

Shadowed Path to Victory

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

Month of Shiba, 1343 (Summer)

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Roleplay, Intrigue, Investigation
Part Two of The Summer Storm

The Storms of the Summer Grow Stronger Still

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

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

Adventure Background and Summary

A brief description of the background elements that lead to the events of the module goes here. A few relevant comments on the history of important people, or groups of people such as clans, may be important to set the context for the GM. Likewise, a mention of the primary locations to establish where the PCs will be going is helpful (though, of course, full descriptions should be located in those sections of the adventure where the characters actually go to those places).

From there, a rough description of what sort of events or circumstances bring the PCs together should be included. Most modules begin with the conceit that any given PC, as a samurai under the authority of their superiors, has been sent to further the interests of their lord (or potentially family or clan), though other motivations may be appropriate. In general, either some NPC will have a task to perform or the PCs are in a public venue and tasked with representing their groups as appropriate to the occasion.

The next major data point is a brief discussion of the projected events of the module. If there are a large number of different choices available to the PCs, it will necessarily require the summary to be more vague, but providing a mention of the key scenes for the module will give the GM an idea of what will be the most important situations to focus on. This can help with pacing, and will ensure that the GM will have them in mind as they run the players through the establishing scenes.

A thumbnail description of the climax may be useful as a conclusion to the summary, again, simply to

stress to the GM what the module will be building toward. Specifying the primary choice or challenge the PCs must face by the end will help the GM set the proper tone through the entirety of the slot.

Upkeep

The events of the modules are certainly of primary importance in the lives of the characters, but many of them will have been working on a variety of tasks in the times between modules. At the beginning of the module, several things will need to take place (though some are obviously dependent on the actual needs of the PCs at the table).

Character Notes

The GM should take a few minutes to examine the players' character sheets in order to have an idea of the nature of the PCs at the table. It is frequently helpful to have a list of specific mechanics that come up in the course of the module determined at the start of the module so the GM does not have to slow down play to check and see which parts apply to which PC. These can be Advantages, Disadvantages, Schools, Skills, or any other particularly relevant mechanics.

- Any Phoenix Sworn Enemies

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 beginning of the module, all PCs lose 1 point of Glory.

Taint Progression

If a PC possesses the Shadowlands Taint, they will need to roll at the beginning of the module to see how much it has grown over the intervening time since the last module. The TN of this raw **Earth Roll** will be **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

For the last two weeks, your travel with Miya Hachi has been swift and hurried. The news you carry is too important to be treated with anything but the utmost urgency, and as you make your entrance to Toshi Ranbo wo Shien Shite Reigasho, Hachi seeks only a brief respite to trade horses before moving on.

PCs who have already played the module Souls of the Fallen know exactly the news that they are bringing to Otosan Uchi: The Army of the Shadowlands, led by Toturi IX, has marched upon Unicorn lands and are beginning their invasion of the Empire. If there

are players who have not yet played the module, the GM should be encouraged to be vague about the reasoning behind their presence here, but still impress that the matter is important.

Players may recognize Miya Hachi from various modules: The Price of Failure, Shadow of Dawn, or Souls of the Fallen. He is a charming young man entering the prime of his career, his normal cheerful demeanor dampened somewhat by the recent news. Still, before he has a chance to replace his steed...

As you travel towards the stables to replace your mounts for the next leg of the journey, a Courier rushes towards Miya Hachi carrying a letter. The letter is sealed with the Seal of the Emerald Champion. Hachi seems confused, but takes the letter and begins to read.

After a few minutes of reading, Hachi turns to all of you, a grim expression on his face. "My friends, I am afraid I must ask your presence for just a little longer. Doji Makibesu-sama has requested that we make our way north, to the remains of the Shrine of the Ki-Rin, to investigate the circumstances regarding its destruction earlier this year. I will send this courier with our recent news ahead to Otosan Uchi to give Makibesu-sama warning of other dangers."

PCs may protest, given the importance of the news that they have, but Miya Hachi is insistent that they follow the orders of the Emerald Champion. An Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness Roll at TN 25 will tell a PC that there is more to this situation than Hachi is letting on, and that he is leaving out important details intentionally. If a PC asks for clarification, however, he says simply that it is important that Makibesu's words be heeded.

Some PCs may be concerned, knowing that the Shrine is in Phoenix lands, which has been closed for several months now following the destruction of several cities from last year's assault by the Great Sea Spider. Hachi will explain that this closure does not seem to have applied evenly to the westernmost sections of Phoenix lands due to their proximity to Dragon Lands and the general lack of movement around the Dragon Heart Plains in general.

The ride to the Shrine of the Ki-Rin takes several days, but is mercifully uneventful. Your path takes you up towards Kyuden Tonbo before veering east

into the Dragon Heart plains, finally coming through to the valley where the Shrine of the Ki-Rin is held.

It has been seven long months since the shrine's destruction, and the site still seems as untouched as in the aftermath of its initial destruction. A mass of dirt and rubble, with several weapons left shattered and destroyed around the valley.

PCs interested in studying the rubble may roll Investigation (Search) / Perception. They can find the following information:

- 10: Any bodies seem to have been cleaned up in the aftermath of the battle. It is impossible to say if the bodies were removed by eta, as would be proper, or if the assailants took the bodies with them.
- 20: The weaponry strewn about is all of clear Gaijin make. Arrows and broken spears, all of them are clearly not of Rokugani Origin
 - A PC with ranks of Lore: Gaijin or Lore: Senpet would recognize these as Senpet weaponry, not Yobanjin.
- 30: A glint of gold can be seen under some of the rubble. Unburying it will reveal that the actual Statue of the Ki-Rin was buried under the rubble, but is otherwise unharmed.
- 40: Deeply buried in the rubble is a torn piece of cloth carrying a mon. The mon is readily recognizable as the Mon of the White Guard.

After the PCs spend some time investigating and discussing what they've learned, Hachi will speak up.

“Samurai, I thank you for your diligent investigation, but I must confess that I have not been entirely forthcoming with you.” Hachi looks a bit nervous before he continues. “While Makibesu-sama requested us investigate this Shrine as pretense, our real mission involves the Phoenix. Our presence here was intended as a means to allay suspicion, you see.”

After another uncomfortable moment, Hachi continues. “You all are aware of the Phoenix's closure of their borders. Normally, Makibesu-sama would have been content to leave things as they are. However, several months ago, Seppun Kazetora-sama entered Phoenix lands to attempt to broker the opening of the Phoenix borders. He has not been seen since. As such, our mission is to enter Phoenix lands, find whatever information we can as to the purpose of this closure, and if possible broker the return of

Seppun Kazetora-sama and the opening of Phoenix borders.

“As border guards have been aggressive to envoys in the past, our intention here is to take advantage of the less guarded nature of the western borders of Phoenix lands. There are also two holdings not far from here that we may begin our investigation at: Yobanjin Mura, and Lost Traveler Castle.”

At this point, Hachi will stop to allow PCs to ask questions.

Are we hiding from the Phoenix?

Not directly, but with the aggressiveness of Phoenix patrols, we would prefer not to find out if they mean us ill intent on the road.

What are we Expecting?

Hachi does not know. There is just too little information on what is happening in Phoenix lands at this time. As such, we will be starting in areas that are known to typically have less of a Phoenix presence.

Should we wear armor/carry our weapons?

No, not at this time, though if the situation changes we may need to be ready for the Phoenix to be antagonistic. There is very little knowledge on what to expect, however.

What is Yobanjin Mura? (PCs with 3 or more ranks in Lore: Phoenix can also answer this question)

Yobanjin Mura is a trade hub in the northernmost paths of Phoenix lands, where the Phoenix trade with Yobanjin. Centuries ago, it was known only to the Phoenix, until it was found by Samurai in the mid twelfth century. It had been abandoned for centuries before Toturi X allowed it's reopening in the same action that brought Gaijin into the Empire several years ago.

Do you wish to go to both places?

Yes, if possible, though if the PCs are concerned about time, Hachi is glad to skip Yobanjin Mura. He considers Yobanjin Mura safer, but less likely to gain information from.

Once the PCs have finished asking questions, Hachi will say one more thing before leading them towards their first destination.

“Samurai-sans, I am thankful for your presence here not just as security. I have little experience in investigation, and do not have the skills to know what I am looking for. I will be leaning on you all heavily to ask good questions of the people we speak to.” He offers a pleased smile to all of you, then starts leading the way deeper into the Lands of the Phoenix.

Part One: Yobanjin Mura

A day’s journey to the north leads you through a rough hewn path adjacent to the nearby mountains. At about midafternoon of your second day of travel, you catch sight of a small town nestled at the base of the mountain. People seem to be moving about, though not as many as you might expect from a town of this size.

As you approach, people on the walls begin scrambling, moving to stand at the gates. Immediately you notice that these men are not wearing Rokugani kimono. Instead they seem to be wearing heavy furs and leather. They are taller than a Rokugani, slightly more tan.

Anyone who has seen a Yobanjin before can readily recognize these men as such. They are confused but not aggressive, and will try to hail the PCs, though the ones guarding the walls do not speak Rokugani and thus can only be communicated with if a PC has Language: Yobanjin. After a few tense moments of misunderstanding (made less tense by someone having Language: Yobanjin), they call out to the people behind them, and the gates open.

As the gates to Yobanjin Mura open, it is not another Yobanjin standing to greet you, but a Samurai. The man is clearly Ronin, wearing a drab kimono and scroll satchel that indicate him a shugenja. As the Ronin Kyouji approaches, he bows to Miya Hachi, who he clearly recognizes. “Miya-sama. It is good to see you again, and under more pleasant circumstances than our last meeting.”

Hachi approaches and gives a bow appropriate for Kyouji’s station. “If only that were the case, Kyouji-san. I may need your assistance in understanding what has happened here, if you do not mind. Why are Yobanjin manning the gates of a Rokugani holding?”

“That...” Kyouji hesitates a moment, looking to the other Samurai. “I believe that perhaps Batul is best to provide an explanation, if that is OK. He is currently residing in the Governor’s mansion. Perhaps we can help each other understand a very unusual situation.” Hachi nods, and Kyouji begins leading you deeper into the town.

As Kyouji leads the PCs towards the Governor’s residence, the PCs will note that there are no Phoenix seen within the city grounds. If asked, Kyouji can tell the PCs that there haven’t been any Phoenix within the city in several months.

Kyouji leads you to a medium-sized building in the heart of the city. As you enter, it is striking how ill used the building is. Dust covers several sections of the floor, as if servants had not cleaned in months.

Still, the tea room that Kyouji leads you to is in fine enough condition. After bidding you take a seat at the low table, he slips out to go find some tea and inform Batul of your presence.

A few minutes later, Kyouji returns with two other people. The first is a tall man, towering over almost any Rokugani, with dark eyes and a dark brown beard. The second is a much smaller woman in a Phoenix colored Kimono, a soft, pleasant smile gracing her features.

As the three bow and sit, it is Batul who speaks first, speaking in well mannered Rokugani, if a bit ill practiced. “Greetings, Samurai. For those of you I have not met, my name is Batul, the Chief of the Carriers of Fire. Please excuse our occupancy in your lands, but it has been some time since we have seen those who come from these lands, and I must admit that I am somewhat puzzled by this development.”

“Ah, there is nothing to forgive, Batul,” Hachi speaks in a calm voice. “It sounds as if there is a great deal of confusion on all sides. Perhaps together, we can begin to come to an answer.”

The PCs can ask whatever questions they like of Batul, Kyouji, and Tomoko. If asked, the three know the following (and will speak roughly as equals, sharing the conversation):

- In the aftermath of the Yobanjin visit, Yobanjin Mura was reestablished and the

Phoenix and Yobanjin resumed regular trade.

- Trade between the two started tense, but the Carriers of Fire slowly became friends with the Phoenix. Batul had great respect for Gennai Asakura, the governor of the city.
- About eight months ago, the Phoenix welcome became somewhat colder. They still traded, but there was an underlying tension that even Batul picked up on.
- About four months ago, when the Carriers of Fire came for trade, the city was utterly abandoned. Figuring that someone would come back for explanation, the Yobanjin stayed in the city and waited. Since there were supplies that they could take advantage of, they took some of the supplies and have left funds equivalent to their typical trades.
- If PCs ask to investigate the city, the Yobanjin will not stop them. Batul is adamant that they are only staying until they know what has happened, and will leave the city when the Phoenix is return.
- None of them are aware of any tragedies that have occurred in the last two years, even the destruction of the Phoenix Coast by the Great Sea Spider. If they are told, all are clearly horrified by the incident.
- Batul would especially like to request the Samurai offer their apologies to the Phoenix. He had no intention of providing them offense, and if that is the reason for their absence, he wishes to know what he can do to make it right.

If the PCs decide to look around the residences or look for records, they can find the following information:

- PCs will find the residences to be mostly abandoned. While bedding and some clothes were left, most personal effects, food, and identifying items have been taken. The remaining items can be found in good condition, if a bit dusty. It is fairly clear that this was not a rushed evacuation.
- Looking through the records in the headman's house, most of the documents are trade records. However, a PC who makes Investigation (Search) / Perception at TN 30 will find a single note well hidden in the documents, bearing a broken seal of the Master of Water (See Player's Handout #2: The Master of Water's Letter).

- If the kami are asked, they can give vague ideas of people evacuating the city in waves, but as people tend to come and go from Yobanjin Mura, they can't provide particularly useful advice.

Unfortunately, there simply is not a lot of direct information within Yobanjin Mura. The Yobanjin will be as helpful as they are capable of being, but simply do not have the information the PCs are seeking. They will offer to ensure that the PCs are well packed for the journey ahead and that they have a well tended room to sleep in for the evening.

The next morning, Batul, Tomoko, and Kyouji meet the PCs at the front gate of the city. Kyouji, unlike the other two, is dressed for travel. He will ask permission to join the party, believing that it is both important for him to help figure out what was going on, and that he will be able to help. So long as the PCs don't turn him away, he will be able to add a +5 bonus to all stealth rolls during the module unless someone has a better stealth rank. He can also assist with healing if needed, though he does not cast aggressive spells against samurai (see his stat block in Appendix #1: NPCs).

Part Two: Lost Traveler Castle

Whether from Yobanjin Mura or straight from the Shrine of the Ki-Rin, the path to Lost Traveler Castle requires the PCs to navigate through the mountain ranges of northern Phoenix lands for three days. As they come upon the Western border, PCs may wish to drop into stealth. Allow them to roll if they really want to, but truthfully there is no need in this situation: the Castle is occupied by the Sixth Imperial Legion, and they are not aggressive to the PCs, even if their presence will be somewhat puzzling.

As you crest the side of the mountain, the sight of a large castle built into the range stands proud. Unlike most castles, this one doesn't carry any sort of heraldry, a testament to its Ronin origins. From your vantage point, troop movements are easy to notice, though the banners that are carried are not any of Phoenix origin.

Instead, the green banners of an Imperial legion are carried by the troops. Instead of singular formations,

however, the troops are in loose, spread formations. Clearly a Legion more used to small unit operations.

As the PCs approach, they can roll Investigation (Notice) / Perception at TN 30. A PC with wary ears +1k1 to the roll. On a success, they will realize that someone is shadowing them. They don't appear to be preparing an attack: instead, they are keeping their distance, perhaps ready to run and give warning if such is necessary.

If the PCs acknowledge the scout without showing aggressiveness, they will step forward, revealing a young woman with an Ikoma mon to go with her Legion heraldry. ***"Samurai-samas,"*** she bows. ***"Apologies for my delay in introduction. I am Ikoma Akiko, Hohei of the Sixth Imperial Legion."***

If the PCs begin questioning her, she will admit that she only knows that they are supposed to be assigned to this castle and the mountain range east of here. She will offer to lead them to Hiruma Keteni, the Legion Commander, if they like. Assuming the PCs agree, Akiko will begin leading them on towards the castle.

Your approach to the castle is simple enough. As you close on other members of the Legion, they give you quizzical looks, but none bother you. Still, stilted whispers can be heard from members of the Legion.

The gate to the city opens, and you are led through a Courtyard filled with training Samurai. A brief walk into the castle proper, and you soon find yourselves in a small tea room. Servants bring tea and snacks, and all efforts are made to ensure your comfort.

In, perhaps, a more comfortable moment for PCs, it takes about an hour for Hiruma Keteni to arrive.

Eventually, the door opens again, and two figures step inside. The first is an older man wearing a dark grey kimono adorned with a Hiruma mon along with the mon of the Imperial Legions. He has a calm, serious demeanor, but not overly dour.

The second figure is a man dressed in an orange and yellow kimono. He has a well manicured beard, and a friendly grin on his face, not showing the surprise that you've been met with by most of the legion.

As the two bow and take their seats, it is the Hiruma who speaks first. "Samurai-samas, well met. I am Hiruma Keteni, Shiriekan of the Sixth Imperial

Legion. This is my Senior Taisa, Shiba Nigichi. Apologies, your presence here has caught us somewhat by surprise, which is quite an impressive feat."

Hachi offers an apologetic bow. "Apologies, Hiruma-sama, it was not our intent to take you by surprise. We are on a mission to collect information, however, so I was hoping you might be able to answer questions for myself and my companions here?"

Keteni nods his assent, and Hachi looks to you to provide an explanation.

Keteni and Nigichi will be silent as the PCs explain their presence here. If no PC steps up, Hachi can do so.

Keteni nods quietly as he is caught up to what is going on. Nigichi's face is set as stone. And it is Keteni who speaks first.

"We were not aware of Seppun-sama's presence within phoenix lands. Our deployment began with us assisting in rebuilding, but it was requested that we instead guard the northern border about a month into our deployment. It makes sense: we are Samurai, and better suited to reconnaissance and defense than rebuilding efforts. But we have been here for some eight months now, and have not heard word from the Phoenix since."

Nigichi is next to speak. "Before our reassignment here, I had not seen my home in several years. I was excited to return to it, but... there has been a palpable tension since our assignment here that I have not been able to shake." He shakes his head. "There are people here who are very angry, Samurai-sans, and I fear that such anger will blow over against others."

Nigichi and Keteni will attempt to answer any questions by the PCs as honestly as possible, though the truth of the matter is that they do not know much. Still, there are a few questions that they can answer.

Did you meet directly with any of the Elemental Masters?

Keteni: Only briefly. Norimichi spoke to us briefly, but most of our contact came through the Voice of the Master.

Are there other Phoenix here?

Nigichi: Only the other members of the Legion. We assumed that the Phoenix not on Legion assignment have been assisting with rebuilding in whatever ways they can.

The general vibe the PCs should get is that the Legion commanders know very little. If someone wants to get a sense of how Nigichi feels can roll Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness at TN 25. A success will tell them that he is clearly concerned about the current state of Phoenix lands, especially given that an official Imperial Investigation seems to be underway.

After a few minutes of conversation, Nigichi will finally speak up. “Samurai-sans, I do not know what is occurring in my family’s lands. But I wish to help you in any way that I am able. I am friends with two Isawa who live in small villages west of Isawa Mori. They are good men, and I believe that they would be able to help you.

“The first is the Keeper of Fire, Isawa Hideki. He has stayed somewhat isolated in the years following him earning that title, and is a man of peace. He has never liked Norimichi, and I believe he would be willing to help us in any way he is capable of.

“The second is Isawa Eguchi. He is the governor of Momiji Sato. A good man, who has learned some hard lessons in the past few years. If he still resides in Momiji Sato, I’ve no doubt he could assist us.

“Both of them reside just west of the Isawa Mori. I believe that it would not be greatly difficult to get to either of them, especially if you can find a guide who would be able to show you the way.”

Keteni looks at Nigichi for a long moment, then nods. “Indeed, they will need a proper guide, and it has been some time since you have been able to see your home properly. As such, I think it is appropriate to approve Leave, Nigichi-san.”

“Leave? But...”

Keteni holds up a hand. “No buts. You have been a great second to me in these last four years since I promoted you. You deserve a chance to see home again.”

PCs who have played CIT 03 - Legacy of my Ancestors will recall Isawa Eguchi as the governor of Momiji Sato, the small village plagued by a vengeful fox spirit. PCs who have played CIT 09 - Essence of Fire will recall Isawa Hideki, a man who was obsessed with the secrets of the Book of Fire, but who had to see the error of his ways before those secrets would be revealed.

Hachi would like to speak with both, if possible, and has no preference on who to speak to first. Nigichi will inform the PCs that the two are close enough that either could be reached in a similar amount of time. Whoever they decide to meet first (detailed in Part 4: Eguchi and Part 5: Hideki, respectively), Nigichi will offer to show the PCs the way.

Part Three: Through the Mountains

While Keteni will offer to allow the PCs to stay the night, Hachi will be insistent that they move as quick as they can. Nigichi will agree, and unless the PCs are very insistent, the group continues on with fresh supplies provided by the Legions.

As the PCs continue their journey, have them roll Investigation (Notice) / Void at TN 25. Any PC who succeeds gets the following:

At first, it seems like a mirage through the mountains. The shimmering hints of a city, about an hour’s walk away. You see it for just a few moments, but in a blink, it is gone, as if a mere illusion.

A Phoenix, and only a Phoenix PC can roll Lore: Phoenix / Intelligence at TN 45 (they do not have the unskilled penalty if they do not have ranks of Lore: Phoenix, but do not benefit from Sage). On a success, they will recognize the secret city of Gisei Toshi, a city where the Phoenix keep many important and dangerous nemuranai. It is a secret city, and informing non-Phoenix of its existence without permission would be considered **very** bad.

Non-Phoenix PCs can roll Lore: Phoenix, Lore: Cartography, or another related Lore skill / intelligence at TN 30 (25 if they are using lore: Cartography or something similar). On a success, they will know with certainty that where they must be in Phoenix lands, there are no mapped cities.

Part Four: Isawa Eguchi

Hachi will want to move on, but does not have a great preference. If the city is truly there, it is only an hour's journey away, and he would not begrudge an investigation in the event it might be important.

If a PC summons the kami, they will not know much. They are very placid and peaceful in this area, and the Air kami specifically have been asked to play 'a very fun trick!' on anyone who is not supposed to be here.

Assuming the PCs do decide to investigate, any PC who had made the original check may roll Investigation (Search) / Perception at TN 35. If no PC succeeds, they don't see the city again, and Hachi calls off the search to return to the main mission.

As long as one PC succeeds:

The image flashes before you again, more solid than before. You feel some measure of resistance, a moment of disorientation, but you are sure you are going the correct way.

Have any PCs who succeeded at the second roll can again make Investigation (Search) / Perception at TN 35. If no PC succeeds, they don't see the city again, and Hachi calls off the search to return to the main mission.

If a PC succeeds again:

Pushing through the disorientation, you continue on. Instead of a skyline, for a brief moment, you see an image of a large, walled city, brilliant jade walls towering impossibly high for a city you've only barely noticed before now. You approach the gates.

No matter if the PCs make all three rolls or not:

The sun rises high in the sky as you leave the mountains and find yourselves in the Phoenix plains. After two days of rough travel, you have made it into the Heartland. The Isawa Mori rising high in the east.

PCs who made it to the castle walls have vague memories of them, but no other memories. Have any PC who made it to the castle walls note "Visited Gisei Toshi" on their mod sheets. They do not remember anything from their visit to Gisei Toshi, but this will come up again later down the road.

It is a day's travel south and east to reach Momiji Sato. A small, idyllic village, the tidy road you travel is certainly too small to march more than a few people in a row. The 'Shaded Rest' is a welcoming sight after a few long days' travel, a lovely inn offering respite to those who wish it.

And yet, you end up walking past the inn, past the Shrine of Inari, and down to the main Samurai residence. Peasants tending the fields shy away from you, timid at the presence of Samurai they do not recognize.

When you arrive at the door to the residence, Nigichi knocks twice on the door. A servant opens it and, seeing Nigichi and other Samurai, immediately invites you inside to have a seat and enjoy tea while you wait.

The wait is not long. Perhaps ten, fifteen minutes? A young man, only now entering the true prime of his life, steps inside. Time has been kind to Isawa Eguchi, who smiles at Nigichi, as well as the other samurai who have graced his home. "Friends," he speaks in a crisp, calm voice, "I welcome you to Momiji Sator. I am Isawa Eguchi, Gokenin of this place." He sits with practiced grace as servants enter, setting tea and several fine selections of nigiri to sample in front of you.

While Eguchi is uncertain as to the reason for the PCs' visit, he is unfailingly polite, and more than willing to follow proper etiquette before getting down to their purpose. He will recognize any PC who has him as an ally, and ask after how they've been, including asking about news from the wider Empire. If PCs discuss the events of Souls of the Fallen, he will be legitimately shocked by such a turn of events.

After pleasantries are exchanged, however, he will get down to business.

Eguchi lets out a sigh as he sets down his cup. "Now, Samurai. You must forgive my less than ideal preparation, but many of you are the first Samurai from other clans that I have seen since even before the Elemental Council ordered the closure of our borders. This town is somewhat... out of the way, you must understand, so even in ideal times I rarely see Samurai of your standing and stature.

Nigichi is the first to speak. "I apologize, my friend, but these times are certainly unusual. I was hoping that you might have some information regarding the closing of our clans' borders."

Eguchi looks at his friend and lets out a soft sigh. "I see. I suppose it was only a matter of time before the Imperial Families risked sending people here." His head turns to you, nodding. "I will answer all that I am able, Samurai-samas. Ask away."

At this point, the PCs will be free to ask whatever questions they may.

Why were the borders closed?

"I cannot say for certain. The official story, as you know, is so that the Phoenix could focus on their rebuilding efforts. But the word I have received from patrols entering the village is that little of our efforts have been put into rebuilding beyond ensuring that Shiro Shiba and Shiro Gennai stood again."

Have you heard anything from the Elemental Council?

"I have been summoned, Samurai. A letter personally sealed by the Master of Water. My presence is requested in Kyuden Isawa." Eguchi will produce a simple note, again with the broken seal of Isawa Norimichi. It's contents are simple:

'Isawa Eguchi,

Your presence is required at Kyuden Isawa, that the future of the Clan and the Empire may be discussed with your peers. Please be at Kyuden Isawa in one month's time.

Isawa Norimichi, Master of Water.'

"This letter was sent two months ago. It has not been my intention to ignore it, but matters here have required my attention. Harvest is soon, the peasants look to me for guidance."

Do you know what the Council is planning?

"I do not, but from what little I have heard, I suspect that Norimichi-sama plans nothing good."

While this conversation is occurring, have the PCs roll Investigation (Notice) / Perception at TN 30. On a success, they hear a small commotion from outside, and footsteps approaching the room.

The door to the tea room is opened with sudden force. An older man, dressed in brilliant Phoenix armor, stares down at the assembled Samurai with barely hidden surprise and contempt. "Eguchi-san," his voice has the tenor of a commander, and the acidity of a man enraged. "I had wondered why you had delayed so greatly in your summons. Is it that I see you plot treason against the phoenix?"

Eguchi looks like he is about to say something, but is cowed as the man continues to speak. "I am disgusted by your betrayals to your clan, Eguchi-san. You will answer before the council. As for these interlopers you have hidden," he looks to you, "they will be brought in for questioning, and dealt with as the intruders that they are."

At this point, the PCs are welcome to respond. Eguchi is not a warrior, and has no answer for Hatchio's claims, but the PCs have a few options.

Talking Hatchio down

This is, perhaps, the least likely option to work. This requires the PCs to be able to persuade him that their presence here is not detrimental to the Phoenix's plans. In order to be able to make the roll, they have to hit on at least two of the following points:

- They are not here to spy on the Phoenix.
- They only wish to talk to the Elemental Council.
- They are not traveling to or near Kyuden Isawa (This, obviously, is a lie, and will carry a D1 honor loss).
- They must not mention that this is an official investigation or mention the Emerald Champion. Any mentions of Makibesu will be met with abject hostility from Hatchio, who will outright state that his authority is not recognized here. If Makibesu is mentioned, the option to talk him down peacefully is immediately failed.

As long as they hit on two of the above points without hitting the instant failure condition, they can roll Sincerity (Deceit or Honesty) / Awareness at TN 50. The TN is reduced to 40 if the PC is a Phoenix PC. If they fail, Hatchio will demand that they stand down for a prisoner's escort. If, however, the PC succeeds at this roll, Hatchio will pause in consideration. "Very well. Perhaps I was too rash in my considerations. I will give you til the morning to have your conversations and leave. Tomorrow,

Eguchi-san, we leave for Kyuden Isawa.” He will motion his squad out of the building, and they will begin marching towards the Shaded Rest.

Dueling Hatchio

A PC can, and likely should be, offended by Hatchio’s claims against Eguchi or themselves. If a PC challenges Hatchio to a duel, he will eagerly accept, ensuring that the PC is aware that this duel will be to the death. He will lead the PCs and his squad out, allowing someone to take the time to consecrate a dueling circle if a shugenja offers to do so.

Hatchio’s dueling stats are listed at the bottom of his stat block. He is a ruthless duelist, and will do his very best to slay the PC. If he is victorious, he will demand that the PCs supplicate themselves before him, making embarrassing demands that will enrage Nigichi, who challenges him immediately after.

If Nigichi challenges him:

Nigichi and Hatchio stand across from each other, each watching the other with hands on their blades. A few moments later, two blades flash from their saya, almost too fast for the eye. The two men are now facing away from each other, blades held out. A breath passes. Two. Nigichi drops to a knee, a line of blood across his chest. Painful, but not lethal. A clatter of steel hitting the floor is heard as Hatchio drops his sword. He is dead well before he hit the ground.

Nigichi lets out a sigh, looking to the remainder of the patrol. “Two people are now dead due to Hatchio’s arrogance. I have no desire to see any more suffer the same fate. Will you stand down?” One of the men steps forward, hands behind his back. “Shiba-san, none of us ever shared Isawa-sama’s... fervor, when it comes to the Master of Water. If it pleases Eguchi-sama, we would not mind acting as his guests for the time being.”

If, however, the PC wins the duel:

As Hatchio’s body hits the ground, one of the other members of the patrol steps up. “It seems that the Heavens have shown the folly of Isawa-sama’s fervor, Samurai-samas. We have no further quarrel with you. If it pleases, we would be glad to stay here as Eguchi-sama’s guest for the next several days.”

Fighting Hatchio

If the PCs decide to simply fight Hatchio, Eguchi will request that their quarrel is taken outside. Hatchio immediately reaches for his sword, but the sound of footsteps make it clear that the remainder of the patrol is already heading that way. Reluctantly, Hatchio will walk outside.

Hatchio will fight to kill as many PCs as he can. Conversely, the remainder of his patrol will focus on knockdowns and other actions to try to disable the PCs without killing them. There is one Shiba Guard for every PC subtracting one, and Hatchio. They will each target an individual PC, with Hatchio going for the PC who looks toughest (has the highest earth). Guards going after courtiers and shugenja will not attack them unless attacked, instead using Shiba 2 to make spellcasting more difficult for the shugenja.

When Hatchio is defeated, any remaining Shiba guard will stand down and surrender to be ‘guests’ of Eguchi.

Isawa Hatchio

Asshole Taisa

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 3 Void 4

Honor 3.7 Status 5.0 Glory 4.1

Initiative: 8k4 **Attack:** 10k4
(Katana, Simple)

Armor TN: 30 (Light Armor) **Damage:** 7k2
(Katana)

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+0), 27 (+2), 33 (+7), 39 (+12), 45 (+17), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 4

Techniques: Can spend 2 void for +2k2 on rolls. Can pick a shugenja to add or subtract 5 from the TN of spells, and can do the same for any spell targeting him. When an enemy spends a void, he gains a void. Simple action attacks with Samurai Weapons

Skills: Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6 (Other skills not listed for lack of relevance to this module)

Mastery Abilities: Free raise on focus, can draw swords as free action, +1k0 to katana damage.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Strength of the Earth/Brash

Outfit: As Shiba Bushi

Dueling stats: 10k5 assessment (1 void spent).

10k8+9 focus (2 void if he did not win assessment by 10 or more, 1 if he won assessment by 10 or more).

9k4 strike (Will use center stance and free raises for damage unless he knows the enemy's reflexes to be 5 or higher. If 5 or higher, he will use 2 free raises to hit, and any other for damage)

Shiba Guard

Not assholes, but doing their job

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 3
3

Honor Agility 4
Status Glory
Initiative: 6k3 **Attack:** 10k4
(Katana, Complex)

Armor TN: 30 (Light **Damage:** 7k2
Armor) (Katana)

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+0), 27 (+2), 33 (+7), 39
(+12), 45 (+17), 51 (Down, +40), 57
(Dead)

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 3

Techniques: Can spend 2 void for +2k2 on rolls.
Can pick a shugenja to add or subtract 5 from
the TN of spells, and can do the same for any
spell targeting him.

Skills: Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6 (Other skills not listed
for lack of relevance to this module)

Mastery Abilities: Free raise on focus, can draw
swords as free action, +1k0 to katana damage.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Strength of the Earth

Outfit: As Shiba Bushi

No matter how the situation resolves, once Hatchio is
dead, the other phoenix can explain the following:

- For the most part, the Shiba have been acting as border guards since the border closing.
- In recent months, however, the squad was sent to patrol and ensure that unknown elements were not traveling Phoenix lands.
- They personally escorted Seppun Kazetora to Kyuden Isawa.
- Troops are massing at the Castle, but for what purpose they do not know. Isawa Norimichi's anger at the Crane is no secret

in Phoenix lands, and they think he may be planning an attack on crane lands.

- Rebuilding has been well, but slow.

Once the situation has resolved, no matter how it does:

Hachi looks at you with hard, tired eyes. "Whatever is happening in these lands... it all points to Kyuden Isawa. I am afraid we can spare no more time in our investigation. We must make our way to Kyuden Isawa as fast as our legs shall take us."

Eguchi will make himself available for any final questions, and then the PCs will head on their way.

Part Five: Isawa Hideki

A day's travel North and East takes you into the Isawa Mori itself. A break in the treeline leads you to a small, but well maintained house, easily recognizable as the estate of Isawa Hideki.

Nigichi strides to the door and knocks on it calmly. An elderly servant opens the door, smiling brightly. "Ah, Samurai-samas! It has been so long since Hideki-sama has had guests! Come in, come in!" He leads you inside to a small serving room.

After a few minutes to settle in, the shoji screen again slides open. A tall, thin man in his early thirties, a filled out beard stands before you, wearing a black kimono with only an orange obi to identify his clan. Next to him is a similarly tall woman, wearing a bright orange kimono and black obi. The two bow together. "Welcome, Samurai-samas. I am Isawa Hideki, and this is Shiba Aki, my sister and Yojimbo."

The two sit and exchange pleasantries as servants serve a fine, if simple meal of pickled vegetables and rice along with a plain tea. Hideki will recognize anyone who assisted him with his opening of the Book of Fire, and greet them heartily as friends. He will pointedly ask about news from around the Empire over the last year, and be earnestly shocked to hear any of the poor news... especially the burning of the Shrine of the Ki-Rin and the approaching Shadowlands hoard.

Hideki lets out a sigh as he sets down his cup. "Now, Samurai. You must forgive my less than ideal

preparation, but many of you are the first Samurai from other clans that I have seen since even before the Elemental Council ordered the closure of our borders. My home is somewhat out of the way, and I am sad to say that news is often hard to come by. So you would forgive me if I ask you to catch me up on matters I am somewhat unfamiliar.”

Nigichi is the first to speak. “I apologize, my friend, but these times are certainly unusual. I was hoping that you might have some information regarding the closing of our clans’ borders.”

Hideki looks at his friend and lets out a soft sigh. “I see. The concerns must be grave indeed if an Imperial investigation has been called.” His head turns to you, nodding. “I will answer all that I am able, Samurai-samas. Ask away.”

At this point, the PCs will be free to ask whatever questions they may.

Why were the borders closed?

“I cannot say for certain. The official story, as you know, is so that the Phoenix could focus on their rebuilding efforts. I suspect, as you surely must by now, that there must be more to it than that. One would think that rebuilding would make one welcome outsiders who wish to help, not spurn them, neh?”

Have you heard anything from the Elemental Council?

“I have been summoned, Samurai. A letter personally sealed by the Master of Water. My presence is requested in Kyuden Isawa.” Hideki will produce a simple note, again with the broken seal of Isawa Norimichi. It’s contents are simple:

‘Isawa Hideki,

Your presence is required at Kyuden Isawa, that the future of the Clan and the Empire may be discussed with your peers. Please be at Kyuden Isawa in one month’s time.

Isawa Norimichi, Master of Water.’

“This letter was sent Four months ago. Then three months ago. Then two. It has been incessant, and frankly somewhat annoying.”

Do you know what the Council is planning?

“The Council has been subsumed under the wave of Isawa Norimichi’s rage,” Hideki states with a soft sigh. “I know not what is being planned directly, but I am certain that it is to end in bloodshed.”

While this conversation is occurring, have the PCs roll Investigation (Notice) / Perception at TN 30. On a success, they hear a small commotion from outside, and footsteps approaching the room

The door to the tea room is opened with sudden force. An older man, dressed in brilliant Phoenix armor, stares down at the assembled Samurai with barely hidden surprise and contempt. “Hideki-sama,” his voice has the tenor of a commander, and the acidity of a man enraged. “I had wondered why you had delayed so greatly in your summons. Is it that I see you plot treason against the phoenix?”

Hideki’s eyes snap to Hatchio, eyeing him with something between contempt and annoyance. “Hatchio-san. Your accusations are distasteful. I have no plots. I am content here, in the holdings that my family has watched for generations. If the Master of Water requires the council of the Keeper of Fire, then he knows where I might be found.”

Hatchio spits at those words, but his attention turns to you. “I will deal with your lies later. In the mean time, these intruders must be dealt with. You will disarm yourselves and come with me. Your intrusion into Phoenix lands is at an end.”

At this point, the PCs are welcome to respond. Eguchi is not a warrior, and has no answer for Hatchio’s claims, but the PCs have a few options.

Talking Hatchio down

This is, perhaps, the least likely option to work. This requires the PCs to be able to persuade him that their presence here is not detrimental to the Phoenix’s plans. In order to be able to make the roll, they have to hit on at least two of the following points:

- They are not here to spy on the Phoenix.
- They only wish to talk to the Elemental Council.
- They are not traveling to or near Kyuden Isawa (This, obviously, is a lie, and will carry a D1 honor loss).
- They must not mention that this is an official investigation or mention the Emerald Champion. Any mentions of Makibesu will

Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+0), 27 (+2), 33 (+7), 39 (+12), 45 (+17), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 4

Techniques: Can spend 2 void for +2k2 on rolls. Can pick a shugenja to add or subtract 5 from the TN of spells, and can do the same for any spell targeting him. When an enemy spends a void, he gains a void. Simple action attacks with Samurai Weapons

Skills: Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6 (Other skills not listed for lack of relevance to this module)

Mastery Abilities: Free raise on focus, can draw swords as free action, +1k0 to katana damage.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Strength of the Earth/Brash

Outfit: As Shiba Bushi

Dueling stats: 10k5 assessment (1 void spent).

10k8+9 focus (2 void if he did not win assessment by 10 or more, 1 if he won assessment by 10 or more).

9k4 strike (Will use center stance and free raises for damage unless he knows the enemy's reflexes to be 5 or higher. If 5 or higher, he will use 2 free raises to hit, and any other for damage)

Shiba Guard

Not assholes, but doing their job

Air 3 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 3

Honor Agility 4
Status Glory

Initiative: 6k3 **Attack:** 10k4
(Katana, Complex)

Armor TN: 30 (Light Armor) **Damage:** 7k2
(Katana)

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+0), 27 (+2), 33 (+7), 39 (+12), 45 (+17), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Dead)

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 3

Techniques: Can spend 2 void for +2k2 on rolls. Can pick a shugenja to add or subtract 5 from the TN of spells, and can do the same for any spell targeting him.

Skills: Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6 (Other skills not listed for lack of relevance to this module)

Mastery Abilities: Free raise on focus, can draw swords as free action, +1k0 to katana damage.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Strength of the Earth

Outfit: As Shiba Bushi

No matter how the situation resolves, once Hatchio is dead, the other phoenix can explain the following:

- For the most part, the Shiba have been acting as border guards since the border closing.
- In recent months, however, the squad was sent to patrol and ensure that unknown elements were not traveling Phoenix lands.
- They personally escorted Seppun Kazetora to Kyuden Isawa.
- Troops are massing at the Castle, but for what purpose they do not know. Isawa Norimichi's anger at the Crane is no secret in Phoenix lands, and they think he may be planning an attack on crane lands.
- Rebuilding has been well, but slow.

Once the situation has resolved, no matter how it does:

Hachi looks at you with hard, tired eyes. "Whatever is happening in these lands... it all points to Kyuden Isawa. I am afraid we can spare no more time in our investigation. We must make our way to Kyuden Isawa as fast as our legs shall take us."

Hideki will make himself available for any final questions, and then the PCs will head on their way.

Part Six: Kyuden Isawa

At this point, the PCs should be looking to get to Kyuden Isawa as quickly as they can get there. Knowing that there are patrols that will no doubt be looking for them, Nigichi will suggest a quieter approach to avoid Phoenix patrols as much as possible. Mechanically, have the PCs roll Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility at TN 25. If Kyouji is in the party, the PCs can add 5 to their roll. Otherwise, they add the highest stealth rank among party members to their roll. In addition, any PC may call a raise to add 5 to the result of any other PC's roll (assume the NPCs pass, for convenience sake).

If any PC fails, they are accosted by a Phoenix patrol and have to fight their way through. The PCs take 30 wounds, modified as normal by reduction and void, as they have to fight their way through the patrol.

After another long day and night's march:

It is early in the morning as the trees finally begin to thin out, giving way to the eastern fields of Phoenix lands. The hints of Kyuden Isawa starting to form on the other side of a nearby hill.

As you crest the hill, the sight in front of you is massive: an entire army of men and women, all in the fiery orange of the phoenix, in marching formation. Several banners are readily recognizable: The Firestorm Legion, the Hurricane Legion, the Avalanche Guard... all behind the Tsunami Legion, standing most prominently at the front of the army.

Stepping out of the command tent are three figures: the first, Seppun Kazetora, Face unreadable among the Phoenix Army.. The second is Shiba Korishima, the Phoenix clan Champion. Eyes staring forward as to give absolutely no hint to what she feels. And the final one, Isawa Norimichi, the Master of Water, confident in his gait as he steps in front of them both. A nearby shugenja says a prayer, and his voice carries across the field.

“Friends, brothers! The time has come for us to act, when the rest of the Empire lacks the courage required to do so! On this day, we mark a new history, one where the Toturi Dynasty is saved from the cowardice of this current Emperor, who clearly does not carry the Mandate of Heaven! In four days, we shall stand in the Imperial Capital, the manipulative bastard who has poisoned the Emperor’s mind and wronged us dead and the Empire saved! It is the Wisdom of the Phoenix that will save the Empire, and a more worthy man shall sit on the throne!” A cheer is shouted from the Tsunami Legion, and echoed by the Firestorm Legion... though others seem far more stoic. With a wave of Norimichi’s fan, the army begins to march South.

As this is occurring, PCs may roll Investigation (Notice) or Battle (Mass Combat) / Perception to gain information about the army as it marches. PCs may find the following information:

- TN 10: The Phoenix seem to be eschewing the main road to go straight south. This leaves the main road more open as a path for a smaller group to rush down.
- TN 20: Seppun Kazetora is riding in a place of honor among the army’s formation.
- TN 25: The Masters all seem to be riding along with their respective elemental Legions: Norimichi in a place of honor at

the head of the formation. Isawa Himeko, the Master of Air, is at the very rear of the column.

- TN 30: The new Master of Fire, Isawa Chiyu, is readily seen just behind the Master of Water’s formation. She is a young woman with a face that looks as if it could melt stone.

As the army moves, Hachi motions you away from where the army marches, cheating towards the main roads. “Samurai-samas, I think it goes without saying... we must get to the capital as swiftly as possible.”

Nigichi nods in agreement. “Indeed. This action is... I cannot believe that my clan would come to this conclusion.” He takes a breath. “Let the Fortunes help us be swift.”

Unless PCs have anything they wish to do, Hachi will make for the road as quickly as possible so they might beat the army to the capital.

Part Seven: A Glimpse of the Void

As you find your way down the eastern roads of Phoenix lands, the scene before you is but a shadow of the year before: while much effort has been made for the rebuilding of the Phoenix lands, villages are still in poor condition. Several huts still lack roofs, and as you find your way past Shiro Shiba, the signs of long construction are clearly present. Though much progress has been made, it will still be years before the seat of the Shiba family is in proper shape again.

After two days of hard travel south, the PCs find themselves just south of Shiro Shiba. As they are passing the city, have the PCs roll Investigation (Notice) / Void at TN 30. Wary applies for this roll. PCs who succeed feel a brief uneasiness in the back of their neck, as if something is palpably changing, before:

A soft pop can be heard in the back of your ear. The feeling of something changing in the very air around you. Your eyes can’t help but blink. And in that moment after you do, you are surrounded. Twelve Shiba, standing at attention, hands held away from

their blades. One steps forward. "Samurai-samas. The Master of Void, Isawa Korimi, would have words with you."

Hachi steps forward to speak. "Shiba-san, please. I hope you understand that what is happening is wrong. We must get word to the Emperor of this treason."

A hand is lifted, and the Shiba shakes his head. "Korimi-sama understands. She assures you that this conversation will not prevent you from doing your duty, and in fact will ultimately save you a day, perhaps more."

Hachi considers a moment, then nods. "Very well, then let us return quickly." As he says that, you hear another pop in the back of your ear. You blink again, and now you stand in the middle of a large courtroom. Two figures sit at the central dais: a wizened old woman who must be nearing her eightieth year, wearing the mon of the Isawa. And a much younger man with the mon of the Gennai, blinking in confusion as to your sudden appearance.

Some PCs may recognize the Gennai family daimyo, Gennai Okaru.

"Greetings, Samurai," the old woman says. "I am Isawa Korimi, the Master of Void, and I welcome you to the court of Kyuden Gennai. I am honored to speak with you today."

"Isawa-sama," Nigichi is the one who speaks up first, bowing low. "I do not understand what is happening. Why is Norimichi-sama committing such blasphemies, and why do the Phoenix follow him?"

Korimi smiles sadly. "Isawa Norimichi's rage has become like a tidal wave, and much of our clan has become caught up within it. His hatred of the Emerald Champion, his anger at the betrayal he perceives from the aid that was denied us last year due to Makibesu's intercession. He blames Makibesu, and by extension he blames our Emperor. It is too late to stop that tide, but I pray it is not too late to prevent the worst from happening. And that is why you are here."

Gennai Okaru is next to speak. "Samurai, I know that what is occurring is an affront on par with the Scorpion Coup. But we know of what occurs in the west. Korimi-sama has seen it. And we know that Norimichi must be stopped, in fact we **beg** you to do

so. But please..." he stops. "The Empire cannot survive this next ordeal without all of its clans. I ask that, when this is over and the time comes to render judgment... I hope that you will consider Compassion and Mercy upon the Clan of Shiba."

Korimi and Okaru will answer questions as honestly as they are able. All in all, they will do their very best to persuade the PCs that the destruction of the Phoenix clan has to be prevented.

What of the other masters? Are they just going along, or do they agree with him?

"Isawa Chiyu, the Master of Fire, was selected specifically for her shared anger towards the Emerald Champion. She was a student of Isawa Koraze, and sees Makibesu's actions as a spit in the face of Koraze's memory.

"Isawa Sukazu was worn down slowly, but came to agree with Norimichi's position. He has only recently agreed to follow this path, which is why it has taken as long as it has for the march to begin.

"Isawa Himeko has been a voice of dissent, but her voice has been drowned out by the other Masters. She is... understandably afraid of Norimichi, and will not oppose him alone."

Why haven't you done anything to stop him?

"My essence is tied to this place, Samurai-samas. If I were to step outside of this castle, I would become barely more than a memory in a matter of hours. The void has seen fit to keep me standing to fit a Purpose, but there are restrictions as to what I am capable of doing. This situation is... not ideal, but it was necessary to prepare this castle for my final duties."

What do you mean/what did you do?

"I rebuilt the castle, in a fashion. Through the void, I was able to make one holding whole again, and I decided this was the one."

Okaru nods to her as she says this. "This is the last action she will be able to do. Entreating the void in this manner has sapped the last of her strength, and it is unlikely she has more than a few weeks left, if that."

But you were able to teleport us?

"You allowed yourselves to be invited here. That invocation requires those who are moved to be willing to move."

What about Shiba Korishima?

Okaru sighs. “Shiba-sama loathes this action. She is a woman of peace, an artisan as much as a warrior. But... the oaths that bind the Shiba are the words of a Kami, and cannot be broken. Perhaps if there was more dissent in the council, she would feel differently, but... as it stands, she is doing what she feels she has to to keep the oath intact.”

As the conversation comes to a close, Okaru stands, and walks down the dais to stand next to Hachi. “I will come with you. I have been indecisive for too long, and I pray that somehow... some way, I may be able to help.”

Korimi nods to him, smiling approving as he speaks.

The Master of Void then looks to Nigichi and any Phoenix PCs.

“Samurai, I understand that there may be conflict in your souls about what must transpire. But we must act as a monolith against Norimichi’s rage. It is by our example that the Empire might see that the Phoenix can help weather the coming storms. And I must ask to be able to rely on you to help me do that. Shiba’s Oath demands that you protect the Isawa. The best way you can do that is by guiding those who have lost their way back home.”

A moment of quiet. Two, then three. Then the now familiar pop hits your ears. And you are again surrounded by a dozen Shiba bushi just south of Toshi no Omoidoso, more than two days’ travel south of where you stood before you met the Master of Void. They take formation to protect you, and the ride towards Otosan Uchi continues.

Part Five: No Sacrifice, No Victory

A few hours into the PC’s journey, they cross into Owl lands, only a day away from Otosan Uchi.

It starts quietly at first. The sound of water, almost like a trickle, in the far distance. That trickle becomes closer to a wave, and you quickly realize that the noise is coming from behind you. Looking back, rushing water barrels down the road, and as it grows closer you can see them: fifty or more Shiba samurai,

riding what appears to be a wave, coming after you fast.

Okaru looks to his men briefly, then turns around. The honor guard immediately fall into formation as he begins entreating the kami.

“My lord!” Nigichi calls out.

“Go! I will buy you the time you need!” Comes the daimyo’s reply. Sweat is coming off his brow as his prayers become quicker, more desperate.

PCs must decide what they wish to do swiftly. PCs may decide that this is where their stories end, and choose to stay back to stop the advancing force. Doing so ends their journey, but begins the journey for another. In addition to the karma rewards, the player’s next PC gains the Great Destiny advantage for no XP or favors.

Some PCs may wish to persuade Okaru to stand down, to live another day. Okaru believes that this is his atonement for the poor job he has done as the Gennai family daimyo, but can be persuaded to stand down by a PC who can persuade him that he can make better amends alive than dead, and help the Phoenix better in the capital than dead on the road. This requires good roleplay and a Courtier (Manipulation) or Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness Roll at TN 50. Phoenix PCs get a raise on this roll, and GMs can assign another free raise for good roleplay. In addition, someone will have to take Okaru’s place, though Okaru will utilize every blessing at his disposal to make sure they can slow down the advancing column sufficiently.

If no PC sacrifices themselves and Okaru does:

As you continue your path to the capital, Okaru’s prayer finally completes. His body is engulfed by a pillar of flame that lashes out to meet the rushing wave. The words “For Rokugan!” Can be heard from one of the Honor Guard, echoed by his compatriots yell of “For Victory!” As they charge forward.

The water crashes against the pillar of flame, and for a moment it seems that Okaru’s success is complete. But a small bit of the wave pushes past: there are still some Shiba determined to fulfill their orders, and they rush at you with impossible speed.

There are a number of Shiba equal to the number of combat capable PCs. They fight with intelligent tactics, and will utilize their Shiba rank 2 technique to make casting as hard as possible on enemy shugenja.

Shiba Elite

Fast moving Shock Troops here to stop the intruders

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 3 Void 4

Honor Agility 5
Status Glory

Initiative: 8k4 **Attack:** 10k6e
(Katana, Simple)

Armor TN: 30 (Light **Damage:** 7k2m
Armor) (Katana)

Reduction: 6

Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+0), 27 (+2), 33 (+7), 39
(+12), 45 (+17), 51 (Down, +40), 57
(Dead)

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 4

Techniques: Can spend 2 void for +2k2 on rolls. Can pick a shugenja to add or subtract 5 from the TN of spells, and can do the same for any spell targeting him. Simple action attacks with Samurai Weapons

Skills: Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana)7 (Other skills not listed for lack of relevance to this module)

Mastery Abilities: Free raise on focus, can draw swords as free action, +1k0 to katana damage. 9s and 10s explode on sword damage

Advantages/Disadvantages: Strength of the Earth

Special effects:

Speed of the Waterfall (Custom): Can move up to Waterx20 as a free action

Power of the Earth: Double reduction from Armor

Outfit: As Shiba Bushi

If, however, at least one PC sacrificed themselves with Okaru (GMs should paraphrase this box text to be as appropriate to the PC in question as possible):

As you continue your path to the capital, Okaru's prayer finally completes. His body is engulfed by a pillar of flame that lashes out to meet the rushing wave. The words "For Rokugan!" Can be heard from one of the Honor Guard, echoed by his compatriots yell of "For Victory!" As they charge forward.

The water crashes against the pillar of flame, and for a moment it seems that Okaru's success is complete. But a small bit of the wave pushes past, and it seems

that it will overtake you, until... it is slammed into. [PC] slams into the first of that wave, forcing them back. They slay one... another... a blade catches their side. But they are persistent. They will not be stopped. Another dead in front of them. Even as another blade sinks into their chest, they cannot be stopped, spurred by their final duty. Their last breath taken in defiance of this treachery, they slay the last of the Phoenix who opposes them in kind. Their sacrifice buying the time you need to escape.

Proceed to the conclusion.

Conclusion

Your remaining travel to Otosan Uchi passes without incident. Hachi immediately makes his way to the Imperial City with you in tow. Every favor, every friend he has made, all of it burned in record fashion to earn him an audience in the main court chamber.

As you find yourself in front of the dais, Makibesu stands in front of the Imperial Throne, which currently sits empty. To his right, Matsu Kurohimi, the Shogun, watches you with a mix of curiosity and wariness. "Samurai," he speaks calmly, "what has happened?"

Hachi speaks quickly, explaining all that you have seen over the last several days. Makibesu's eyes harden, but Kurohimi is the one who speaks first. "We must prepare to defend the city now. If they bring the might of the Phoenix down upon us, then we must call the nearby Lion and Crane troops to us immediately." Her eyes turn to the Samurai in front of her, and immediately she walks off the dais towards the far doors. "Samurai, I will need an Honor Guard to go and attempt to stop this foolishness before it turns to bloodshed."

Makibesu turns to speak. "Now wait a minute. You are a General, Kurohimi-san. If anyone should-

Kurohimi turns to him, eyes hard as she speaks in a cold voice. "Your short sightedness is the reason for the Phoenix's rage, Makibesu-san. If you walk out on that field, then you will only spur the rage of Norimichi further, and I will not have potential negotiation sabotaged before they begin.

"You would be best to do your job as the Emerald Champion and protect the Emperor." Without giving

him opportunity to respond, she walks out of the Courtroom, that she may do the Shogun's duty.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module:	1 XP
Good Roleplaying:	1 XP
PCs make it to Kyuden Isawa:	1 XP
PCs make it to Otosan Uchi:	1 XP
Total Possible Experience:	4 XP

Favors

Returning to the Imperial Capital with information about the incoming attack gains PCs 1 favor.

Honor

For bringing word of the incoming attack, PCs gain H12 Honor. A paragon of duty gains an extra point of honor regardless of their current honor rank.

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

Defeating Isawa Hatchio: G8 Glory

Bringing word of the Attack to the Capital: G12 Glory

Allies and Enemies

All PCs gain Miya Hachi as an ally. He is Influence 2 / Devotion 1. If they already have him as an ally, increase his Devotion by 1.

Other Rewards and Penalties

A PC who sacrifices themselves to halt the advancing troops gains Great Destiny for free on their next character. This is in addition to the usual karma rules

Module Reporting Questions

Did Kyouji come with the PCs?

Did the PCs make it to Otosan uchi?

Did any PC sacrifice themselves?

Did Okaru get persuaded not to stay behind?

To count for final results, reports for this module must be in by 12/19/2021.

Appendix #1: NPCs

If any NPCs require statblocks not listed elsewhere in the module

Shiba Nigichi

Concerned Imperial Legionnaire

Air 4 Earth 4 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 5

Awareness 5 Agility 4 Perception 5

Honor 8.1 Status 5.0 Glory 7.1

Initiative: 9k4+6

Attack: 10k5e
(Katana, Simple)

Armor TN:

Damage: 7k2m
(Katana)

Reduction: 3

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

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 5

Techniques: (As Shiba Bushi)

Skills: Battle 6, Kenjutsu 8, Stealth 7, Lore: History 5, Lore: Phoenix 6, Etiquette 4, Courtier 5 (Other skills as expected of a Shiba Bushi)

Mastery Abilities:

Advantages/Disadvantages: Silent, Great Destiny / Idealistic

Outfit: As Shiba Bushi

Player's Handout #1: News From the Empire

“Honored Samurai,

It is unfortunate, but necessary that I bring you word of the recent going ons 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 of 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 Dragon's attack of Hazumi so many years ago.

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.

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.

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's Handout #2: The Master of Water's Letter

“Gennai-san,

By order of the Elemental Council, the people of the city of Yobanjin Mura are required to return to Kyuden Isawa. Organize their return as swiftly and safely as possible. Further instructions shall be provided upon your arrival.

Blessings upon you and yours,

Isawa Norimichi,

Master of Water”

