

Threads of Fate

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

Month of the Moon 1343 (Spring)

**Module Number: CIT45
Release Date: 02/28/2020**

Supernatural, Investigation, Combat
Part Five of Shifting Sands

A relaxing court, what could possibly go wrong?

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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

A year and a half ago, a would-be assassin from the Dragon attacked Shinjo Hazumi, striking her down with a mystical gaijin knife. After fleeing into the Dragon mountains, he was arrested by a group of samurai, the knife destroyed, and Shinjo Hazumi awakened.

In the time since, the Scorpion chose to side with the Dragon, dissolving their alliance with the Unicorn. Shinjo Hazumi and the Unicorn at large have not taken this well. They have allied with the Owl and prepare for war with the clans that have slighted them.

However, the recent ascension of a Dragon shugenja to the post of Imperial Herald has upended this plan. Mirumoto Kasei has begun to leverage the power of his office to forestall any war. An 'Imperial Arbiter', Miya Chien, has been dispatched to 'negotiate a resolution of the situation'. Hazumi, her honor guard, and a representative of the Scorpion have been called to Kyuden Miya to meet.

As befits a court of this size and events this important, the other clans have also sent representatives to witness the proceedings and provide input.

During the proceedings a local Jade Magistrate, Kitsu Esa, has gone missing while tracking the movement of some suspicious goods. An Emerald Magistrate in attendance, Bayushi Tenno, will request the PCs investigate Esa's disappearance in his stead, as he is forced to be present at court.

Esa stumbled upon a series of shipments of tainted artifacts being smuggled into the castle and was killed by a fellow jade magistrate to protect the secret. The PCs will need to uncover the circumstances of Esa's demise before more weapons can enter the castle.

Meanwhile, the negotiations between the Unicorn and Scorpion will break down, culminating in a massive breach of etiquette by Shinjo Hazumi. Into this void will step the Jade Champion, Iuchi Katachai. He has been quietly influencing Shinjo Hazumi since she was injured, tempting her down a path of corruption. Faced with her inexcusable outburst, Katachai will finally succeed in tipping Hazumi over the brink and unleash the tainted forces he has smuggled into the castle.

The PCs must flee and find allies to face the tainted monsters which have overtaken the castle. Once reinforced, they must retake the castle and destroy the tainted monster who calls herself Shinjo Hazumi.

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.

- Noticed or Ally: Shinjo Hazumi, Moto Sartaq, Moto Noritoshi, Iuchi Katachai, or Hoshi. Status: Jade Magistrate or Emerald Magistrate. Any PC that has played Balance Shifts.
- Shadowlands Taint, Disbeliever, Cast Out, Sworn Enemy: Shinjo Hazumi, Moto Sartaq, Moto Noritoshi, Iuchi Katachai, or Hoshi.

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

L4 glory loss

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 25**. 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. Conveniently, PC ronin are all currently in the employ of Bayushi Tenno as a representative of the Emerald Magistrates and so do not need to roll for survival as he has arranged food and accommodations for them.

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.

Part One: Negotiations

The court at Kyuden Miya has been both abuzz with speculation and terminally boring simultaneously for the past three days. Perhaps that is so boring is the cause of the rampant rumors.

The announcement of an Imperial Arbiter before a war had begun was unusual on its own, but the direct involvement of so many important persons at the negotiations drew contingents from most clans to observe the proceedings. The Unicorn have been preparing for war with the Scorpion and Dragon, and

the sudden intervention of the Imperials appears to have forestalled the conflict.

Since your arrival the only progress that has been made has been on procedural questions. This was not helped when the minister of protocol Seppun Masaharu pointed out that the castle has rooms reserved for every Great Clan except the Unicorn, forcing them to stay outside in their yurts.

The morning court convened by the local lord, Miya Ayame, does not promise to be much different, with the arbiter Miya Chien, Shinjo Hazumi, and Soshi Hizoko already having left to begin the day's discussions. The remaining attendees have been left to fill their time at their own direction.

As the courtiers mill about, a servant approaches you with a letter in hand. "Excuse me, samurai, Bayushi-sama asked me to give you this."

Give the players **Handouts 1** and have them introduce themselves while giving them some time to peruse the list of people that are present. All the NPCs from the handout are present, except for Miya Chien, Shinjo Hazumi, Soshi Hizoko who are all in meetings. Iuchi Katachai has not yet arrived and is notably absent from the handout.

Otherwise, the PCs are free to speak with anyone that strikes their fancy, other gather rumors.

Rumors

The following information is available with a Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness roll. The TNs are low because the courtiers are all very bored.

- 0: The Unicorn had to sleep outside! Apparently, the Miya never built quarters for the Unicorn in the castle after they returned to the empire. You'd figure they'd have managed that by now.
- 5: The negotiations are very stalled; I think the Imperials are just trying to delay the Unicorn. I wonder if the new Imperial Herald, Mirumoto Kasei had anything to do with it...
- 10: Otomo Yusuuke just left! He told me some really interesting news... [Give the PCs Handout 2: News of the Empire]
- 15: I think that Crab delegate is interested in the Phoenix. How unseemly! Of course the Crab don't understand the subtlety of courtly romance.
- 25: I heard Miya Chien ordering someone to berate the servants for her after they brought her cold tea.
- 30: If you ask me, the Scorpion constructing that statue in Otosan Ouchi was just a bribe. They

weren't even involved in the fighting against the... this summer.

- 40: I saw someone going into Kyuden Hantei last night. I wonder if the Owl are planning to claim the right to use it. That would certainly make the Scorpion mad! Or maybe it's haunted! That would be exciting.

Once the PCs have had a chance to spend a little time talking with each other or any NPCs that immediately strike them, continue onwards. You don't need to rush them, but don't let this portion drag on too far.

The doors to the hall of Kyuden Miya swing open, and a tall thin man with an angular, clean shaven face steps forward wearing a long purple kimono and a green mantle so bright it almost glows. A hush falls over the gathered court. His voice is loud and clear, "Miya Chien! I have arrived to discuss..." the man pauses and quickly scans the crowd. "Please, forgive my rude intrusion. I was looking for Miya Chien, but I see that she is not here. My apologies. Please, do not let me disrupt you."

The man turns on his heel and departs down a hallway with a Miya herald, apparently intent on announcing his presence, trailing behind him unable to keep up. The crowd blinks for a minute, unsure if the sudden arrival of the Jade Champion was real or a mirage brought on by the complete lack of noteworthy events.

The gossip starts, quietly at first, then the assembled courtiers resume their discussions, presumably speculating behind fans about what Iuchi Katachai wanted from the Imperial Negotiator and why he arrived unexpectedly.

After the momentary drama, the PCs should feel free to either continue socializing, or seek out Bayushi Tenno regarding his letter.

Part Two: Tea with Tenno

A servant leads you to a quiet room far from the main court. As you pass the corridors, you notice this area of the castle has quite a few Scorpion courtiers present, many in hushed discussions with Imperials. Eventually you reach a stately tearoom with a balcony looking out towards the Spine of the World mountains. At the table is seated a handsome man in the colors of the Scorpion, his face concealed by an elaborate bird mask, with a cane sitting prominently next to him.

He nods as you enter and begins to pour tea for you as the servant slides the door shut behind you. The notes of a biwa seep into the air as someone sitting outside

begins to play. The scorpion clears his voice, "Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I have been kept exceptionally busy by the negotiations, so I am afraid I must be brief. If you had arrived a few hours ago, I would have said this is a strange but perhaps idle matter. Now, I am less sure. But I should start at the beginning. A friend of mine, a jade magistrate named Kitsu Esa told me a few days ago that she was informally investigating something curious, but she didn't say what. She apparently wasn't even sure something was the matter, so didn't want to go into details. Then she disappeared sometime between last night ago and this morning. I asked the servants and guards, and no one saw her leave, her horse is still here, and as far as I can tell she is not in the castle. And now the Jade Champion himself has arrived."

Tenno stops, takes a sip of tea, and then breathes deeply. "These may all be unrelated benign coincidences. Unfortunately, I am shortly going to have to return to the negotiations and have no time to investigate them. I am given to understand you have no commitments at the moment, so I would greatly appreciate if you could unofficially look into the matter."

Presuming the PCs agree to assist Tenno, he is willing to answer a variety of questions about Kitsu Esa and the situation. He will explicitly avoid talking about the negotiations and politely apologize if they are brought up, because that is "Clan Business" and so must remain confidential. At the moment Tenno is simply suspicious and vaguely concerned, rather than specifically aware of a threat or crime.

Questions the PCs might have:

- What was Kitsu Esa investigating?
"I don't know. She was concerned about raising false suspicions if she was wrong, so didn't want to share until she knew more. I believe she mentioned questioning servants though, so you may consider starting there."
- How are the negotiations going?
"I am afraid I am not at liberty to speak on that matter."
- Have you seen anything suspicious around the castle?
"Other than a Jade Magistrate disappearing, I can't say that I have, no."
- Who might know what Kitsu Esa was investigating / who did Kitsu Esa talk to?
"I don't know what she was investigating. I believe Kitsu Esa was friends with Shiba Kaito and Kitsuki Oda was one of her

compatriots in the Jade Office.” (Tenno’s information is incorrect, but he is not aware of it)

- Did Kitsu Esa have any enemies? / did anyone in the castle dislike her?
“Kitsu-san did not get along well with either Miya Chien or Seppun Masaharu, but I would hesitate to call them enemies. I am told she did not care for Hiruma Izumi very much, but I do not know why.”
- How is your leg?
“It is getting better, slowly.”
- Do you think the Jade Champion’s arrival is connected?
Tenno stops to stroke his chin, considering his words very carefully. “I do not know. It is likely a coincidence, he is probably here to support his liege in the negotiations.”
- Can we wear armor / carry weapons?
“No. This is not an official investigation, yet. Just a minor matter of curiosity. Such things would arouse unnecessary attention.”

Part Three: Pokin’ About

This section is by necessity somewhat open ended; there are three general areas the PCs may investigate, in addition to talking to the various courtiers or castle servants. Speaking to courtiers or servants doesn’t ‘take time’, but they will only have time to investigate one location before they are expected to join the court for dinner.

See Appendix 2 for the court NPCs and what they know, and Appendix 3 for the various investigation locations.

If the PCs wish to split up to investigate, that is possible to visit more locations simultaneously, but they shouldn’t feel compelled to do so.

Part Four: Nice Calm Dinner

After the first round of investigation, the guests of the court assemble for dinner.

As the sun sinks to the horizon, servants escort you onto a massive balcony overlooking the foothills of the Spine of the World mountains. Long tables are laid out, with attendants setting out dishes of food and preparing place settings. You are all ushered to the table furthest from the high table. At the three seats of the high table sit Miya Chien, the imperial negotiator,

Soshi Hizoko, daimyo of the Soshi, and Seppun Masaharu, an imperial master of protocol.

Just before dinner is to begin, Shinjo Hazumi, champion of the Unicorn, enters the room and proceeds towards the high table only to be stopped by Seppun Masaharu. Quiet words pass between them as Seppun Masaharu points to a table in the middle of the balcony. Hazumi turns away, obviously incensed. She stalks back towards the door, and seats herself in an open chair at your table, the lowest and least prestigious place at the dinner.

Hazumi nods to you, “Samurai. Apparently, there was a mistake made in the seating. I hope you do not mind if I join you for dinner.”

She seizes a cup and downs it in a single draught.

Shinjo will make polite conversation and is generally feeling frustrated with the imperials; she is completely aware that she has been slighted by being refused a place commensurate with her status.

If a PC has either Ally: Shinjo Hazumi she will be curious what they think about the political situation, and if someone has Sworn Enemy: Shinjo Hazumi she will do her best to politely ignore that PC. If PCs are present with Noticed: Shinjo Hazumi she will be curious what they have been up to lately.

Feel free to paraphrase and extrapolate Hazumi’s responses as makes sense to keep the conversation flowing. The idea here is to convey Hazumi’s perspective (justifiably frustrated) to the PCs and get them to understand ‘her side’ of the matter. It is especially good if they validate her feelings of grievance or otherwise act understanding.

Topics of discussion, along with Hazumi’s general thoughts, may include:

- Politics in the empire
Shinjo Hazumi is concerned about the sudden reclusiveness of the Phoenix, and thinks certain politicians have been using their influence recklessly lately (She won’t name names, but in order she is concerned about Mirumoto Kasei, Seppun Kazetora, and Doji Makibesu)
- The Unicorn desire to go to war with the Dragon and Scorpion.
The Dragon attempted to assassinate her, their clan protected the assassin, and yet somehow the imperials have decided to protect them from consequence. Further, the Unicorn’s allies the Scorpion decided to reject them and instead side with the assassin’s. It would be dishonorable to not

answer these slights, and frankly Shinjo Hazumi is perplexed by people that think these actions are acceptable.

- Recovery after last summer's spider attack
Shinjo Hazumi feels terrible about what happened, and has been redirecting significant aid to the Phoenix, Crane, Crab, and Mantis. Compassion demands she do no less. She has tasked the Jade Champion with coordinating responses to the rash of Kumo sightings in the wake of the spider. She has significant concerns about Isawa Norimichi, "I fear his rage consumes him, I tried to ask the Miya to investigate, but they ignored me."
- How the negotiations are going
Slowly, and it is obvious to Shinjo that the negotiations are just a stall tactic. She believes (correctly) that Mirumoto Kasei is abusing the power of his new office to shield his clan from consequences. Further, the Scorpion donated significant funds last summer to "fund a monument" in the imperial city and suddenly are favored by imperial interference; to Hazumi this is clear evidence of a base bribe.
- What the PCs have been up to lately

Shinjo is frustrated and feels (rightly) slighted by the imperials. She is entirely aware these "negotiations" are the result of the new Imperial Herald, Mirumoto Kasei, using the power of his office to protect his clan and his scorpion allies, as well as a quid pro quo from the Imperials to the Scorpion for their donations last summer.

Responses from Shinjo to common questions might be:

- How are you recovering?
"Well enough. Iuchi Katachai has been heavily involved in seeing to my recovery; I am told I owe my survival in significant part to his ministrations. I still have nightmares about the attack and the aftermath. Sometimes in my dreams I see glimpses of places I have never visited; a mountainside, a volcano, an anvil."
- Why are you intent on going to war with the Dragon?
"The son of a daimyo entered my lands, as my guest, and attacked me. Instead of punishing or apprehending him they aided and sheltered him and tried to stop imperial magistrates from pursuing him. These are clearly the actions of a clan entire."

- How are the negotiations going?
"Poorly" Shinjo clearly stops herself before saying more and takes a moment to compose herself, "They are going slowly."
- Why are the imperials being rude?
"Presumably in order to send a message; they are making a point about relative power; that they are in control and I am not."
- Why is Iuchi Katachai here?
"To add weight to our side of the negotiations; it will be harder for the Miya to ignore the voice of the Jade Champion. I didn't expect him to arrive, but I am glad he did."

Once the conversation peters out or otherwise comes to a natural conclusion:

A servant approaches, bows low to the Champion of the Unicorn, and hands her a note. Hazumi reads the paper with only mild interest, then sighs, folds it, and places it into her sleeve. She nods to you and rises, "I apologize, but there is a small matter I must attend to. Thank you for the honor of your company."

She turns, and leaves the balcony, following the servant back into the castle. Following the unicorn champion's departure, dinner continues, and the courtiers begin to circle, gossip, and chat amongst themselves as night begins to fall in earnest over the castle.

The PCs are free to remain to talk to the other guests, or they can retire themselves once Shinjo Hazumi leaves.

The rest of the court guests listed in the handout are present, with the noticeable exception of Iuchi Katachai. If someone thought to ask Shinjo Hazumi where he is, she would reply "He is working on securing more appropriate accommodations for our clan."

There is a new rumor going around the court, which any NPC will actively tell the PCs if they speak with anyone: The Jade Champion has declared that as a vassal of the Emperor, it appropriate for him and his 'companions' to stay in the normally empty Kyuden Hantei next to the castle.

NPCs friendly to the Unicorn think this is a clever solution to the Unicorn being forced to sleep outside, and those unfriendly avoid saying so directly (because contradicting the Jade Champion is dangerous) but think this is quite presumptuous on the part of Iuchi Katachai.

Part Five: Lookin' Around

The same general guidelines and locations from Part Three apply again here. Once again, the PCs will have time to investigate one location before their next meeting with Bayushi Tenno. Presumably by then they will have realized they need to investigate the basement of Kyuden Hantei. At that point, they should return to Bayushi Tenno to get permission.

If they attempt to investigate Kyuden Hantei on their own, they will find guards posted by the Miya and the Unicorn at both entrances with strict orders not to allow anyone access without authorization. If the PCs do something exceptionally clever to bypass the guards, then proceed to Part Six, skipping the meeting with Tenno.

If the PCs try to get permission from Tenno to investigate the basement of Kyuden Hantei after having visited one other location, he'll be unwilling to write a pass, "Without a solid basis for an investigation, it would cast the Scorpion in a very bad light if I allowed yoriki to enter the building where the Unicorn are dwelling. I can't allow the negotiations to be undermined unless we have persuasive evidence of the need."

Part Six: Finding Trouble

Once the PCs have realized they need to get into the basement of Kyuden Hantei, they will likely need to meet with Bayushi Tenno to secure permission and appraise him of their investigation.

The repeated tapping of a cane coming down the hall alerts you to the approach of the scorpion, who enters the room looking exceedingly rushed. He takes a moment to compose himself before speaking, "I am sorry for making you wait; it is growing increasingly difficult to find opportunity to disentangle myself from the negotiations. I hope you have some good news on your progress."

It is up to the PCs to convince Tenno that they need permission to access Kyuden Hantei. This will not be terribly difficult if they have found the Key Evidence from two of the three locations.

Tenno scratches his chin, "Kyuden Hantei is clearly key to understanding what happened to Kitsu Esa. If she was last seen entering the basement, then that is where you must go. I can grant permission to search it, but be very careful, since neither the Imperials nor the

Unicorn will not take kindly to any hints of impropriety. If things go awry, neither the Imperials nor the Unicorn will give us another chance. You are officially my yoriki for this investigation, carry the fortunes."

Leaning on his cane, Tenno scribes a quick, but well calligraphed, writ of investigation with his left hand, and slides it towards you. With a nod, he turns and leaves, the paper sitting on the table.

If the PCs decide to wear armor or carry battlefield weapons they are technically allowed to do so, but it is a minor breach of etiquette (D4), which they would know; this is not a 'trap' honor hit.

Give the PCs a chance to collect any equipment they need or otherwise make any short preparations, then when they are ready, proceed to the basement.

The Miya guards at the gate to Kyuden Hantei inspect your papers briefly, then shrug and open the doors, "If you need any assistance, do not hesitate to get our attention."

The other guard adds, "The Unicorn have guards as well, they came in with the Jade Champion, but if they give you any trouble just..." then is silenced by a glare from his counterpart. "I mean, have a good day, samurai."

A servant leads you through Kyuden Hantei, with one of the Miya guards trailing behind you, passing by staff going about their day to day business, and a pair of Shinjo samurai in discussion about their favorite brand of tea.

"This is the basement, samurai-sama. I apologize, but I must attend to my duties. We, uhh, did not expect guests, so there is much to do to prepare." With a bow, the peasant points you to a set of steps down and a door, then hustles off down the hallway while the Miya takes up a position to watch the door.

Opening the door and stepping inside, a smell vaguely like iron hits your nose. The basement is full of wooden crates, many marked with imperial seals, some opened, some closed, and a few others marked with a strange green and purple glyph, one of which has had its seal broken. A metal bar rests on top of that crate.

From the main room are two doors; one appears to lead to a closet, and the other to a further storage room.

The PCs are free to poke about in the basement.

The imperial crates:

The crates are sealed, and breaking them open would take a solid object, say, the crowbar that is sitting nearby.

The sealed crates are spare goods for the castle, candles, linens, carpentry supplies, soaps, tea kettles, and various other dry goods.

The crate that has been broken open with the crowbar has supplies and spare goods, just like the sealed crates.

The opened crates have dried, nonperishable foodstuffs. The food in these crates is not (currently) tainted, in case the PCs are paranoid.

The purple and green crates:

The crates marked with the purple and green glyph are not sealed; they clearly were at one point, but they have all been opened. Most are empty.

The few that are not contain clothes; shitagi (the tunic worn beneath armor) and sashes bearing the mons of the Jade Legions and the Jade Magistrates, respectively.

Investigation (Search) / Perception at TN 30: These crates have false bottoms. Underneath are swords with blades made of black metal, and a few boxes of black rice.

PCs that have at least one rank in Lore: Metallurgy, Artisan: Swordsmithing, or a similar skill (or that can roll an Intelligence / skill check at TN 30) will recognize this metal as Obsidian.

Lore: Shadowlands / Intelligence at TN 25 will recall that Obsidian is usually associated with the taint, and inspection will reveal that the blades are in fact tainted.

The rice is also tainted. It may have been used as packing material or a desiccant to preserve the blades.

This is obviously awful, and PCs may want to leave immediately to report it. If they do so, it may serve to remind them that they will likely only have one opportunity to conduct this search.

The closet:

You try the door and it seems to be stuck. You pull a second time with slightly more force, and it swings open. You are instantly assaulted by a cavalcade of wooden brooms!

Reflexes / Defense at TN 10 to avoid taking 1 damage from brooms.

There are brooms in the broom closet.

Searching the room:

Investigation (Search) / Perception

TN 10: The dust is disturbed here; people have been in and out of this room quite a bit in the past few days.

TN 20: At least two people have gone through the door into the next room, but only one set of footprints comes back.

TN 40: The crates marked with the imperial seal have all been here for quite a while, but the ones marked in purple and green are new.

Once the PCs open the door to the next room:

The door is lodged tightly closed, but a solid pull forces it to swing open, revealing a large and rather dusty looking storeroom.

The smell of iron, no, blood, assaults your nose immediately.

Along the stone walls of the room are stacked more crates, caked with dust.

In the middle of the room, hands manacled together, slumped over in a pool of dried blood, is a woman in the brown and gold of the Lion.

Next to her is a black dagger, a pen, and a wakizashi with a Lion mon on it.

Kitsu Esa is thoroughly dead.

The Knife:

Lore: Shadowlands / Intelligence or Craft: Weaponsmithing / Intelligence at TN 20: This blade is made of Obsidian. If Shadowlands was rolled, it is clearly tainted and should not be handled.

The Wakizashi:

It is a Lion clan wakizashi. It has blood on it.

The crates:

The crates are sealed and full of spare furniture, tools, and parts for routine maintenance of the castle's structure. None have been opened.

The room itself:

Investigation (Search) / Perception:

TN 15: Kitsu Esa came in here alone and was clearly rummaging through the crates before she died.

TN 25: Someone entered the room after her, there was a struggle, and that other person left.

TN 30: Based on the size of the footprints and length of the stride, it was likely a tall thin male that attacked Kitsu Esa.

The crates are sealed and full of spare furniture, tools, and parts for routine maintenance of the castle's structure.

Kitsu Esa:

If a PC has some ability to discern such, she is not Lost, and not sufficiently tainted to rise again as a zombie. Still best to be safe and cut off her head though.

Her corpse has had its wrists bound together with manacles.

Medicine / Intelligence or Lore: Anatomy / Intelligence:

TN 10: Kitsu Esa was stabbed with a knife twice, once in the side from behind, and a second time in the stomach.

TN 15: Kitsu Esa died from a draw cut along her abdomen, likely self-inflicted.

TN 25: Based on the bruises, the manacles were put on her before she died.

Investigation (Search or Notice) / Perception:

TN 25: There is a small amount of ink on Kitsu Esa's fingers.

TN 30: Up Kitsu Esa's sleeve is a small, very crudely written, note.

If a PC finds the note, it reads as follows:

"Oda stabbed me. Knife probably tainted, left me to bleed. Crates full of <smudge>. Must seppuku first."

After they finish investigating, presumably the PCs will want to go report this to someone.

If they try to report it to the Jade Champion, a servant will 'take a note to him, he is in the negotiations at the moment and cannot be disturbed.'

Tenno on the other hand will meet with the PCs immediately.

Part Seven: Explaining yourselves

As you round the corner to the court chamber, Tenno limps quickly into the hallway to meet you. Standing just over his shoulder, still inside the court, is Soshi Hizoko and several important imperial samurai. Tenno speaks in a rushed whisper, "What have you found? Did you manage to determine where Kitsu Esa went? The negotiations may be nearing their end, and I suspect we don't have much time remaining to solve this conundrum."

Tenno will listen with interest as the PCs explain what's happened and will do his best to keep the note of increasing panic out of his voice while he asks them questions.

Ask the PCs lots of clarifying details about the basement, Tenno is especially interested in the specifics of Kitsu Esa's fate, as well as the contents of the various crates.

Once the PCs finish:

Tenno nods somberly, "We must inform the Jade Champion. Someone is smuggling tainted artifacts into the castle, as well as planning to impersonate jade magistrates or legionnaires."

Tenno scrawls a short note with his left hand, gives it to a servant, and waits for a long minute, staring pointedly at the floor.

With almost no delay, the tall thin personage of the Jade Champion, clothed in a shining green mantle, steps into the hallway. Tenno starts to bow, and Iuchi Katachai waves away the pleantry.

"You said there was an emergency. What has happened?"

Tenno nods to you, "These samurai were investigating the disappearance of one of your magistrates. They have come across a potential threat. They can explain."

If any PC has played The Balance Shifts, Katachai will add:

Turning to you, Iuchi Katachai starts for a moment. "I apologize. I did not recognize you before now. Please, allow me to extend my deepest apologies. What my brother did was... unfathomable. Thank you for stopping Jinsoku-san. I only wish I had realized how far he had fallen before the Horiuchi paid the price for his madness."

Presumably the PCs will explain, again. The Jade Champion will nod at the appropriate points, ask the PCs follow-up questions, and ask if they have any speculation as to the nature of the plan or the culprit. Get them to speculate further about motive and possible accomplices, if you can.

His questions should sound like he is genuinely interested in solving the mystery. His real aim is figuring out "how much they know" but that shouldn't be readily apparent. The PCs should feel like the Jade Champion is on their side.

Once the PCs finish explaining to the Jade Champion:

Part Eight: RUN AWAY

Iuchi Katachai nods to you, “This is clearly a grave threat. We will need to address it immediately. Arrest whomever you believe is responsible, you have my full support.”

He turns to reenter the court, just as Miya Chien ascends the central dais. All eyes look to her, and she clears her throat, “I thank all of you for the wisdom you have shared with us these past days, and for your patience with our deliberations. We have come to our conclusions.”

The court seems to collectively hold its breath, and Soshi Hizoko steps out into the hallway to share a whispered word with Bayushi Tenno.

Miya Chien continues, “It is our determination that the matter of honor between Shinjo Hazumi, the Scorpion, and the Dragon was a personal one, and was satisfied by the execution of the criminal Tonbo Kyoshi. We find the Unicorn have no justification for further conflict, and we forbid them from taking military action on this basis.”

Surprise plays over the faces of the crowd, none more so than Shinjo Hazumi who bursts out, “No! You can’t do this! They attempted to kill me, in my own court.” She levels a finger at the Scorpion, “And they stood with the assassin instead of their allies, they turned their back on us. This court can’t condone these dishonorable, cowardly actions!”

Miya Chien levels a withering glare at Shinjo Hazumi and taps her chin “The Scorpion have donated generously to the rebuilding efforts, perhaps you should do likewise. The Unicorn taxes can be increased by fifteen percent this year, to aid the Dragon in rebuilding from the devastation they suffered last summer.”

Chien pauses a moment, smirking before adding, “Do remember that your outbursts are inappropriate, Shinjo-san. The decisions of this court are final.”

Shinjo Hazumi’s face flushes red with anger. “No! Last year you tried to steal the lands of our lost family, our heritage and history, and now you want our people to starve to feed assassins?!” and her sword whips free from its saya, striking Miya Chien across the neck and separating her head from her body. The imperial negotiator crumples.

The Jade Champion steps up to stand next to his champion.

His voice is a whisper, but everyone in the court can hear it. “It is as I said. The child who holds the throne is a pretender with no power, and the three who control him let corruption and dishonor run rampant.

Shinjo Hazumi stands, dazed, staring down at the body, while the Jade Champion steps from the dais. He casually waves a hand at a nearby Shinjo bushi wearing a Jade Magistrate’s sash, his voice seeming almost bored but somehow reverberating through the entire castle, “Not precisely what I planned, but no matter. Kill them all.”

Bayushi Tenno seems to react first, dropping on his cane, shoving the Soshi daimyo towards you with his bad right hand and drawing his sword with his left. “Run! Get out of here with as many as you can! That’s an order, yoriki.”

He steps forward, and slashes at the Jade champion, a thin cut drawing a line of black blood from Iuchi Katachai’s cheek.

If PCs want to stay and fight, it is a hopeless battle, but they will gain a glorious death against the tainted Jade Champion and his tainted magistrates, legionnaires, and Shinjo house guard. Encourage the PCs to run instead of fighting, they have an order after all.

The castle immediately begins to descend into chaos as the jade legion troops, as well as a many of the Shinjo house guard, turn on the Miya. Fighting is everywhere.

The PCs currently have with them Soshi Hizoko. There are pockets of samurai all over the castle, and it is up to the PCs as to who, if anyone, they wish to save.

The NPCs are spread throughout the castle, so reaching all of them before the Jade Champion can secure the building is impossible; each PC can only attempt one rescue. It is up to the PCs if they wish to split up or concentrate on rescuing one specific group. As a note, make to get an action or choice from every PC so that no one is glossed over.

If a PC has Overconfident, they should roll it here or be compelled to attempt to save at least one NPC.

The Courts: Seppun Masaharu and Seppun Hanako

Extracting the courtiers from the chaotic swirl of the courts is no mean feat. The Miya guards are engaged in pitched battle against the forces of the Jade

Champion, who is himself locked in a fight on the dais with Bayushi Tenno.

Near the edge of the court, trying to slink away, are Seppun Masaharu and Seppun Hanako.

Getting to them and then getting them out without being noticed is a challenge up to the PCs. Encourage creative solutions, some of which might be sneaking up to them and then sneaking them out (Stealth / Agility at TN 30), fighting off the guards (Attack rolls at TN 35, along with taking 2k2 damage), or defending them as they move out (Defense / Reflexes, TN 35) to shield them.

Failure indicates an inability to get past the swirling melee and chaos of the court before the Miya are overwhelmed by the Jade Champion and a retreat is forced.

The Temple: Miya Masako and Moshi Atsuko

The monks of the Eastern Temple are engaged in battle with a group of Jade Magistrates and are losing badly. Moshi Atsuko is flinging lightning bolts into the magistrate's ranks, while Masako is keeping her head down and trying not to get killed.

Turning the tide against the magistrates so that the monks, Atsuko and Masako can escape would require either wading into combat personally (Take 2k2 damage, and make a TN 35 attack roll to cut your way to them), devising an innovative strategy of some form (Battle (Mass Battle) / Perception at TN 30), or maybe some clever application of magic.

Creative solutions and innovative uses of temple structures should pay off (like Engineering to drop a statue on someone, etc).

As above, time is critical as soon reinforcements from the Shinjo House Guard will arrive and force the PCs to escape or perish.

The Teahouse: Hiruma Izumi and Shiba Kaito

Shiba Kaito is trying to help the hobbled Hiruma Izumi walk and escape from a group of Shinjo, while she strikes at them with what looks like the broken off arm from a piece of statuary. Neither has their weapons with them, as they left them at the entrance to the tea house, which they are cut off from by the Shinjo. Kaito dives behind a fallen support column as an arrow whizzes cuts across his leg, pulling Izumi with him.

As above, the PCs will need to either fight them past the Shinjo (Take 2k2 damage, and make a TN 30 attack roll to cut your way to them), create a distraction or alternative escape route (Engineering / Intelligence at TN 20), or some other clever way to get the crippled

Hiruma Izumi and the obvious noncombatant Shiba out of the tea house. For example, the pillars of the tea house are slightly rickety and could be collapsed with a Raw Strength roll (TN 17) onto some of the Shinjo.

As above, time is critical as soon reinforcements will arrive and force the PCs to escape.

Once the PCs have done what they can to rescue courtiers (or not), move on to Part Nine.

Part Nine: Allies of Convenience

Once you make it past the body of the fighting, Soshi Hizoko mutters a prayer to the kami, and a sudden indistinct haze fills the air around you, allowing you to slip past a large group of Jade Legionnaires fighting against the outmatched Miya guards. You move into the central courtyard and the Jade Champion's troops are clearly in the final stages of snuffing the Miya's resistance.

A riderless horse runs past, apparently freed from the stables in the commotion, as Hizoko gestures you onwards.

"We have to go, this won't last long, but it should get us past them. It doesn't look like they're watching the stables, let's get our horses and get out of here."

An hour later you stop riding, finally far enough away from Kyuden Miya to feel safe enough to stop.

"We have to tell someone what happened here. There's a Scorpion military camp half a day south of here, part of the 9th legion. I think there's an imperial garrison at Seiketsu Pass, if we could convince the local Emerald Magistrate to lend us troops. I also heard a rumor that the Khan was conducting military exercises nearby with the Khol, so they might be close enough to reach as well. They would certainly have the largest army, if we could convince them to help. Opinions?"

The PCs have a choice of where to go to obtain assistance with the immediate problem of the Tainted Unicorn clan champion controlling Kyuden Miya. They could of course abandon the problem, or leave it to someone else to solve, but that would end the module, so let's hope they don't make boring choices like that.

In order of size, the Scorpion army would be the smallest, followed by the imperial garrison, and then the Khan's force is by far the largest.

Seiketsu and the Scorpion are each half a day away, in opposite directions, but reaching the Khan's camp would take a full day of hard riding. It is up to the PCs where to go, though they should be encouraged to stay together. However, if you have plenty of time left for the mod and they really want to split up, I suppose you could let them.

Moto Sartaq and the Khol:

You ride hard to the Northwest for a day and part of a night, arriving at the large Moto encampment an hour after dusk. Wary guards wearing the emblems of the Khol greet you at the camp's edge, take your chops, and then lead you into the huge tent in the camp's center.

Reclining on a seat of cushions is a giant of a man in an exceptionally traditional bright purple kimono. He stands up as you enter, moving to sit on a short chair instead.

At the Khan's left shoulder is a young man in the purple of the Moto wearing the bright blue mon of the Kakita duelists, the Khan's son, Moto Noritoshi. At his right shoulder is a tall thin man bearing the mon of the Ide, Ide Akio, hatamoto to the Ide Daimyo, Ide Ekuan.

The Khan gazes at you intently, then utters a single word. "Speak."

It is up to the PCs to present a compelling case to the Khan why he should send forces to intervene in the matter.

Ide Akio will argue against helping. Examples of his counter arguments might be:

"This is an Imperial matter. How would it look if Unicorn troops marched into Miya lands uninvited? The political fallout would be immense."

"If what these samurai say is true, then there could well be other traitors within the Shinjo, the Iuchi, and the Jade Legions. We must recall the Khol to the capital and secure our holdings"

"This army is tired, and our supplies run low from the past weeks of training; we did not provision to be in the field for a campaign. It is imperative we resupply before undertaking a siege and fighting against whatever the Jade Champion has arrayed."

If you feel the PCs are completely floundering, have Moto Noritoshi either prompt them, or argue in favor

of their case alongside them, stressing the good of the empire or the responsibilities of the Moto.

Once the PCs have finished their case, they can make a cooperative Courtier (Manipulation) or Sincerity (Honesty or Deceit) / Awareness roll at TN 40. Award free raises as you deem fit if they make good arguments, especially ones that focus on the Moto's responsibility as this is a 'Unicorn Problem' or that play on the Khan's sympathies over the loss of the Horiuchi. The PCs also gain a free raise if they rescued Seppun Hanako, as she was cousin to the Khan's late wife.

The Khan scratches his chin for a moment, lost in thought.

"I believe what you have told me, and it is surely a great threat to Rokugan. Furthermore, the Unicorn lands are clearly in grave danger, so I must prepare our armies to defend our borders, as well as excising any further conspirators. We lost an entire family when Iuchi Katachai's brother Jinsoku betrayed us, and I will not lose another. The cancer within must be cut out before it can spread."

"However, I cannot ignore the threat on our doorstep. By the time the imperial legions act it may be too late. We can spare the White Guard; they have trained for generations to fight threats such as these. My cousin, Moto Ogedei, will go with you to lead them. I pray that proves enough. I am sorry that I can send only one legion and not the entirety of the Khol."

If the PCs fail to convince the Khan:

The Khan scratches his chin for a moment, lost in thought.

"I believe what you have told me, and it is surely a great threat to Rokugan. I will write a letter to the Imperial Legions, as this is their area of responsibility. Unicorn lands are clearly in grave danger, so I must prepare our armies to defend our borders, as well as excising any further conspirators. We lost an entire family when Iuchi Katachai's brother Jinsoku betrayed us, and I will not lose another. The cancer within must be cut out before it can spread."

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention, samurai. I am sorry that I cannot lend you forces to retake the castle. I will of course give you whatever provisions you require and fresh horses if you need them. You are dismissed."

The PCs will need to choose another place to seek assistance. Moto Sartaq will however replace their horses and any provisions they need (within reason, no Jade or similar).

Miya Yuritogen and the Imperial Legions

You ride hard along the road to the east, towards the imperial garrison that guard Seiketsu Pass. You pass by many caravans and travelers on the roads, taking advantage of the beautiful spring weather to begin the commercial season early.

By dusk you approach the rim of the crater and next to it the large imperial encampment where taxes are levied and goods inspected by the local Emerald Magistrate.

Passing your chop to a servant, the magistrate and his assistant come out to greet you with a minimum of waiting. Both men bow low, the magistrate a man in his late 30's, and his assistant a young man perhaps only in his 20th year.

"I am Miya Yuritogen, Emerald Magistrate, overseer of customs and duties, and administrator of security of this pass. This is my yoriki, Shiba Taroki. How may I assist you this day, Samurai?"

Miya Yuritogen will listen quietly to the PCs story and ask a minimum of questions. Fundamentally he doesn't want to believe that tainted infiltrators have overtaken his family castle, so he will be quietly skeptical without directly contradicting the PCs.

Shiba Taroki, on the other hand, is tainted and in league with the Jade Champion and will be openly skeptical of the PCs story.

Taroki did not have knowledge about this specific plan or the events that have occurred at Kyuden Miya but he intends to help his master by delaying a response. Accordingly, he will attempt to maneuver the PCs into calling him a liar, at which point he can issue a challenge to first blood, which Yuritogen will sanction. If that happens, a suitable Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness roll (at TN 30) could deflect the challenge, as can simply standing on Status if the accused PC is Status 4.0 or higher.

If Taroki cannot arrange an excuse to challenge, then he will do his best to undermine the PCs by expressing skepticism about whether the Jade Champion, of all people, would attack the imperials, or if such an

upright and compassionate samurai as Shinjo Hazumi would murder an imperial in open court.

Yuritogen will listen quietly to the argument between Taroki and the PCs. If they can avoid the duel and make a believable case, Sincerity (Honesty or Deceit) / Awareness at TN 30 to convince the magistrate to march troops to Kyuden Miya.

Shiba Taroki

Tainted infiltrator

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 2

Initiative: 5k3

Armor TN: 20

Taint Rank: 3.0

Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 34 (+10), 40 (+15), 46 (+20), 52 (Down, +40), 58 (Out)

Attack: 8k3 (Katana, Complex)

Damage: 7k2

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
3	3	3	3	4

Honor: 1.5 Status: 1.5 Glory: 2.5

Primary Skills: Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5

Significant Dice Pools:

Assessment: 9k4 (single void)

Focus:

No assessment: 10k8+9 (double void)

Assessment Bonus: 10k8+9 (single void)

Strike: 9k4+5.

If a PC strikes him, he bleeds black, and he will attempt to strike them and kill them now that his tainted nature has been exposed. If he 'wins' the first touch duel, he will keep low dice on damage, as doing so is polite.

If he wins, Taroki will smugly assert that clearly the heavens favor him. Miya Yuritogen will shrug and apologize but state that he can be of no further help.

If a PC wins the duel:

Miya Yuritogen stares down as black blood leaches into the ground, flowing the corpse of his former yoriki.

"Clearly this conspiracy is wider than either of us imagined. My family's castle can not be allowed to remain in the hands of monsters. We will aid you, and I will send word to the nearest full Legion to support us if it comes to a siege.

Rest now, for we march in the morning."

If a PC convinces Yuritogen:

Miya Yuritogen shakes his head, and Shiba Taroki prepares to make another comment, then bites his tongue when his master raises his hand. "Enough. I believe these samurai. Monsters have overtaken my family's castle, and I cannot abide that. We will not allow Kyuden Miya to remain in the hands of the enemies of Rokugan. We will aid you, and I will send word to the nearest full legion to support us if it comes to a siege."

"Rest now, and we march in the morning."

If a PC loses the duel:

Shiba Taroki wipes his blade and bows. Miya Yuritogen shakes his head, "I am sorry, Samurai. I am sure something is afoot, but the celestial heavens speak for the result; I am sure you were just mistaken about what has occurred, or there was an innocent misunderstanding. Regardless, this is my post and I cannot lead my troops away without orders from my commanders.

You are welcome to stay here tonight, but I must bid you depart in the morning. Goodnight."
With that, the Emerald Magistrate and his yoriki turn and leave.

The PCs will now need to choose another place to seek assistance.

If all PCs fail to convince Yuritogen:

Miya Yuritogen shakes his head as Shiba Taroki smirks, "I am sorry, Samurai. I am sure something is afoot, but this is my post and I cannot lead my troops away without orders from my commanders. I will send a message to my superior in the legions, perhaps they will send troops to investigate what has happened at Kyuden Miya. It may be a few weeks before we have a response."

The PCs will need to choose another place to seek assistance, because a few weeks is far too long to wait for help.

Bayushi Gimon:

You ride hard to the south across the rolling hills of the Miya before reencountering the road that leads to the Scorpion lands in the south.

Near dusk, you finally reach a small encampment on the confluence of the roads leading to the Shinonmen

Mori in the west, the lands of the Minor Clans in the south, and the Scorpion in the east.

A large group of Scorpion, perhaps a quarter of a legion in size, go through the daily routines of a military camp; cleaning, daily drills, maintenance of equipment, and eating dinner.

Guards stand at attention as you arrive and bow low upon recognizing Soshi Hizoko. A word, and you are swiftly conducted into the command tent, where a lean scorpion man with a bit sits contemplating a map, and a woman with long hair and a slim black mask is standing over a set of reports. Both bow as you enter, and the woman responds

"Lady Soshi-sama, I am Bayushi Gimon, Gunso of the 9th Legion. How may I serve you today?"

Hizoko gestures to you, prompting you to explain.

If a PC played Lost Path, they would probably recognize Bayushi Gimon, and she them in turn. She will be polite, regardless of how that module resolved.

Bayushi Gimon is surprised to see the PCs, but will listen closely to them, ask what they need from her, ask for tactical details, and generally encourage the PCs to contribute a plan. She is focused on how to accomplish what the PCs are asking of her, so get the PCs to involve themselves in the planning process.

If a PC asks, her force's current assignment is to guard the western border and respond to any calls for aid from the minor clans.

She knows that Kyuden Miya, while it doesn't look it, is reasonably defensible and is designed to withstand attack. Gimon is a specialist in surprise attacks, ambushes, and clever feints, so she should probe the PCs on what kind of feints they might recommend, if they have ideas about weaknesses or blind spots, etc.

Fundamentally she doesn't need convincing because she knows that Soshi Hizoko outranks her and could just order her into battle regardless of her own opinion, so wants to be as ready as possible for the fight.

After staring at maps in silence for a long moment, Gimon finally nods. "I think we can do this. It will cost us, probably a lot, but I believe we can make it happen. I wish we had more troops, but we don't."

"My force is brave and skilled. Let us hope it is enough. Rest now samurai, you'll need your strength in the morning. I'll inform the others and have them make ready to move in the morning."

Later that night:

Regardless of which force the PCs choose, select a Courtier, non-combat shugenja, or otherwise the least combat capable PC in the party (use your judgement).

As the campfires burn low, and you prepare to return to Kyuden Miya, a middle-aged man with a shaved head approaches, and sits down on the hard earth.

He leans towards the firelight; you can see his kimono is a dark green and his body is covered in tattoos.

“I wondered if this would happen. I pondered if there was a way to avoid it. At least two tried, and both failed. So, now here we are. All of you, together, maybe you have a chance.”

His tattoos seem to ripple and shift slightly as he withdraws a rolled-up piece of paper from his sleeve.

He fixes [Selected PC] with a stare, and his eyes seem to glow golden, or maybe it’s just the reflection of the firelight, “If it must be done, then it must be done.”

He hands over the scroll then stands to leave.

The scroll is covered in words in a language you have never seen, and that you would at best struggle to pronounce.

If a PC is wondering who this is, Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence at TN 20 (Dragon get a Free Raise) to identify Hoshi, clan champion of the Dragon.

Hoshi does not remain long enough to answer many questions, nor is he inclined to do so for his own inscrutable reasons. If a PC asks for instruction on how to use the scroll, he will cryptically reiterate, “Speak the words when the moment is right.”

If a PC wants to know what he means by “all of you” or is thinking about not going to the final fight, Hoshi should reiterate that “All have a place in Fate’s plans. Whether or not they can see it” and that they should go regardless of personal combat ability.

Hoshi is at best enigmatic and should be downright unhelpful other than to stress that the PCs will know what path to choose when the situation presents itself and that Destiny is never fixed for the mortal man or woman.

Part Ten: Shifting Foes

The ride back to Kyuden Miya is easy, the warm spring air filling your lungs and the green plains of the northern empire are beginning to bloom in earnest.

Your force pulls their horses to a halt as it reaches the gates of Kyuden Miya; a force of samurai in full armor stand before you, hands on weapons. Most wear the purple of the Shinjo house guard, but more than a few wear the livery of the jade legion or the sashes of the jade magistrates.

Shouts go up from the defenders, a mix of battle cries of the Shinjo, and some other more inhuman noises, then their ranks part, and a figure in the armor of a Scorpion, whose mempo is carved with a crow steps forwards, limping ever so slightly.

The figure points a hand at you, semi-skeletal fingers visible beneath the black and red gauntlets.

The creature’s voice is hoarse, air travelling through an unliving throat, “Them. The Lady wishes to speak with them. They are to be conducted within, unharmed.”

[Name of chosen allied commander] gives you a nod, and your forces separate, allowing you to pass forward. After moving to the front, they close ranks again and prepare to give battle against the tainted foes.

If there are any quick actions, preparations, or supplies the PCs want to grab before going into the castle, they have a few minutes. They do not have time for elaborate or time-consuming activities (meditation, ritual spellcasting, etc), but things that take a round or two are reasonable.

Trying anything offensive or oriented towards attacking is inadvisable, and if asked the PCs allied commander think it is a good idea to keep Shinjo Hazumi distracted while the army fights outside of the castle; it will be much easier to defeat them without her on the field, and especially without having to conduct a siege.

Likewise, Shinjo Hazumi wants to speak to all of them, so encourage non-combat PCs to go inside.

If there are any specific weapons or things the PCs want to take with them, within reason (other than Jade), someone can find it for them.

If the PCs took the Moto White Guard, Moto Ogedei will offer them each a small packet of Jade Powder; it will be good for two strikes, allowing those attacks to count as Jade.

A dragon samurai in full armor wearing the sash of a Jade Magistrate rides forward, nods at you, and then waits for you to follow him into the castle. Beneath the mask you can just barely make out the face of Kitsuki Oda as he leads you through empty hallways to the central court of Kyuden Miya, then turns and leaves.

The entire court chamber is empty except for yourselves, Shinjo Hazumi and a few members of the Shinjo house guard, lurking in the shadows at the room's edges. Hazumi paces back and forth, standing on the dais at the far side of the room. She seems to mutter, half to herself, "You brought an army. It won't matter."

She stops and turns to you, "The sons of Akodo have failed. They spend their time grasping for power, obsessed with ruling. They have lost compassion for their subjects and empathy for their people. They have embraced dishonor and blindness in the name of tradition."

"We don't need to war today, tell your allies outside, join your forces to mine. We'll set right what is wrong. We'll tear down this corrupt order, build a new one. We will break the power of the liars, the assassins, and the backstabbers. Don't you see? A new empire. A better empire. An empire for all its people, instead of just the powerful few. You know it is for the best, just as I do."

The PCs are free to simply attack the tainted Unicorn clan champion if they wish. She is willing to carry on her tirade until the PCs become overtly hostile, but if it becomes clear that the conversation is just going in circles, the PCs are stalling her, or they have otherwise failed to make progress she should grow tired, say something like "Enough of this!" and engage them in battle.

Discussion:

The PCs have a chance to convince Shinjo Hazumi to give up her maddened quest

If they ask where Iuchi Katachi is, she will smirk, "He has gone to rally more of our allies for the coming struggle." (Katachai left the castle shortly after the PCs fled).

Example counterarguments that Shinjo might make to the PCs:

If they argue in favor of bushido: "What does Bushido matter now? Fathers protect assassin sons, clans protect families full of criminals, allies turn away in favor of backstabbers, and the imperials take bribes to declare it all honorable and righteous? Where is Bushido in any of that? The empire has left bushido behind."

If they argue in favor of tradition: "Yes, yes. The tradition of the Imperial Herald abusing his position to favor his clan. The tradition of the Imperial Chancellor plotting to usurp his brother's authority, though in fairness not his throne. The tradition of the Emerald Champion mollycoddling the emperor to 'protect' him from poor choices. Yes, our empire is a very traditional one at heart."

If they are disbelievers: "The Celestial Order has failed the people; it is used to oppress instead of to help. Where are the Celestial Heavens when the people need them? We do not need to heed their commands any longer."

If they argue that the taint is corrupting her or influencing her decisions:

"The Taint is influencing me? I have heard ***enough*** of such things over the years. Prophecy is influencing me. The Soul of Shinjo is influencing me. The Celestial Heavens are influencing me. No! I make my own choices. What happened to Fate Favors the Mortal Woman? I choose my own path. It is the empire that is corrupted, surely you must see that."

Shinjo should offer at least token counterarguments for whatever topic the PCs raise, focusing on realism over tradition or ideals. Feel free to improvise counterarguments that you feel make sense. If the PCs were sympathetic to Shinjo earlier, then if possible, throw their words from the dinner back at them.

There are two main avenues that will shake Shinjo's convictions:

Method 1: Understanding her frustrations, arguing against the concept of destiny, or showing concern for her soul and the Soul of Shinjo. The TN for an appropriate Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness or Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness is 60. If a PC fails at Method 1, they can attempt Method 2, though not vice-versa.

Method 2: Appeals to tradition, honor, and Bushido. The TN for an appropriate Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness or Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness roll is 50.

If a PC attempts to use Sincerity (Dishonesty) the roll automatically fails; Shinjo is impossible to deceive with petty lies.

If the PCs talk Shinjo into committing seppuku (method 1):

Shinjo Hazumi drops to her knees, steadies herself, and draws her wakizashi from its saya.

Beneath her breath you can hear her mutter a short prayer, then her final words, “Thus do I cleanse my shame.”

She plunges the blade into her stomach, drawing it slowly across, completing the three cuts, then she bows her head.

With a swing, you bring your sword down and lop her head from her shoulders.

For a moment the chamber becomes cold, and ten pinpricks of dancing light are visible, then wink out again. A mirthless clacking laugh rings through the court.

Silence settles over the castle, and a few minutes later your allies burst in as shouts of triumph ring through the halls of Kyuden Miya.

Proceed to the conclusion.

If the PCs talk Shinjo into committing seppuku (method two):

Shinjo Hazumi drops to her knees, steadies herself, and with trembling hands draws her wakizashi from its saya.

Beneath her breath you can hear her mutter a short prayer, “kami forgive me”.

She plunges the blade into her stomach, completes most of the first cut, then struggles to continue.

With a swing, you bring your sword down and lop her head from her shoulders. It falls into her lap and she slumps over forwards

For a moment nothing happens, and then she shudders, and her body begins to move; her hands place her head back onto her shoulders as her features begin to change and flow.

You step back as a single horn sprouts from her forehead, along with two more from the crown of her head. Her face is one moment human, the next blending into something vaguely equine, then finally a

nightmarish amalgamation of human, horse, and insect, while her eyes glow a baleful red.

“I am not so easily ended. Put away your weapons, join me, and together we will reforge Rokugan, or die.”

Go straight to the Shinjo the Corrupted portion of the fight.

The fight:

At any point during the fight the PC possessing the Black Scroll and open it and read it. Doing so is a Simple Action. The fight immediately ends, go to the Black Scroll box text.

Shinjo Hazumi should not prioritize incapacitating whomever is carrying the Black Scroll; among other things, the scroll should be the PCs final recourse, even if doing so would not normally be possible due to Action rules, they should have a chance to choose to read it if they would otherwise “wipe”.

Shinjo Hazumi is accompanied by a number of House Guard equal to two less than the number combat capable PC's. If all or most of the combat capable PCs are rank 3, the House Guard should have Earth 3 instead of Earth 4. If most of the PCs are rank 5, Hazumi should have an extra Free Action attack each round, 75 extra Wounds in her normal form and 100 extra wounds in her Corrupted form.

Shinjo Hazumi

Tainted Unicorn Clan Champion

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 5

Initiative: 10k6

Armor TN: 30

Reduction: 3 (Jade)

Taint Rank: 4.0

Wounds: 135 (Dead, see below)

Attack: 10k8 (Enginoshi, Simple, Emphasis)

Damage: 10k3, exploding 9's. (Enginoshi)

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
5	5	5	5	6

Honor: 2.5 Status: 8.5 Glory: 8.0

Primary Skills: Courtier 5, Sincerity (Honesty) 5, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 7, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Defense 5.

Special Mechanics:

Power of the Taint – Shinjo Hazumi has been significantly empowered by the Taint. All magic has a +10 TN penalty to affect her. She can see through darkness, fog, and illusions automatically, though while doing so her eyes will glow blue. Shinjo Hazumi moves as if her Water ring were two higher.

Soul of Shinjo – Shinjo Hazumi has begun to tap into the latent power of the Soul of Shinjo; she can shift impossibly quickly to evade any Grapples, and is immune to Conditions or effects that would restrict her movement or that would directly incapacitate her in any way (Embrace of Suitengu, etc). Her rings and traits cannot be altered.

Shinjo Bushi – When spending void points, she can make a Void Ring roll at TN 30 as a Free Action to not spend the void point. When voiding for a skill roll gains +7 to the total.

Whirling Strikes – Shinjo Hazumi can use the Extra Attack maneuver for only Three Raises if all of her attacks in a given round target different opponents. She will attempt to do this on both her primary attacks if able each round.

Celestial Sword of the Unicorn, Enginoshi – Enginoshi is a nemuranai katana whose bonuses are included in Shinjo Hazumi’s stats above. If she is disarmed, she can call Enginoshi back to hand as a Free Action, even if another is holding it.

Shinjo Hazumi has access to all five ranks of the Shinjo Bushi school, but for the sake of a fun encounter won’t drop into Defense or Full Defense stances to utilize the parry techniques because frankly it would be boring.

Shinjo House Guard

Tainted Unicorn

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 4

Initiative: 8k4

Armor TN: 30 (Light Armor) **Reduction:** 3

Taint Rank: 4.0

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

Attack: 10k4 (Katana, Simple, Emphasis)

Damage: 8k2. (Katana)

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
4	4	4	4	3

Honor: 2.5 Status: 3.0 Glory: 2.0

Primary Skills: Horsemanship 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Defense 5.

Special Mechanics: The house guard will avoid using their techniques, because that would make a boring fight. One of them will spend one of their simple actions each turn performing a Guard on Shinjo Hazumi.

When the PCs drop Shinjo Hazumi to what would be the Dead wound rank:

Shinjo Hazumi drops to her knees, about to collapse. She gasps and air leaves her lungs for what is likely the last time.

She wheezes. Then she draws in a sharp breath, and laughs. A mirthless laugh. The noise echoes off the walls of the courtroom, reverberating and increasing in volume until the sound is all you can hear.

Shinjo puts a foot underneath herself, and impossibly, for there is no way the human body could sustain such injuries and continue to fight, rises.

Her features begin to change and flow as a single horn sprouts from her forehead, along with two more from the crown of her head. Her face is one moment human, the next blending into something vaguely equine, then a nightmarish amalgamation of human, horse, and insect, while her eyes glow a baleful red.

“I am not so easily ended. I will give you one last chance; put away your weapons and join me, and we will reforge Rokugan.”

Presumably the PCs will not take up the tainted monster on her offer. Note that this is not an opportunity to reengage in RP; if the PCs do anything except accepting her as their liege Shinjo recommits to the fight.

Fear 4

Shinjo the Corrupted

Tainted monster

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 5

Initiative: 10k6

Armor TN: 30

Reduction: 10 (Jade or Crystal)

Taint Rank: 5.0

Wounds: 250 (Dead)

Attack: 10k9 (Enginoshi, Simple),
10k6 (Black Claw, Free)

Damage: 10k3, exploding 9’s. (Enginoshi)
8k3 (Claw)

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
6	7	6	6	0

Honor: Status: Glory:

Primary Skills: Courtier 5, Sincerity (Honesty) 5, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 7, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Defense 5.

Special Mechanics:

Power of the Taint – Shinjo Hazumi has been significantly empowered by the Taint. All magic has a +20 TN penalty to affect her. She can see through darkness, fog, and illusions automatically, though while doing so her eyes will glow blue. Shinjo Hazumi moves as if her Water ring were two higher.

Shinjo Hazumi has grown long sharp claws of obsidian (see below).

Soul of Shinjo – Shinjo Hazumi has begun to tap into the latent power of the Soul of Shinjo; she can shift impossibly quickly to evade any Grapples, and is immune to Conditions or effects that would restrict her movement or that would directly incapacitate her in any way (Embrace of Suitengu, etc). Her rings and traits cannot be altered.

Black Claw – Shinjo’s speed increases to inhuman levels; she can make a single Free Action attack twice per round with the clawed fingers of her offhand, which can’t be directed at any characters she attacks with her katana.

Celestial Sword of the Unicorn, Enginoshi – Enginoshi is a nemuranai katana whose bonuses are included in Shinjo Hazumi’s stats above. If she is disarmed, she can call Enginoshi back to hand as a Free Action, even if another is holding it.

Note that in this form she no longer has access to the void recovery benefits of her school or her Whirling Strikes ability, and that her magic resistance increases by 10.

As a general principle, try to spread Shinjo Hazumi’s attacks across the entire party rather than focusing down one or two opponents; make everything feel at least somewhat threatened.

Once the PCs win:

The monster that used to be Shinjo Hazumi stares for a moment in disbelief, then collapses to the ground with a shudder.

The corpse twitches and spasms, then begins to collapse in on itself. After a moment the body of the monster is gone, and only the human corpse of the former Unicorn Champion remains.

For a moment the chamber becomes cold, and ten pinpricks of dancing light are visible, then wink out again. A mirthless clacking laugh rings through the room, then silence settles over the court.

A few minutes later your allies burst in as shouts of triumph ring through the halls of Kyuden Miya.

Proceed to conclusion

Black Scroll:

You unfurl the scroll, and though the writing on it is clearly not in Rokugani you have no difficulty pronouncing the words. A drop of sweat rolls from your forehead.

As the syllables slip from your lips the world seems to freeze, time itself standing still while you speak. The droplet stops halfway to the floor.

Then just as suddenly it is complete. The bead of water splashes against the stonework.

Shinjo Hazumi turns and looks at you in horror as the paper in your hands blackens and rolls up of its own accord. Her eyes roll backwards in her head and she collapses limp to the floor, completely lifeless. A human-looking corpse, as though the events of the past few days had never occurred.

For a moment the chamber becomes cold, and ten pinpricks of dancing light are visible, then wink out again. A mirthless clacking laugh rings through the room, then silence settles over the court.

The threat has passed.

A monk covered in tattoos appears at the doorway, nods to you, and holds out his hand to accept the scroll. “It must be taken far from here. Your part is done.”

The PC has trapped the Soul of Shinjo in a brand-new Black Scroll.

Presumably the PC will turn the scroll over to Hoshi. If they do not, he shakes his head at them, and then takes it with an impossibly fast grab, then leaves the room moving at an inhuman speed (advanced Centipede tattoo).

Proceed to Conclusion.

Conclusion

The threat of the tainted Unicorn clan champion has passed, and with the sincere thanks of all involved, you are dismissed to return to your homelands.

It takes the wider empire a few days to believe the news, but in time the truth of what happened at Kyuden Miya takes root.

In the absence of any clear successor among the Shinjo, the Unicorn daimyo meet for the second time in as many years to decide who will fill the void in their clan’s leadership.

If a PC happens to specifically ask, neither Bayushi Tenno’s armor nor his corpse were found in the aftermath of the battle.

Kitsuki Oda’s corpse is likewise not among the dead.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Playing the Module:	1 XP
Good Roleplaying:	1 XP
Discerning Kitsu Esa's Fate	1 XP
Confronting Shinjo Hazumi:	1 XP
Ending the threat of Shinjo Hazumi:	1 XP
Total Possible Experience:	5 XP

Favors

Defeating Shinjo Hazumi results in a Favor from the Imperial Herald.

Honor

Facing a tainted reincarnated kami: H 10

Glory

Defeating a tainted reincarnated kami: G 11

Allies and Enemies

If the PCs secured the assistance of Moto Sartaq, they gain him as an Ally (I4, D1).

If the PCs secured the assistance of Bayushi Gimon, they gain her as an Ally (I2, D1) and Soshi Hizoko (I3, D1).

If the PCs secured the assistance of Miya Yuritogen, they gain her as an Ally (I3, D2).

GM Reporting

- 1) Did Shinjo Hazumi cleanse herself successfully via seppuku (Method 1)?
- 2) Was Shinjo Hazumi's soul captured in the black scroll?
- 3) Which Ally was selected?
 - a. The Khan
 - b. Bayushi Gimon
 - c. Miya Yuritogen
- 4) Was Seppun Hanako saved from Kyuden Miya by the PCs?
- 5) Was Seppun Masaharu saved from Kyuden Miya by the PCs?
- 6) Was Shiba Kaito saved from Kyuden Miya by the PCs?
- 7) Was Hiruma Izumi saved from Kyuden Miya by the PCs?
- 8) Was Moshi Atsuko saved from Kyuden Miya by the PCs?
- 9) Was Miya Masako saved from Kyuden Miya by the PCs?

The GM must report this information by September 19, 2020 for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs you really shouldn't need

I really hope you don't need these stat blocks

Bayushi Tenno

A scorpion Magistrate

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 5 / Emerald Magistrate / Bayushi Courtier 1 (IR 7)

Initiative: 10k7

Armor TN: 30 or 35

Reduction: 3

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

Attack: 10k6+5 (Katana, Simple)

Damage: 8k2 (Katana)

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
5	4	5	4	5

Honor: 5 Status: 5 Glory: 6

Primary Skills: Courtier 6, Sincerity 5, Acting 5, Lore: Law 6, Iaijutsu (Focus) 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Stealth 5, Investigation (Notice, Interrogation) 6

Advantages/Disadvantages: Quick.

Moto Noritoshi

Son of the Khan

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 4

Initiative: 9k5+14

Armor TN: 30

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

Attack: 10k4 (Katana, Simple)

Or 10k5 from Kakita 2 if higher initiative.

Damage: 7k2

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
5	3	4	3	4

Honor: 3.5 Status: 7.5 Glory: 8

Primary Skills: Courtier 5, Etiquette 5, Iaijutsu (Focus) 7, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6

Advantages/Disadvantages: Prodigy

Moto Sartag

Khan of the Moto

School/Rank: Moto Bushi 5 / Topaz Champion (IR 8)

Initiative: 10k7

Armor TN: 30

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

Attack: 10k6 (Nemuranai Katana, Simple), plus half TN penalty of opponent

Damage: 10k3, 10k5 if in Full Attack, exploding 9's.

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
5	5	5	5	5

Honor: 3.5 Status: 7.5 Glory: 8

Primary Skills: Courtier 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 6, Etiquette 5, Iaijutsu (Focus) 6, Kenjutsu (Katana, Scimitar) 7

Advantages/Disadvantages: Prodigy. 5 points of Social or Mental disadvantages (for Bayushi Courtiers).

Topaz Champion Path: 5 bonus void points per day which may only enhance School Skill rolls.

Appendix #2: Court NPCs

Miya Chien (Status 6) – Imperial Arbitrator, cousin to the Miya Daimyo, a woman with a reputation for being fair, a good listener with an exceptionally perceptive mind, and who has no hesitation to wield the imperial bureaucracy against anyone that disobeys her decisions. In her late 30's, and highly regarded by those that know what is good for them.

Miya Chien is here on instructions from the Imperial Herald Mirumoto Kasei and the Imperial Chancellor Seppun Kazetora (as a favor repaid to the Scorpion) to ensure that the Unicorn are frustrated in their attempts to go to war. If she can bring the increasingly reckless and unpredictable Unicorn Champion back into line, so much the better.

What she knows about Kitsu Esa: Kitsu Esa was a thorn in her side; overly suspicious, asking rude questions of the guests, poking about everywhere, and the guards kept sending reports that Kitsu Esa was in places she wasn't expected to be like the loading dock. Miya Chien is glad that Kitsu Esa decided to leave, because she was troublesome and uncouth.

If the PCs ask questions similar to those that Esa asked, Chien will become politely unfriendly to the PCs as well. If the PCs persist in bothering her, she will not hesitate to wield the machinery of the court to make their lives uncomfortable.

Miya Masako (Status 3) – Representative of the Imperial Herald, Mirumoto Kasei. Masako is an expert in disaster relief and contingency planning, and frankly this court is a waste of her talents. She is fully aware that the negotiations were prompted by the Scorpion clan champion, Mirumoto Kasei, and Seppun Kazetora using their influence to shield their allies in the Dragon and Scorpion clans. She is sympathetic to Shinjo Hazumi, but intends to obey her lord's orders, and relay back to him what happens at this court.

What she knows about Kitsu Esa: Kitsu Esa asked a lot of questions about goods transfer in and out of the castle. Her questions were suspiciously detailed, so Masako sent her down to the shipping docks to talk to Miya Anzai. Masako presumes Kitsu Esa was worried about something being shipped out of the castle, so probably left to track where it went and who received it.

Seppun Masaharu (Status 4) - Assistant to the Imperial Chancellor's Herald, Master of Rituals for the Seventh Hall of the Forbidden City, Keeper of the Ceremonial Keys to the Inner Gates of the Imperial Libraries Third Floor, Aide to the Supervisor of Messages between the Imperial Library and the Brotherhood, Keeper of the One Hundred and Third Building in the Forbidden City, Seppun Masaharu.

Seppun Masaharu is here to see that proper protocols are observed, and because he was annoying the Imperial Chancellor. Masaharu intends to make the most of the opportunity to travel beyond the capital by ensuring that everyone in Kyuden Miya also observes all the proper formalities of protocol and address. The chance to peruse the archive of personal mon and titles is a bonus treat, since it gives him more chances to correct people who use incorrect forms of address.

What he knows about Kitsu Esa: Kitsu Esa displeased Seppun Masaharu; she did not use the proper forms of address, definitely did not know which spoon was proper for the second soup course after rice, thought he was the Chancellor to the Imperial Herald instead of the Imperial Chancellor's Herald, and kept asking annoying questions about the temples outside the castle. How is he supposed to know when the Temple to the Moon is open? Night time maybe?

Shinjo Hazumi (Status 8) – The champion of the Unicorn clan, a woman of great skill with a blade and horse. Renowned for her kindness, understanding, and compassion. Two years ago, she was attacked by an assassin and narrowly escaped with her life, including a period of many months in a coma while she was attended by the Iuchi. Since awakening, she has sought, and been stymied, in her pursuit of redress against the Dragon for their attack and the Scorpion for their diplomatic snubs.

What she knows about Kitsu Esa: I have never met that Lion, and I know only that when the Scorpion turned their backs on us their first action was to go running to the Lion to replace us. It shows that we were nothing to the Scorpion beyond an interchangeable source of military might. Hopefully the Lion learns from this before they too are discarded.”

Soshi Hizoko (Status 7) – Daimyo of the Soshi family, Hizoko is a young woman who carries many of the traits famous among her clan. Young, charming, and rather conventionally attractive, she is a common sight in many courts across the Empire. She is here to make sure that the negotiations go to plan and that the ambitions of the Unicorn are thwarted. The Scorpion are already embroiled in a contentious war with the Owl which, while it is going well, would be problematic if the Unicorn intervened. Her goal is to see the imperials bring the negotiations to the expected outcome without giving the Unicorn new or expanded cause for war with the Scorpion, so her plan is to be as bland and inoffensive as possible.

What she knows about Kitsu Esa: She only spoke with Esa once; Hizoko ran into her while Esa was on her way back from visiting the Temple of the Moon (the Western temple). They had a brief conversation about the role of Lady Moon in Rokugan and the differences between the cosmological functions of the former Lord Moon and the current Lady Moon. Esa seemed preoccupied by something, but they had a very interesting conversation. Hizoko was hoping they could continue it, but apparently Esa left the castle.

Bayushi Tenno (Status 5 / Emerald Magistrate) – A senior Emerald Magistrate and the former chief magistrate of the City of Beiden. As a clan magistrate he had a reputation for fairness and an impeccable record for solving crimes and apprehending thieves and smugglers. He is exceptionally handsome, wears a crow mask whose wings cover his forehead, and he walks with a cane; a relic of a serious injury two years ago. He has however largely recovered but hides that fact exceptionally well. He is in his early 30's.

What he knows about Kitsu Esa: See Part Two

Seppun (nee Doji) Hanako (Status 4+) - A familiar face in all of the major courts of Rokugan, Seppun Hanako represents the interests of the Crane with grace and dignity. A soft word from her has brought an end to several incipient conflicts (to the chagrin of those who wished to make their reputation in war), though it is rumored that she is more willing than most of her family to use sterner measures when required. She is supposedly a patron and great appreciator of all forms of artistry.

Hanako shredded the reputation of Shiba Kaito in a Unicorn court two years ago, and as a result the semi-famous sculptor made amends to the Crane over the winter. Hanako intends to lavish praise on the Phoenix man now that he is back in the clan's good graces, and perhaps help him find a suitable wife. His talent is wasted in the Phoenix, especially now that they have closed off their borders. Hiruma Izumi has been making overtures, and the only place less useful for a talented sculptor than his current role would be in the Crab, so she intends to thwart that idea.

What she knows about Kitsu Esa: Esa was quite pleasant, for a Lion. They had tea together, discussed painting, and had a lively debate about composition and which pigments create the best reds. She was fond of a cypress red, and I am partial to safflower red. She was going to show me a painting she was working on, but I suppose whatever business called her away was more pressing.

Shiba Kaito (Status 2)– A sculptor of moderate renown, Kaito is tall and handsome. He recently unveiled a sculpture in the Crane lands titled “Pure Note” and gifted it to a Kakita lord. It received high praise from his hosts. He as largely successfully patched things up with the Crane after **incident** at Shiro Ide a few years ago, but the crane are still keeping a close eye on him. He is at the castle hoping to do some research for his next project; he was intending to sculpt a particular Hantei from the 6th century for the Owl, but details on the exact design of his personal mon have been scant, so Kaito came here hoping to find a copy in the archives. So far, the Miya are delaying him, probably until the court is over, so he passes his days mostly working on his sketchbook and trying to avoid Seppun Hanako.

What he knows about Kitsu Esa: Shiba Kaito knows nothing about Kitsu Esa. He never spoke to her and doesn't recall ever seeing her in passing.

Hiruma Izumi (Status 2) - Izumi is a former Crab scout now assigned to the courts. She walks with a pronounced limp but has a very open and friendly attitude. Unless a Crane is around. Hiruma Izumi's foot was severely injured by a Crane 'trap' during the war with the Crane a few years ago, and it forced her to be reassigned from the battlefields to the courts. She has become quite proficient at representing the Crab's interests, and while she is no Yasuki, she has become good at papering over misunderstandings between the Crab and other clans. She leaves the

trade negotiations to the Yasuki whenever possible, however. She enjoys kemari and has something of an interest in Shiba Kaito.

What she knows about Kitsu Esa: Esa was asking her about shipping manifests, and whether the Crab were engaged in moving any goods through Kyuden Miya. First of all, that is none of her business. Second of all, I am not a Yasuki. Third, go talk to the Miya quartermaster, that's his job. Just because I'm a Crab doesn't mean I know every good that goes through every castle.

Izumi was annoyed that Kitsu Esa kept asking her questions about commerce and treating her like a Yasuki, which she clearly is not, and the Lion obviously don't know the difference. But of course the Lion don't, why would they care about what the Crab actually *do*. They're barely better than the Crane after the stunt the Lion clan champion pulled a couple years back.

Moshi Atsuko (Status 2) - A priest from the Moshi family, is very friendly and has become a skilled priest and navigator. She longs to be back on the seas, but that will likely not happen until summer. In the meantime, she knows she will likely have to endure a couple court assignments. She enjoys telling stories about her 'adventures' on the high seas, convincing overly proper samurai to sing sea shanties with her, and drinking. She has gotten slightly better at holding her alcohol since an 'incident' at Shiro Ide a few years back. She has spent the majority of her time meditating in the Temple of the Sun (the Eastern temple) and talking to the monks there, because the imperials strike her as overly stuffy. Especially Seppun Masaharu. She called him The Herald to the Imperial Chancellor's Assistant on purpose the other day and he sputtered for hours, it was great.

What she knows about Kitsu Esa: "Esa-san was really nice! We talked for a while about travelling, she's a jade magistrate, so she's been to lots of cool places. She was telling me about this one time when she visited the shrine of Osano-Wo and got to run through a really cool obstacle course and there was this geyser that erupted like WHOOSH and I wish I could have gone."

She knows that Esa spent some time talking to the monks in the Temple to the Moon.

Kitsuki Oda (Status 3) - An investigator and courtier from the Kitsuki. Recently promoted to Jade Magistrate after unravelling a cult revering some Yobanjin gods and practicing forbidden magic that had taken root among some peasants in the border area between the western Phoenix lands and south eastern Dragon lands.

Oda has had trouble sleeping for years and is prone to walking the halls at night when he can't sleep. He also has a bad reputation for jumping at shadows. Unbeknownst to Oda, he was Tainted years ago during an investigation, and both maladies stemmed from the creeping corruption of his soul. In the last year he has become aware of his corruption and was a primary reason the Jade Champion recruited him to his nefarious cause. Oda realized what Kitsu Esa was investigating and followed her into the basement of Kyuden Hantei where she found the weapons that the Jade Champion had been smuggling through the castle. Oda stabbed her with a Tainted knife and left her shackled in the basement with the intent that the wound would Taint her so that she could be converted to the cause.

Oda is well trained in the Kitsuki School (rank 4), has Awareness 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, and his shadowlands powers both mask his own taint and give him +10 to any Sincerity rolls to hide his misdeeds. He will avoid lying directly to the PCs; instead he will simply omit pertinent information if possible.

If the PCs ask him about Kitsu Esa, he will tell that that she was investigating something, but she didn't tell him what and that when they spoke she only had vague suspicions and wasn't ready to open a formal investigation, so didn't want to cause a scandal by spreading what might just amount to rumor. Whatever it was involved the castle and the Miya, so Esa was very circumspect about the various Miya finding out the particulars of her investigation (this is true; Esa had realized contraband was being funneled through the castle and was unsure if the Miya were involved. Oda knows they weren't but is happy to repeat Esa's incorrect suspicions to the PCs to throw them off the trail).

Appendix #3: Investigation Locations

Servants

There are two subgroups of servants who know different things and were talked to at different times by Kitsu Esa. They don't know much themselves but should be able to succinctly point the PCs to other areas of investigation. A Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness check at TN 15 will reveal which groups of servants Kitsu Esa spoke with about her investigation.

Court Messengers:

After a couple frustrated attempts to find the correct messenger, you eventually manage to locate the runner that was couriating information for Kitsu Esa. The young man bows low to you, "Oh, samurai-sama. This one is Eishi and he apologizes, but he has a lot of memos to deliver at the moment. I... uhhh." He stops, clearly not wanting to actually tell a samurai No, 'uhh... I guess if it's quick I can help without getting in trouble... Did you say whose messages you wanted to know about?'"

Eishi was carrying a variety of messages between Kitsu Esa and the monks of the Eastern temple, as well as between her and Kitsuki Oda. He didn't open them, obviously, but he knows that she wrote longer notes to both Oda and the monks than she got back in return.

Eishi thinks that some of the messages were asking Oda about the various Miya, because when Oda was writing his responses, he mumbled something about Miya Chien and Miya Masako.

After taking the monk's last response to Esa, Eishi is pretty sure that she went off in that direction to visit the Eastern Temple.

Kitchen Servants:

The kitchens of Kyuden Miya are a riot of activity, with servants moving in every direction, cooks preparing food, and a pair of bakers in the corner preparing breads trying valiantly not to spill the soups that some of the waiters keep placing quite too near their ovens.

After a few moments of shouting over the din, a middle-aged peasant man with a tall hat and a demeanor of one that is normally obeyed walks over. "Samurai, I get you somethin'? My kitchen's a bit busy a' the moment, so what'll it be? We have some miso ready, and I think the buns are about ready to come out. If you want something with a bit of kick, one of the Unicorn left a jar of spicy stuff around here, and I put Shota in charge of coming up with something to make out of it. HEY SHOTA, YOU FINISHED YET WITH THEM UNICORN PEPPERS?"

There is a clattering of pots, and from a corner someone a voice yells, "No boss, ramen's not ready yet." The head chef turns back to you and shrugs, "Sorry, ramen's not ready yet."

Kitsu Esa came through the kitchens and questioned the chef, Enji, about the food being prepared, where the food was imported from, and how it was stored. She took her meals in her quarters and insisted that her food be prepared separately from the other guests, which Enji thought was very strange but frankly he's dealt with stranger requests.

Enji brought her food up to her personally, again at her request, and couldn't help but notice that her room in the castle seemed like a complete mess.

If the PCs want to stick around for the ramen, it will take Shota about 15 minutes to finish cooking it. It is extremely spicy and non-Unicorn players should probably roll Etiquette / Stamina to not cry out from the heat.

Loading Docks / Stables

Peasants load and unload cargo from wagons, grooms brush down and feed horses, and a single samurai, a thin man in a green kimono with a greasy looking topknot, flips a coin in one hand and whistles as a pair of laborers load crates into the wagon he is sitting on.

He drops the coin as his eyes settle on you. “Oh, it’s you again. I just got here, I ain’t done nothin’, and I ain’t talkin’. So, leave me alone. Bother some of the peasants or something, they probably know whatever it is you wanna know.”

Most of the peasants ignore the Dragon samurai’s sudden paranoia and keep working, though one groom taking care of the horses leans against a stable wall to watch and begins to munch on a carrot. The horse he was brushing promptly steals the carrot.

This is Kitsuki Nikaru, information broker and occasional smuggler. The PCs may have encountered him in Shiro Tonbo during Bleak Portents. He will refuse to answer any questions unless the PCs first agree not to arrest him.

If the PCs want to talk to the peasants, as Nikaru suggested, the groom Hachi, who just lost his carrot to the horse, knows the following:

- Kitsuki Esa was asking some questions a day before she went missing about shipping manifests. Apparently, they had gone missing and she wanted to know who had seen them last. Hachi told her it was probably the dock foreman, Miya Anzai
- Esa kept asking questions about where goods were stored, but Hachi doesn’t know. The porters take stuff inside for the most part. The porters, who are nearby, will chime in that there are storage areas in the basements under Kyuden Hantei and under the Western temple. There used to be storage under Kyuden Miya, but it got turned into more guest rooms years ago.

If the PCs give their word that they won’t arrest Kitsuki Nikaru (who is a tad paranoid about PC investigators), he will cooperate and answer questions. If they try to arrest him anyway, he will flee.

- He has never met Kitsuki Esa and has no idea what she was looking for.
- He is here to find out some information about an old suit of armor; a Yasuki paid him a lot of money to track down a suit of armor that was last seen in the 11th century. It’s not here, obviously, but Nikaru thinks that it got shipped through here a month back when a collector from Lion lands bought it off some ronin that live in the Shinomen Mori. He took a contract to cart some records back to Shiro Mirumoto for the Miya (this is legitimate; he has a valid contract and travel papers), and is just waiting on the Miya to load the cart so he can get on the road.
- He doesn’t know who has the shipping logs or copies of manifests now.
- He paid a peasant two days ago to let him borrow the shipping logs overnight so he could make copies. He returned them in the morning, he doesn’t know what happened since then. He has the copies, and if the PCs pay him, he’ll let them see them, or maybe make a copy for themselves if they’re quick for the low price of 5 koku. He could also be cajoled (Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness at TN 25) or threatened (Intimidation (Bullying or Control) / Willpower at TN 20) into letting them borrow his copies.

If the PCs get the logbook, finding discrepancies is a matter of comparing entries meticulously until a pattern of non-matching deliveries and shipments is found. This requires Commerce / Intelligence at TN 20 – Someone using the name Miya Satoshi has been receiving deliveries that don’t correspond to anything ordered and which have no shipping manifests.

Miya Satoshi was the name of a famous samurai from the time of Toturi the first and is clearly a pseudonym.

If the PCs are persistent about talking to the dock foreman, Miya Anzai can eventually be tracked down. He knows everything the groom does, as well as that the logbook went missing the day that Kitsuki Esa disappeared (he is not actually aware Kitsuki Esa has disappeared) and has been searching for it since. If a PC asks about the purple and green symbol from Kitsuki Esa’s sketch, Anzai recalls seeing it on some of the supply crates, but without the log book doesn’t know if those crates were meant for the castle or to retransmit, or where they might have been stored.

Kitsu Esa's quarters

Kitsu Esa's quarters are in the former basement of Kyuden Miya – the increase in importance of the family castle of the Miya in recent centuries saw a need for expanded guest quarters so the former storage areas were converted with fine wood floors and walls to become passable accommodation for samurai of lesser importance that area visiting the castle.

A servant slides open the door to Kitsu Esa's quarters and bows low. "I apologize for the state of the rooms. We did not want to move any of magistrate-sama's things while she was away so that everything would be as she left it when she returned."

Indeed, Kitsu Esa's spartan room is covered with books, papers, names, and scribbled notes full of numbers and times. On one wall is a large cork board where she has affixed bits of paper with hairpins.

Her trunk of clothes lies open in one corner, with a few kimonos still hanging up in the closet for her use. Her futon is unrolled and remains in another corner, and a tea pot sits half-full on a small end table next to it.

Kitsu Esa's room is a mess, but it is full of potential clues.

Searching the room: Investigation (Search) / Perception:

- TN 5: It doesn't look like she took any of her stuff with her if she left.
- TN 10: The tea is very cold and the rice next to it smells of overly strong vinegar. She has clearly been gone at least since the evening before you spoke with Bayushi Tenno.
- TN 25: Many of the papers that are scattered around seem like they were at one point up on the cork board but were torn down and discarded. They almost all contain the names of places and lists of goods.
- TN 35: There is a lot of dirt and dust on the hems and sleeves of the last kimono she wore.

Deciphering the cork board: Lore: Law / Intelligence, Commerce / Intelligence, or Raw Intelligence:

- TN 5: The names of most of the guests of the court are on the board, including yours!
- TN 10: Pieces of paper are tacked to the board near the names; it looks like they are lists of goods that were shipped to those people. Hey, look, Seppun Hanako had someone ship her an entire crate of extra combs last week.
- TN 20: There is a group of papers stuck to the board that aren't tacked next to names, and these all have lists of very ordinary goods on them – spare carpentry supplies, unassembled furniture, and spare garments.
- TN 30: On the corner of a couple pieces of paper it looks like Kitsu Esa drew a strange purple and green symbol and scribbled the word 'storage?'

Looking through her trunk of stuff: Investigation (Search) / Perception:

- TN 15: The trunk of clothes has a lot of knives in it. Like, a lot of knives.
- TN 25: Under the bottom of the trunk is a compartment with a journal in it. Give the PCs **Handout 4**.

Kitsu Esa suspected that contraband of some form was being shipped into the castle and stored somewhere, because the incoming goods didn't match what the castle was using or the records of the outgoing goods. They were either stockpiling for some reason, or more likely in Kitsu Esa's opinion, they were mislabeling the containers for smuggling. Based on the numbers, Kitsu Esa reasoned that whatever it was must still be in the castle compound somewhere, so went looking into the two out of the way storage areas; the basement of the Eastern Temple and the basement of Kyuden Hantei.

If the PCs have trouble coming to conclusions based on the circumstantial evidence above, consider giving them a Commerce / Intelligence roll at TN 30 (20 if they have hit both the high TN rolls for the board and room) to realize that Kitsu Esa thought someone was smuggling goods into Kyuden Miya.

Western Temple

The vaulted ceiling of the temple rises high above your head, unusual for Rokugani architecture, and pinholes simulate the stars of a night sky. A single lantern hangs from the rafters, partially shuttered to match the moon's phase. Priests and Miya samurai speak in hushed voices in the alcoves, and a statue of Hitomi dominates the far end of the hall.

The abbot, a heavily muscled man who seems out of place in a temple not dedicated to Osano-Wo, approaches you and bows, "Greetings, samurai-sama. This one is Jihi. Have you come to offer apology and ask Lady Moon for forgiveness? There are incense sticks in the container there, and if you need to request mercy a brother can see to your needs."

If someone who is cast out is present, he adds:

The abbot turns to you, and his face remains serene as he studies you for a moment, then shakes his head. "I have heard of you. Lady Moon has yet to forgive your misdeeds, and I foresee this life has yet more punishments to bring for you."

If a PC asks him to explain, he refuses saying only "You know what you have done."

The abbot is heavily attuned to the concept of Sin (being a subsidiary function of the moon), and so will give confrontational answers to PCs who have a higher degree of Sin than others (lower honor, disadvantages related to the three Sins of Fear, Regret, and Desire. He will also encourage such PCs to ask for Lady Moon's forgiveness; he is not angry at such PCs, it is just his way of encouraging them to reflect on their sins.

Jihi knows the following:

- He spoke with Kitsu Esa the morning of the day before she disappeared, and he recalls the conversation because it was very peculiar. She wanted to know about storage.
- Esa wanted permission to look around the basement of the temple, which Jihi gave because he didn't see a reason to say no to a fellow priest.
- She asked about a purple and green symbol, but Jihi wasn't familiar with it.
- He only stayed for a few minutes because she seemed fine, but Esa was poking into the crates that the Miya store in the basement.
- Esa spent about an hour in the basement, and when she left, she looked frustrated. He didn't ask why.
- The Miya use the basement of this temple, and the basement of Kyuden Hantei to store spare supplies, because the basement of Kyuden Miya was converted into guest quarters years ago.

If the PCs want to search the basement themselves, Jihi will shrug and allow it, and assign a monk to supervise the PCs:

The temple basement is dirty, and full of crates stacked on shelves along the wall. A number have been pried open. Most bear the markings of the imperial families. A few crates are marked with clan symbols, and the majority of those are among the crates that have been opened. An iron bar rests against the wall near the entrance.

The PCs can search the basement itself or the crates for more information:

Crates: Investigation (Search) / Perception

- TN 10: The crates contain mundane dry goods; things like nonperishable food, spare parts for wagons, travelling gear, and paper. They are utterly unremarkable.
- If a PC thinks to ask and someone has rolled at least a 20: No crates have the purple and green symbol that was scribbled in Kitsu Esa's notes from her room.

Basement: Investigation (Search) / Perception:

- TN 10: This basement is well travelled; the dust and dirt on the floor has been disturbed frequently.
- TN 15: The crates near the door are largely clean; only the crates in the far back are dusty. Many of have been opened.
- TN 20: There are a few spaces in the far back where crates clearly used to sit but have been recently removed.

Player Handout #1: List of NPCs

Miya Chien (Status 6) – Imperial Arbitrator, cousin to the Otomo Daimyo, a woman with a reputation for being fair, a good listener with an exceptionally perceptive mind, and who has no hesitation to wield the imperial bureaucracy against anyone that disobeys her decisions. In her late 30's, and highly regarded by those that know what is good for them.

Miya Masako (Status 3) – Representative of the Imperial Herald, she is widely known as an expert in disaster and calamity relief planning. I heard she spent all last fall working on the site of Kyuden Gennai before the herald recalled her.

Seppun Masaharu (Status 4) - Assistant to the Imperial Chancellor's Herald, Master of Rituals for the Seventh Hall of the Forbidden City, Keeper of the Ceremonial Keys to the Inner Gates of the Imperial Libraries Third Floor, Aide to the Supervisor of Messages between the Imperial Library and the Brotherhood, Keeper of the One Hundred and Third Building in the Forbidden City, Seppun Masaharu.

Shinjo Hazumi (Status 8) – The champion of the Unicorn clan, a woman of great skill with a blade and horse. Renowned for her kindness, understanding, and compassion. Two years ago, she was attacked by an assassin and narrowly escaped with her life, including a period of many months in a coma while she was attended by the Iuchi. Since awakening, she has sought, and been stymied, in her pursuit of redress against the Dragon for their attack and the Scorpion for their diplomatic snubs.

Soshi Hizoko (Status 7) – Daimyo of the Soshi family, Hizoko is a young woman who carries many of the traits famous among her clan. Young, charming, and rather conventionally attractive, she is a common sight in many courts across the Empire.

Bayushi Tenno (Status 5 / Emerald Magistrate) – A senior Emerald Magistrate and the former chief magistrate of the City of Beiden. As a clan magistrate he had a reputation for fairness and an impeccable record for solving crimes and apprehending thieves and smugglers. He is exceptionally handsome, wears a crow mask whose wings cover his forehead, and he walks with a cane; a relic of a serious injury two years ago. He is in his late 20's or early 30's most likely.

Seppun Hanako (Status 4+) - A familiar face in all of the major courts of Rokugan, Seppun Hanako represents the interests of the Crane with grace and dignity. A soft word from her has brought an end to several incipient conflicts (to the chagrin of those who wished to make their reputation in war), though it is rumored that she is more willing than most of her family to use sterner measures when required. She is supposedly a patron and great appreciator of all forms of artistry.

Shiba Kaito (Status 2) – A sculptor of moderate renown, Kaito is tall and handsome. He recently unveiled a sculpture in the Crane lands titled “Pure Note” and gifted it to a kakita lord. It received high praise from his hosts. I am guessing he was trying to patch things up with the Crane after the, well, **incident** a few years ago.

Hiruma Izumi (Status 2) - Izumi is a former Crab scout now assigned to the courts. She walks with a pronounced limp but has a very open and friendly attitude. Unless a Crane is around. She was at Kyuden Bayushi 2 years ago and almost won the kemari contest. Pretty good for someone that can barely walk! Though there was a minor scandal when she caught the ball with her elbow. Elbows in Kemari, who would even think of such a thing?

Moshi Atsuko (Status 2) - A priest from the Moshi family, she seems really friendly. She was talking about her time on a Kobune the other day and was trying to get people to sing ‘sea shanties’. They seemed a bit odd, but she was a pretty good singer!

Kitsuki Oda (Status 4) – A tall thin investigator and courtier from the Kitsuki. I heard that he got promoted into the Jade Magistrates after he uncovered some blasphemers and a gaijin cult last year! I heard someone saw him wandering the halls of the court late last night, I wonder what he was looking for?

Player Handout #2: 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.

Player Handout #3: A Note

Friends,

I hate to impose upon you, but there is a slight matter which has arisen, and I find that I am unable to attend to it due to my other responsibilities.

If you happen to be at liberty, I would appreciate it if you could speak with me this afternoon over tea.

Bayushi Tenno

Player Handout #4: Kitsu Esa's casebook

There are a lot of entries in the book, many of which meander through the day to day activities of a Jade Magistrate. Many contain cases that were solved but leafing through you can quickly see a common thread of unsolved cases or strange issues that Kitsu Esa marked as interesting.

Entry 7:

Contacted by representative of Emerald Office to observe site of blasphemous ritual and perform cleansings. Blood everywhere. Marks of ritual sacrifice, but no correspondence to known bloodspeaker, ivindi, or yobanjin practices. Had eta decontaminate impure surfaces and dispose of everything that could be taken outside and burnt. Ritually sanctified site.

Likely a previously unknown burning sands gaijin practice based on cultist corpses.

Filed my findings as addendum to Otomo Katsuo's posthumous report - Shinden Horiuchi.

Entry 12:

Received request from magistrate Kuni Tokimasa to look into suspected tampering with goods received in Shiro Kaiu.

Origin point was dragon lands, traced path. Looks like smugglers out of Kyuden Tonbo were intercepting shipments to Crab lands, rifling through, looking for something, then resealing the crates. Doesn't look like they took anything based on the manifests. If Tokimasa wasn't so thorough about checking the seals I don't think anyone would have ever noticed. What were they looking for?

Entry 18:

Contacted by Bayushi Tenno to conduct follow up investigation: gaijin artifact stolen from Shiro Moto by known criminal. Relic was stored in secure vault beneath castle. Interrogated guards, saw no one, no evidence of dereliction of duty. Vault showed evidence of magical entry; earth kami had been induced into creating a passage into the vault, and wards had been defeated. Perpetrator clearly had detailed information about the state of the vault's defense. Personal opinion: Moto were not as thorough about guarding the vault as they should have been. Don't tell anyone I said that.

Entry 22:

Received invitation to meeting with Jade Magistrates Soshi Izo and Asahina Kaizen from Kaizen. Was delayed on road, when I got to the meeting site found Soshi Izo's body and tracks leading into the forest. Followed, found dying Asahina Kaizen. Tried to tell me something, but he died first. Found a tattered green and purple symbol in his pocket; Kaizen's?

Who killed them, and why?

Compared the letter to prior correspondence from Kaizen post-facto – Almost certainly forged; whoever did it was good at mimicking his handwriting. They went to a lot of trouble to lure the three of us into a trap. Why?

Entry 28: (Dated the day before she disappeared)

Tried to get into the castle yesterday. Guards wouldn't let me in. I'll go back tomorrow and pull rank, see if I can find anything.