

Heroic Inspiration

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**An All Rank Module for Heroes of Rokugan:
Champions of the Ivory Throne**

Month of the Sun (Mid Spring)

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[Intrigue][Roleplay]

During a Once in a Lifetime performance in Scorpion lands, things take a turn for the dramatic.

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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

Art inspires and is in turn inspired by life. Rokugan has had no shortage of heroes and villains in its history, though in many cases the title of Hero or Villain can become very subjective. On some topics however the matter becomes far more clear, and it is far easier to find the hero of a story in a play than in reality. At least that is the hope of Shosuro Seiken.

Seiken was once a rising star in the world of theatre, having produced many striking plays about the Ascension of Toturi II, the Siege of Mukui Toshi, and the Invasion of Balishnimpur. During this time he conducted considerable research into the events that transpired to give it as much verisimilitude as possible. During this time, he noted the presence of many heroes rising from unlikely origins to combat villains. But it was only in the presence of a direct and obvious villain that true heroism resulted. He has decided to try and

inspire heroism by creating something new; an interactive play where the audience would see villainy rise and have the chance to stand up to it.

It took a great many favors, and much persuading, but he managed to succeed in getting his new play set up in Painted City. Invitations have gone out to many prominent samurai, some have chosen to attend, others have sent proxies instead. Now it is the time for the performance, and it just wouldn't be an opening night without at least one complication creeping up. Specifically, an uninvited guest, the ghost of a Scorpion long dead who spent much time considering the titles of hero and villain.

A Note on the topic of Heroism

Heroism can be a very subjective thing, often times the hero of one clan can be a villain in the eyes of another. Even the qualifying characteristics of a hero or villain can be the subject of debate. Many of the roleplaying scenes in this module are on this topic and a GM must use their judgement on what they believe is heroic or villainous. For guidance though, think of a hero as a person who acts in a selfless way to uphold the values of society, the empire, and their clan. At the same time think of a villain as a person who acts either selfishly or underhandedly in the pursuit of interests that will bring harm to their own clan or the empire.

This is an All Ranks adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. Use of the costumes can help to balance out the difficulty curve however a GM can feel free to

modify the TNs if such would make the module more challenging for a high rank table or achievable for a lower rank table.

Before play the GM should check for the following on character sheets:

*Earth Has No Eyes or Eight Directions Awareness Kiho

*Seppun Miharu Rank 3

*Black Sheep (Shosuro Family)

Upkeep

Inactivity Penalty

All PCs suffer an L4 Glory loss. This cannot drop a PC's glory below their Insight Rank.

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 $10 + (5 \times \text{Current Taint Rank})$

Crafting

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

Preparation Techniques

Techniques like the Agasha Shugenja or Yogo Wards do not quite fall under Crafting, but still can benefit from pre-planning and the Upkeep is

a good opportunity. However, unlike Crafting, this is not the only time these Techniques may be used during a module – this is just a chance for the GM to remind the players and get it out of the way.

Ronin Survival

Life is difficult for ronin in the Empire at the best of times. PC ronin are no exception to this. At the start of the module, a PC ronin reduces their available Koku to half (round down) to reflect travel expenses..

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.

The PCs are personally invited (even Ronin) to attend a special play performance being held in the Scorpion holding known as Painted City. Painted City is essentially a giant fake city filled entirely with students from the Shosuro Actor school who fully inhabit their roles for the year. Travel papers and accommodations are fully provided and their journey to Scorpion lands is uneventful. The Module begins with the morning of the performance.

Part One: Clothes Make the Samurai

Following a finely made breakfast and a short travel from their accommodations they meet up with a delegation of Scorpion outside of the gates of Painted City. As they wait, several wagons are brought up and one of the Scorpion breaks away from the group to speak with the

PCs. This Scorpion is a middle-aged man with a smooth and featureless mask covering his nose, eyes, and forehead.

A PC can identify him by name and learn of his reputation with a **TN 25 Lore Heraldry/Intelligence** or **Lore: Scorpion/Intelligence**. He is Shosuro Seiken, a playwright of some skill who has served as court shugenja for Shiro no Shosuro for the last thirty years. While unremarkable as a courtier and a priest, his plays have been a series of highs and lows. Each has either been a beloved masterwork or a disastrous flop.

“My greetings samurai, allow me to offer my welcome to you and my thanks to you for coming. My name is Shosuro Seiken, a playwright of some humble skill, and it is my work that will be unveiled for you this day.” He looks back over his shoulder to the city. “It is not the first time I have had one of my works performed in this place, certainly it will be the last.” Seiken turns back and smiles at you, covering his mouth for a moment as he coughs. “But I will ramble on for a bit if allowed. No, no, as we wait for the final preparations to be ready I wanted to ensure you are prepared for the performance as well.”

“The actors of Painted City train and practice to bring a fictional city to life, not just to portray a role but to fully inhabit it. For this performance I wished to see visitors given the chance to have a glimpse of this life. To that end we have assembled a variety of costumes, masks, and props that I would ask for each of you to put on that you may assume a role in the story to come.”

Pass out **Player Handout #1**, each PC is to select a costume. Only one copy of each costume exists, try to ensure all PCs can be satisfied with their costumes but if there are competing interests then roll off between players. While wearing the costume and making a Social role to

interact with the Actors inside the play, the player gains Free Raises equal to 6 – Insight Rank provided they include the appropriate social cue as indicated on their mask. PCs will need to divest themselves of all equipment not part of the assigned costume. Should a PC wish to sneak 1 small item into the play, they can roll **Sleight of Hand/Agility** at **TN 25**, +1 item per successful raise. This will prompt a **D2** Honor loss.

Should a PC have an item they are obligated to carry at all times such as the Spearhead from Courage in Death or the badge of office of a Kuni Witch Hunter they may attempt a **Courtier/Awareness (Manipulation)** roll or **Sincerity/Awareness (Honesty)** roll at **TN25**. Should a PC fail this roll and still wish to bring the item into the module they can take a 3 pt Obligation to the Scorpion clan. Regardless of how it is done, any object brought in like this will be wrapped up so it does not spoil the costume.

Under no circumstances will the Scorpion permit a PC to enter with armor or weapons. Any PC who refuses to divest themselves of either can take 2 xp and leave the module.

Unless items are snuck inside or Seiken is persuaded to allow them inside, the PCs will receive no mechanical benefits of any Material Advantages or Equipment based certs. This means Shugenja will not have access to their scrolls during this module.

Blessings

During the module, PCs will have a chance to earn Blessings of the Hero and Blessings of the Villain. Blessings of the Hero

are awarded to the group as a whole, Blessings of the Villain are awarded to particular PCs. These blessings can be used during the Climax of the play when things are at their most dramatic.

Blessing of the Hero: Any PC can use 1 Blessing of the Hero from the group pool as a Void point, with the group's consent. This Void point does not count towards Void expenditure for the round and may be spent on a roll that has already been enhanced by Void.

Blessing of the Villain: A PC who has been given a Blessing of the Villain may use it after making a roll to re-roll as many dice as they would like from that roll. They must keep the results of the second roll and no other re-roll mechanics may be used on that roll. Using the Blessing of the Villain requires a sacrifice of a D0 Honor loss or 5 pips, whichever is more.

A PC may not call upon both blessings in the same turn.

Once the PCs have had a chance to change into their costumes, the procession to start the play will begin:

'Booming drum beats call all of your attention towards the gates to the city, the beat forming a cadence as unseen workers on the other side pull them open. Marching out in two orderly rows comes a line of brightly attired soldiers, all wearing snarling mempo and holding aloft spears. As the notes of a shakahuchi come in they strike the butt of their spears on the ground and begin to spin them through a clearly choreographed set of movements more theatrical than martial.'

"All hail to the Fearsome Warlord! Returned in battle victoriously over our clan's foes! Let all show respect to our greatest warrior!"

'A group of soldiers carry a platform on which stands a man in a suit of heavy armor, carrying a naginata in one hand. His face is painted in a

noh style, harsh triangular lines that resemble bloody gashes into his own face. There is a palpable weight of menace that seems to emanate as though this is not a man but a force of raw violence and savagery.'

The guests are all ushered forward into the city as the soldiers continue their procession. They can notice several burlier men carrying massive chests suspended on poles. Every so often jewels or coins will topple out of the chest, leaving a glittering trail behind them. Closer examination will reveal all of them to be obvious fakes.

As the PCs watch the procession, a beaming young man in an unmarked kimono walks up behind them, his hands resting comfortably on his daisho.

"Wow, now that's a great warrior for you! I hope to have half as much skill as he does when I'm all done with my Mush-... with my training, right, training. But, he's kinda scary looking. I don't think I want to wind up being a man like that. The blade of a samurai is meant for honor. I don't see much honor in kicking weak people about. Someone should really teach him a lesson in how to behave properly. Oh right, sorry, I didn't introduce myself... I am the Idealistic Youth, pleased to meet you!"

"It is said in the Code of Bushido that one should be the judge of your own actions, and I believe that I am seeing wickedness. I should try to confront someone like that, but I do not know that I should. Or what the proper way to do so would be."

The Idealistic Youth is meant to embody the sense of simplistic justice a young bushi will often adopt, though such idealism can overstep its bounds into a sense of vigilant justice if improperly handled. He will ask the PCs their opinions and advice, especially any who are dressed as bushi, about what it means to be a good warrior and samurai. While he will be deferential to people he regards as his seniors,

he will react poorly to anyone who disparages his ideals. The conversation ends when he either feels the PCs have given him good advice and encouragement, or they have rebuffed him or disparaged his ideals. PCs can roll either **Courtier/Awareness (Manipulation)** or **Sincerity/Awareness (Honesty)** at TN 35 to convince him of their point of view. Multiple PCs arguing for the same cause can use cooperative rules. If the PCs are taking different approaches, then the highest roll prevails. If the Idealistic Youth was convinced to behave honorably and was reminded of his place in the world then the group earns a **Blessing of the Hero**. If any PCs argued for dealing with the lord by dishonorable means, even if they did not persuade him, those PCs receive a **Blessing of the Villain**.

If reassured of the worth of his convictions he will say: *“Well, thank you very much, you have given much to me this day and I must work to make myself worthy of the trust you have given me. But please, let me give you this gift.”* He will present the PC who rolled highest with a netsuke in the shape of an oak leaf.

If a majority of PCs discourage or disparage him: *“I am disappointed that my seniors seem to have lost their way. But actions can perhaps serve where words have failed. I will prove to you that an honorable blade can serve well.”*

If the PCs encourage dishonorable methods and successfully convince him, he will frown and nod slowly, *“It would seem that the world is a far less noble place than I believed...”*

Once their conversation with the Idealistic Youth is over, they can resume watching the procession to see that a man has moved out to speak with the Fearsome Warlord.

‘There is the fluttering of fans and a murmur spreads through the crowd, “The Calculating Karo...”. This man has a long thin mustache that he strokes carefully at as he straightens from his bow.’ “My Lord, your return from battle

is a blessing, only eclipsed by the bounty you bring back with you. Let the people show their gratitude for your return.” He claps his hands and several attendants hurry out past him to toss handfuls of coins (fake stage props), riceballs, and candy into the crowd. An almost festive atmosphere breaks out among the people, though they are all careful to give the Fearsome Warlord and his Karo a wide berth.

As the PCs are in the middle of the festivities, they can hear many people discussing recent events. This would be a time to roll **Courtier/Awareness (Gossip)** to see what information they pick up on. If a PC has a suitable idea for playing their costume roles interaction with the crowd they may apply their free raises as appropriate.

5: The recent five year war between our clan and our neighbors has come to an end thanks to the legendary skills of the Fearsome Warlord. At long last our people can come home and enjoy a time of peace, and our clan shall benefit from the contested valley this was being fought over in the first place.

10: While there was Imperial Sanction to resolve the disputed ownership of the valley in battle, word is that the Emperor is displeased by fighting going on between the clans in his Empire. Anyone who provokes a new conflict is likely to face Imperial Censure and a swift march of the Imperial Legions to quash the fighting. No doubt that is why the Officious Shisha is here to keep an eye on things.

15: To ensure that peace remains between the clans following this war, our neighbors have sent the Resplendent Maiden as a bride to the Fearsome Warlord. It is hoped that her tranquil nature may rub off on him, and steer him away from the life of fighting he has always known. Her procession is said to be arriving within the hour.

20: The Calculating Karo is an absolute snake in all things, it is said that when his own mother died he only stopped what he was doing long enough to request paper to send correspondence to inform his extended family of her death. You would sooner see tears and compassion from a stone than from him.

25: With the fighting over, we are starting to see travelers and merchants arrive in the city once more from other lands. Why, just this morning there was this Idealistic Youth who came wandering in all full of wonder and with his jaw fit to scrape the dirt off the ground. I don't know what his business in the city is, but he's clearly a samurai by his swords. Maybe a Warrior's Pilgrimage?

30: Make sure you do not miss the ceremony performed later by the Jolly Monk. He's offering blessings over the sacred temple sword that's passing through. In times like these we could surely use his good nature and wisdom.

35: Once the procession ends, I think we should be seeing some games being set up in the marketplace. Might be a way to win some worthwhile prizes, if you have the skills to back them up. I think we just have to wait until the soldiers finish their march and the officials have had a chance to make their proclamations.

45: Did the gates to the city open up early? I swear we did not have an 'outfit' that looked like that, and certainly that mask doesn't match any of the 'guest' masks outside. Did someone come with their own costume today?

Should any PC have **Read Lips**, they can attempt to spy on the conversation between the Fearsome Warlord and the Calculating Karo. A success will catch the words, "...he is only waiting for her arrival to do his part."

The festivities begin to die down and the crowds all scatter to different streets, disappearing out

of sight to leave you alone with the Calculating Karo and the Fearsome Warlord, who begin to walk towards the manor house. As they march along the Fearsome Warlord speaks loudly:

'For five long years I have fought against the clans enemies, crushing all before me. The thrum of war beats within my blood and the lamentations of my foes has become the sweetest music to my ears. Now though a new song beckons to me, the cheers of the people and the promise of marriage. To the victor goes the spoils and none have arisen who could stand against me!'

He spins his naginata blade as he moves through the motions of a kata, or perhaps the repetitive motions of cleaving down enemies on the field. "Something within my soul grows restless. I have been the invincible blade of my clan, no foe on the battlefield has ever managed to challenge my abilities, and yet I feel unsatisfied." The Calculating Karo strokes his mustache as he moves to stand beside his master. "You have mastered the art of war my Lord and now the Emperor has ordered that the ways of war be set aside for now. Perhaps your advisors may be able to find a place for a puissant warrior when the time for battle is over. They may know a challenge that can still excite your soul." He gestures towards all of you.'

The Fearsome Warlord and the Calculating Karo will hear what advice the PCs have, looking to focus on what meaning and purpose a bushi may find during a time of peace. Suggestions based upon discovering the arts or culture will not find favor with the Warlord, while the Calculating Karo will be opposed to any idea that would require his lord to abdicate or put aside his position. Each PC argument should have a **Courtier(Manipulation)/Awareness** or **Sincerity (Honesty)/Awareness** roll at **TN35**. PCs who are making similar arguments can assist each other. If the PCs have multiple different arguments, then the Warlord will take heed of the highest roll. Should a PC propose a solution that would engage the Warlord's martial

instincts peacefully and honorably, they will gain a **Blessing of the Hero**. Should any PC advocate for pursuing his own wishes regardless of honor or propriety, they will gain a **Blessing of the Villain** without the need for a successful roll.

'The Warlord nods, "I thank you for your assistance, you have given me much to think on. For now I must handle the responsibilities of my bride." The Fearsome Warlord departs with his soldiery, the Calculating Karo lingering behind for a moment. "My lordship is not one to show gentleness to even a wife or children. It would be best if an opportunity were found to test his blade once again. So long as it carries the presentation of legality, it must be offered." The Karo bows and excuses himself as well.

Part II. Here Comes the Bride

'The trilling of biwa heralds the arrival of another procession into the city. The gates swing open and a much smaller group enters the Painted City. This procession contains many monks of the brotherhood carrying a platform on which rests a sheathed katana. Unlike the raucous presentation earlier, the monks move in a silent and careful procession, with the only sound being the scrape of sandals on the ground.'

'Trailing behind the monks is a beautiful woman, hair tied up into a maiden's foxtail, walking beneath an umbrella alongside an extravagantly dressed man with a long beard and a courtier's hat. The woman's expression is partially hidden behind a fan though there is a faint bemused quality to

the way she takes in her surroundings. The man for his part almost seems to have his head tilted back slightly all the better to look down his nose at people.'

"Traveling to this place has reminded me of the glorious arts and displays of the capital, the marks of civilization and culture that all samurai must aspire to." The Officious Shisha shakes his head, "I truly miss it."

"I would kindly ask you to refrain from reminding me of your departure Shisha-sama, after all it is hardly gracious to boast in the face of your hosts." The Resplendent Maiden replies, "You have your duty to attend to in this place and I have my own. Don't tell me you would have any wish to trade duties, ne?" She teases.

The Shisha snorts loudly, "As always you are a paragon of proper behavior Maiden, though I think your husband to be may find your tongue sharper than any blades or arrows he faced on the field." As they continue to walk, their words become harder to hear though the color coming into the cheeks of the Officious Shisha indicate he is far from enjoying the occasion.'

All PCs should roll an **Investigation/Perception (Notice) TN 20 (Wary Applies)**. Should any PC succeed they notice the following:

'You notice a black clad man open up a window to a more recessed home on an upper floor. He picks up a hankyu, nocking an arrow as he lines up a shot towards the Maiden and Shisha. Before you have a chance to react or call out, the man jerks

back away from the window and disappears from sight.'

If PCs go to investigate they encounter 'Soshi Yaksoku'. If the PCs do not investigate, proceed to the Monk's Blessing. PCs may elect to split up at this point.

Part IIIa. Dramatic Improvisation.

'As you step into the room searching for the trouble, you notice a black clad man clutching a bow with one hand and his chest with the other. Standing over him within the shadows is another man in a Scorpion kimono looking around the room. His mask is a rough scrap of black cloth that covers the lower half of his mouth, clearly at odds with the finer cut and quality of his attire. He turns to regard you with a curious expression. "I don't suppose there's any way you will believe me when I say I didn't do anything wrong here?" He sighs and spreads his hands to show he intends no violence.'

Who are You? *'You may call me 'Soshi Yaksoku', that is a name I will answer to.*

What are you doing here? *'The spirits called me to this place, there is much out of order since the last time I walked these lands. What I have seen in this city is among the least troubling of strange events.'*

What happened in this room? *'Good question, it did seem to me that someone*

was in the process of murder. But something appears to have startled them so badly as to stop their heart.'

Why shouldn't we turn you over to the magistrates/Scorpion/city officials? *'As they say, the play must go on. If you would prefer, I can accompany you as you try to figure out just what is afoot. You have my word I will raise no hand against any of you.'*

Are you an actor/one of the guests? *'I was called here. As far as being an actor or wearing a costume, I have never pretended to be anything I am not.'*

On Roleplaying Soshi Yaksoku

'Soshi Yaksoku' has no place in the play, he is a Bayushi Guardian Spirit recently manifested in Rokugan. He knows that there is someone he must avenge and someone else he must punish. He does not believe they are the same people, but the process of traveling to Rokugan from Yomi has confused him and while he will put forward the appearance of being composed and knowledgeable there will be occasional lapses or oddities to showcase that he does not quite know what is going on. Further complicating matters is that by personal choice his answers to questions are often vague or subject to interpretation. As an ancestral spirit he will instinctively notice the Touch or Curse of a Spirit Realm, Blessing or Curse of a Fortune, and whether a person he meets is of Scorpion heritage. Notably, the people he is seeking to avenge and to punish are not present in the city, though he does not know this.

If the PCs check the other man, they will discover that his clothing is dark and unremarkable, and he only carries a hankyu and a single arrow. Unlike the prop weaponry they may have taken with them as props, both the bow and the arrow are real (Seiken is a bit of a stickler for verisimilitude). The man is also quite dead, a **TN 20 Medicine/Intelligence** roll will show that he had a heart attack brought on by a sudden fright or shock. If no PC makes the roll, 'Soshi Yaksoku' will make a comment about 'frail hearts can fail so easily'. Should 'Soshi Yaksoku' leave the shadows or the PCs spend a considerable amount of time speaking to him, they can **roll Investigation/Perception (Notice)** at a **TN of 20** to realize that he is semi-translucent and has no feet.

'The Scorpion drifts over towards the window, keeping himself in the shadows as he studies what is going on with the procession. "There is a villain lurking out there, unpunished for his crimes. Like all good villains he hid beneath a veneer of honor and respectability. My clan has grown soft in recent years, far too many Junshin these days."' He turns towards you, "If you had the certainty and discretion to spot a villain within the empire who would perpetrate evil on the Empire, how many of you would have the resolve to murder them? Not kill, murder. A good villain does not reveal his hand until the final act." He chuckles.'

Yaksoku will engage in a bit of question and debate to see who among the PCs has the sort of ruthless pragmatism that would allow them to act in the Empire's interests

even if it violated the law or any sense of honor. He will be particularly scornful of any Scorpion PC who has an Honor Rank above 5. Once the debate has proceeded far enough along, he will nod and offer the following comment:

"I do hope you will recall my words in the days to come. They can have unexpected power. Being a villain can be much like being a hero, sometimes you just need to put a sword into the right person's hands."

PCs may decide to attack him, in which case 'Soshi Yaksoku' will adopt a defensive posture and go out the window at his first opportunity. His ATN is 45, he has Earth 4, takes no wound penalties, and the Spirit Quality. If the PCs do not strike him down in that round he will escape and disappear during the Reactions phase. Should they strike him down he will play no further role in this module but as his anchor is still in Rokugan, he will be able to return later.

If the PCs accept him accompanying them, he will disappear in a swirl of green fire but they can hear a soft chuckle over their shoulder along with a sibilant whisper into their ear of, "I am right here with you"

Finding a Magistrate

Law-abiding PCs may wish to report the presence of a dead body, a ghost, or their suspicions to the local magistrate. Locating a magistrate requires either physically searching for someone dressed as a magistrate with an **Investigation/Perception (Notice)** roll at

TN 35. Alternatively they can ask around of the people with an **Etiquette/Awareness (Bureaucracy)** at **TN 30**. Success allows them to find the Suspicious Magistrate.

The Suspicious Magistrate is an officious looking man with a heavy-set build and a thick mustache and beard. He walks with a daisho and a jitte thrust through his obi.

His first response to any news of trouble is to ask, "Was it Ninjas?"

If told that Ninjas are not responsible, his second response will be, "Was it a group of about a half-dozen samurai of various clans drawn together for vague or unclear reasons?" Before looking off into the distance mournfully, "We will never forget what they did..."

The Suspicious Magistrate is neither actually a magistrate nor is he actually helpful. He will be extremely skeptical, more likely to accept an improbable and convoluted theory than anything resembling the truth. Should the PCs persist long enough, or decide to try and force the matter with social means he can be convinced to take the matter seriously with a Social Skill roll at **TN 45**.

Success will at least convince him to call the Burakumin to collect the body, but no meaningful investigation will commence.

Part IIIb. The Monk and the Sword

'A heavy set, bearded monk approaches the stand where the sword is on display struggling to balance an armful of scrolls.

He totters one way and then another, rolled paper threatening to careen off his arms every which way as he spins and weaves to keep them against his body. The spinning finally becomes too great and he topples to the ground, dropping the scrolls in a pile over himself and bursts out laughing.'

"We can become too engrossed in the words of our ancestors, weighing over and over what exactly they meant. And then we trip over these words and find ourselves the fool when really all that was needed was to take their words and figure out firsthand what they meant."

'Pulling himself up to his feet, he picks up the scrolls and begins walking around, handing out a single scroll to everyone he meets. No hint of unbalance or clumsiness this time. As he finishes handing out the scrolls he grins broadly, "Remember, wisdom does not come from scrolls alone, but from what you do with what you are offered. Now, I have a sword to bless! Come and gather round as I perform the ceremony. I would be interested in hearing what people think a sacred sword should be."

The sword upon the stand is clearly being used as a temple blade but is not a prop. It has been loaned to the play as once again Shosuro Seiken insisted on verisimilitude. It has been receiving blessings as it will once more come out of storage and see some use. An examination by PCs of the sword will easily notice its craftsmanship and quality, an appropriate Lore skill (**History TN 40, Scorpion** or **Theology TN 35,** or **Craft: Weaponsmithing/Intelligence TN 30**) will

allow a PC to identify it as the blade Hisui (Jade) forged by Sanzo, the Fortune of Fire and Steel shortly before his ascension to Tengoku. It was given as a gift to the Scorpion Clan from the Minor Clan Alliance in exchange for political support.

As the monk goes through the process of blessing the sword, he will question the audience and the PCs about what a sacred sword should be. Specifically, what qualities should one be able to identify in a sacred sword. Any PC espousing virtuous qualities can roll **Sincerity/Void** or **Lore: Theology/Void TN 35** to earn the group a **Blessing of the Hero**. Any PC espousing ruthless or pragmatic qualities will earn the **Blessing of the Villain**. It is not inherently evil to think in such a way, but it does leave such options open.

The scrolls, if opened, are all blank.

Part IV. Things get Dramatic

Once the Monk is done with his blessings and the PCs return from investigating the attempted assassination, the Resplendent Maiden will return to pay her respects to the sword and to speak with the Jolly Monk.

‘The Resplendent Maiden comes to a stop before the sacred temple sword, bowing her head in respect to the blade. As she raises her head upon finishing the prayer the Jolly Monk approaches and greets her. “I have seldom seen such unflappability, but I would be remiss as a priest if I failed to notice the weight on your shoulders.”

She turns and closes her fan, inclining her head slightly. “I was offering prayers for my brothers. They were both killed in the war and I do not know how they would be satisfied with the ending of this war.”

The Monk nods, “A difficult thing, to move on to a new life when still carrying the burdens of a previous life. Of this I have some familiarity.”

“I grieve and I have mourned. I have a duty now that will ensure that no others will have to suffer and mourn. But I still cannot quite look to the faces of my brothers. I have only looked upon him from a distance and I know the character of the man I am to marry. How much longer until there is more misery that spreads from his hand? I was taught that the strength of a samurai exists to protect those weaker than yourselves, should such strength not be used to pull down one who uses their strength to abuse the weak?” She looks towards the audience as she speaks, locking gazes with you.’

She will listen to the PCs opinions and for their suggestions on what exactly she is meant to do, while the monk follows behind nodding at things he agrees with. A PC can roll an appropriate Social Skill at **TN 35** to convince her of the heroic approach to earn a **Blessing of the Hero**. A PC who advocates a villainous approach will gain **Blessing of the Villain**.

Regardless of whether they convince her for a more heroic or villainous route, she will stare meaningfully towards the sword. *“This blade was first born into battle by a great ancestor of mine. A man with a*

knack for being where he was needed and applying this blade where it was needed. Its name is Hisui, forged by Sanzo, Fortune of Fire and Steel before his ascension to the Heavens. It has cut down monsters and wicked men alike, its purity burning through the protections such foes would normally flaunt. Its last wielder fell in battle not long ago, and this blade would have fallen to me to take up before it was forced to come here.” Her hand twitches slightly. “Some nights I have dreamed of taking up this blade and being the sort of person my ancestor was, someone who never regretted their decisions. The wrong path is always lying in wait before me, but with the certainty of my ancestor and a holy sword in my hand...”

The monologue is interrupted however by a shout from a nearby rooftop.

“You will not stop me villain!” All eyes are drawn to a nearby rooftop where the Idealistic Youth has drawn his katana and circles the Calculating Karo, who has also drawn a sword. “I have learned of your murderous plot and your plans to sabotage peace! Honor and justice will always prevail, for a soul guided with honor will never find defeat!”

The Karo waits like a spider, completely unflappable. “Is it your intention to offer speeches all day, or is there any actual skill in that blade to be wielded?”

Raising his blade up high the Idealistic Youth charges forward with a bold kiai, cutting downwards fiercely. The Calculating

Karo is already stepping past, shaking blood from his blade as he finishes the cut across the youth’s midsection. The Youth staggers, taking hold of his bloodstained kimono, looking down in horror at his hands before giving out a shout and launching a savage backhand, catching the Karo off guard and drawing a line of black blood from his chin. The Karo snarls and thrusts his blade into the youth’s chest, he looks down upon the gathered crowd with contempt before turning and rushing away, leaping from rooftop to rooftop towards the Warlord’s mansion.’

If PCs pursue, they will be unable to catch him before he makes it to the Mansion. If any of them think to check the rooftop, or for the Idealistic Youth they will find a pool of what appears to be blood. A **Medicine/Intelligence** roll **TN 10** or an **Investigation/Perception** roll **TN 15** will reveal it is fake. The Karo and the Youth have both departed the rooftop as the entire incident is still part of the play. What the PCs saw fleeing was a Soshi crafted illusion, moving too quickly in the dusk light to be clearly seen.

Should a PC try to use a ranged weapon or a spell to strike the Karo, it will be less than effective. Hitting with a ranged attack requires a **TN 30**. The Kami will be confused at any requests to strike the fleeing man (they realize he’s not actually there) but if the spell TN is exceeded by at least 15 they will strike the illusion though it will have no effect.

Part V. The Climax

Presumably the PCs arrive at the Mansion

of the Fearsome Warlord, following the trail of the wounded Karo or to warn the Warlord. What they arrive to is hardly encouraging:

'Within the front hallway of the Warlord's mansion you see that shoji screens have been torn and knocked over. A tea set has been spilled and shattered to pieces and spilled tea mixes with the dark crimson pool soaking out from the prone form of the Officious Shisha who lies facedown beside the headless form of the Calculating Karo in front of the Fearsome Warlord. The Warlord's naginata is buried blade first into the floor and his fury is a palpable force.'

"I never expected treachery so close at hand nor to be renounced by an agent of the throne. The Karo was slowly poisoning my soul and mind with his corruption, the Shisha was ready to condemn me for the actions of my subordinate and to cast doubt on the victories I won by my own strength of arms. There will be no peace now, there will no awards or glory for the services I have rendered. There will only be my death. If so, then let it be a final battle worthy of remembrance!"

'The Warlord steps forward and you can see his flesh begin to darken even as his form grows bloated and swollen. His face hardens until his painted mask becomes a mask of bone studded with spurs. The flesh around his hands split and the skeletal hands sprout claws that scythe through the air. As his transformation completes you see a beast of roiling shadow and smoke looming above you. The only solid parts are the immense claws and the bony mask framing a face that holds a maw of sharp teeth and burning red eyes.'

Fear 4 test

The Beast is not actually here, at this point Shosuro Seiken has created a grand illusion using the air kami. The actors are all slipping out through hidden trapdoors in the floor. You can roll 10k6 for the Beast's initiative (actually Seiken's) as he directs the focus of his illusion. It has an effective ATN of 15, no wound track, and has two options on its action. Firstly, it can swipe four times with his claws rolling 8k5 to hit, although no more than two claws may be allocated to a single PC.. Any PC struck suffers no physical damage (It is an illusion after all) but feels their strength and energy draining away from them. Any PC struck must make a **TN 25 Earth (35** if hit twice in the same round) roll or become **Fatigued**. A PC who is struck more than once will have the penalties stack. If any PC has as many levels of Fatigue as their Stamina they will fall asleep. Alternatively instead of swiping with claws the Beast can focus its gaze upon a single PC, prompting that PC to roll a **Fear 6** test, it will use this option only if it encounters stubborn resistance it cannot wear down. Attacks or spells against the Beast will seem to mostly pass through the smoky and shadowy body, tearing off a tiny scrap of smoke which dissipates into the air. If a PC sets the area on fire, then during the Reactions stage an unseen Soshi Shugenja will cast Extinguish to suppress the fire.

Should a PC take a Complex Action to roll **Investigation/Perception (Notice)** or **Lore: Shadowlands/Perception** at TN30 to notice that the Beast does not quite fit standard oni profile and characteristics. Should a PC succeed at this roll and have 5+ ranks in Lore: Shadowlands they will

conclude this is not actually an oni, but the appearance of oni as rendered by someone not actually familiar with Oni.

If the PCs do not come to the conclusion they should run, or especially to get the sacred sword from the temple, by the end of the second round then if Yaksoku is accompanying them he will whisper to the PCs, 'None of you are equipped to fight a battle like this one. How could you change that?' An **Overconfident** PC must pass their check to resist the urge to perform a rearguard action to let the rest of the PCs escape. If a PC stays behind to rearguard either by their own will or because of Overconfidence the rest of the PCs can flee without difficulty. If all the PCs run, they will need to make an **Athletics/Agility (Running)** check at **TN 20** to break away and avoid some of the fallen and destroyed furniture. Failure will mean they stumble and the Beast can take a free swipe at them during the Reactions stage. If no PCs stayed behind as rearguard the Beast will pursue.

'As you emerge from the Mansion of the Fearsome Warlord, you find yourself passing through the marketplace where many people are busy and hard at work. You are nearly a block into the marketplace before your racing mind catches onto something out of place and identifies what is wrong. None of the people around you are making any sort of sound. The only source of sound on this street is from your group.'

At this point, none of the people present on the street are actually here, the actors having been replaced by creations of the air kami. They will not respond to any verbal

prompts, but if a PC tries a physical prompt or just ignores them to keep walking along then the following occurs:

'As one, every person on the street turns around to face you. The masks and makeup of the actors are gone, as are their facial features. Eggshell smooth faces somehow look upon you, as clothing darkens to an inky black that seems to absorb all light.'

As a Complex Action a PC can attempt to break past the shadowy hands with any of the following: **Athletics/Strength (Running) TN25, Defense/Reflexes TN25, Jujutsu/Strength (Grapple) TN30, or Weapon Skill/Agility (Appropriate Weapon Emphasis) TN30.**

If any PC fails their roll, a shadowy figure reaches out for them. The PC needs to make a **Willpower** roll, adding their Honor rank to the total, at **TN25**. On a success they manage to throw off the attacker and get some distance opened. On a failure, they feel a shadowy claw reach into them and pull something loose. The PC becomes **Fatigued**. As before, the Fatigue penalties can stack and any PC with as many failures as ranks in Stamina falls asleep.

Getting to the sword will take 2 Complex Actions, however there are some impediments in the way.

'As you flee out of the marketplace towards the Temple you can see the Jolly Monk and the Resplendent Maiden taking cover in the shadows of the doorway to the Temple. Just past them on its stand rests Hisui, ready to be taken up. As you close in towards the temple, shadowy claws

reaching for your back, the ground begins to rumble and shake before a fissure splits open in front of the temple, greenish fumes spewing into the air amidst an ominous glow.'

As a Complex Action, a PC can try jumping the gap to get to the sword or they can persuade one of the NPCs to either take up the sword or to throw it across the gap. Jumping the gap is an **Athletics/Strength (Jumping)** test at **TN25**. As the pit is illusory, the PC cannot fall into it but they do land badly if they fail and take 4k1 damage. Convincing one of the NPCs to act requires an appropriate Social test at TN25 (to convince the Resplendent Maiden) or TN35 (to convince the Jolly Monk). Success means the PC can convince them to either take up the blade or to throw it across the gap to them.

Once someone takes up the sword, the Beast will fly to engage them as its next action from wherever it was. As soon as a PC or an NPC strikes the Beast with Hisui the following happens:

'As the gleaming green blade arcs through the air and pierces into the shadowstuff that makes up the beast's body, it gives off a screech of pain as the shadow solidifies and begins to crack. Green cracks spread through its body, causing it to spasm and shriek before it finally shatters into scraps of shadow that dissipate onto the wind. As the shadowy host fades from view behind it, you are startled to hear applause.'

'Turning around you see a crowd of actors applauding you, including the Fearsome Warlord, the Calculating Karo, the Idealistic

Youth, and the Officious Shisha. Those faces you can see are smiling. Shosuro Seiken emerges from the crowd, his face seeming more lined, his hair turned a stark white, and his gait faltering.'

"Whenever evil should happen to emerge into the world, there is always the possibility of good to oppose it. Sometimes that good takes the form of people taking up arms against darkness to drive it back. Other times it takes the form of inspiring others to find the heroism within themselves that was previously unseen. Both have their place in the empire." He coughs heavily, nearly stumbling, "I have never been a hero to fight in battle, but it was my hope that art could serve as a catalyst to inspire. I may be a clumsy playwright but I have a life to offer in these troubled times. Please remember..."

'Shosuro Seiken coughs again, slumping down to the ground, "...any one of you can be the hero the Empire needs... if you can just find your one moment." As he breathes out these words, Shosuro Seiken goes still and quiet. His life given for the grand illusion he set up as his final performance.'

If the PCs fail to take up the sword or inspire one of the NPCs:

'The sky begins to turn black, a cold wind picking up as the shadowy form of the Beast fills your vision. There is not enough strength left in your body to fight and there is not enough breath to carry your words to someone else who could take up your cause. The Beast stares down at you curiously, wondering how no hero has come

to truly challenge it.'

'A roiling green light shines behind you, drawing all eyes to the blade Hisui wreathed in green flame. Holding the blade with a look of faint disgust in his eyes is 'Soshi Yaksoku'. "I can't believe you're asking me to be a hero again... it never worked out well for me." The Scorpion spirit steps forward and drives the blade between the Beast's eyes, green fire burning away the shadows and banishing the gathering storm clouds.'

'Around you, you now see shocked actors including the Fearsome Warlord, the Calculating Karo, the Idealistic Youth, and the Officious Shisha. Shosuro Seiken, looking weathered and breathless and about ready to collapse on his feet, is gaping at a loss of words.'

"You miscalculated. Your life has been wasted. It will not be a hero that saves this empire, but a villain with the resolve to do whatever is necessary." 'Yaksoku' is suddenly in front of the Shosuro playwright, his green blade no longer on fire but instead stained darkly with blood as it plunges through Seiken's chest. 'Soshi Yaksoku' releases the blade, allowing Seiken to collapse to the ground. "I am done with this pageantry. Be more clever than this fool with your own lives." The Scorpion spirit fades away again from view, even as the actors edge away from Seiken's body.'

If the PCs manage to figure out what's really going on:

-The Seppun Miharū Rank 3 Technique can

pierce the lesser illusions such as invisible Soshi Shugenja if a PC with such a technique activates it successfully. The power of Seiken's Sacrifice means that they cannot pierce his grand illusion but they will clue in to the fact that they are somehow being deceived.

-Earth Needs No Eyes will notice the presence of many people that the PC cannot see, and will not detect the presence of the illusions.

-Eight Directions Awareness will reveal that the hidden actors and shugenja, and will not reveal the presence of the Beast or the Shadow People.

-Should any effect to pierce the illusion require a contested roll then Shosuro Seiken is a Rank 5 Soshi Shugenja with Air 5. He gains four free raises due to having lifecast.

Potentially PCs may realize that the appearance of the Beast or that the events of the finale are entirely illusionary and be unwilling to play along. The finale will play out much the same way unless a PC attempts to stop the illusion. Locating Shosuro Seiken by normal means will be impossible, only clever use of the kami, techniques that can overcome Illusions, or kiho such as Earth Needs no Eyes or Eight Directions Awareness can find him.

Alternatively the PCs can declare they will take no part in his game, rolling **Sincerity/Willpower (Honesty)** at **TN 60** to force him to abandon his finale.

Conclusion

Shosuro Seiken has died, his life spent on the final grand illusion to cap off his play. There are no plans to ever have the play repeated, and to some extent the Scorpion are quick to move on past this event. The blade Hisui, assuming it was not stolen by a PC, is taken up by the actress playing the Resplendent Maiden as the blade does belong to her family. As the blade serves as his anchor in Rokugan, 'Soshi Yaksoku' remains to continue to pursue his vengeance. Perhaps someday he may even remember where his ire is properly directed.

The Scorpion clan will be quite apologetic, claiming they had idea exactly how extreme Seiken's finale was going to be, and that they would consider it a favor if the PCs would not raise a fuss over this play. Should any PC agree they are eligible for the favor award at the end of the module. Should a PC refuse, the Scorpion will say they understand but the PC will not receive a favor from this module. If a PC says they will not raise a fuss and do anyway... well, surely that will work out well for them?

Stealing the Sword

Unscrupulous PCs may attempt to steal the blade Hisui. As they are being observed by a large number of Scorpion samurai this effort is unlikely to succeed. Should a PC come up with a plan that seems plausible they may be able to acquire the blade. Hisui is a Radiant Katana of Tsi make, that gives the PC Sworn Enemy (Scorpion Clan) and Haunted ('Soshi Yaksoku').

Rewards

Surviving the Adventure	1 XP
Good Roleplaying	1 XP
Engage in at least one social	
Interaction	1 XP
The Beast is defeated	1 XP
Total	4 XP

Glory

There is no glory award for this module, as far as the Empire is concerned you just went to see a play.

Honor

Should any PC fail a Fear test yet continue to try and act heroically they will gain an H7 gain. If any PC volunteers to stay behind as rearguard to allow the other PCs to escape they gain an H8 gain. This award does not apply to Overconfident PCs unless they pass their Overconfidence test.

Favors

The Scorpion grant 1 favor to PCs who agree not to raise a fuss to thank them for being a good sport with Shosuro Seiken's final play.

Other Rewards

None

Questions

- 1.) Was the Beast Defeated?
 - a. By a PC?
 - b. By an NPC?
- 2.) Did the PCs earn more Blessings of the Hero than Blessings of the Villain?
- 3.) Did players refuse the favor?

PC Handout #1 News From the Empire

PC Handout #2: The Masks and Costumes

Each PC is invited to take a Mask and Costume for their journey through Painted City. Each player chooses one of the masks and costumes. There are no duplicates of any costumes. Acting appropriately to the role as listed in the condition will grant (6 – Character Rank) Free Raises to any Social Skill Rolls made during the module. Any Prop Weaponry uses the appropriate skill for that weapon, but has its DR reduced by 1k1 (to a minimum of 0k1) and will shatter if it inflicts more than 25 wounds in a single strike.

Brash Bushi

Condition: Acting in a belligerent and aggressive fashion without actual violence.

Costume: Snarling Mempo, Bogu, Prop Daisho

Clever Yoriki

Condition: Making an observation about your surroundings that supports your statement.

Costume: Smiling lower half mask, Prop Wakizashi, Jitte, Lantern

Elegant Artisan

Condition: Flowery embellishments about your statement.

Costume: Elegant Kimono, Courtier's Fan, Artisan's Tools.

Wise Monk

Condition: Using a koan, parable, or quote from the Tao in support of your statement.

Costume: Basket Hat, Walking Stick, Kawaru Coins

Drunken Fool

Condition: Embarrass or humiliate yourself with a display of clumsiness or drunkenness.

Costume: Prop Daisho, Straw Jingasa, Jug, Rough Kimono

Grizzled Veteran

Condition: Introduce an old war story that shows you know what you're talking about.

Costume: Prop Naginata, Prop Daisho, Rough Kimono.

Wealthy Patron

Condition: Make an offering of money or gifts to entice the subject of your speech.

Costume: Extravagant Kimono, Bag of Coins, Prop Wakizashi, Parasol.

Learned Scholar

Costume: Dusty Robes, Small Stack of Books, Scrolls

Condition: Explain how some small bit of historical trivia or minutia relates to your present query and feel free to start rambling off on a tangential theme.

Lazy Yojimbo

Costume: Prop Yari, Sturdy Clothing, Prop Daisho, Hat

Condition: Give an excuse for why you cannot do what you are asking to do, but the person you are speaking to should.

Opportunistic Ronin

Costume: Sturdy Clothing, Prop Daisho, Prop Sodegarami, Small Sack.

Condition: Point out an opportunity for profit if the subject does as you are asking.