I do ask that you accompany me on this task.”

Assuming the PCs agree (or ask what is happening), Ritsuke will explain a bit further:

“It is dusk. Twilight. In the hours between day and night, a passage may be found. The Ki-Rin has shown the way to the next realm, that we may recover Ogedei’s soul. We must hurry, though – the portal may not last the night.” With no further hesitation, she steps forward and disappears.

## Part Three: The Fields of the Dead

The PCs see nothing but gray haze for what feels like a long time. Minutes, maybe hours, later they find themselves on a vast, rolling plain illuminated faintly with a light like dusk.

Your feet step into water up to your ankles, and there is a faint smell of salt. The air is hazy, like smoke but without color, and distant objects are uncertain in outline. In fact, you are the only points of color in view; everything else you can see is faded and washed out. There are few landmarks, however – a few stands of trees, something that might be a palace on the horizon, and the milling forms of people wandering vaguely toward the only visible structure.

This is Meido, and anyone with any ranks of Lore: Theology will immediately recognize it; should anyone ask anyway, Ritsuke will quietly inform them of the fact. The water is not a usual feature, and as they start to acclimate, they will hear a gentle,

sorrowful keening on the air that is likewise undescribed in Rokugan’s religious texts – but there is no mistaking the field, the palace of Emma-O, or the dead.

As the PCs look around and get their bearings, Ritsuke will provide what information she has concerning the Spirit Realm in which they find themselves.

“This is the Realm of Waiting, where the souls of the dead go after leaving the mortal realm. They, well, wait here, for some amount of time – how long, and whether and how they are punished for their misdeeds in life, is judged by the Lords of Death. After that, they are measured by Emma-O, the Fortune of Death, who determines what their next fate is – whether to pass to another Realm or to return to Ningen-do in a new incarnation. The Tenth Kami, guardian of the dead, guides them to their destination, beyond the Gate.” Indeed, beyond the uncertain shape of the palace you can see a massive arch. Unlike anything else in view, its edges are sharp and clearly defined.

“It is reported that the spirits of the dead are generally passive, drawn to the judgement of the Lords and Emma-O by the nature of the Realm. I do not know what that means for Ogedei’s soul, since he is not actually dead. We are here in our flesh, so while the effects of other spiritual Realms are likely to be muted, we are somewhat protected from losing our will to Meido, as happens with the departed. Obviously, however, anything tied to this realm is likely to be heightened.”

If there are any shugenja, she will warn them that they may be cut off from the spirits – the fact that they can cast any significant spells is unexpected. Ritsuke is unsure what will happen if any of the PCs are killed while in Meido, and suggests caution.

### Effects of Meido

Any PC with an Advantage or Disadvantage that ties to another Spirit Realm (Cursed by the Realm, Touched by the Realm, Haunted, certain Techniques) will feel it severely muted. It is still present, and they will regain it upon their return to the mortal realm, but it provides no mechanical effects while they are in Meido.

Any PC who has either Cursed or Touched by the Realm: Meido will feel the same tug that the spirits of the departed do, granting them a Free Raise on any Hunting rolls in the realm.

Any mechanic that prevents a character's death may be used here as an automatic success on any roll. It uses up the effect as normal (so if it is a one-shot, it is gone; if it is once per module, it cannot be used again), and produces a result as if the PC had rolled the exact TN. This can be used in combination with Raises, but must be decided before the dice are rolled.

In addition, shugenja will find that there are essentially no native elemental spirits for them to speak with. The spiritual tumult of the place does mean that a few spirits most closely tied to them have accompanied them; mechanically, this means that they can only use spell slots from their element of Affinity to cast spells or activate Techniques. The basic spells (Sense, Commune, Summon) are the exception to this restriction, and any shugenja with a non-elemental Affinity can only use spells of that Affinity regardless of element.

Any PC that has the Lost Love Disadvantage will feel the presence of their loved one's spirit, causing a constant trigger of the Disadvantage. (If the GM knows the PC well enough and time allows, having the actual spirit be seen or encountered at Kirima's refugee camp is a possibility and would trigger the Disadvantage again – but this should be done with caution, if the soul has been dead for more than a few years, they should likely have gone on to their appropriate reward.)

Finally, any character who dies here is returned to Ningen-do. Their experience marks them with the Cursed by the Realm: Meido Disadvantage, but they otherwise survive.

### Throngs of the Dead

Once the PCs are acclimated, Ritsuke will suggest moving on (if they do not do so themselves). “We should be moving, samurai. If Ogedei's soul is here, it may have been drawn to his ancestral gods for judgement.” She suspects that the Lords of Death are actually responsible, though she is hesitant to be the first to voice that thought.

There really is only one “place” to go in the realm, and it is easy enough to see. The souls of the dead – the only other moving figures that can be seen – are slowly, inexorably moving toward the Palace and the Gate.

Between their general silence and what appears to be a hesitation to come to close to you, you did not notice at first how very many of the souls of the dead there are. As you travel in the same direction they are, at a

somewhat brisker pace, you start to realize that there are thousands – perhaps many thousands – upon this plain, all travelling in the same direction as you. Clad in the silken robes of samurai or the rough homespun of peasants, they are from all across the Empire – though the orange of the Phoenix does seem more common than you might have anticipated. None, it is worth note, have weapons or appear to have the will to use them.

Though distance is hard to judge in this place, by the time you are within a half-mile or so of the Palace of Emma-O, the throngs of the dead begin to lose their sense of purpose and you see the spirits of the departed simply milling about, aimless and hollow. What might be chaos has some sign of organization, however, and instead of a mob you face what appears to be more of a refugee camp.

However, as you approach the edge of the camp, there is a small knot of figures that stand out almost as much as you. Though faded like the rest, these are clad in familiar leathers and fur: the yobanjin you so recently fought are here, and quite confused.

Dae-Hyun and Dae-Jun, the leaders of the yobanjin, are absolutely not looking to resume hostilities. They find themselves displaced from their own afterlife – they died in the borders of Rokugan, but more specifically, the Lords of Death were meddling in the battle and their souls were caught up in the backlash. Ritsuke can only assume that there is some spiritual unbalance at work, which any PC with Lore: Theology will confirm– a roll at a TN of 30 will let them remember that the rise of the Great Sea Spider in the summer was the sort of disaster that can affect the Spirit Realms, though for the effects to be felt still months later is troubling.

A small crowd will form around the party and the gaijin – less out of interest than from the static point being a bit of a block for the aimless wandering the dead are otherwise engaged in. The PCs can speak with the yobanjin (though their words are accented, all are equal in death and the Realm allows those within it to break the language barrier), and perhaps learn that the gaijin were simple barbarian raiders without major malice or any sinister backing. It should not be long, however, before the PCs gain some attention:

A voice speaks from the crowd, the general silence of the spirits making it seem louder at first than it actually was. “What is this? Gaijin? Ah, wonderful. A whole band.” A woman in the green and gold of the Dragon, faded by the Realm's influence, strides out of the milling spirits. She move with more purpose than

most of the other dead, though she is clearly one of their number. Her eyes light on you in surprise. “And – you, samurai. Are you still alive?”

This is Mirumoto Kirima, the deceased daimyo of the Mirumoto family. As noted in the News of the Empire, she committed seppuku after technically disobeying orders to bring her troops to battle against the Great Sea Spider (which some PCs may have been part of). If she is not recognized, she will introduce herself casually – her position in life is of much less importance here.

What is important is that she is a leader, a woman of integrity and strong will, and has been responsible for organizing the dead since she arrived here. She will inform the PCs that something has gone very wrong in the Realm of the Dead.

Kirima shakes her head in weary frustration. “Ever since I arrived, however long ago it was, things have been like this – the dead do not know where they are supposed to go.” She sighs, and glances down at the water swirling around your feet. “The fields of Meido are flooded with the salt tears of those slain by the Great Sea Spider, and the cries of those that mourn them echo on the breeze. These gaijin should be taken to their own destination by the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, and all of these—” she waves her hand over the vista of the dead “—since even before the rising, still await judgement from the Lords of Death. I have heard that Emma-O has taken up what he can in their absence, but the influx of lost souls has overwhelmed even the Fortune.”

Kirima is willing to help the party as best she can, though she does not know what has caused the Lords of Death to fail in their duties. She is aware that the situation predates the attack of the Kumo by a few months – probably dating back to the spring. It is worth noting that time in Meido is difficult to measure, and she is not entirely certain how long she’s been dead (the PCs are likely aware it has been three months). She will inform the PCs about the Bone Guard – the spirit guards dedicated to the Lords of Death – who have been turning the dead back from approaching the Fortress of Iron (the stronghold of the Lords) or the Palace of Emma-O. There have been confrontations, but none have gotten through in several months.

“I apologize, samurai... I am not what I was, though I try to keep order here so as to reduce the suffering of the dead.” She places a hand on her hip, where a pair of swords would have once rode. “I do not know how

long I can keep this up. I feel – I am coming to the end of myself.”

Much of Kirima’s previous identity was bound up in her skill as a bushi – as a commander on the battlefield, which has served her in good stead so far, but even more as a duelist. Her driving goal in life was to duel a Kakita bushi – and if there are any among the PCs, she will gaze at their School mon with a hopeless longing she’s largely unaware of.

If the PCs do not realize they can help Kirima recover part of herself (which is understandable, as they are well outside their normal comfort-zone), Ritsuke will speak up. “We actually met, once or twice – in our, hm, former lives. I was always impressed with your skill with the blade – I know that you had to have worked hard to develop that talent. Perhaps you could recover some of yourself if you were allowed to engage in it once again?” She looks expectantly to the PCs.

The PCs can get extra help from Kirima by helping her remember herself better. The easiest way to manage this is by going through the motions of a formal duel. Any PC can offer this, though her interest is most caught by a Kakita-trained bushi. The PC does not have to win – in life, she was one of the greatest duelists of the Empire, but the familiar ritual will help her recover some of her identity.

While she does not have a set of daisho when the PCs first met her, if they proceed with this, they can let her borrow a blade; otherwise, when she enters the Center Stance for Assessment, an ephemeral pair of swords form at her side.

#### Mirumoto Kirima

Mirumoto Bushi 5

Air 4/Reflexes 5 Fire 5 Void 6

Iaijutsu (Focus) 8, Kenjutsu (Katana, Wakizashi) 9

Assessment: 10k5+9 (no Void)

Focus: 10k10+19 (with Void) (+25 if she wins Assessment by 10+)

Strike: 10k8+15 (no Void)

Armor TN: 30/40 with both swords out

Whether the PC wins or loses, the return of her blades is indicative that something has changed, and in fact, she stands straighter and speaks with greater certainty. She will accompany the PCs to the edge of the camp, to the border of the territory the Bone Guard claim.

If the PCs do not duel her, she will give them vague directions. “Head toward the Palace. The Fortress of Iron – the stronghold of the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang – is

between here and there, though the Lords of Death have spirits that guard them and have been turning away any that approach. Did I already say that? Never mind. Where the water ends, that's where they start their patrols. Be careful."

Approaching the Fortress and the Palace beyond it is not difficult, save for the crowding of the gathered spirits. As you near, details on the structures begin to come into view – but they shift in the strange way so much does in this place when you look away. The Palace of Emma-O is a massive structure, a building of an ancient style that shows occasional touches from every era of Rokugani architecture. White banners fly from its ramparts, but its gates are closed.

Between you and there is a likewise ever-shifting stronghold on a promontory of some sort – whether hill or mountain varies. The Fortress of Iron, castle of the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, sometimes appears as a fortified camp on a hilly plain, sometimes as a craggy castle atop a mountain with a serene vista in the background; sometimes merely as a series of caves in the side of an imposing rocky cliff. Whatever form it has, there are signs of damage from an attack of some sort – burned timbers shift to a shattered tower, or scorch marks on the hillside become a collapsed cavern-mouth.

The waters recede as the ground rises; a wide expanse is open before the Fortress, with mounted figures clad in white armor patrolling the area vigilantly.

If she accompanies the PCs here, Mirumoto Kirima can give advice on the best ways to approach or evade the Bone Guard (mostly based on experience with things that have not worked). This provides them a Free Raise on any roll to interact or sneak past them. She advises caution when it comes to a direct confrontation – these are the souls of Moto or Ujik-hai chosen specifically by the Lords of Death for their service in life.

### Plain of Ash and Bone

There are regular patrols across the ground between Kirima's "refugee camp" and the Fortress of Iron. Sneaking past is not impossible, though likely somewhat difficult. The three basic options are to try to sneak past the guards, fight them, or talk them into allowing passage.

Due to the regularity that the guards are passing (rigid order being a hallmark of the Lords of Death), it is possible for one skilled character to find a route that

does not require Stealth rolls from everyone. Mechanically, this requires either a normal **Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility** roll from every PC at a TN of 25 or one character to make a **Stealth (Ambush) / Intelligence** roll at a TN of 30 – the other PCs must still succeed at a raw **Agility** roll at a TN of 10. Failure on these rolls means that the PCs are noticed and will be attacked by a trio of Bone Guard. (Note that the Free Raise from Kirima applies to all of these rolls.)

The Bone Guard patrol in groups of three; if the PCs simply charge ahead, as long as they defeat the guards in less than ten combat Rounds, they will have a clear path to the Fortress. If it takes longer than that, however, another patrol will engage, bringing three fresh combatants to the fray.

### Moto Bone Guard

Clad in white armor, these are the souls of dead Moto who fell willingly in service of the Lords of Death. They are more than willing to die again, knowing that their masters can reclaim their souls.

Air 2	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 3
Reflexes 3		Agility 4	Strength 4	
Honor 2.1		Status 4.0	Glory 6.0	

**Initiative:** 6k3

**Attack:** 10k4e-5  
(Scimitar, Simple)

**Armor TN:** 30

**Damage:** 8k3  
(Scimitar)

**Reduction:** 5 (Heavy Armor)

**Wounds:** 20 (+0), 28 (+3), 36 (+5), 44 (+10), 52 (+15), 60 (+20), 68 (Down, +40), 76 (Out), 77 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Moto Bushi 3

**Techniques:** *The Way of the Unicorn:* May wield two-handed weapon with one hand (except for bows). +1k0 damage while mounted or using a scimitar or a two-handed melee weapon (these bonuses do not stack). Scimitars have the Samurai keyword.

*Shinsei's Smile:* Gain a bonus to attack rolls equal to half of target's Wound Rank TN penalties, rounded down.

*Desert Wind Strike:* Simple Action melee attacks.

[*The Charge of Madness:* Once per skirmish, if you successfully bring a target down to the Out Wound Level, you may immediately make an additional attack as a Free Action. This attack may not target the same target as the attack that activated this Technique, and Raises cannot be called on this attack.]

**Skills:** Athletics 5, Battle 4, Defense 2, Horsemanship 7, Hunting 5, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Scimitar) 6; Intimidation 4, Investigation 2, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Theology (Shi-Tien Yen-Wang) 5, Spears 2

**Mastery Abilities:** Athletics 5, Horsemanship 7, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 6

For High-Ranked tables, the Bone Guard should be Rank 4, with Reflexes 4 (raising their Armor TN to 35 and Initiative to 8k4), Water 4, and Kenjutsu 7 (increasing their attack to 10k5e-5 while mounted, and allowing them to explode damage dice on 9s. At the GM's discretion for particularly combat-capable Mid-Rank tables, one of the Bone Guard can use these stats as a unit commander.

If the PCs approach the Bone Guard openly, however, they will not meet with immediate hostility.

The three horsemen rein in and gaze down at you impassively. The one in the middle nudges his steed forward slightly, and booms out, "What brings living souls to the Plain of Ash and Bone?"

The PCs have the opportunity to explain themselves as best they can. Ritsuke can remind them that Ogedei is a servant of the Lords of Death, should it be necessary. The fact that the party are all alive, and that they are ultimately here on behalf of a worshipper of the Lords of Death, can be enough to convince the Guard to let them pass. (The Guard are unaware that the Lords have taken Ogedei, let alone why.)

This does require a **Sincerity / Awareness** roll at a TN of 40. If a PC shows genuine respect or reverence for the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, they gain a Free Raise; on the other hand, being dismissive of Moto traditions as "gaijin" or inferior in any way raises the TN by +10. (The GM is free to allow other Social Skills to apply, based on the player's approach.)

Success means that the Guards here will allow the PCs to pass. "You must still answer to the guards on the Fortress, but you can make your case to them. See that your offerings are in order." If asked what kind of offerings are meant by this, he will smile grimly. "You will find out." (If a PC has a background with the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, they may roll **Lore: Theology / Intelligence** at a TN of 35 to know that the Lords of Death, being old gods, do not have the same priorities as other Rokugani Fortunes. Their focus tends to be on action rather than objects, so while they don't know what exactly will be required, they will know that it will involve doing something rather than giving up an item.)

If the PCs succeed by 20 or more, the guard commander will give them a token carved from some form of bone. "Give this to the guard at the gate to the Fortress. It will show them you have my

countenance." This will prevent having to roll to convince the gate commander to let them pass, and give a Free Raise on any roll associated with their offering.

If the PCs fail, they will either have to turn back or fight immediately. It is possible to go back to the camp and return to find another guard patrol to try again, but doing so increases the TN by 5, and can only be done twice before the guards have been informed of the living mortals with no business trying to get in.

## Part Four: the Fortress of Iron

The edifice has been damaged by something recently, as things are judged in this realm, and its defenders are disorganized – but still present. Moto and Ujik-hai who were judged worthy and died willingly in their service continue to serve the Lords of Death in their afterlife, and are under orders not to allow the PCs to interrupt the proceedings. Any Free Raises gained from Mirumoto Kirima's assistance no longer apply, as she has no experience with the Fortress itself.

If the PCs fought the guards on the plain outside, they can choose to do so again here – though there should be four guards per unit, and inside the castle they are not mounted. The guard will be lessened slightly, as the fight outside will have drawn some of them off to investigate – this will make sneaking easier if the PCs attempt that approach.

Sneaking into the Fortress can be accomplished with a similar roll as sneaking across the plain, though a single leader will roll with and keep Willpower instead of Intelligence due to the nature of the stronghold. The TN is still 25 if all PCs attempt to roll Stealth themselves or 30 for a leader, and 10 for Agility rolls from everyone else. (They will also gain a Free Raise here if they have Cursed or Touched by the Realm: Meido.)

The most straight-forward approach is simple to walk up to the gates and request audience with the Lords of Death.

A hulking pair of white-armored figures stand on either side of the gate, with another pair stationed on the inside as if guarding passage from that side as well. Their voices echo oddly off the stone walls (or wooden stockade, or rocky cliff) as they challenge your approach. "Who dares seek the attention of the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang?" asks the one on the right, followed

immediately by the one on the left. “And what business brings you to brave their dread gaze?”

The PCs can explain themselves as they wish; once again, any disrespect increases the TN by 10. If the PCs do not have the token from the plain, they must roll **Sincerity / Awareness** at a TN of 30. Success will grant them passage, as long as they make an offering. (Failure means that they will be allowed to make an offering, but the TN for any roll is increased by 15.)

“All who wish to enter must pay homage to the Lords of Death in some form or fashion,” intones the first, to be taken up by the second with, “An offering is required.”

If asked what kind of offering, they will chant their response (in what is an imitation of how the Lords of Death speak in the throne room): “An offering of blood.”

“An offering of bone.”

“An offering of will.”

“Or an offering of steel.”

Ritsuke will blanch slightly and inform the PCs, “They require a sacrifice of some kind. An offering of blood is what it sounds like; the Lords of Death are ancient and predate the corruption of blood magic. We are also in Meido, where the kansen cannot be invoked so readily – it would not be maho, here. An offering of will is a prayer, though failure to perform it correctly will be judged – harshly. I think the offering of bone is to pledge to join their ranks when you die. The offering of steel, though... I’m not sure.”

Asking the guards for explanation yields little more specific:

“Bleed for them.”

“Fight for them.”

“Pray to them.”

“Or kill for them.”

Ritsuke almost whispers, “You would pledge to kill someone in the mortal realm in their name. When they ask.”

The PCs are free to choose which options they want. Refusal to accept any of them results in having to retreat to attempt to sneak past, or fight.

Offering of Blood: One of the guards steps forward with a heavy gaijin dagger and offers it to any PC who chooses this. They must cut themselves (where is up to them, though it will leave a scar that does not ever

fade) and take at least one Wound Rank of damage. The blood is all absorbed by the knife, leaving none to spill on the ground.

Offering of Bone: The PC pledges to join the Bone Guard when they die. There is no roll required for this, but they must take an oath.

“I pledge my spirit to the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, that my soul will join them when my body has fallen, to ride at their command in both this life and the next, to service without end in the name of the Lords of Death. And until my last breath, every life I take, every injustice I right, every corrupt soul I judge, will be in their name.”

Upon finishing, the guards all intone in concert, “So do we witness.” A sharp pain strikes the PC on their shoulder (of their dominant hand), and a mark of a jagged crown appears there.

There is no immediate mechanical effect to this, though there is a cert that will be associated with it.

Offering of Will: While not quite as simple as the Offering of Blood, it is probably the most palatable to Rokugani sensibilities. It involves a sincere prayer to the Lords of Death; as this is the choice Ritsuke makes, it is easy enough to pick on the words and structure from her. However, doing so does require spending a Void Point and making a **Lore: Theology / Void** roll at a TN of 30. (PCs with the Disbeliever Disadvantage must call Raises on this roll equal to their Willpower Trait.) Void may be spent to increase the roll as normal, but the initial Void Point does not count toward that. Failure on the roll causes the PC to take damage equal to the amount by which they failed, as blood seeps from their nose, ears, and in extreme cases, eyes. (Void may be spent again to reduce this damage.)

If the roll is failed, however, the PCs are allowed entry – what mattered was that they were willing to suffer.

Offering of Steel: The PC must pledge to perform a service for the Lords of Death at some point in the future. One of the guards will give them a steel spearpoint. “This will point the way to the one the Lords of Death seek, when they choose. You need not claim their life with it, but you will know the time when it comes.”

There are no mechanics for this choice either, but also a cert.

## Finding a Path in the Fortress of Iron

Once past the guards, however it is accomplished, the PCs must navigate through the dark passages of the Fortress. A pervasive feeling of doom hangs in the air, with an almost palpable resistance to their continued progress. Finding their way requires a **Hunting / Willpower** roll at a TN of 30. Any PC who fails loses a Void Point, though as long as at least one PC succeeds, they can find the throne room. If no PC succeeds on the roll, they must attempt it again. If a PC fails and has no Void Points remaining, they must make a roll to resist **Fear 3** (TN 20). This condition will apply as long as they are within the Fortress.

## Confronting the Lords of Death

Eventually, the PCs will find their way to the central chamber that serves as the throne room of the Lords of Death.

You make your way into a black and gray room, with rocky walls that open into a vast darkness above. Moto Ogedei is here, arms clutched across his chest and his head bowed, but standing upright. Ten thrones rise at least eight feet above the stone floor of the chamber. Nine of them are occupied, by tall, emaciated figures clad in dark robes and opulent jewelry. One throne holds nothing but a few shattered pieces of metal that may have once been a crown. Some of the entities on the thrones turn their gazes to you, though you can feel the collected will of the others still focused on Ogedei.

Voices echo around the chamber, though if mouths move under the cowls, you see no sign of it. “Who dares come before us?”

The PCs are free to ask what is happening at this point, request Ogedei be returned, or whatever they choose. (Note that violence against even minor Fortunes in their place of power is essentially suicide, so that should be cautioned against.) If the PCs are uncertain how to begin, Ritsuke can begin. Questions can be answered, though the responses are a far more unsettling version of the guard’s imitation from before – the voices echo around the room, and though it’s possible to tell that more than one is speaking, it’s not certain which one is at any given time. The voices are different, but whether deep or hoarse or raspy, they are all disturbing.

The Lords of Death are not terribly subtle gods – what obfuscation they are capable of tends to be in the area of omission rather than outright prevarication. They

have no issue explaining why they brought Ogedei here – “He is our most devoted servant. Our most accomplished soul. The greatest among our worshippers. His life was spent in our service. Having fallen in battle, he can join us. If he chooses.”

Ogedei has not so chosen yet, because he is worried about what will happen to the Unicorn with him gone. He does not feel that he is the only leader of the clan with an appropriate perspective, but he is worried that few others are willing to stand up to Hazumi.

The Lords of Death are somewhat petulant. “A living soul has promise. A living soul has potential. A living soul has *power*. When he chooses to join us, he will bring that power with him and mend our... loss.”

Ogedei can be talked into going along with their plan. He will eventually break under the pressure the Lords of Death are putting him under, and the PCs can convince him to take the position with only moderate effort. This does not require a roll, though his faith is being tested – as long as the PCs promise to help the Unicorn (taking Major Obligation: Unicorn Clan), he surrenders to the will of the Lords of Death.

A simple approach would be to try to kill Ogedei. Like the PCs, he is a living soul in the realm of death, and what exactly would happen is uncertain – but if a PC decides to take this route, they can strike him down with a single blow and banish his soul back to Ningen-do. This incurs the wrath of the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, but accomplishes the basic mission the PCs had. There will continue to be spiritual unbalances in the other Realm with no one to replace the lost Lord, and the remaining Lords will send the PCs back to Ningen-do immediately. Moto Ogedei will eventually recover, though his faith is shattered and he is haunted by his experience. The PC who performed the “killing” strike gains “Cursed by the Lords of Death”, and none of the PCs gain any Allies as rewards.

When asked why there are only nine Lords of Death present, or just in general why they need a replacement, the response is somewhat vague. “The memory is damaged. Our minds are linked, and when one fell... it caused a wound that will not heal as long as the throne is unfilled. We could show it to you, but your minds are yet mortal and there would be... consequences.”

If any PCs agree to experience the vision regardless, one or more of the Lords of Death will descend from their throne. Skeletal hands reach for the volunteers’ faces, and the voices give one chance to back out. “This will scar your soul. Be ready.” If they do not

turn away, there is a searing pain, they lose a Void Point, and they have a vision.

The GM should give Player Handout #2 to the players experiencing the vision (letting them read it to themselves first if there are PCs who are not experiencing it will help set the mood, and their reactions will hopefully fuel some role-play).

Imperial PCs, those with some specific Lore for Imperial figures, or anyone who can succeed at a **Lore: History** or **Heraldry / Intelligence** roll (TN 30) will remember that the fallen Emperor, Toturi IX, carried a sword called “Courage” that had appeared mysteriously with him a few years before his death. He never explained where it came from, but was almost never seen without it, and it is certain he carried it with him during the Battle of Broken Jade. While his soul has been reported to be in Tengoku by the sodan-senzo, the blade was never recovered.

### Other Options

The PCs may not be terribly happy at the prospect of leaving Ogedei with the Lords of Death, and rightly cautious about simply trying to kill his manifestation in Meido. There are other ways to satisfy the Lords of Death, though they may require some clever thinking on the part of the players.

Ritsuke can be offered by the PCs – she is a living soul, and though she is not a worshipper of the Lords of Death, as a member of the bloodline of the Unicorn Champion, there is Moto blood in her heritage. She is also a powerful soul, having been trained to a place of high leadership and rejected it for a life of contemplation. The Lords of Death would find her acceptable, though convincing her to do so will require **Sincerity** or **Lore: Theology / Awareness** at a TN of 40. Ogedei objects, because he wanted to talk to Ritsuke about her sister, but if she becomes one of his gods, she may be able to offer guidance in another fashion.

The PCs may think of Mirumoto Kirima, who has been doing much of the work of their normal duties. There are some objections – she is dead, and therefore not quite as powerful, she has no connection to the Lords of Death, and she is not of the Moto bloodline. However, it can be pointed out (by Ritsuke if necessary) that taking the oath of the Offering of Bone would forge a connection. Adopting her into the Unicorn post-mortem could be done if there is a Unicorn PC present who knows the appropriate rites to accomplish that (requiring a **Lore: Theology / Intelligence** roll at TN 25 to perform correctly).

Ultimately, this option depends on whether or not they can convince Kirima to take up the role – this requires a **Sincerity / Awareness** roll at a TN of 35.

A PC can offer to take Ogedei’s place; PCs are not quite as accomplished as the older and more experienced Moto, but they do have great potential. In order to qualify for this, however, they must have pledged themselves to the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang with the Offering of Bone, and succeed at a **Lore: Theology / Void** roll with a TN of 45. Being a member of the Moto family gives one Free Raise for this roll, as does being trained in a Moto family School or having the Moto Curse (for a potential of three Free Raises). Success means that the PC is acceptable to the Lords of Death, and will take the place of the fallen member. (They are, quite obviously, no longer a PC at that point.)

Finally, the Lords of Death don’t really need a replacement member. They have lost some of their power, which will recover in time, but they are primarily confused on an existential level. Calling them to task for their lack of courage, their hypocrisy in judgment, or forcing them to admit what they are trying to do is unnecessary will get them to release Ogedei without requiring a replacement – though this does require a **Courtier (Manipulation), Sincerity**, or **Lore: Theology / Awareness** roll at a TN of 50 (and, again, Disbelievers must call Raises equal to their own Willpower).

If the PCs cannot manage any of the above options, Ritsuke will grudgingly take on the role in order to allow Ogedei to return. Her lack of acceptance does result in some continued spiritual imbalance, but at least the PCs will recover Ogedei.

## Conclusion

Whether the PCs convince Ogedei to do so, or someone else takes the vacant position in the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, the chosen one moves slowly to the empty throne.

They move their hand through the shattered remains on the vacant seat, and the iron shards rise up and reform into the shape of a jagged crown. It floats for a moment over their palm, then fades away – only to reappear on their head. Color begins to drain away from their face as they turn to you, and their voice takes on the sepulchral quality of the other inhabitants of the thrones.



“We thank you, samurai, for your assistance in this matter. It will take us some time to return this Realm to the proper balance, but those efforts will being now.”

The dark throne room fades around you, with the sight of the Lords of Death rising to greet their new member the last image you see.

The PCs are sent back to Ningen-do by the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang. They appear at the battlefield that they departed from. If they returned with Ogedei and Ritsuke, they are both grateful; returning with Ogedei or Ritsuke alone results in them being pensive and concerned about the future of the clan they love.

If the PCs admonished the Lords of Death or banished Ogedei’s spirit back to Ningen-do by more immediate means, they will be thrown back into the mortal realm.

Ogedei will return to the Unicorn lands immediately, following this. If she returned from Meido, Ritsuke will accompany him. In any event, the PCs are sent back to their lords.

## The End

### Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module:	1 EXP
Good Roleplaying:	+1 EXP
Return Ogedei to Ningen-do OR convince him to become a Lord of Death:	+1 EXP
Find someone to take the place of the fallen Lord of Death OR convince them to accept their loss:	+1 EXP
Total Possible Experience:	4 EXP

#### Favors

If the PCs return to the mortal Realm with Ogedei, they gain one Favor.

#### Honor

If the PCs return to the mortal Realm with Ogedei, they gain H7 Honor for going through with their Duty.

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

#### Glory

While grateful for their deeds, Ogedei makes no effort to spread the word of this adventure. The PCs do not gain any Glory from this module.

#### Allies and Enemies

If the PCs return the soul of Moto Ogedei to Ningen-do, they gain him as an Ally. (Influence 4/Devotion 2) This Devotion is only 1 if Ritsuke was left behind.

If the PCs return to Ningen-do with both Ogedei and Ritsuke, they gain her as an Ally. (Influence 1/Devotion 1)

#### Module Tracking Sheets

PCs who chose to make an “Offering of Steel” gain that cert.

PCs who chose to make an “Offering of Bone” gain that cert.

PCs who experienced the vision of the Lords of Death gain the “Marked by the Lords of Death” cert. Of major note is that it does mean that their Void Points are permanently capped at one lower.

PCs who chose to kill Ogedei in the throne room gain a 2-point Spiritual Disadvantage: Cursed by the Lords of Death. The omnipresent aura of death that surrounds the character as a result of the attention of the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang cause them to suffer a -5 penalty to the total of all Social Rolls they make, except for Intimidation (which instead gains a +5 bonus to the total of any rolls made).

#### GM Reporting

There should be a few reporting questions for each module,

- 1) Did the PCs recover the soul of Moto Ogedei?
- 2) Did the PCs return to Ningen-do with Ritsuke?
- 3) Did the PCs persuade the Lords of Death to accept Ritsuke as a replacement?
- 4) Did the PCs persuade the Lords of Death to accept Kirima as a replacement?
- 5) Did a PC persuade the Lords of Death to accept them as a replacement?

**GM must report this information BEFORE 2/16/2020 for it to have storyline effect.**

## Appendix #1: NPCs

### Moto Ogedei

Burly warrior, bowlegged from living on horseback, he is dedicated to his people and will do anything to keep them safe.

Air 3    Earth 5    Fire 4    Water 5    Void 5  
Reflexes 4                      Agility 5  
Honor 3.8                      Status 7.0                      Glory 6.9

**Initiative:** 10k4+6                      **Attack:** 10k7e  
(Scimitar, Simple)

**Armor TN:** 25                      **Damage:** 9k3m  
(Scimitar)

**Wounds:** 25 (+0), 35 (+0), 45 (+0), 55 (+0), 65 (+5), 75 (+10), 85 (Down, +30), 95 (Out), 96 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Moto Bushi 5/White Guard 2

**Techniques:** *The Way of the Unicorn:* May wield any two-handed weapon with one hand (except for bows). +1k0 to damage while mounted, using a scimitar, or while using a two-handed melee weapon (these bonuses do not stack). Scimitars have the Samurai keyword.

*Shinsei's Smile:* Gain a bonus to attack rolls equal to half of target's Wound Rank TN penalties, rounded down.

*Desert Wind Strike:* May make attacks as a Simple Action when using a melee weapon.

*The Charge of Madness:* Once per skirmish, if you successfully bring a target down to the Out Wound Level, may immediately make an additional attack as a Free Action. This attack may not target the same target as the attack that activated this Technique. May not make Raises on this attack.

*Moto Cannot Yield:* While mounted or while assuming the Full Attack Stance, keep an additional number of damage dice equal to half Strength, rounded down. Gain this bonus only while wielding a two-handed weapon or a weapon with the Samurai keyword.

*The Pale Face of Death:* At the start of your Turn, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action and choose an opponent within 30'. He suffers TN penalties to all actions equal to your Lore: Theology Skill Rank. This penalty lasts until the end of the encounter. You may only affect one target in this manner at any one time.

*Moto's Strength:* Ignores 10 points of Wound Penalties.

**Skills:** Athletics 5, Battle 6, Defense 4, Horsemanship 7, Hunting 4, Kenjutsu (Scimitar) 8, Lore: Theology (Shi-Tien Yen-Wang) 5; Courtier 2, Etiquette 3, Sincerity 2

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Strategist, Tactician / Driven (Maintain Moto Customs)

### Ritsuke

A tall, rangy woman in her late twenties, Ritsuke has the shaven head of a monk but moves with the grace of a warrior. She is now a monk, but has never truly forgotten her upbringing as a samurai and her training as a leader has served her in good stead in the Brotherhood.

Air 4    Earth 3    Fire 4    Water 3    Void 4  
                    Willpower 4    Agility 5    Perception 4  
Honor 6.1                      Status 2.0                      Glory 2.0

**Initiative:** 10k6+5                      **Attack:**  
**Armor TN:** 25                      **Damage:**

**Wounds:** 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Out), 58 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Shinjo Bushi 4/Thousand Fortunes Monk 2

**Techniques:** *The Way of the Ki-Rin:* When spending Void Point for +1k1 on any School Skill Roll, may add Horsemanship Ranks to total. May not be done in Center Stance.

*Dance of the Blade:* When in Full Defense and opponent successfully hits with an attack, may take a Free Action to make a Contested Agility Roll with opponent to make the attack miss. Up to 4 times per Round.

*The Four Winds Strike:* Simple Action attacks with Samurai weapons. Simple Action attacks with bows while mounted.

*Spirit of the Blade Unleashed:* When in Defense or Full Defense Stance and opponent makes a melee attack against you, after the attack resolves, may immediately take a Free Action to make one melee attack against them. This moves you to Attack Stance. 4 times per skirmish, once per Round limit.

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Battle 5, Defense 5, Horsemanship 8, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Kyujutsu 4; Hunting 3, Jiujutsu 3, Lore: Theology (Fortunes, Ki-Rin) 5, Meditation 2, Staves 3; Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Etiquette 4, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Sincerity 3, Spears 5

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Absolute Direction, Clear Thinker, Irreproachable / Ascetic, Lost Love

## **Player Handout #1: News From the Empire**

Samurai of Rokugan,

The late summer months have been busy! I will spare you the news of rebuilding which is common to every town and city along the coasts, for such discussions would take more time than either of us have to spare.

In recognition of the unfortunately canceled Annual Kyuden Gennai Fireworks Festival, the Dragon, at the direction of the Imperial Herald, have sent a group of hanabi exhibitors to the Phoenix to ensure that despite the loss of their castle, they are still able to hold their annual festival. Several venues are being considered to host the festival until Kyuden Gennai can be rebuilt.

The Unicorn have declared a plan to march through the Dragon lands to aid the Owl in their war with the Scorpion. Imperial Chancellor Otomo Kazuko has responded by 'suggesting' Imperial Arbitration of the matter; apparently the Unicorn swore a year of peace with the Dragon and so their intended path might cause them dishonor by accidentally failing to live up to their word. Hazumi is publicly incensed with this development, decrying 'imperial meddling' and 'abuse of position' by the new Imperial Herald. Still, the Unicorn have not marched, though supposedly they stand ready to do so.

I apologize, I have tried my best to bring you the news that I am sure you are most interested in hearing, but I was unable to acquire any information at all about the state of rebuilding in the Phoenix lands. Apparently the Phoenix are turning away anyone they determine to be 'nonessential to rebuilding our homes.' Turning that many Monks and Samurai away has caused quite a stir! In his wisdom, Seppun Kazetora has declared that he will travel to Kyuden Isawa, to find a way that these people might resume their religious pilgrimages.

Like the air after a storm, tensions between the Crab and Mantis seem to have finally broken. Both sides seem to have taken a step back from war, and neither committed to any military engagements this summer. The Shogun has sent the 4th legion to aid the Mantis in their rebuilding, and the Yoritomo have publicly stated they will commit additional ships to "law enforcement activities" to ensure safe travel until any remaining navigational hazards have passed.

It is with great pleasure that I further inform you that plans are in motion to provide housing for any refugees displaced by the decimation of the Phoenix coastline. The herald organization and the Dragon have been preparing a plan to open the Dragon borders and locate a suitable site for anyone needing to find succor or a new place to live after the great tragedy. Bushido demands that we demonstrate Compassion in both Word and Deed, after all.

Carry the Fortunes my friends,

Otomo Yusuke

## **Player Handout #2: Vision of Death**

Images and thoughts cascade into your mind in an alien tide. It is like seeing the same scene from nine different points of view, though there is a tenth that is blind. It all crashes in as a single event, as if entities that are supposed to be unbounded by time cannot distinguish an order recognizable by the human mind (or perhaps are too damaged to do so)...

Somewhere in Ningen-do, though outside the borders claimed by the Empire. A fallen body, twitching in the throes of a familiar, distasteful power. Its soul moving beyond reach, as so many others were by the violation of the Burning Words. A bright arc of steel flashing in the shadows. A voice, cold and hard as the blade, ringing out. "What you foreign gods have never understood – for the hero, there is no death." A crown, shattering into dust at the onslaught, and the other nine flee, death coming for one that was death – an end for that which was endless, and the remainder reeling from the impossible. The last image, a symbol that you recognize as your perceptions become your own once more: the kanji for "Courage", etched into the shining steel of the katana.