

Souls of the Fallen

by Cory Mills

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

Month of Doji, 1343 (Summer)

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[Court, Intrigue, Horror, Combat]

Part Six of Shifting Sands

Part One of the Summer Storm

**THIS MODULE CONTAINS MAJOR SPOILERS FOR
CIT45: THREADS OF FATE**

The leaders of the Unicorn Clan have gathered at Shiro Shinjo to mourn the losses of the last year and to determine their clan's future. But the rest of the Empire must address the threat rising on the northern plains, or run the risk of war...

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This module is written for the Legends of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Fourth Edition, originally published by Alderac Entertainment Group.

Please refer to the *Heroes of Rokugan 4: Champions of the Ivory Throne Campaign Primer* for information on how to run official campaign modules. In addition to the basic setting information and house rules for this campaign, it details the various administrative necessities of the living campaign. GM reporting is crucial to players' ability to engage with the setting and to increase their characters' influence.

Adventure Background and Summary

Nearly six years ago, Emperor Toturi IX led the 6th Imperial Legion to face a major incursion of the Shadowlands. This desperate defense of the Kaiu Wall came to be called the "Battle of Broken Jade", and costs the lives of the Emperor, his son and heir Torizawa, the Jade Champion, the Shogun, and thousands of Imperial Legionnaires and Crab samurai – but the Horde was stopped. A greater danger has arisen in the years since, however, and Rokugan has yet to realize the peril it faces.

The unprepared Toturi Shin-Zhu was left to take the throne as Toturi X, and though he has learned much about leadership and ruling in the years since, the Empire has lacked a strong moral authority to maintain stability. Petty wars have erupted between the Lion and Crab, and the Scorpion and Owl; another is brewing between the Unicorn and Dragon, following an assassination attempt by a misguided Tonbo upon the Unicorn Champion. This, as well as the corruption of the new Jade Champion, led to the fall of Shinjo Hazumi and her loss to the Shadowlands.

Moto Sartaq, the Khan of the Moto family (and, unknown to any, the architect of the attack on Hazumi), has moved to claim the title of Unicorn Champion. Hazumi's elder sister Ritsuke, prompted by another Unicorn leader, has returned to the clan and has stepped into place as her sister's heir. The lords of the Unicorn have been under pressure the last year, and even Sartaq wants to avoid strife in the clan. So, while the Unicorn are not known for their interest in politics, their leaders will meet to determine their clan's future.

Such a meeting attracts interest from across the Empire, of course – a change of leadership in a Great Clan is always important, and the Unicorn is a military power that none of the other clans are willing to underestimate. The Imperial Court has dispatched

Miya Hachi to serve as an official observer, and he has called upon his allies to provide him with an appropriate escort (the PCs). Representatives from the other clans will also be present, to observe or involve themselves as they see fit.

There are also those outside the Empire that have interest in the Unicorn's proceedings. Over the last several years, Tainted samurai have pledged themselves to a new leader in the Shadowlands. This Dark Lord has forged the disparate creatures into a vast army under the command of samurai that were Lost during the Battle of Broken Jade, and sent Tainted infiltrators into the Empire. One of these agents, a sodan-senzo whose connection to the ancestors is being subverted by Jigoku, will clear the way for his master to finally begin his conquest of Rokugan. In the process, he will attempt to recruit the PCs to the service of the Dark Lord – he has recognized that they are worthy samurai and will be instrumental in the coming war.

For the time has come that the Dark Lord will return to the Empire to reclaim the throne he lost when he fell fighting the Shadowlands. Toturi IX, the Illustrious Emperor, intends to save the Empire from itself – and neither the forces of Jigoku nor the Celestial Heavens can stop him.

Notes for the GM

This module contains major spoilers for CIT45: Threads of Fate, as the basic premise of this module depends on the events of the previous one. Players who have not played Threads of Fate should be made aware of the fact that they will be learning about the campaign's results for that module, and therefore the most significant events that happen in it.

Additionally, this module should NOT be run for more than seven players. Timing becomes far more difficult when adding another person to the court sequence in Part One, and a larger table might be tempted to split up in Parts Two and Three. (It also does not fit the narrative behind Isei's choice of nine samurai in specific, but having the shugenja NPC to assist the PCs and keep them on the right track is potentially very valuable.)

Finally, the GM may wish to inform the players at the start of the module that the adventure has the potential to involve their characters' ancestors, so that they can think about that aspect of their PCs' background before the scene in which it becomes relevant.

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.

- Ally, Noticed by, or Sworn Enemy for any of the NPCs noted in Player Handouts #2 and 3.
- Touch of the Realm or Cursed by the Realm: Yomi
- Haunted
- Lost Love
- Shadowlands Taint
- Rumormonger or Can't Lie

News from the Empire

While the GM is looking over sheets, it's a good time to distribute the first player handout of most modules. The News of the Empire is an overview of the recent events of the Empire in a fashion that shares the ongoing story with the playerbase without requiring a Skill Roll or interfering with the actual plot of the module. Any plot-relevant Rumors will belong in the appropriate section of the module to be learned during play.

Inactivity

Time passes, and though the PCs' deeds will earn them a reputation, the Empire is a large place and lasting fame is a long-term goal not easy to achieve. At the start of the module, each PC loses **three points of Glory**. This cannot reduce a PC's Glory Rank to less than their Insight Rank, and the Fame Advantage increases their Insight Rank by one for these purposes.

Taint Progression

If a PC possesses the Shadowlands Taint, they will need to roll at the beginning of the module to see how much it has grown over the intervening time since the last module. The TN of this raw **Earth Roll** is **20**. Failure on this roll causes the PC to gain a point of the Shadowlands Taint. If a character is growing close to being Lost (Shadowlands Taint Rank 4.5+), it is recommended that the player have another PC ready to replace them.

Crafting

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

Preparation Techniques

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

Ronin Survival

Life is difficult for ronin in the Empire at the best of times. PC ronin are no exception to this. At the start of the module, any ronin PCs lose half of their koku. This cannot reduce their accumulated wealth below an amount of bu equal to their highest Skill.

Experience Expenditure

Finally, the players should be given one last chance to spend any experience they wish before the module begins. Unless the module specifically allows it, experience may not be spent during the adventure.

Introduction

The PCs are sent by their lords to meet Miya Hachi at the City of the Rich Frog, a major trade hub and business city on the Drowned Merchant River at the border between the Lion and Unicorn. Apart from the usual "sent to provide assistance to a well-connected Imperial figure" sort of basic information, the PCs should not know much about why they have been sent.

Toshi sano Kanemochi Kaeru is the stronghold of the Frog Clan, a major trade center on the Drowned Merchant river on the border of the lands of the Lion and Unicorn. Though the Minor Clan has spent the last two centuries balancing its position between two of the Empire's most martial clans, the Frog have prospered by maintaining good relations with both.

The wealthy merchants of the city have ensured that its inns are generally of the highest quality, and you find Miya Hachi at a luxurious establishment. The

meeting chambers reserved for your use are tastefully decorated, and you settle into comfortable cushions around a low table as fine tea is served. Miya Hachi is a slim, dynamic man in his late twenties, and though he is as gracious and debonair as one could expect from a high-ranking Imperial courtier, there is a certain tension in his shoulders as he greets you.

The PCs may have encountered Miya Hachi in previous modules (he was of relative importance in both CIT21: *The Price of Failure* and CIT51: *Shadow of Dawn*); he is a high-ranking Miya Herald, with close ties to the Emperor's family. As a direct subordinate of the relatively-new Imperial Herald Mirumoto Kasei, he is a relatively influential member of the Imperial Court. PCs with significant connections or courtly skills (members of Courtier Schools, 5 or more Ranks in the Courtier Skill, or a position in the Imperial Courts) likely also remember that he is a close ally of Imperial Advisor Seppun Kazetora, and that the Imperial Families have been having issues with in-fighting and the new Imperial Herald has not helped the situation any. Hachi is not terribly happy to be working under Kasei, who achieved his rank through political appointment with essentially no relevant skills for the position, but both men are doing their best in a bad situation.

In person, Hachi is friendly and outgoing. He is happy to engage in small talk, asking after the PCs and their duties – this should allow the players to introduce their characters to the rest of the table, if they are not familiar with each other already.

When enough time has been spent for the appropriate social conventions, Hachi moves smoothly to business:

“I do thank you for joining me here, my friends. The matter I have asked for your assistance on is a fairly momentous occasion, as far as politics go, but should not be too onerous. As you are aware, the Unicorn Clan Champion was... lost to us three months ago.” Hachi's mouth crimps distastefully, but he leaves the topic with the vague euphemism. “Following that unpleasantness, the leadership of the clan has been uncertain. Moto Sartaq, the Khan of the Moto, has claimed the title of sozokunin – the title used for a presumptive Champion who has not yet been recognized by the Emperor. However, it seems that Shinjo Ritsuke, the sister of Hazumi, has contested his claim. The lords of the Unicorn are meeting at Shiro Shinjo to discuss the matter, and I have been sent by the Imperial Court to serve as an official Imperial Observer.

“Of course, no clan champion technically holds that title until the Emperor grants his approval. Since this usually happens at Winter Court, however, leaving the position entirely unfilled for the rest of the year is uncommon. The Emperor normally allows champions or daimyo to select their own heirs, and in a case such as this, is most likely to heed the wishes of the leaders of the clan – the family daimyo, the provincial lords, influential generals, that sort of individual. If the Unicorn come to an agreement, it is highly likely that the Emperor—” he sighs briefly, and almost mutters, “or his advisors—will grant official recognition to their choice. As Imperial Observer, I will return to the capitol with my, well, observations of the proceedings, so the Emperor can make an informed decision.

“It is not my intent to interfere in the Unicorn's internal politics. The other clans are certain to send representatives, and they may or may not show similar restraint. I have asked for you to serve as my honor guard; I will ask for your support, advice, protection in the unlikely event it becomes necessary, and your assistance in ensuring that the court proceeds smoothly. I will not ask you to act against your clans' interests, though I will ask that you consider carefully what actually best serves those interests.

“The Unicorn are one of the more militant clans in the Empire, and they have been put through significant strain in the last few years. I truly believe that the interests of the Empire are best served by ensuring a peaceful transition of power. Do you have any questions?”

Hachi does not know who the clans are sending to the convocation, though he has a pretty good idea which leaders of the Unicorn will be present – this information is gathered in Player Handout #2, and can be given to the players either now or on the journey to Shiro Shinjo. Hachi does not have a written dossier, of course, though as an active courtier he has some basic idea of most of the major figures of influence in every clan. PCs who are likewise well-informed (at the GM's discretion) can make similar guesses. Such characters likely know or can figure out their clans' positions on the Unicorn leadership before they arrive – this information is in Appendix #3.

Additionally, while Hachi absolutely hopes it will not be relevant, he does know that there are two Imperial Legions in the vicinity of Shiro Shinjo. His position as Imperial Observer will allow him to call upon them for support in the event of open warfare, so he regards them as a tool of absolute last resort.

The 5th Imperial Legion (the Jade Legion) has been recalled from its usual deployment (scattered across the Empire in support of Jade Magistrate operations); they are being assessed for complicity or corruption following the fall of the Jade Champion. The 8th Imperial Legion is also in the area observing them – this is being passed off as “ongoing support to the Unicorn Clan following the tragic loss of their Champion” by the Imperial Families. (The next closest Imperial Legion is the 7th, to the south – on the border between the Crab and Unicorn lands.)

Hachi will provide travel papers and methods (horses or carts as reasonable). All provisions and equipment will be provided, as well as appropriate court garb if the PCs don’t have any already. (Given that there is no expectation of violence, of course, Hachi doesn’t see much point to arms or armor for this journey...)

Other than further discussion on what politics Hachi expects, there isn’t too much for the PCs to do until they depart the next morning. The City of the Rich Frog is a major trade hub, so if they wish to purchase any other equipment or supplies, they are quite capable of doing so, but since the travel portion of the module doesn’t involve anything beyond sitting through some box text, it can be glossed over with little issue.

Part One: Blessings of the Ancestors

The vast lands of the Unicorn sprawl across the northwestern quarter of the Empire. Your route is fairly direct, and the Imperial travel papers provided by Hachi speed your way along the Emperor’s Road, but it will still take most of a week’s journey before you reach Shiro Shinjo.

Heading north, your first stop is Shiro Moto. The stronghold of the Moto family lies in the southern reaches of the Unicorn lands, positioned to defend the clan’s borders ever since the family’s return two centuries ago. When you pass through, there are relatively few high-ranking Moto in the city – it is not difficult to determine that many of them have traveled to Shiro Shinjo to lend support to their Khan and daimyo. Whatever troubles the clan has had with the Empire’s politics, the common folk that you see in the Unicorn lands appear happy and prosperous.

The next few nights are spent at comfortable wayside inns along the Imperial road – the Unicorn clearly anticipate the needs of travelers in their lands, and Hachi is familiar with the establishments you stay at. Your journey turns west at the village of Yashigi, a

small community of note only for its jade mines and a surprisingly elaborate temple to Kyufoki no Kami, the Fortune of Earthquakes.

On the journey, Hachi is focused on the task ahead. If he hasn’t already, he provides information on the Unicorn leadership (Player Handout #2) to the PCs, and is willing to strategize with them regarding what to expect on site. The herald is cautious in his personal assessments of the Unicorn; he has met most of the family daimyo (though he has not spoken with Ritsuke since her return to samurai status) and respects them for their abilities while he has some personal concerns regarding most of them. Hachi is a relatively good judge of character, and most of the Unicorn are not skilled enough dissemblers to fool him (Sartaq being a notable exception, not least because such subtlety is entirely unexpected from him).

Shiro Shinjo is visible for miles as you approach from the east, commanding a view over the surrounding plains. The gleaming waters of the Mizu-Umi Ryo shine to the west of the sprawling city around the Shinjo castle, and several massive military camps dot the hills. Banners flying proudly on the wind proclaim the tents belong to two Imperial Legions and a major contingent of the Junghar Unicorn army. A bustling, festive atmosphere eases what tension the sight of so many martial samurai might cause.

Shiro Shinjo Toshi is a major city, having long since overgrown the original walls built to protect the castle. Thousands of people live and work in the thriving trade center, and the buildings are a riot of color and architectural styles. Shiro Shinjo itself, however, is entirely utilitarian in appearance – at least from the exterior. It is obviously a military fortification, though its three-sided construction and rounded towers appear odd to Rokugani eyes.

The gates open wide at your approach, revealing a busy courtyard and a group of servants waiting to greet you warmly. A tall, lanky samurai steps forward with a fluid bow. “Greetings, Miya Hachi-sama. Shiro Shinjo is honored by your attendance. I am Shinjo Yoshino, Captain of the Shinjo House Guard. If there is anything that you require, I will be more than happy to ensure it is taken care of. Please, allow me to show you to your rooms while the grooms tend to your steed.”

Hachi appreciates the welcome, and moves briskly to follow, looking forward to cleaning the dust of the road off. If the PCs ask why the captain of the guard is greeting the Imperial Observer, Yoshino is a little

uncomfortable to admit that some of the guests are proving difficult and that the castle's hatamoto is occupied with them.

The courtyard of the castle is mostly occupied by yurts and a few more standard tents, marked with banners that indicate they belong to higher-ranking Unicorn military officers. Most of them are Shinjo, though the Moto family is well-represented as well.

Inside the gates, visitors who have not been to Shiro Shinjo before may be surprised to see the ground floor of the castle is taken up by stables and storage rooms. A clearly-defensible spiral staircase rises in the center of the large space, and servants rush to take the group's baggage and tend to their steeds. Yoshino leads Hachi and the PCs up to the fourth floor, chatting amiably but avoiding any substantive conversation regarding the purpose of the court.

On the whole, Yoshino should be a sympathetic face for the Unicorn to present to the PCs. He is absolutely loyal to his clan, and thinks Ritsuke is the right choice, but also wants to give the Imperial guest (and, by extension, the PCs with him) a good impression. Ideally, the PCs should view him as a potential ally and a reasonable authority figure so that his fate presents at least a bit of emotional conflict.

The Imperial Observer and his entourage have been given the use of a suite that takes up an entire wing of the fourth floor. Yoshino casually mentions that the other two wings are where Shinjo Ritsuke and Moto Sartaq are staying; while Shinjo Ritsuke, as the presumptive Shinjo daimyo, would be within her rights to take the daimyo's quarters on the fifth floor (the top floor of the castle), she has chosen to put herself on equal footing with her highest-ranking guests. (The other Unicorn daimyo are staying in the suites with one or the other of the claimants, giving a clear indication of their initial preference; while Yoshino is likely to avoid the complication, it is easy enough for the PCs to discover if they do any asking around.)

The PCs' quarters are quite comfortable, and despite its utilitarian exterior, Shiro Shino is lavishly decorated inside. Treasures from all over the world are displayed everywhere, in sufficient quantity that even regular visitors are always finding new wonders. Yoshino leaves the group to make what preparations they wish (and partake of the typical Rokugani custom of bathing after a journey), informing them that the court will officially open in a few hours, at the evening meal.

The PCs have enough time to get cleaned up and briefly speak with representatives from their clan, if they wish. They do not have time to do much more than touch base with their clans' representatives before the official opening of court. This should not be done as full role-playing scenes (unless the table does not have a significant time constraint), but the players can be made aware of their clans' initial positions on the Unicorn leadership, and it can be assumed that the NPCs will respond to offers of assistance with gratitude and ensure that the PCs are aware that they will be willing to assist the Imperial Observer if necessary. The GM should provide Player Handout #3 to the players, and the clan positions are detailed in Appendix #3.

There are a few other things that might be of interest to the PCs, though very little in the way of time to explore them. The Hare Clan maintains an embassy in the city, though they have deferred to Ichiro Kentaro to represent the Minor Clan Alliance at the court. The main dojo of the Shinjo School is located in the city, and the sensei are normally present at the castle – though given the intense court, they have taken their students out into the field for an extensive training exercise. Shiro Shinjo Toshi is also a major trading city, if the PCs did not get enough shopping at Toshi sano Kanemochi Kaeru...

And, of course, PCs who are making a general effort to learn what is going on may search for rumors.

Rumors

The following information is available with a Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness roll. Unicorn PCs gain a Free Raise on this roll.

- 10: Ritsuke has the unanimous support of the Shinjo provincial daimyo; none of them want the position and are trusting her to redeem the family name. (They are also not present at this court.)
- 15: There is a small but vocal group speaking against Ritsuke; she is being spoken of as out of touch and too passive, and the time she spent as a monk is seen as a drawback when it comes to leadership of the clan.
- 20: On the other hand, anti-Sartaq sentiment is less common; there are a few that don't trust his attitude and aggression, but most support for Ritsuke seems to be positively for her rather than motivated by feelings against him. A large amount of the speech against Ritsuke, in fact, seems to be coming from Moto Noritoshi.
- 25: Kitsu Isei, one of the Lion representatives, has a decent relationship with the Unicorn, having been one of the first to recognize Shinjo Hazumi

as the Soul of Shinjo (along with the PCs, in all probability). Additionally, he is regarded highly by his clan due to his contact with the soul of the deceased Emperor Toturi IX in Tengoku.

- 30: The Khol army was sent to assist the Owl against the Scorpion last year. Following the official end of the war, some elements of the army remain in the Owl lands to assist rebuilding and provide additional defense if the Scorpion should change their mind. However, on the way back to Unicorn lands, the bulk of the army under its commander Shinjo Kenshin attacked and razed Shiro Tonbo (actual events may be less severe than described). The Unicorn are grimly happy that Hazumi's cousin chose to take a direct route to justice.
- 40: There has been no word from the Badger lands in the last few weeks. There is some thought that the Yobanjin are preparing an offensive, and speculation that it might explain the silence out of the Phoenix lands. (Any mention that the Dragon might also be attacked at that point is met with a flat "they deserve whatever they get"...)

Court of Shiro Shinjo

The court scene is intended to serve as a misdirection for the players. It should appear to establish a "normal" court module, with political wrangling and social mechanics to resolve the conflict – but the mod takes a hard turn after the opening court scene. Nonetheless, this scene should give the players an opportunity to involve themselves in the politics. If a player is proactive enough to start pursuing their clan's (or their own) interests by trying to sway an NPC, they should be rewarded for success with a Favor despite the fact that it ultimately has little lasting effect.

Music rings over the milling crowd of guests and Unicorn, quieting the low murmur of voices in the main hall on the castle's third floor. Clad in fine silks of purple, white, and gold, the leaders of the Unicorn take the dais at the end of the room. Ide Ekuan, Iuchi Kanetsugu, Utaku Fujiko, Moto Sartaq, and Shinjo Ritsuke – the daimyo of their families, each an accomplished samurai and unbowed under the weight of their responsibilities.

Ritsuke takes the center position as host, and greets her guests in grave tones. "I give you all welcome in the name of the Shinjo. We are glad to have the eyes of the Empire upon us as we look to the future of our clan, and ask only that you who are here as representatives of our neighbors observe and advise without interfering in the proceedings. This has been a

difficult time for us all, and the Unicorn appreciate your counsel but we will determine our own fate, with only the Emperor's approval." She offers a dignified nod to Miya Hachi, who bows politely in return, his face impassive.

"In order to ensure that the Iuchi are not over-burdened by both these political concerns and the spiritual needs of a court, Kitsu Isei-san has graciously offered to oversee any intervention with the spirits that may become necessary. I—" Ritsuke's speech is interrupted by a voice speaking in a piercing whisper, one clearly calculated to be heard.

"The Unicorn need no interference from outsiders, let alone a Lion," Moto Noritoshi's snide remark in the crowd prompts lower-voiced muttering from the throng.

"I do not yet speak for the Unicorn, Noritoshi-san, but neither do you. I will thank you to remain civil to the guests of my family's castle." Ritsuke's clipped tones brook little argument, but Noritoshi offers one regardless.

"If you wish to educate me on civility, Ritsuke-san, I am adequately prepared to face you with steel." He chuckles at the gasp this provokes from many of the Unicorn in the court.

Ritsuke simply shakes her head. "I am surprised at the need to lecture you on courtesy, Noritoshi-san, but somehow unsurprised that I must remind you of Shinjo's Law. We will find an appropriate method to resolve this dispute later, but in the meantime, try to keep your temper from bringing shame to your father. As great a leader as he is, he does not deserve further burdens." Noritoshi flushes a dark red in anger, but Ritsuke continues speaking as though nothing of note has happened. "Isei-san? I think we are in need of your benediction."

The Lion sodan-senzo steps forward, and bows his red-maned head. "I am sorry, my lady. I should like to consult with your guests, to determine which ancestors to beseech for their guidance. Perhaps at the close of court tonight?"

"Of course, Isei-san." Ritsuke nods, then turns to open her hands in a gesture of welcome. "There will be much to discuss in the coming days, but know that you are all honored guests. I ask only that you enjoy our hospitality in peace, as we go about our weighty matters."

The Unicorn court is largely scandalized by Noritoshi's behavior, and he is visibly ostracized by most of them over the course of the evening. Shinjo's Law is a tradition of the Unicorn, following an edict from the Kami that no Unicorn should kill another. Many take this to mean "no Unicorn should shed the blood of another", and most duels between members of the clan are resolved in a bloodless fashion of some kind – whether with practice weapons or by using other methods of resolution. Any Unicorn PC should be aware of this, and any Unicorn NPC will be willing (if not happy) to explain the situation, and the depth of Noritoshi's transgression, if asked.

This serves as the opening of the formal court. There are a lot of Unicorn courtiers, most of whom have not been provided names for simplicity's sake, as well as the guests of consequence noted in the player handouts. As the PCs are expected to be relatively significant samurai at this point, they can reasonably expect to be able to speak with the NPCs without too much of a run-around. Each PC has the opportunity to speak with one NPC, to sway them or determine their inclination or just to interact with them. Getting an NPC to support one leader or the other requires a Social Skill roll (using Awareness, the actual Skill used at the GM's discretion; Courtier is the default) at a TN indicated by the chart in Appendix #2. These interactions should be kept short if there is a time constraint (less than five minutes per PC). The implication that this is just the first scene of an ongoing court should be clear, to keep the players from trying to accomplish everything in the first night, but everyone should be given an opportunity to act.

Over the course of the evening, Kitsu Isei approaches each PC: "I wish to know which of the shiryo are likely to have a connection to the Unicorn Clan's most prominent guests." He should be polite and respectful, and try to draw a little bit of each PCs' backstory out of them, especially in regard to their ancestry. (Again, with time constraints, this should be done within a few minutes if at all possible.) Any PC who does not know their ancestry will cause him to apologize, as Isei genuinely does not wish to cause offense, and he will offer to assist them in learning more if they wish.

It should be noted that, while an ancestor spirit (shiryo) generally has an easier time forging a connection to someone who is descended from them, they can also provide their guidance to anyone who is a member of the clan they were sworn to in life. The players should be encouraged to explore their PCs' backgrounds, and Appendix #4 has some general ideas for ancestors for each of the clans. Ultimately, this is an opportunity for the players to establish things about their character that

don't often come up, and unless their ideas are particularly disruptive, they should be given a decent amount of leeway. (Bear in mind that Fortunes are not shiryo, and Isei cannot call upon them in the same way.)

If possible, after Isei speaks with them, one of the PCs should be approached by Shinjo Yoshino, who wants to ensure that the Imperial Observer is doing well (he is). This also gives Yoshino a chance to mention that he has assigned a few guards to escort Isei, and that the sodan-senzo has been leaving incense all over the castle as blessings, even into the catacombs.

After each PC has had a chance to interact with Isei and with one other NPC of their choice:

At the end of the evening, Kitsu Isei raises his voice in prayer on the dais. "I call upon those who have gone before, that their wisdom may guide us in the coming days. I ask that the Thunders Otaku and Kamoko, who stood to defend the Empire from the Fallen Kami, grant us your courage. Let us be inspired by the memories of all of Rokugan's heroes – from Kakita Shimizu to Kuni Osaku, from the great Hantei Genji to the mighty Ujik-hai Moto. And in this time of strife, let us remember the examples of those who faced similar trials: Shino Shono, Kitsu Tsuko, Tsuruchi Munemori. Stand proud with the souls of the fallen, that we may face what comes with honor and pride."

As he prays, Isei holds a heavy bronze incense bowl aloft. At each name, a kanji bursts into golden light on the surface of the bowl. When he finishes, the entire vessel emits a bright pulse, and he sets it on a stand upon the dais, a fine wisp of smoke rising to the ceiling.

If possible, the GM is encouraged to incorporate the ancestors named by the PCs to Isei in his invocation. (The names given are mostly canon characters: Kakita Shimizu was the fourth son of Lady Doji and Kakita, the first Master of the Kakita Dueling Academy and the second Emerald Magistrate; Kuni Osaku was the shugenja that gave her life to stall the Maw's attack on the Crab lands so the Kaiu Wall could be built; Hantei Genji was the son of the first Hantei and established most of the Empire's culture; Moto was the founder of the Moto family, from the gaijin Ujik-hai tribe; Shinjo Shono was the daimyo of the Shinjo who redeemed his family after they were corrupted by the Kolat; Kitsu Tsuko was the first Shogun, named in the reign of Toturi II; Tsuruchi Munemori was the first Emerald Champion from his family. The last three were active in the Empire during the founding of the Toturi Dynasty and appeared in the HoR3 campaign.)

The court breaks up into smaller groups at that point, with a few gatherings focused around the leaders but people mostly take to their rooms to rest in preparation for what is anticipated to be an exhausting next few days of political maneuvering.

Part Two: Terror in the Night

While the PCs and the rest of the samurai of the castle sleep that night, Kitsuo Isei casts a massive maho spell, sending them all into a deep, unrestful slumber. (This is a variation on the “Wind-born Slumbers” Air spell, powered by blood and Isei’s ancestor magic.) If a PC is deliberately attempting to remain awake for some reason, they may roll raw **Earth** at a TN of 30 to realize that they are about to be put to sleep by magic but they succumb to the effects of the spell regardless.

While everyone is asleep, Isei kills many of the Shinjo House Guard and raises them as undead slaves. His ability to affect ancestral spirits also allows him to bind the spirits of the deceased into their corpses, making them a threat far beyond most zombies or even revenants. Under his command, they carry the PCs and a few others to the catacombs below the castle – Isei has decided these samurai represent the best potential servants for his Dark Lord, and wants them out of the way while he prepares the rest of the castle for the advance of his liege’s forces.

However, due to Isei’s invocation of the ancestors during the court scene, various shiryō will make contact with their descendants. Every PC, except any with the Curse of the Realm: Yomi Disadvantage, will have a vision sent to them by an ancestor of their clan. This may be the one they specified when speaking with Isei, but it does not have to be, at the GM’s discretion, and for any PC that had no answer to give him it obviously cannot be. The GM is encouraged to find a figure that would inspire both the character and the player, and this also provides an opportunity to give the PC insight into their own background if they were previously lacking some. If a PC has the Haunted Disadvantage, this ancestor should almost certainly be the one reflected by that Disadvantage.

The intent is for this vision to give the PCs a sense of danger, but also an element of hope. While they are aware of the nature of the threat to the Empire, what the ancestors can tell the PCs is limited – they cannot speak freely about it due to Isei’s corruption.

Ideally, the vision should encourage the PCs to face the dangers that are descending upon Rokugan. There is a limit to the amount of help the Celestial Heavens can provide, and the mortal realm will need to face the brunt of the threat, but Ningen-do, and the PCs, are not alone

Any PC who does not have the Curse of the Realm: Yomi Disadvantage has the following dream:

Your sleep that night is fitful. Isei’s invocation has, perhaps, brought the image of your ancestor to your mind, for you find yourself facing them in your dreams. Formless shadows swirl around you as they try to deliver a warning.

Any PC who has the Curse of the Realm: Yomi Disadvantage instead is confronted by:

You stand alone in a dark, formless void. There are swirls of denser blackness that seem to be grasping for you. A low, mournful wind echoes on what seems like an empty plain, highlighting your utter isolation.

Each PC rolls **Lore: Theology (Ancestors) / Void**, or raw **Void** at a TN of 25. (PCs who have Touch of the Realm: Yomi gain a bonus of +1k1 to this roll, and PCs who are Cursed by the Realm: Yomi are at -1k1.) If they fail, they must roll raw **Earth** at a TN of 20 or gain a Rank of the Shadowlands Taint (to be informed of this when they wake up by Isei). If they succeed with a 40 or higher on the first roll, they gain “Shiryō’s Blessing” and may re-roll any one roll during the rest of the mod. PCs who have Curse of the Realm: Yomi cannot gain this benefit, but if they succeed on the roll, they may buy off the Disadvantage with 4 experience points and no Favor cost at the end of the module. If a PC has the Haunted Disadvantage, they only have to roll a 30 to gain this benefit.

These visions should be personalized as much as possible, though the general sentiment the shiryō is attempting to get across is the same. The ancestor spirit wants to warn the PC about the situation, and can provide any advice or insights that the GM may consider important for the character.

“A darkness is coming for the Empire. This time it does not seek to destroy, but to conquer – though Rokugan may survive, its soul would be forever twisted. Victory will not come easily, but as long as you fight, there is hope.”

Each player should have an opportunity to interact directly with their ancestor, though not for very long.

After no more than three questions (that the ancestor cannot provide more specific information on Isei or the “darkness”, though they can try to imply what the PCs are about to face), the vision will end:

The shadows around you swirl into chains of gleaming obsidian. Your ancestor fights against the binding as the links wrap around them.

If the PC succeeded at the earlier roll, they help the vision of their ancestor break free. Failure ends the vision with no clear knowledge of the fate of the ancestor. If they failed the Earth roll, they are cut by the obsidian chains and their ancestor is torn away from them. If they gained “Shiryō’s Blessing”, the ancestor gives them a gesture of benediction before the vision ends.

Waking in the Depths

As the vision fades around the PCs, they find themselves in a more mundane darkness. Opening their eyes, they are lying on a cold stone floor, with the roar of a frustrated shugenja echoing in their ears.

“Spirits of purity, rise to strike the unclean before... me...” The deep, bellowing voice of Kuni Tokimasa falters, then tries again. “Spirits of purity, cleanse the... What is this blasphemy?”

Any shugenja (or another PC reasonably acquainted with them) can recognize the basic spell Jade Strike, though why an experienced Kuni like Tokimasa has failed to cast a spell that is second nature to him is less obvious.

The PCs are in the catacombs below Shiro Shinjo, though that shouldn’t be immediately obvious. The room they find themselves in has stone walls and floor, indicating it is underground, and dimly lit by a handful of lanterns on the walls. A few shelves line the walls, with offering plates or incense holders. A single larger altar stands by the door, though it has been defiled; a heavy bronze incense bowl rests atop a coating of sticky blood, and a wisp of faint grey-white smoke rises into the air from it.

The PCs are not the only ones present: Kuni Tokimasa, Soshi Yukiyo, and Kakita Kayozu have also been brought here. (If there are only five PCs at the table, Hantei Ganji has been chosen to join them; if there are seven PCs, then Kakita Kayozu has not.) All nine of these samurai are clad in their sleeping garb (light robes can be assumed) and have none of their usual equipment.

A dozen members of the Shinjo House Guard stand in a loose circle around the samurai prisoners. Half of them are wearing armor, all are armed with daisho at their waist, and all of them are quite visibly dead. Most of them have slashed throats, with gore splashed liberally down the front of their garb. They stand almost unnaturally still, regarding you impassively with glowing green eyes. Shinjo Yoshino, the captain of the Guard, is standing near the altar, between you and it – and also blocking the door.

As the PCs realize peril they are in, they should become aware that they are Fatigued, have recovered no Void Points or spell slots used over the last day, and are having a hard time maintaining their balance (any Agility-based rolls are made with a -5k0 penalty). These effects are lingering from the maho used to bring them to this place, and can be identified as such with a **Lore: Maho / Intelligence** roll at a TN of 25. More, as they are in a strange place and surrounded by undead monstrosities, they need to roll to resist

Fear 4

The PCs should be given a short time to react, speak with the other samurai (who are as ignorant of what’s happening as they are), and take stock of their situation. If no one else moves to explore, Kuni Tokimasa can be pushed back easily by the undead Shinjo to demonstrate the infirmity the prisoners are under. Soshi Yukiyo can cast Sense, to try to understand what’s going on with the spirits and will report that the elemental kami appear to have been suppressed by kansen. There is no way to speak with them safely; any spell other than Sense can cause the caster to gain the Taint.

Isei’s Offer

After a few moments, the smoke from the incense bowl on the altar begins to coalesce into the image of a golden-eyed man with blood-red hair: Kitsu Isei.

“Ah, you are awake. Good. Your deeds and capabilities have earned my respect, and I would be honored to have you join me in service to the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands.”

There are a number of ways the PCs are likely to respond to this sort of offer. A key thing to remember is that Isei is absolutely sincere: he truly respects the PCs, and because he believes he is serving the rightful emperor (a fact that he will not share immediately, since they haven’t agreed to join him), he thinks that

he only has to convince them of the rightness of his cause. To that end, he should always be polite to them and refuse to rise to any taunts, obscenities, or insults with anything more than disappointment. Isei is deluded, but he does still respect the tenets of bushido, and courtesy is a key aspect of proper behavior.

Ultimately, there is no real expectation that he will be successful in his recruitment effort. If PC attempts to dissemble, they will find that he sees through their lies with ease. (On the other hand, if a PC genuinely decides to give themselves over to the Dark Lord, they become an NPC and will be sent on to meet the oncoming army as a messenger; the GM should inform the Admin Staff about the event in their reporting).

Isei is a fanatic who has lost, if not his sanity, at least his perspective. He fundamentally believes, due to his mind being overwhelmed by a more powerful akutenshi, that Toturi IX is the legitimate ruler. He will hint at the truth, possibly giving the impression that the “Dark Lord” is the returned Fu Leng, but keeps it somewhat vague until he is convinced that the PCs have converted. As a general rule, the other NPCs can drive some of the discussion if the PCs are not active, but the players should be the focus of events.

- What do you want? – “You need to accept the blessing of Jigoku, as I have. The Dark Lord showed me how to retain my mind and faculties. You need but have a cause greater than yourself to serve.”
- Why are we here? “You are here, nine samurai to serve the new Dark Lord of the Shadowlands, as nine is a number sacred to him. He will have need of champions, and you are worthy to stand at his side.”
- Who is the Dark Lord? “He is the true ruler of these lands. Touched by both Tengoku and Jigoku, his power is greater than any other being in the mortal Realm.”
- What have you done here/why doesn’t magic work? “I have given this place to the Shadowlands. My votives called the kansen here, and they have sent the elemental spirits into slumber. You may call upon the kansen, if you accept the touch of Jigoku.”
- What have you done to the Shinjo? “They would not serve willingly. I bound their mortal souls to the husks of their bodies after I killed them.” He sighs regretfully. “It was not an easy decision, but they would not see reason. They are obedient, and may use the full range of their training as directed, but they are not as useful as they would otherwise have been.”
- Where is Miya Hachi/the Unicorn leaders/other NPCs? “They are not as worthy, though they can

still serve in a fashion. I have no wish to harm them, but their service to the Dark Lord does not require as much of their mind.”

Additionally, any PC who already has any points of the Shadowlands Taint (whether they are aware of it or not, or even if they have less than a full Rank), will be informed by Isei, “You already bear the mark of Jigoku. Embrace it, and become more than you are!”

When it becomes clear that the PCs are entirely resistant to his efforts, Isei will shake his head and leave them with one last appeal:

“Your choice is to serve willingly, and keep your mind. Or I can bind your spirit to your flesh, as I have done with these. All that you are will serve the glory of the Dark Lord, one way or another. Do not take too long in your consideration. Eventually, Jigoku will overwhelm your soul, and you will serve as nothing more than bodies.” He turns to the too-still Yoshino, and commands, “Keep them here until they comply. Do not kill them, and do as little harm as you must.”

With that, his image dissipates, and the incense returns to a normal wisp of smoke.

At this point, Kuni Tokimasa begins to curse under his breath as he tries to think of what can be done.

Casting Sense with any element (if no PC is able to do so, Soshi Yukiyo can) will inform the PCs that the spirits are not accessible. No spell with the Jade or Crystal Keyword can be cast, as the kansen cannot duplicate the purity necessary; any spell other than Sense that is cast causes the PC to automatically gain a number of points of the Shadowlands Taint equal to its Mastery Level. Additionally, all kiho cause the user to gain a point of Shadowlands Taint; the exception to this is Internal Kiho, which do not usually interact with spirits outside the user’s body. (Touch of the Void Dragon, however, does align the user’s body with the element of the surrounding area – in this case, the Taint – so they would gain a full Rank of the Shadowlands Taint from using it.) The Sense spell also allows the caster to identify the incense bowl on the altar (which Isei referred to as a “votive”) as the focus of the effect, and provides some control over the undead. The range is several hundred feet, but there is no physical protection on the item and simply destroying it will cause the effect to end. There are, however, several in the castle – at best guess, one on every floor.

However, due to the maho curse they are currently under the effects of, the PCs will almost certainly be

unable to get to the votive. They should not be encouraged to try, but if they insist on moving without conferring with the NPCs, they can experience the penalties. They must roll Athletics or Jujutsu / Agility to try to break past the undead guards to get to the altar. As long as they are under the effects of the maho, they will be knocked Prone and take 1k1 damage if they cannot roll a 25 or more (with the -5k0 penalty); even if they succeed, they simply keep their feet as they are shoved back.

After the PCs have an opportunity to begin to think, Kuni Tokimasa breaks off and gathers them close. “I can get you out of the room, I think. What will you do after that?” In the interest of having a coherent plan, he will brush past any inquiry over why he wouldn’t be involved at that point. He, or one of the other NPCs, can remind the players about their duty to Miya Hachi; the PCs may also consider it important to try to rescue the Unicorn leaders or other NPCs present.

Once the PCs have at least an approximation of a plan, Tokimasa will grunt.

The grizzled Kuni tears open the hem of his gi, and withdraws a small finger of jade. “I can use this for one pure spell. The best option is to ensure that you are protected from the Taint, and, hopefully, clear this maho that’s hobbling us off. It should make it a bit easier to deal with whatever foul tricks you’ll face.” Tokimasa’s lip curls in something between a grimace and a smile. “Make it worthwhile.”

The small piece of jade clenched in his white-knuckled fist begins to glow. He whispers, “Spirit of purity... protect these, your allies, that they may set this wrong aright. Take what is required from me, your servant, that they not fall to darkness.”

The fragment of stone breaks apart into a pure green light that washes over the other eight samurai. When it clears, Tokimasa takes one last, shuddering breath, and collapses.

The Kuni shugenja has life-cast “Strength of the Crow”; under normal circumstances, this provides a bonus of +5k5 to any roll to resist the Shadowlands Taint and increases the TN of maho spells targeting the recipient by 10. With the extra power provided by his life-force, Tokimasa also cleanses the PCs (and the NPCs) of the lingering effects of the maho spell – they are no longer penalized by the curse, lose the Fatigued Condition, and the wash of invigorating energy allows each of them to recover a Void Point.

Break the Focus

At this point, the PCs should realize that they need to do something about the physical foci that Isei left around. Soshi Yukiyo, while she may mourn Tokimasa, respects his sacrifice too much to waste it, and will curtly remind the PCs that the source of much of the maho they’re facing is the incense bowl on the altar.

Doing so while they were still under the effects of the maho was essentially impossible, but now skilled PCs can try to get past the undead Shinjo House Guard. It is of note that the undead will follow the literal commands given to them by Isei, but are showing no initiative and will rebel as much as they can (it’s just not enough to allow the PCs to do what they wish without contest).

The Shinjo have lost none of their training, and even show signs of being able to utilize their Techniques (given the defensive nature of the Shinjo School, this would make combat likely very frustrating), but PCs can try to dodge past them or push through by rolling **Athletics** or **Jujutsu / Agility** at a TN of 30. Other PCs may attempt to distract them by rolling **Defense / Reflexes** at a TN of 20; each successful Defense roll gives one of the PCs trying to break through a Free Raise.

Success on the Athletics or Jujutsu rolls allows a PC to get past the guards, either to the door (though alone) or to the altar. Breaking the votive does not require any roll, but once broken, it releases a noxious black smoke – an almost malevolent, gritty cloud that scours at the PC’s skin if they are within a few feet. This necessitates a raw **Earth** Roll at a TN of 25; failure means that the character gains a number of points of Taint equal to the amount they failed the roll by. However, since they have Strength of the Crow, they do gain +5k5 to this roll, so hopefully failure is only a remote possibility.

Once the votive is broken, a shudder goes through the undead Shinjo. The leader, Yoshino, glances swiftly around at the others, then silently draws his wakizashi. Making eye contact with you, he kneels and with deliberation drives it into his belly. As he bows his head, the others all move to follow his lead one last time.

Taking katana from the Shinjo and putting them out of their misery does not require a roll, but will certainly be appreciated by the tormented souls. This serves the additional purpose of providing the PCs with weapons;

if a PC is particularly dependent on a weapon other than a sword, Soshi Yukiyo can cast “Netsuke of Air” to create a single item of twenty pounds or less. This cannot be used for armor, but a Heavy Weapon, Spear, or Polearm is entirely possible. (She will not create a no-dachi simply to make a PC feel better, however.)

Part Three: Darkness Loose in Shiro Shinjo

At this point, the PCs, Yukiyo, and Kayozu (plus Hantei Ganji, if he’s there) are free to move as they wish. They may want to be careful, but any amount of exploration allows them to find the main spiral staircase at the center of the castle that leads up to the upper stories. They will encounter no other people, everyone else in the building being asleep still from the effects of the maho spell. There are some undead guards visible at the main gates to the castle, but they were ordered to keep watch on the gates and unless the PCs try to leave, will not provide any resistance.

As the PCs climb the castle, they may attempt to find the other votives. As indicated by Soshi Yukiyo, there is one on every floor, and locating them requires an Investigation (Search) / Perception roll at a TN of 30. Another casting of the Sense spell gives two Free Raises on this roll, but Yukiyo will only do it if the PCs ask – she does have a limited number of spell slots. Doing so also takes about five minutes, which may strike some PCs as too much time without their gear or knowledge of their charge’s fate. Again, breaking the votive releases the Tainted smoke and requires a roll to resist (TN 25, with +5k5 from Tokimasa’s last blessing, failure gives a number of points equal to the amount failed by).

The first and second floors can be cleared in this fashion with no difficulty. The lack of any living presence should be eerie, but there are no guards to stop the PCs. If the PCs have animals in the stables, they can confirm that they are healthy and unharmed, if still asleep (and unlikely to be of much use, as they would suffer a similar effect to the penalties the PCs had when they awoke).

When the PCs reach the third floor, where the main meeting hall and the guest quarters for the majority of the court are located, they may search for the votive – it is in the main stairwell, tucked into a large vase from Medinaat al-Salaam – but doing so also allows them to attempt a raw **Perception** Roll at a TN of 25. Success allows them to hear chanting from the guest quarters hallway. If they are actively intending to wake the guests on this floor, they will notice it as they

get closer to the common room at the end of the hall – the same roll can be used, scaled based on distance at the GM’s discretion.

If the PCs have not gone to the fourth floor, then Kitsu Isei can be interrupted here before he kills some of the other guests and raises them as undead servants. If they have already gone to the fourth floor, they likely have their equipment, and he will have raised at least three of the other guests (four if the table is particularly combat-capable or has seven players) to defend him. See the “Confronting Isei” section on page 14.

If the PCs do not go to confront Isei on the third floor before they go to the fourth floor, whether due to prioritizing getting their equipment, failing to notice the chanting, or other reasons, they can find the votive on the fourth floor atop a frame that displays a tapestry from the Yodotai lands in the central staircase.

The fourth floor is divided into three wings, with separate towers containing the suites for the highest-ranking guests (normally these towers have other uses, but have been repurposed for the court). Hachi and the PCs were given the southwest wing, with Ritsuke and her retinue in the northern wing and Sartaq and his followers in the southeast.

If the PCs confronted Isei on the third floor, the oni are not here and there is no major impediment to them waking the Imperial Observer and the Unicorn leaders. See “Dark Whispers” on page 15.

If the PCs come to the fourth floor first:

The comfortable common room that your rooms open on lies at the end of a long hall. Sliding the door aside, you see the furnishings cast aside and a tense form pacing among the mess. At first it appears to be a samurai in full armor, carrying a sword in either hand... but when it turns as you open the door, you see that the bone-white plates are growing out of bloody red flesh, and the blades are actually long claws on its arms. Fiery eyes blaze at you, over a bony plate reminiscent of a mempo. It gives voice to a piercing cry, one echoed by even stranger cries from the hallway behind you, and moves to attack!

Before Initiative is rolled, the PCs need to resist **Fear 3** from the new oni charging them. The room is about twenty feet on a side, so crossing to their own rooms to recover equipment during the combat should require at least a Simple Action, with a Complex Action to gather weapons or spell scrolls.

The Chishio no Oni are not complicated creatures. They should attack whoever is closest; if they miss their first Round and survive, they move to Full Attack. They are designed (quite literally – they are new creations by Muzo the Shrike, a powerful shugenja advisor to the Dark Lord) to be cannon fodder and cause as much damage by dying as they might by attacking. Against less skilled opponents than the PCs, they are potentially very dangerous.

The main thing to remember about the Chishio no Oni is that their blood is some form of deadly substance. These have fire, acid, and poisonous gas that is released when the oni is cut – mechanically, this always results in the attacker taking half the damage they deal in Wounds the first time they attack an oni. They may avoid the damage on subsequent attacks with a Defense or Athletics roll, but there is no way to avoid it on the first.

The “samurai” oni has fire for blood; there is also an avian-shaped oni guarding Rituske’s suite that releases poisonous, caustic gas when cut (reflected as damage for mechanical simplicity), and a bipedal eel-like creature guarding Sartaq’s suite that has acidic blood. The other two should close during the Reactions Stage of the first combat Round.

As the PCs are not likely armed with anything greater than the Shinjo House Guards’ katana, and do not have armor, this encounter is not intended to be a serious danger but threaten them and keep them from feeling comfortable. They should be able to handle the creatures with relatively little effort.

The NPCs accompanying the PCs should be useful if possible without overshadowing the PCs. Yukiyo can provide support, and Kayozu some martial help, but the PCs are, as always, the main characters.

Chishio no Oni

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3

Initiative: 7k3

Attack: 8k4 (natural weapons, Simple)

Armor TN: 25

Damage: 6k3 (natural weapons)

Reduction: 0

Wounds: 25 (+5), 50 (+10), 75 (Dead)

Taint Rank: 5

Special Abilities:

- Fear 3
- *Corrupted Blood:* When damaged by an edged weapon (or anything else that draws blood), the enemy takes half the damage they deal in

Wounds. (This cannot deal more than 37 Wounds from a killing blow.) This damage is automatic the first time a PC damages a chishio no oni, and may be avoided with a Defense / Reflexes roll at a TN of 20 afterwards. (A PC may roll Athletics / Reflexes instead, but this increases the TN by 10.) This damage type varies between the types of oni.

Once the oni are dealt with, there is no real impediment to the PCs getting their gear and waking Miya Hachi (who sleeps through the combat entirely). See “Dark Whispers” on page 15.

After gathering their gear and touching base with Hachi, if the PCs have not faced the Tainted sodan-senzo, they will likely either go looking for him or seek to wake the rest of the castle’s guests on the third floor. Either way, they will locate him there. If they have already faced him, then Hachi will insist on waking the Unicorn leaders and heading to the castle’s observation tower to see what is coming. See “Part Four: Arrival of the Dark Lord” on page 16.

Confronting Isei

Whether they face him before getting their gear or after, Isei is on the third floor turning samurai guests of less political value into undead servants. If they confront him first, the PCs can stop him from murdering any more samurai; if not, he will have raised Ichiro Kentaro, Heichi Toya, and Agasha Shumei (if the table is particularly combat-heavy or has seven players, then he has raised Moshi Atsuko; otherwise, she is dead but not undead yet).

At the end of the guest hall, there is a large room with a window on one of the corners of the triangular castle. Isei kneels, knife in hand, chanting dark prayers to the gray pre-dawn sky. When you step into the room, he turns with a shocked face. “You should not be here! You must await the Dark Lord’s pleasure!” With a swift gesture, he draws the knife along his left forearm again, drawing another thin line of blood there. A cloud boils out of his blood, a thick fog that rushes toward you – only to pass around your bodies with no effect, a faint green aura inches from your skin seeming to repel it. Isei drops the knife and rises to his feet, sorrow in his voice as he squares his shoulders.

What forces Isei has to help him here depend on whether the PCs have gone to the fourth floor first: if they have, then he has undead samurai and he calmly orders them to “Defend me, but try to keep from permanent damage to our comrades.” The undead

samurai move between the PCs and the fallen Kitsu. (Their stats, and Isei's, are in Appendix #2 on page XX)

If they have not gone to the fourth floor, he has no undead and is a little more desperate as he cries, "Gifts of the Shrike! Defend me!" The three Chishio no Oni tear their way through the ceiling and drop down to stand between the PCs and their current master.

Both sets of enemies require the PCs make a roll to resist **Fear 3**.

In either case, the room is about forty feet long, and PCs who wish to engage Isei in melee must cross the distance occupied by hostiles. This requires a Complex Action and an **Athletics / Agility** roll at a TN of 25; failure on the roll stops them in melee with the defenders, but only requires a Simple Action (so if the PC stopped in this fashion has Simple Action attacks, they may still attack the defenders). They may move normally to engage him in the following Round.

In combat, Isei tends to follow the traditions of his family and seeks to provide support magic to his defenders – Stand Against the Waves, Reversal of Fortunes, or other buff magics. He has roughly half of his spell slots (which should not be an issue) and has taken 10 Wounds of damage from maho casting. He should remain disappointed that the PCs will not hear the rightness of his cause, but he is not suicidal and will fight as best he can. His defenders act in the Reactions Stage, and are considered to have lower Initiative Scores than every PC if it is relevant.

Two Spirits, One Flesh: When he is taken to Down or lower, Isei will cast aside his mortal form:

A human corpse falls to the ground, leaving a dark blue, black, and green mottled creature standing in his place. Clawed talons erupt from its fingers and feet, while iron horns sprout from the skull. A twisted snout full of sharp fangs gives vent to a triumphant roar that shakes you to your soul.

The PCs must roll, once again, to resist a **Fear** effect. This is Fear 5 for any PC within ten feet of Isei, and Fear 3 for any others. The PC may use their Void Ring instead of Willpower, but still adds their Honor Rank and any other mechanics appropriate to a Fear effect.

Instead of the usual consequence, if the roll is failed, the PC loses the use of their two highest School Rank Techniques and two Ranks of their highest Skill (including Mastery Abilities, if any). If the roll is successful, they only lose their highest School Rank

Technique. This cannot prevent them from using their Rank One Technique. Shugenja do not lose their basic Technique (though Paths or Advanced Schools are vulnerable), but are considered to be one or two Ranks lower for spell casting, both for the roll and the Mastery Level of spells they can cast. Advanced Schools are a priority over Basic School Techniques. This effect is temporary, lasting only three Rounds (or as long as Isei remains standing), but is a deliberate threat against things often taken for granted as safe by players.

This is a corruption of Isei's sodan-senzo abilities, an attack upon the living souls of the PCs. It is not a particularly reliable attack form, and he will only do it once as a reaction to taking his final form. His defenders will lose their action in the Round that this happens, likely giving the PCs an opportunity to strike directly at him en masse.

The creature left standing resembles a Tsuno, apart from coloration. His tactics shift significantly, from magical support of his martial defenders to Simple Action claw attacks. Unfortunately, he is not terribly skilled in that form of combat and will likely shift to Full Attack if he survives the first Round.

When he is dropped to Down or lower again, he falls to the ground for good. His defenders fall back and immediately flee out the window when he dies (for the oni) or kneel and beg silently for PCs to take their heads (for the undead).

"You don't understand," the mortally-wounded creature growls from the floor, writhing in agony. "The Dark Lord... only wants... to save his Empire... to ssave uss..." He gasps, a thick liquid bubbling in his throat. "... from his... sonssss..."

As he takes a final breath, a loud, brassy war horn blares on the plains outside the castle. The blast is echoed by what seems like hundreds more such instruments, and the twisted sodan-senzo tries to smile through his fanged maw. "The Dark Lord... comes." With the last word, he breathes his last.

If the PCs have already woken Hachi and the Unicorn leaders, they will all go to the castle's observation tower. If not, the PCs likely need to confer with their superiors before doing so – Soshi Yukiyo can suggest this if they do not do so, or will do so on her own so that all of the relevant NPCs are present for "Part Four: Arrival of the Dark Lord".

Dark Whispers

Isei has summoned air kansen to whisper in the dreams of the ranking guests, to turn them into something like sleeper agents for the Dark Lord. He intends that they will become Tainted when the castle falls, and they can return to the Empire or lead the Unicorn to follow the Dark Lord's agenda.

The air kansen is manifested as a dark cloud hovering over the hostage's head, whispering the target's darkest desires and frustrations to them as part of the brainwashing process. While the hostages are being kept asleep by the magic, it only requires an active effort to wake them (shaking them awake works, but just shouting at them takes longer). The air kansen are not Invulnerable, and will dissipate if attacked with a weapon that does 12 or more Wounds. The TN to hit them is 10. If a nemuranai weapon or spell is used, no damage roll is required. However, doing damage does require the PC to make a roll to resist the Taint (TN 20). The kansen will also dissipate harmlessly if the hostage is woken.

This intrusion does allow the PCs to get a sense of the targets' deepest secrets, however. The whispering is readily audible to any other character in the same room; note that if the PCs are too busy trying to accomplish other things to listen, then Soshi Yukiyo will be certain to take note. None of this information can be acted upon easily, but it represents an opportunity for the PCs to learn things that they may be interested in.

- Miya Hachi: "if he really loved you, he would have returned by now... you would have changed the Empire for the better, like you always said you would... but that Dragon is keeping you from greatness... we can help you show him his place... then the prince will know you're his equal after all..." (Hachi is in love with Seppun Kazetora, and hates Mirumoto Kasei.)
- Shinjo Ritsuke: "the Dragon took your sister... the Lords of Death corrupted her... and the Moto has challenged your right to take her place... you were right all along, but they killed her anyway... we can ensure they all pay..." (Ritsuke is angrier than even she really consciously realizes, with the Dragon, the Imperials, and Sartaq.)
- Moto Sartaq: "after everything you've done... the lies, the plans... you finally get rid of her, and her worthless sister comes back... we know your true strength, your cunning... the Dark Lord will need a worthy champion for the Unicorn..." (Sartaq is

angry that Ritsuke has returned to challenge his efforts to become clan champion.)

- Ide Ekuan: "if you hadn't failed so utterly to keep the peace, the Unicorn would not be so beset by troubles... you couldn't even keep peace in your own household... we can change it... they'll all listen to you if you heed our counsel..." (Ekuan has an unhappy marriage in his personal life, and feels that he has failed the Unicorn's interests in the larger Empire.)
- Iuchi Kanetsugu: "you are so close to showing the true power of the Iuchi name... your cousin betrayed you, but he was not wrong, we gave him great strength... he was just too weak to use it... you can be mightier than he was... you put him, and his brother, in that position... it's your fault already... you may as well take the benefits that come from your failure..." (Kanetsugu is ambitious, though has had a crisis of confidence after he put significant effort into getting his cousin Katachai made the Jade Champion and that turned out disastrously.)
- Utaku Fujiko: "they all think you killed her... you failed to protect her... we can ensure that you never need be that weak again..." (Fujiko is known for surviving the ambush that killed her predecessor as daimyo, and while she was simply overmatched, she still feels some guilt.)
- Moto Tsuki: "you failed your command... you could not keep them from his manipulations... join us, and you will never worry about that again... you can be respected for your strength, and we will not lie to you about your purpose..." (Tsuki is shaken by how badly he and the Legion were taken in by Iuchi Katachai, and sees it as a failure of his leadership.)
- Moto Ogedei: "you couldn't save her from herself... she turned to the darkness because you were weak... you put your faith in gods that were not strong enough to save even one of their own..." (Ogedei is guilty over the loss of Hazumi and his failure to defend her; his faith in the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang has also been shaken.)
- Moto Noritoshi: "your father will never respect you... he will not turn over power to you... you don't know what he's done, but you know he's crossed the line... we can make him recognize your worth..." (Noritoshi is an unpleasant man, driven by his insecurities, but he is not malicious and has no direct part in his father's schemes.)

Part Four: Arrival of the Dark Lord

When Isei is killed, the approaching army will announce its presence by sounding their horns. (This is both a tribute to the Dark Lord's fallen agent, and a deliberate attempt at intimidating the defenders as the horde moves into position; additionally, it indicates that the Dark Lord is aware of at least that agent's condition without waiting on a messenger...)

The ranking NPCs will wish to see what is happening; whether they are conscious for it or not, someone will inform them of the activity on the plain (an NPC if not a PC), and they will gather on the top floor of the castle to look out over the plain. Miya Hachi, Shinjo Ritsuke, Moto Sartaq, Moto Ogedei, and Moto Tsuki meet the PCs there.

The pale grey light of pre-dawn illuminates the hills around Shiro Shinjo. To the northwest, the grasses are darkened by an oncoming army – an army of monsters. Oni and ogres, goblins and undead, marching under the command of samurai in full martial panoply. Mounted on twisted steeds or on foot, all move in the precise ranks of trained veterans.

A single figure rides at the head of the horde, surrounded by an aura of dark power. Even the most terrible of his followers seem to cower at his presence, and the gruesome creatures shy away as he unsheathes his katana. The blade seems to gather all the light of the sky, burning with a harsh white glare. The rest of the world darkens in comparison, a palpable shadow that forms into the palm of his left hand.

The luminous blade lifts aloft, and a deep, powerful voice rings across the field. "ROKUGAN! I RETURN FOR WHAT IS MINE! KNEEL BEFORE YOUR TRUE EMPEROR, AND KNOW PEACE ONCE MORE!"

With a sharp gesture, the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands releases the shadow gathered in his hand, and a billowing wave of darkness washes over the hills. All of those it touches shudder in an icy terror – and some of them kneel, eyes darkening and offering their weapons in supplication to their master. His banner raised behind him, Toturi Rezan, Toturi IX, the Illustrious Emperor, has returned to claim his throne.

Any PC who has any amount of the Shadowlands Taint must make a raw **Earth** Roll (with the +5k5 bonus) at a TN of 40; failure gains them an additional full Rank of the Shadowlands Taint. If this roll is failed, they must make an additional **Willpower** roll

at a TN of 15 + (10 x Taint Rank) or become Lost immediately. The +5k5 bonus from Strength of the Crow applies to this roll as well.

However, the rest of the people on the plain, many of whom are already Tainted, do not have that protection.

Visible from the tower, the PCs can see that roughly a third of the Jade Legion joins the horde, though most don't. Unfortunately, this also includes the Legion's commander, Moto Tsuki, atop the tower with them.

As the wave of shadow passes over the tower, Moto Tsuki's eyes turn utterly black, and sickly green veins appear across his face. He raises his hands in supplication to some dark spirit...

Between the PCs and the NPCs present, it can be assumed that Tsuki gets no further than that before being cut down.

Below, the troops of the Eighth Legion and the Junghaur army begin to move to defensive positions against the Fifth as well as the horde, but it is obvious that they are shaken, and their leadership is not reacting efficiently.

After a moment of calculation, Moto Sartaq barks out, "We must counter-attack. Their numbers are vastly greater than ours, but they are mostly on foot. We can use the terrain to our advantage here, and keep them from taking Shiro Shinjo. At the least, we can push them aside and retain the stronghold so we can deal with them later."

Shinjo Ritsuke shakes her head more slowly. "No. This is my family's castle, and I would rather die than lose it... but staying gains us nothing but more death. It is not just our bushi that will pay the price of defiance. We must evacuate the city and retreat. Save the common folk, so they will not join the horde and add to its strength, and return to fight on our terms. Let them hold a fixed point while we retain freedom to move, as the Unicorn should. The jade mines at Yashigi may provide protection for our people while we deal with this threat."

Both tactical options have good points and bad points. An astute and suspicious PC may roll **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** at a TN of 50 to realize that Sartaq is motivated more by the desire to unite the clan under him than by any real consideration for Shiro Shinjo – but he is absolutely willing to sacrifice the Unicorn peasantry to achieve his ends, and Ritsuke genuinely wishes to save them.

The End

The PCs may wish to break the deadlock. Hachi is inclined to support Ritsuke, but feels bound to neutrality by his position as Imperial Observer and recognizes that this is a power play between the two leaders. Speaking in support of one side or the other requires a **Sincerity / Awareness** roll at a TN of 30; if the PCs are split in their opinion, whichever side rolls highest prevails. Doing so earns the appreciation of the leader whose plan they speak in favor of.

If the PCs do not weigh in to support one side or the other, then the Unicorn army splits – some follow Sartaq, some follow Ritsuke. Neither accomplishes their intended goal, and the horde takes Shiro Shinjo and gains a large number of troops in the form of Lost or undead Unicorn.

Conclusion

Regardless of what happens with the Unicorn leadership, Hachi will request (just shy of ordering) that the PCs escort him to Otosan Uchi to give a report to the Shogun. Even Unicorn PCs are expected to accompany him – they were given this duty by their lord, and the Unicorn leadership feels that they can serve the clan better by getting help from the Imperial forces.

The journey will not be a short one, and as a final note, Hachi will counsel the PCs to caution on the trip:

“We should all understand that what is known and what is spoken are often different things. The Emerald Champion will likely take any open speech against the memory of the Illustrious Emperor Toturi IX very poorly. By all means, inform your lords of what you have learned and how, but allow me to ensure that this information circulates in a discreet fashion. I have a few allies that might be able to intercede on my behalf, but you are likely to have greater issues.”

If any PC has the Rumormonger Disadvantage, they should be encouraged heavily to buy it off at this point – Hachi will help them get control over their impulses, reducing the experience cost by half (to two points) and costing them only the Favor they gain from this module. (Choosing not to do so requires making a raw **Willpower** roll at a TN of 50 in order to avoid speaking of the matter publicly at the start of every module, which will result in the Emerald Champion ordering their death; contact the Admin staff if this occurs.) Hachi will also offer to help PCs with the Can't Lie Disadvantage, though this still costs two experience points and one Favor.

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module:	1 EXP
Good Roleplaying:	+1 EXP
Spoke with Isei:	+1 EXP
Rescued Miya Hachi:	+1 EXP
Rescued one of the Unicorn leaders:	+1 EXP
Total Possible Experience:	5 EXP

Favors

Each PC earns one Favor for ensuring Miya Hachi escapes Shiro Shinjo.

If a PC swayed an NPC to support one of the Unicorn candidates (in the single opportunity they had to do so), they gain one additional Favor. This module cannot grant more than two Favors.

Honor

Refusing the blandishments of the Shadowlands grants the PCs an H8 Honor gain for the tenet of Honor.

Standing against the unprecedented monstrosities summoned by Isei grants the PCs an H7 Honor gain for the tenet of Courage. (This requires participation in the combat in some active fashion, even if it's just breaking the votive foci.)

Unicorn PCs that act in direct support of one of the candidates gain H8 for their understanding of Duty.

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

Glory

Assisting the Imperial Observer gains the PCs a G6 Glory gain, though the nature of the actual conflict and the state of the Unicorn lands at the end of the module keeps it from being quite as publicly-spoken of in the Empire as it might otherwise have been.

Allies and Enemies

Any PCs with Isei as an Ally now have him as a Sworn Enemy (yes, even if they kill him and burn the headless corpse).

Any other Ally NPCs who die during the module are removed from the PCs' character sheets.

Providing support to either Moto Sartaq or Shinjo Ritsuke during their argument at the end grants a PC the appropriate character them as an Ally (Influence 4/Devotion 1) or increases the Devotion of the character by 1 if they already have them as an Ally. (This only applies if a PC takes an active role in the debate.) Note the increase in Ritsuke's Influence regardless.

Module Tracking Sheets

PCs with the Rumormonger or Can't Lie Disadvantages may buy them off at this point by spending two experience and one Favor (from the experience and Favor rewarded by this module, presumably).

GM Reporting

There should be a few reporting questions for each module,

- 1) Did any of the PCs sway any of the NPCs?
- 2) Did the PCs prevent Isei from killing Ichiro Kentaro, Heichi Toya, Moshi Atsuko, and Agasha Shumei?
- 3) Did Shinjo Ritsuke survive?
- 4) Did Moto Sartaq survive?
- 5) Did the PCs destroy all of the votive foci?
- 6) Did the entire Unicorn army retreat (Ritsuke's plan)?

GM must report this information BEFORE 12/19/2021 for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

Miya Hachi

Slim and energetic, Hachi remains dedicated to the future of the Empire while he tries to overcome the trials that assail it.

Air 5 Earth 2 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 3

Intelligence 4

Honor 6.8

Status 6.0

Glory 4.3

Initiative: 10k5

Attack: none

Armor TN: 30

Damage: none

School/Rank: Miya Herald 5

Skills: Courtier (Rhetoric) 5, Defense 5, Etiquette (Courtesy) 6, Horsemanship 5, Investigation 4, Lore: Heraldry 5, Sincerity 5

Artisan: Painting 4, Athletics 3, Calligraphy 3, Games: Go 3, Hunting 3, Lore: Bushido 4, Lore: Gaijin 3, Lore: History 5, Lore: Theology 4, Meditation 3, Tea Ceremony 4

Advantages/Disadvantages: Benten's Blessing / Soft Hearted, True Love (Toturi Kazetora)

Kakita Kayozu

A charming young man who may initially seem too easy-going to be the Master of the Kakita Dueling Academy, Kayozu can become extremely focused when iaijutsu is involved but prefers to save his perfectionism for the blade.

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 2 Void 5

Reflexes

5

Strength 3

Honor 6.8

Status 6.0

Glory 6.2

Initiative: 10k4+18

Attack: 10k4e

Armor TN: 25

Damage: 7k2m

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 5/Kenshinzen 1

Skills: Etiquette 4, Iaijutsu (Assessment, Focus) 9, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Kyujutsu 4, Meditation 5, Sincerity 4, Tea Ceremony 3

Artisan: Poetry 3, Athletics 3, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 4, Defense 3, Horsemanship 1, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Jiujutsu 2, Lore: Bushido 4, Lore: Heraldry 3, Spears 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Luck, Soul of Artistry / Driven: Perfection with the Blade, Idealistic

Soshi Yukiyo

Driven to hunt cultists after the death of her family, Yukiyo has turned her full attention to cleansing the Jade Legion with Kuni Tokimasa.

Air 4 Earth 4 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 3

Honor 2.4

Status 2.5

Glory 5.1

Infamy 0.5

Initiative: 8k4

Attack: 8k3

Armor TN: 25/33

Damage: 7k2

Defense Stance

School/Rank: Soshi Shugenja 4

Affinity/Deficiency: Air/Earth

Memorized Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon; (Air: 10k4) Tempest of Air, Netsuke of Wind; (Earth: 8k4) Jade Strike; (Fire: 8k3) The Fires from Within; (Water: 8k3) Path to Inner Peace

Skills: Battle 4, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Courtier 2, Etiquette 2, Lore: Theology 4, Spellcraft 5, Stealth 4 Athletics 2, Defense 4, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 2, Investigation 4, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 5, Medicine 2, Sincerity 2

Advantages/Disadvantages: Heartless, Sage / Antisocial, Driven: Destroy Cultists

Hantei Ganji

Ganji has a strangely martial bent for an Owl diplomat, but no matter how bitter he is over his duty as a courtier, he will perform it.

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 3 Void 4

Awareness 4

Honor 6.8

Status 4.0

Glory 4.6

Initiative: 7k3

Attack: 9k4e

Armor TN: 25

Damage: 7k2

School/Rank: Hantei Diplomat 4

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Courtier (Rhetoric) 5, Etiquette (Courtesy) 5, Intimidation 5, Investigation 3, Lore: Nonhumans 4, Sincerity 3,

Artisan: Origami 3, Battle 3, Defense 3, Games: Go 2, Horsemanship 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: History 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Ally: Owl Champion / Doubt: Sincerity

Kitsu Isei

Isei is an honorable man who has come to the conclusion that the fallen Emperor is the best option for the future of the Empire. This decision was very much influenced by the effect of the Taint on his soul, but he has not lost his grasp of polite behavior and will always show respect to other samurai – especially those he has chosen for their worthiness.

Air 4 Earth 4 Fire 4 Water 6 Void 5

Honor 7.8 (drops to 4.0) Status 5.0 Glory 4.0

Initiative: 10k3 **Attack:** 7k4+7 (unarmed, Simple*)

Armor TN: 31 **Damage:** 7k3 (unarmed)
(Defense) / 20 (Attack)

Reduction: 10

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

School/Rank: Kitsu Shugenja 5/Sodan-Senzo 3

Taint Rank: 7 (minor akutenshi)

Technique: *Eyes of the Ancestors:* May make a Spell Casting Roll (as though casting a Water spell) at a TN of the target's Willpower x5 to learn all Spiritual Advantages or Disadvantages that individual possesses. May negate any one Spiritual Advantage the target has for 8 minutes by spending a Void Point. Free Raise on any spell with the Battle keyword.

Senses of the Kitsu: Detect spirit portals, +1 School Rank for Spellcasting

The Hand of the Kitsu: +0k1 unarmed damage; may visit Meido or Yomi with Meditation (TN 30)

Soul of the Kitsu: Can take one person with to other Realms, +1 School Rank for Spellcasting

Affinity/Deficiency: Water/Fire

Shadowlands Powers: Eyes of Hell (golden leonine eyes, see in the dark); Beside the Darkness (can suppress his own Taint to blend in); Chosen of Fu Leng (immune to mind-affecting magic or Techniques); Unholy Beauty (no visible signs of the Taint); Two Spirits, One Flesh (see combat text)

Spells: (Earth: 10k5) Armor of Earth, Force of Will; (Water: 10k8) Path to Inner Peace, Stand Against the Waves, Reversal of Fortunes

Skills: Battle 4, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Lore: History 6, Lore: Theology (Ancestors) 8, Lore: Spirit Realms 9, Spellcraft 5

Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 6, Investigation 3, Jujutsu 3, Lore: Shadowlands 6, Medicine 3, Meditation 6, Sincerity 4

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies: Akodo Shuhan, Akodo Anami, Prodigy / Dark Fate

Ichiro Kentaro

Thickly muscled and graying, Kentaro is an experienced mercenary that is fully capable of violence when necessary but usually spends a fair amount of effort making it unnecessary.

Air 3 Earth 4 Fire 2 Water 4 Void 3
Agility 4 Strength 5
Honor 3.2 Status 2.0 Glory 6.1
Infamy 1.1

Initiative: 7k3+5 **Attack:** 10k4e (Masakari, Complex)

Armor TN: 20 **Damage:** 7k3m (Masakari)

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 76 (Dead)

School/Rank: Ichiro Bushi 4

Techniques: *Transcend the Mountain:* May re-roll any Trait or Skill roll that uses Strength, but must keep result of second roll. Suffers no movement or combat penalties for Moderate Terrain, and only half the normal penalty for Difficult Terrain.

Strength of the Badger: May re-roll a damage roll a number of times per session equal to School Rank and keep highest.

Crushing Blow: Ignore opponent's armor bonus to TN; ignore 1 point of target's Reduction with unarmed attacks.

Crashing Stones: Simple attacks with Samurai weapons or unarmed

Skills: Athletics 5, Commerce 3, Defense 2, Heavy Weapons (Masakari) 7, Jujutsu 6, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Sincerity 2

Battle 5, Etiquette 1, Games: Fortunes & Winds 3, Hunting 4, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3, Lore: Underworld 3, Stealth 2

Advantages/Disadvantages: Balance, Hero of the People / Can't Lie

Heichi Toya

A bulky woman in her late thirties, Toya is an accomplished veteran and despite her Imperial duties greatly appreciates the assistance the Unicorn provided to her clan when the Scorpion attacked.

Air 3 Earth 4 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 3
Agility 4 Strength 4
Honor 4.4 Status 3.5 Glory 5.8

Initiative: 7k3 **Attack:** 10k4e (Mai Chong, Simple)

Armor TN: 20 **Damage:** 5k4 (Mai Chong)

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 76 (Dead)

School/Rank: Heichi Bushi 4

Techniques: *The Charge of the Boar:* May ready a medium weapon or a spear as a Free Action while in the Full Attack Stance. +0k1 spear damage.

The Strength of Opposition: May call two Raises to Entangle an opponent with a Mai Chong, or three Raises to Entangle them with another spear-class weapon.

The Speed of the Boar: Simple Action attacks with spears.

The Anger of the Boar: Unusable due to lack of Void Points

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 5, Defense 3, Hunting 3, Intimidation 4, Kenjutsu 5, Spears (Mai Chong) 7
Craft: Weaponsmithing 4, Engineering 3, Etiquette 2, Heavy Weapons 4, Horsemanship 2, Investigation 2, Jujutsu 4

Advantages/Disadvantages: Large, Leadership / Obtuse

Agasha Shumei

Usually friendly, Shumei is reserved in the Unicorn lands unless the conversation turns to his many travels across the Empire or the science of alchemy that he has devoted his life to.

Air 2 Earth 4 Fire 4 Water 2 Void 3
Awareness 3 Perception 3
Honor 4.7 Status 3.0 Glory 3.6

Initiative: 5k2 **Attack:** 8k4 (thrown potion)

Armor TN: 15 **Damage:** by potion

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 76 (Dead)

School/Rank: Agasha Shugenja 3

Spells: Shumei will not cast any spells, but he has several potions already prepared. These may be drank as a Simple Action or thrown as a Complex Action with Athletics/Agility. Drink (enhancements): Be the Mountain, Fires of Purity; Throw: The Wolf's Mercy, The Fires from Within (others may be used at the GM's discretion, with emphasis on Earth and Fire spells)

Skills: Athletics 4, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Defense 4, Divination 2, Lore: Theology 4, Medicine (Herbalism) 5, Spellcraft 5

Commerce 3, Craft: Alchemy 6, Etiquette 2, Hunting 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Nature 4, Sincerity 2

Moshi Atsuko

Loud and unapologetic, Atsuko fits in well with the Unicorn despite the general lack of common culture.

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 4 Void 2

Honor 3.6 Status 3.0 Glory 4.2

Initiative: 8k4 **Attack:** 9k4 (lightning spark, range 50'), ignores Armor TN from metal armor

Armor TN: 43/53 vs **Damage:** 5k3, 6k4 if ranged attacks target in armor and ignores Reduction

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 57 (Dead)

School/Rank: Yoritomo Shugenja 4

Affinity/Deficiency: Water / Earth

Spells: Atsuko can command the kansen in a manner similar to normal elemental magic; she generally produces effects based on driving the kansen to storm conditions. This is reflected in her stats above (Armor TN increase from swirling winds, lightning attacks from corrupt kansen.)

Skills: Athletics 4, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Defense 4, Knives 3, Lore: Theology 3, Meditation 1, Sailing (Navigation) 4

Battle 3, Commerce 3, Courtier 1, Divination 2, Engineering 1, Etiquette 2, Games: Fortunes & Winds 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Sincerity 1, Spellcraft 5

Advantages/Disadvantages: Blood of Osano-Wo / Jurojin's Curse

Appendix #2: GM Aid

This table lists the initial support any given NPC has for either Sartaq or Ritsuke, if any, and the TN necessary to sway them to support one of the candidates (or to change their mind if already determined). If an NPC that can be swayed is approached by another PC later, the higher total roll will determine which of the candidates receives their support. The candidate with the most total Status among the NPCs supporting them will have the strongest case to present to the Imperial Court (Unicorn NPCs add their Glory to their Status for this).

NPC	Status	Glory	Candidate/High Roll	TN to sway
Asako Montaro	2			25
Agasha Shumei	3			35
Hantei Ganji	4			30
Heichi Toya	3			25
Ichiro Kentaro	2			25
Ide Ekuan	7	5	Sartaq	35
Iuchi Kanetsugu	7	5		30
Kakita Kayozu	6			30
Kitsu Isei	5			25
Kuni Tokimasa	5			20
Matsu Naoya	5			30
Moshi Atsuko	3			20
Moto Noritoshi	5	5	Sartaq*	Cannot be swayed
Moto Ogedei	7	6	Ritsuke*	Cannot be swayed
Moto Sartaq	7	8	Sartaq*	Cannot be swayed
Moto Tsuki	7	7		35
Seppun Anzai	7			40
Shinjo Ritsuke	7	2	Ritsuke*	Cannot be swayed
Soshi Yukiyo	2			35
Utaku Fujita	7	7	Ritsuke	40

Appendix #3: Clan Positions

These are the basic positions each of the clans has on the Unicorn leadership. PCs with any Ranks in a Courtier School, 5 or more Ranks in the Courtier Skill, or some specific Social Position dealing with the Unicorn know their clan's position at the start of the module; any PC may learn their own clan's position by speaking with their clan members before the court. Learning other clan positions is more difficult, but can be done with a Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness roll at a TN of 15 – success learns one other clan's position, and an additional one for every 5 the player's roll beats the TN by.

State of the clans:

- Crab: recently attacked by the Shadowlands, they are hunkering down in a defensive stance; tension between them and the Unicorn in recent years means they have little interest in the situation save for concern over the fall of the Jade Champion and Clan Champion
- Crane: historic good terms but little interaction in recent years; Moto Sartaq and Moto Noritoshi have relatively close ties to the Crane and seem to be more interested in integration than Moto Ogedei
- Dragon: significant strife in the last year; the attack on Shinjo Hazumi was largely dismissed by the Imperials – which the Unicorn blame on the Dragon Imperial Herald, along with the loss of the Jade Champion and Shinjo Hazumi as well as the disaster at Kyuden Miya; to date, there has been no indication that the Dragon really care
- Lion: recently allied with the Dragon and Scorpion, but have no interest in opening hostilities under Akodo Shuhan; they are not generally blamed by Unicorn for their allies' actions, but are given serious thought as a potential obstacle; they are slightly more inclined toward Sartaq's integrationist policies
- Mantis: these clans generally have little interaction, having different spheres of influence with their only real overlap being "gaijin affairs" – somewhat hampered by interacting with different gaijin cultures; the Mantis are generally sympathetic to the Unicorn's troubles as another "outsider" clan, and support their allies in the Crane
- Owl: recently allied with the Unicorn to help drive the Scorpion out of the Owl lands; the war ended with negotiations but the Unicorn army provided significant pressure on the Scorpion; the Owl would like to see continuity maintained, and bringing Ritsuke back has precedent
- Phoenix: still out of communication with homeland, with only a few messages from the Council; in the absence of orders, they are more inclined toward the ones least likely to cause problems
- Scorpion: there is bad blood with the Unicorn after the breakup of the alliance; the Scorpion don't have anything concrete against Sartaq but prefer Ritsuke as a more likely target for manipulation
- Minor Clans: a few of the Minor Clans (Hare, Fox, Badger) have reasonably good relations with the Unicorn and want to see the Unicorn prosper after their troubles; there is a general desire to support the Unicorn without offending a powerful member of a Great Clan
- Imperials: want to avoid another Kyuden Miya, but recognize the blame given by the Unicorn and feel a need to support them; most of the Imperial courtiers want stronger ties with the Unicorn to use them as tool against the three-clan alliance

Ronin have no opinion. They're just here to get paid.

Appendix #4: NPC Notes

These are some general notes on the NPCs and their personalities, to guide interactions with the PCs

Ide Ekuan: Honor 6.8, Status 7.0, Glory 5.6; Ide family daimyo

Nervous about future, sad over losses, hopes that Sartaq will be energetic and dynamic enough to overcome troubles

Iuchi Kanetsugu: Honor 3.2, Status 7.0, Glory 5.3; Iuchi family daimyo

Feels somewhat guilty over having thrown so much political weight behind making his cousin the Jade Champion, and the madness that claimed Katachai and his brother; still wants to prove the Iuchi are powerful and worthy, but uncertain over how to do it. Noncommittal, avoids topic of leadership unless pressed.

Moto Sartaq: Honor 2.9, Status 7.5, Glory 8.0; Khan of the Moto

Angry that he's being forced to work for something he has already put a lot of effort into claiming; presents an extremely convincing façade of a typical gruff, bluff bushi in court but always calculating for his advantage

Shinjo Ritsuke: Honor 6.1, Status 7.0, Glory 2.0; Shinjo family daimyo

In mourning for her sister, but determined to push forward and reclaim the future of the clan; desperately wants to redeem the family name

Utaku Fujita: Honor 7.4, Status 7.0, Glory 7.1; Utaku family daimyo

Honorable and dedicated, understands failure and the importance of overcoming it; still respects Ritsuke but hasn't spoken to her in six years before the current situation, so she's trying to get to know her again. Not impressed with Sartaq – doesn't see past his lies, but she also is independent enough that his tendency to claim authority when they are presumptive equals is irritating to her

Moto Noritoshi: Honor 3.5, Status 5.0, Glory 5.0, Infamy 0.3

Narcissistic and arrogant, with some actual ability, but has the misfortune of trying to overshadow people who are better than him; not really evil, but beset with insecurities and lashes out as a result

Moto Ogedei: Honor 3.8, Status 7.0, Glory 6.9, Infamy 1.2; general of the Junghar

A gruff bushi in court, highly experienced as a samurai war leader; devoted to the Unicorn as a whole, not just his family; still faithful to the Lords of Death even after having his faith questioned by their uncertainty

Moto Tsuki: Honor 4.3, Status 7.0, Glory 7.4, Infamy 1.0; general of the 5th Imperial Legion (Jade Legion)

Death priest with martial tendencies; has been having nightmares recently, but blames the stress of the Jade Legion's circumstances rather than the Taint. An absolutely professional military leader, eager to be a good leader to his troops, and trying to save as many of them as he can.

Kuni Tokimasa: Honor 3.1, Status 5.5, Glory 6.7, Infamy 1.0 (Ring of Air, Mantle of the Jade Champion)

Blunt and outspoken, with a bit of attitude over the taboo about speaking directly about the Taint; has no qualms about involving competent non-Crab in fighting

Kakita Kayozu: Honor 6.8, Status 6.0, Glory 6.2 (Pull the String)

Friendly, easy-going outside of a duel, but highly capable (if overspecialized) duelist. A little uncertain that he's worthy of his position, but does have the benefit of training since infancy for it.

Agasha Shumei: Honor 4.7, Status 3.0, Glory 3.6

Somewhat subdued, though usually outgoing, will come out of his shell if PCs are friendly; has travelled all over the Empire, and happy to share stories of travels

Matsu Naoya: Honor 6.6, Status 5.0, Glory 4.3, Infamy 0.5 (Test of Loyalty, Promise of Aid)

Arrogant and cocksure, though smooth enough as a courtier to usually avoid giving offense; not happy with his marriage but willing to do his duty (and show them, show them all!)

Kitsu Isei: Honor 5.2 (soon to drop), Status 5.0, Glory 7.2 (Blackened Honor)

Fallen to the Taint, but still honorable and respectful. Has done a good job of hiding the truth, so when he has the opportunity to talk about it, he will. Until the time comes to spread the good word of the returned emperor, however, he will remain the epitome of a Kitsu spiritual advisor.

Moshi Atsuko: Honor 3.6, Status 3.0, Glory 4.2 (Winter Court: Shiro Ide, Threads of Fate)

Actually what she appears to be; a bit coarse, somewhat loud, but friendly on the whole and made welcome by the Unicorn for her novelty.

Hantei Ganji: Honor 6.8, Status 4.0, Glory 4.6 (Winter Court: Shiro Ide)

Close cousin of the Owl Champion; though he privately would prefer to be a bushi, he does his duty as a courtier and diplomat. Tall, balding, thin

Heichi Toya: Honor 4.4, Status 3.5, Glory 5.8

Bluff and hearty, fits in well with the Unicorn; takes her duties seriously but not much else

Asako Montaro: Honor 4.6, Status 2.0, Glory 3.1

Social scientist, scholar, present to observe the proceedings from a more intellectual perspective than a political one, but has no specific orders from the clan and somewhat unsettled over it

Soshi Yukiyo: Honor 2.4, Status 2.5, Glory 5.1, Infamy 0.5

Practical and ruthless, super angry about the Taint claiming the Jade Champion and too many of her Legion

Ichiro Kentaro: Honor 3.2, Status 2.0, Glory 6.1, Infamy 1.1

A little unhappy that the Ichiro lands have not been heard from in the last few days, but friends with several Unicorn, so eager to represent the Minor Clan Alliance; Hare embassy not in court to avoid giving offense but Kentaro's allies cover him.

Seppun Anzai: Honor 7.8, Status 7.0, Glory 8.1

Stern, stoic, strict samurai; is absolutely committed to ensuring the safety of the Legions

Player Handout #1: News of the Empire

Honored Samurai,

It is unfortunate, but necessary that I bring you word of the recent goings-on of this spring and early summer. Allow me to start with our Southern borders.

It seems that there was some sort of assault by the forces of our Greatest Enemy against Shiro Hiruma. A brave march by the acting Clan Champion of the Crab, Hiruma Miraiko and samurai both of the Crab Clan, and from a nearby Imperial Legion, was able to break the siege. Details are... understandably sparse, but fortunately it seems that the army was broken and the city spared the worst of the damage.

To the north we have unfortunate, but perhaps more mundane news. Unfortunately, it seems that some form of misunderstanding led to a brief assault by the Unicorn on Kyuden Tonbo as they were passing in support of their allies in the Owl. At the time of this writing, the city has largely burned to the ground, and the Tonbo family have condemned this action of the Unicorn. No word has come from Moto Sartaq or Shinjo Ritsuke yet, but I would guess this action was in retaliation for the Unicorn's attack of Hazumi so many years ago.

In all of this, the Phoenix continue to deny entrance to their lands. Since Seppun Kazetora-sama left to speak with the masters, still none have been allowed to enter these lands... including even Phoenix who have been outside the provinces in the last few months.

Not all news is poor, however! The Crane have been blessed, it seems, by a bountiful harvest. Combined with their recent receipt of the Miya's Blessing, their recovery from the attack by the Great Sea Spider has been a great blessing in these otherwise trying times.

I hope and pray that we can report more good news soon. the Empire surely needs some respite after these last few years of pain.

With Honor, Friends.

Otomo Yusuke

Player Handout #2: Leadership of the Unicorn Clan

These are the leaders of the Unicorn Clan expected to be present at Shiro Shinjo

Ide Ekuan: Status 7.0, Glory 5.6; Ide family daimyo

Known as a skilled negotiator, Ekuan has served as a steady voice for the Unicorn with the rest of the Empire for years. He shares Sartaq's goal of integrating the Unicorn into the culture of Rokugan,

Iuchi Kanetsugu: Status 7.0, Glory 5.3; Iuchi family daimyo

With the prospect of war on the horizon, Kanetsugu has shown interest in expanding the Baraunghar (the Unicorn army that makes the most use of magic). He has, however, avoided political situations of late, perhaps owing to the shame brought upon his family by the most recent Jade Champion.

Moto Sartaq: Status 7.5, Glory 8.0; Khan of the Moto

The dynamic daimyo of the Moto has been acting as Champion for the last few months, though he has no actual official sanction from the other daimyo or the Emperor. As the strongest leader in the clan, none has challenged his self-appointed title of sozokunin, though he as yet only has active support from Ide Ekuan.

Shinjo Ritsuke: Status 7.0, Glory 2.0; Shinjo family daimyo

The elder sister of Hazumi, Ritsuke had stepped aside in favor of her promising sibling six years ago, even going so far as to retire to the Shrine of the Ki-Rin. With Hazumi's fate, however, she has recently returned to reclaim her place – though many in the clan are unsure that she is an appropriate leader. Her return to samurai status has precedent in history, as Toturi himself had taken orders as a monk before the death of his younger brother, and he returned to become Lion Clan Champion.

Utaku Fujita: Status 7.0, Glory 7.1; Utaku family daimyo

A quiet warrior, given to few displays in the court, Fujita has spent the better part of the last decade serving her clan on the battlefield and guarding the clan heartland. Little is known of her beyond her skill and the close friendship she once had with Shinjo Ritsuke (before the latter's retirement).

Moto Noritoshi: Status 5.0, Glory 5.0, Infamy 0.3

The son of Sartaq is a skilled duelist, trained by his mother's Kakita relatives in the art of iaijutsu. Despite his prowess, he is known to be arrogant and touchy, and has taken his few losses poorly.

Moto Ogedei: Status 7.0, Glory 6.9, Infamy 1.2; general of the Junghar

Ogedei is one of the most experienced military commanders in the Unicorn, having served in the past as general of the Khol (the most prestigious of the Unicorn armies), a provincial daimyo, and now the leader of the Unicorn's defensive forces. He was close to Hazumi before her fall, and there is little love lost between him and Sartaq as Ogedei is (in)famous for his devotion to the Lords of Death and the traditions of the Moto family.

Moto Tsuki: Status 7.0, Glory 7.4, Infamy 1.0; general of the 5th Imperial Legion (Jade Legion)

A devotee of the Lords of Death and one of the few martial shugenja of the Unicorn to choose to serve somewhere other than the Baraunghar, Tsuki is an experienced tactician with a streak of ruthless pragmatism. As much of the Jade Legion is under suspicion, Tsuki has very vocally cooperated with the Imperial authorities investigating the depth of the Jade Champion's corruption and how far into the Legion it may have spread.

Player Handout #3: Guests at Shiro Shinjo

These are the non-Unicorn delegates present for the meeting of the clan (with any previous appearances noted)

Kuni Tokimasa: Status 5.5, Glory 6.7, Infamy 1.0 (Ring of Air, Mantle of the Jade Champion)

An active and outspoken Jade Magistrate, Tokimasa has been spearheading the investigation into the former Jade Champion's corruption.

Kakita Kayozu: Status 6.0, Glory 6.2 (Pull the String)

The son of Kakita family daimyo Yushihiro, Kayozu has recently been named as the head sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy. Though young for the position, few deny that he is one of the greatest iaijutsu masters in the Empire.

Agasha Shumei: Status 3.0, Glory 3.6

A traveling alchemist with little influence and fewer court skills, the fact that the Dragon have not sent a more appropriate delegate to the Unicorn speaks volumes about the state of relations between the clans.

Matsu Naoya: Status 5.0, Glory 4.3, Infamy 0.5 (Test of Loyalty, Promise of Aid)

The youngest son of Doji Makibesu recently married Matsu Kirohimi, the Shogun. A trained courtier, he has taken the role of political advisor to his wife's family upon himself, and furthers the interests of his new clan with the boldness of his new family name.

Kitsu Isei: Status 5.0, Glory 7.2 (Blackened Honor)

Most known for having contacted the soul of Toturi IX in Tengoku, Isei is possibly the most powerful sodan-senzo in the Empire. However, he is content to serve the spirits by offering quiet advice to the leaders of his clan.

Moshi Atsuko: Status 3.0, Glory 4.2 (Winter Court: Shiro Ide, Threads of Fate)

Atsuko (an unimportant shugenja more used to life on the sea than in court) has acquired an informal position as an emissary to the Unicorn simply by process of having more experience with the clan than most other Mantis.

Hantei Ganji: Status 4.0, Glory 4.6 (Winter Court: Shiro Ide)

A skilled and well-connected diplomat, Ganji has clearly been sent to Shiro Shinjo as a sign of the new alliance between the Unicorn and Owl.

Heichi Toya: Status 3.5, Glory 5.8

Toya is a gunso in the 7th Imperial Legion, and though she is more confident on the battlefield than in the court, she has made no secret of her gratitude to the Unicorn for their defense of the Owl lands against the Scorpion.

Asako Montaro: Status 2.0, Glory 3.1

The borders of the Phoenix lands remain closed, with only a few samurai of the clan at large in the Empire. Unfortunately, most – like the scholar Asako Montaro – do not know what is transpiring in their homeland and can only seek to do their duty as best they can determine on their own.

Soshi Yukiyo: Status 2.5, Glory 5.1, Infamy 0.5

A Jade Legionnaire, Yukiyo has taken up the task of assisting Kuni Tokimasa as his liaison with the 5th Imperial Legion.

Ichiro Kentaro: Status 2.0, Glory 6.1, Infamy 1.1

Kentaro is a jovial mercenary who has travelled the Empire for years; while his courtly skills are lacking, he has numerous friends in the Unicorn. The Minor Clan Alliance has little interest in the Unicorn leadership, but also have no desire to offend their powerful neighbor.

Seppun Anzai: Status 7.0, Glory 8.1

Following the fall of Kyuden Miya, the 8th Imperial Legion was moved into the Unicorn lands. Anzai has made it clear that this is as much to help the Unicorn as it is to keep watch on the Jade Legion, though the lords of the Unicorn are not certain of her intentions.