

# **The Ruins of Shiro no Fukuro**

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**An Intro-Rank Adventure for  
Heroes of Rokugan: Champions of the Ivory Throne**

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Combat, Intrigue, Introductory

A haunted castle at the fringes of the Empire holds a secret lost to time - or perhaps it is Time itself that is lost.

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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.

**GM's Note:** *This adventure contains references to suicide.* Consider giving your players a warning to this effect before play begins, so as to be certain all players are comfortable and able to enjoy the game at all times.

## Adventure Background and Summary

There has always been more than one Rokugan. In the depths of Yume-do, the Realm of Dreams, alternate histories and futures of the Emerald Empire have played out again and again, an endless spiral of what might have been. The most famous - or rather, infamous - of these dream versions of Rokugan is the so-called Thousand Years of Darkness, a version of history where the Dark Kami Fu Leng was victorious on the Second Day of Thunder and rules over a corrupted Rokugan, but it is far from the only one, or even the most hopeless. Time is as malleable as clay in Yume-do, and pasts and futures can be reached by those with the power to travel through it.

However, there was once a mighty assault on all the myriad versions of Rokugan, at the very reality underpinning them, that threatened to dissolve every history and every future of Rokugan into Nothingness. "When" is impossible to say, since time is so different in dreams, and "where" even moreso. What is more clear, though, is that a group of heroes from across Rokugan's pasts and futures were brought together under the leadership of Toturi Sezaru, the Wolf, to battle the Nothing's champion, the Shadow Dragon, for the fate of all possible existences. These heroes were called "yumemusha," dream warriors. They were successful, though at great cost. When the battle was done, those who survived were sent back to their home realities,

awakening as from a single night's dream, though forever changed by what they had experienced. The tale of the yumemusha and their battle was told in the *Heroes of Rokugan: The Nightmare War* campaign.

One such yumemusha was Toturi Reizan, who would eventually go on to become Toturi IX in the *Heroes of Rokugan: Champions of the Ivory Throne* timeline. As a result of his adventures in Yume-do, Reizan learned a great deal about strategy and tactics, enhancing his innate gifts and becoming one of Rokugan's finest military minds. He also acquired a nemuranai katana named Courage, a blade forged by one of the most powerful artifact makers in history, Asahina Yajinden. The blade carries within it the essence of the virtue it embodies, and drives its wielder to greater and greater acts of bravery.

Toturi IX's bravery led him into the Shadowlands to face the might of the Horde, where both he and his eldest son died at the Battle of Broken Jade. Or at least, that is what the Empire has believed for the past several years. It is soon to learn that Toturi IX did not die at all, but instead turned to Jigoku. Not only has he united the many horrors of the Shadowlands behind him, the fallen Emperor was even able to invade Meido, the Realm of Death, and slay one of the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang with Courage.

That act has stirred Toturi IX's dreams, however, and the link between the Emperor and Yume-do has opened a spirit portal between the Realm of Mortals and the Realm of Dreams at the spot where, in another Rokugan, the yumemusha once gathered their strength under the banner of the Owl Clan. The effect of the portal has drawn the attention of Moshi Saori, a Mantis researcher interested in the Naga, due to its proximity to the Shinomen Mori.

Saori calls the PCs together to learn more about the shifting histories she has found in her records relating to the area. The group travels to the portal's location, where they are attacked by a small group of baku, dream spirits, in the form of various warriors from other versions of Rokugan. Although unlikely to provide much danger to the heroes, they indicate that the portal is a threat that must be dealt with. Once they find the portal proper, the PCs must solve a riddle to open it and journey inside for more answers.

Once in Yume-do, the PC encounter one of the yumemusha, Doji Hotaru, and have a chance to see

one of the alternate Rokugans face to face. Hotaru explains what she knows about the yumemusha and the spirit portal, then leads the Saori and her group into Toturi IX's dream of receiving Courage. She reveals she is carrying Sincerity and describes the Virtuous Weapons' curse.

With the source of the disturbance in Yume-do identified, Hotaru attempts to lead the group back to Ningen-do, but they all run afoul of the self-appointed guardian of the alternate timelines, Sezaru the Wolf. They must persuade Sezaru to let them go free or, if they cannot, watch Hotaru sacrifice herself to convince Sezaru instead. When they finally do reach the mortal world, they confront one last challenge: a corrupted Jade Magistrate, sent by Toturi IX to seal off this small weakness in his defenses.

## **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. In particular, GMs should examine PC characters for the following Advantages and Disadvantages, which can have impacts in the story:

- Moshi Saori as an Ally or Sworn Enemy
- Touch of the Spirit Realms or Cursed by the Realm: Yume-do
- Paragon of Sincerity, Failure of Bushido: Sincerity, or Doubt: Sincerity

### **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. However, as this is an Introductory module, there is no Glory loss for inactivity.

### **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 vary depending on the time frame. 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 player characters begin the story in the Scorpion holding of Zakyo Toshi, an infamous city even by the standards of the Clan of Secrets. Zakyo Toshi is widely reputed to be a place where anything can be found, for the right price, and nearly anything can be done, as long as you bribe the right people. Although originally an unaligned holding, the Scorpion Clan annexed it during the 12th century - under their control, however, the city has not truly changed, it has simply become better managed. The same criminal syndicates exist, but they answer to the Scorpion now, and their activities are carefully controlled so as not to impact the city's overall profitability. Wealthy samurai visiting the city to experience the illicit thrills of a "den of iniquity" never need fear for their lives or property; anything and anyone that might threaten that flow of revenue is quickly and ruthlessly removed by the city's overlords. On the city's main streets, brightly-colored lanterns glow from each spacious, well-appointed geisha house, gambling parlor, and opium den (though the latter are all labeled as "pain treatment halls") - should a visiting samurai wander away from these well-lit, sturdily-paved roads, they often find themselves approached by helpful ronin or respectful heimin to be guided back to the appropriate parts of town. What lies down those darkened allies is only for the truly dishonorable - or truly desperate.

Moshi Saori, the Mantis Clan shugenja and researcher, has called the PCs to meet with her at a teahouse called Nine Nights Dreaming. It is perhaps the most reputable public establishment in the decidedly disreputable city, as it does indeed serve primarily as a teahouse (although a wide variety of fine sakes are on offer as well, and geisha are available on request). Saori, like many of her Clan, is not especially troubled by the nature of the city, particularly the non-violent aspects of its trade, but as she is requesting assistance from Clans across the Empire, she would prefer not to risk offending anyone with more... elevated... sensibilities.

The Nine Nights Dreaming Teahouse sits on a bluff overlooking the Small Trade River, giving a gratifyingly lovely view of the river valley, the city of Zakyo Toshi that spills down the hillsides, and the vastness of the Shinomen Mori beyond. The late afternoon sunlight spills across the table and silk cushions of this finely-decorated dining room, and a pleasant breeze carries a touch of the coming

coolness of autumn. Your host, Moshi Saori, smiles graciously at all of you as she gestures for the young and handsome server to begin pouring your tea.

The Mantis Clan shugenja waits calmly until the young man finishes his task and slips out of the door before she begins to speak. She is short, her hair still tied into the foxtail style that denotes an unmarried samurai, but fine lines around her eyes and a strand or two of silver suggest she is approaching her middle years. Her kimono is fashionable and made of fine silks, dyed in a pattern of centipedes curving around large white and black pearls over a deep green background.

"Thank you all for joining me," she says, nodding to you all. "I am Moshi Saori, and I am a scholar of the Naga people: their history, culture, and traditions. I've requested your aid on an expedition to learn more about a mystery my research has uncovered. At this point, I do not know if it is connected to the Naga or not, but regardless, it is a puzzle that I believe is important to solve."

Rather than turning immediately to address the puzzle, though, Saori instead looks to the PCs and asks them to introduce themselves in kind and asking about any of their most noteworthy deeds. This is an opportunity for the players to introduce their characters to Saori and to each other, and offer any background information they think appropriate. Saori listens intently, eager to learn more about her new assistants. Some of the PCs might know Saori already, as indicated by having her as an Ally, and in those cases she instead admits to having requested their aid specifically and thanks them for joining her on the expedition. If, on the other hand, one of the PCs has Saori as a Sworn Enemy, she extends only minimal courtesy to them, seeing their presence as an insult from their daimyo. She does not violate etiquette, but her dislike is visible and palpable.

The pleasantries complete, Saori reaches into a carrying bag sitting on the floor next to her and withdraws from it several rolls of paper. Some are single scrolls, while others are thick reams of paper incorporating dozens of individual documents. She spreads them across the table, then looks up at you with troubled eyes. "In my years of studying the Naga, I have of course spent much of that time studying the Shinomen Forest, where the Naga make their home. Over the years I have accumulated a store of records related to the forest and its environs,

including tax records, unclassified military reports, merchants' journals, even personal letters where I could find them. On occasion, I review these records, looking for clues I might have missed on previous examinations.

"A few weeks ago, I was in the middle of such a review when I began noticing references to a particular piece of territory on the forest's edge, just over a day's travel south of here and not far from the northern shore of the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow. Some of the records mentioned the ruins of a Scorpion castle called Kyuden no Keishu Dedokushii, abandoned during the 8th century; others said the ruins were of an Owl castle called Shiro no Fukurou, its dates of construction or destruction undefined; still others said there was no castle there at all, just an empty stretch of Hare lands.

"The primary mystery is, of course, that none of those can be correct. Zakyo Toshi, where we now sit, is the southernmost holding the Scorpion have ever controlled, and the ruins are more than a dozen li further south. Similarly, the Owl have never built a castle called Shiro no Fukurou anywhere, as far as I am aware, let alone at an isolated spot on the far side of the Empire from their holdings. And the Hare territories are, of course, near the northern end of the River of Gold, opposite Ryoko Owari Toshi, several days' travel north from here."

With a shake of her head, Saori shuffles through the papers a bit, as though an answer to these contradictions might pop out from them like a child trying to surprise a friend from behind a tree. "The lesser mystery," she continues after a moment, "is that I have studied these documents many times before, as I said. I am absolutely certain that these references were not there when I looked at them previously."

Saori has no theories as to how the papers were changed, nor why, but she is adamant that they have been altered. The discrepancies all but jumped out at her when she was reading them this time - it beggars belief to suggest she simply overlooked them every other time she's read through them. She also has no idea if whatever is happening is linked in any way to the Naga; there's no obvious connection beyond the location, right next to the Shinomen Mori, but she can't rule it out either. She does admit that the mystery feels personal to her, since her records have been changed, but if that's the case, she has no idea

why she would be the focus. Suggestions that it might be some kind of trap are met with a startled and disbelieving laugh. "Who in the world would want to trap me? I'm a scholar!"

The PCs are free to ask any other questions they like, but Saori doesn't really know anything beyond what she's already said. The answers, she is sure, will only be found by visiting this mysterious area and seeing what is there for herself. That is what she plans to do, with the PCs' assistance.

Once the dinner and discussion are over, the PCs have the evening to themselves. Saori has procured reasonably good rooms at the inn adjoining the Nine Nights Dreaming and the PCs are free to simply retire to them, but if they wish to partake of some of Zakyo Toshi's unique entertainments, they may do so. Saori certainly intends to, albeit in a fairly restrained fashion. Sake, shochu, and other, more exotic, liquors are available in qualities ranging from barely drinkable to truly sublime, and the company of geisha can also be procured for the evening. Prices for alcohol range from a couple zeni to a few koku, while geisha can be hired for between 3 bu and several dozen koku. In general, spending the evening enjoying a few good drinks or listening to an entertainer's skilled musical performance has no lasting consequences, but escalating either beyond those limits will result in a D3 Honor loss and, at the GM's discretion, a L0 Glory loss if the overindulgence is particularly public. **(GM: please keep in mind the sensitivities of everyone at the table, including your own, where topics such as sex or prostitution are concerned, and avoid or veil them appropriately.)** Prices for opium are similar to those of geisha, but the illegality of its use means indulging inflicts a D0 Honor Loss, and a L0 Glory loss if it becomes known to anyone outside the opium den.

Gambling, which happens to be Saori's preferred vice, also results in a D3 Honor loss, but does stand a chance of earning the character some money. A gambling PC must establish a stake and then roll **Games (any) / Awareness**, TN 20. For every successful Raise, they earn an additional 25% of their initial stake. Note that a character who is untrained in the Skill cannot declare Raises and thus cannot do better than break even unless they purchase the Skill with a Void Point. Failing the roll by at least 5 (including any increases to the TN for Raises) costs the character half their stake, while failing the roll by at least 10 costs the entire stake. Lower the TN by 5

for any PC with Daikoku's Blessing and for each Rank of Luck they possess, and increase it by 5 for Daikoku's Curse and each Rank of Unluck they have. (Neither counts as a use of Luck or Unluck for the mod.)

## Part One: Castle of Nightmares

The journey south from Zakyō Toshi is uneventful, and by midmorning on the second day, the PCs are approaching the area called out by Saori's mysterious documents. As this is land unclaimed by any Great or Minor Clan, nothing prevents any PC from wearing armor, and Saori encourages it if the idea is presented to her, if only because there is no way to know what the group might find. She has encountered unexpected violence on other expeditions in the past, after all.

It does not take long for the group to spot the ruins of a castle in the distance, sprawling all across the top of a low hill. By their size, the castle was a sizable fortification, the equal of most Great Clan family castles, such as Kyuden Bayushi or Shiro Doji - this of course only deepens the mystery, since the idea of such a massive stronghold just being "lost" seems more than just farfetched. Though it might have once been several stories high, now it is a collection of broken walls and tumbled-down stone, without a single intact roof or upper floor. Any character trained in Battle has no difficulty recognizing the aftermath of a terribly destructive siege, one deliberately aimed at razing the fallen defenses almost to the ground. The remaining construction is a maze of half-standing walls and overgrown paths, making it difficult to see very deep or very far into the ruins, but at first, at least, there is no impediment to moving deeper in.

As the PCs begin to penetrate the ruins, they start to notice the rubble shifting around them. A collapsed wall will now be standing upright, while next to it the previously-open doorway is filled with rocks and vines. These changes do not occur when the PC is looking at them directly, only when they have looked elsewhere and then glance back. All physical evidence seems to refute that anything has changed at all, but the phenomenon only increases in frequency and blatancy the further in the PCs go, removing any doubt that it is real. At the same time, much of the area - though not the PCs or Saori themselves - takes

on a dark, almost shadowy cast, as though a cloud were passing over the sun.

If the PCs try to figure out what is going on, a **Spellcraft / Intelligence** roll, TN 15, suggests that it could be some kind of illusion spell, but the Air kami deny this if asked. (With Raises for clarity or proper phrasing, they might instead point to "the hole in the world" as the source of the bizarre occurrences. They will also take the opportunity to share the riddle of the spirit portal's opening, as described below.) A character actually trained in Lore: Spirit Realms or Lore: Theology (Sage counts as Lore: Theology for this) can attempt a **Lore: Spirit Realms / Intelligence**, TN 10, or **Lore: Theology / Intelligence**, TN 20, to recognize the influence of another Spirit Realm pushing into Ningen-do; the most likely culprits are Sakkaku, Yume-do, or Kousoku no Chigiri, though Toshigoku, Gaki-do, Meido, or even Yomi could potentially cause something like this.

All of a sudden, a crouching figure in white and brown armor comes around a corner, daishō in hand. A glowing aura, the red of a dying forge, surrounds the figure as it stops and spins, taking up a defensive stance. The figure's hairy muzzle and long, hairless tail mark it as one of the Nezumi, often called ratlings by Rokugani, but it handles its blades with the skill and technique of a trained bushi. Mounted on the back of the armor is a sashimono banner bearing the mon of the Owl Clan along with another mon you have never seen, one depicting a broken leg bone. Even as the Nezumi readies itself, two Unicorn samurai, mounted and carrying lances, charge around the same corner, their weapons aimed squarely at the Nezumi's heart. As they hurl themselves forward, all three fade and vanish, leaving you staring at nothing.

The following instant, two more bushi come around a different corner, each wearing heavy black armor marked with another new mon, this one of a spider. The skin of both warriors is marked with the pustules and growths that so often indicate the Shadowlands Taint. They too appear to be fleeing, and their pursuer appears right behind them: a samurai in the green and gold of a Mirumoto bushi, also surrounded by a red aura. The Mirumoto wears an Owl mon on her armor next to her family crest, and she bears paired weapons of wood and iron, also painted green and gold, that spit fire from their ends. One of the tainted "Spider" bushi collapses with a massive wound in his back, then again, all the figures fade and disappear.

Any character who has experience with firearms (such as playing the module “Pearls of Wisdom” or participating in the “Blood of the Waves” interactive) recognizes the Mirumoto’s weapons as guns, though these are more advanced revolvers rather than the flintlock muzzle-loaded examples they have likely seen before.

## **Baku Ambush**

The PCs have just a few moments to react to these visions before the strangeness escalates further. Starting from somewhere deeper still into the ruins, the world abruptly seems to ripple, as though it were reflected in a pool of water that just had a rock thrown in. The ripple rushes outward from a specific point, giving a direction for the PCs to head once the immediate threat is dealt with. Before they can make any moves that way, though, the ripple passes over them all, disrupting their very sense of reality and also causing some of the nearby shadows to materialize into physical, and dangerous, solidity.

Have each PC make a **Raw Void** roll, TN 10. PCs who fail are Dazed as combat begins (see pg 89 of the *L5R 4E Core Book*). Saori fails this roll and will be unable to act during the coming fight. Characters with Touch of the Spirit Realm: Yume-do automatically succeed at this roll, while characters Cursed by Yume-do face a TN 20 instead.

The shadows clinging to the nearby ruins suddenly take on the forms of several murderous foes. These are actually lesser baku, dream spirits that constitute all the living, animate creatures in any dream. Naturally formless, they automatically take on the shapes needed for the dream in which they appear. The influence of the nearby portal to Yume-do has brought them into the mortal realm, shaped them into these forms, and given them only the most basic of drives: to attack.

There is one less baku than the number of PCs. The shapes the baku take can include: a ronin wearing a leather vest and pants sporting a cybernetic right arm and glowing, metallic eyes; a faceless bushi in polished obsidian armor and a black sash similar to that of an Emerald Magistrate; a Doji duelist with dyed white hair and a white silk blindfold hiding their eyes; a lion-like creature with glowing red eyes, wearing heavy barding marked with the Lion Clan and Akodo family mons and long, vicious-looking

artificial claws over their formidable natural weaponry; and another Spider Clan bushi, seemingly Tainted like the ones the PCs saw in the vision before. Regardless of their appearance, they all use the same stats. When they are destroyed, they fade into greasy grey smoke that shimmers with a rainbow-colored sheen before fading entirely. The first attack made against a character Touched by Yume-do automatically fails; a character Cursed by Yume-do will be attacked preferentially over other targets.

## **Lesser Baku**

|                             |       |      |                                 |
|-----------------------------|-------|------|---------------------------------|
| Air                         | Earth | Fire | Water                           |
| 2                           | 2     | 2    | 2                               |
| <b>Initiative:</b> 3k2      |       |      | <b>Attack:</b> 4k2<br>(Complex) |
| <b>Armor TN:</b> 15         |       |      | <b>Damage:</b> 2k1              |
| <b>Reduction:</b> 5/crystal |       |      |                                 |
| <b>Wounds:</b> 10           |       |      |                                 |

Due to the unique nature of the Dazing effect, a PC who was Dazed by the reality ripple can spend a Void Point to automatically succeed at the Earth Roll at the end of a Round to overcome being Dazed.

If a PC tries to figure out what they are facing, either during the battle or afterward, they can roll **Lore: Spirits** or **Lore: Nonhuman / Intelligence**, TN 20, **Lore: Spirit Realms / Intelligence**, TN 25, or **Lore: Theology / Intelligence**, TN 30, to identify the baku for what they are. Lower these TNs by 5 each if the PCs are already suspicious that they might be dealing with something linked to Yume-do. Again, Sage counts as Lore: Theology for this purpose.

Regardless of whether the PCs identify the baku or the spirit realm’s influence, Saori (once she recovers from being Dazed) notes that the attack makes it clear that whatever is happening here, it is dangerous and needs to be dealt with. She instructs any bushi PCs not already in armor to put it on and then leads the way toward the source of the reality ripple.

## **The Spirit Portal**

Though the peculiar visions of otherworldly entities, many of whom carry red auras, continue as the PCs move deeper into the castle, there are no more attacks. Most are indeed human, but occasional visions of nonhumans with the red aura appear as well. One is even a Naga, though Saori happens to be

glancing in a different direction and doesn't turn until it's already gone.

Scattered across the ground are larger and larger numbers of artifacts, mostly broken weapons and armor, though there are noticeably no bodies. Not all of the weapons are recognizable, and several bear more resemblance to the firearms of the Mirumoto from earlier than anything used in Rokugan today. The shattered materials often show mon, and there are examples of every Great Clan and nearly every Minor Clan. There are also mon that seem to reflect Clans that have never existed, including Ant, Armadillo (though the PCs likely mistake it for a pangolin), Bear, Firefly, Pegasus (another one the PCs do not have a name for, though the basic concept of "winged horse" is unmistakable), Snail, Wolf, and more. Many show the Spider mon the PCs saw earlier, and nearly all of the rest carry the Owl mon in addition to another Clan or family's emblem. No matter their origin, the pieces of gear all look as though they have lain where the PCs found them for a very long time - a century or more at least.

Eventually the PCs reach what was once some kind of central courtyard, paved with smooth stones and probably lined with short trees. Now it is just a mostly-empty rectangle of dirt, only occasionally broken up by a half-buried paving stone. In the center of the courtyard is the source of all the metaphysical disruption the PCs have encountered: a spirit portal.

It looks like a smoky grey column, perhaps half again as wide as an armored bushi's shoulders, that shimmers with a greasy rainbow sheen, like oil spilled onto water. It is impossibly tall, vanishing into the late morning sky (observant PCs might note that such a column should have been easily visible from outside the ruins entirely, let alone anywhere within them, and yet it only came into view once they stepped into the courtyard proper). Despite having its own dim inner light, the column seems to be casting not just one but four different shadows - and the PCs note as soon as they examine the shadows that none of them line up with the sun's current position.

Saori, as well as any PC trained in Lore: Spirit Realms, immediately recognizes the portal for what it is, though it's impossible to know for sure what Realm it links to. (If the PCs were able to identify the baku earlier, they probably have a pretty good guess.) "It appears to be 'stuck' in a partly-open state," Saori observes. "We probably need to open it before we can

close it again - and that might or might not be possible from out here."

As Saori explains, opening or closing spirit portals usually involves re-arranging the local elemental balances, usually by shifting or placing things with elemental resonance into specific locations. Sometimes there are specific items that act as "anchors" for the portal, and removing or destroying them can dissolve the portal automatically. Other times, the portal lacks such anchors and the placement of elemental items is just how one can most easily influence whether the portal is open or closed. In either case, the items do not have to be literal examples of the element, though they can be; things with metaphorical or philosophical connections to the Rings can work as well. The trick is figuring out where any anchors might be or where each resonant item needs to go.

(The PCs will likely find ways to invoke the literal elements in solving this puzzle, which is absolutely fine. If they wish to go for more metaphysical links, however, GMs are encouraged to reward creativity and to discuss with the players what the various elements can represent - for example, Fire can represent passion, creativity, aggression, or illumination, among many other things. Be generous in interpretation.)

The typical ways to study a spirit portal involve either Sensing or Communing with the kami, which Saori will do if there is no PC shugenja available. Sense reveals no unusually intense elemental kami in the area, which rules out the idea that the portal might be anchored. (A character only needs to Sense once, as spirit portal anchors always come in sets of four, one for each non-Void element.) Commune, however, can provide some additional information. The courtyard has both Air and Earth kami available to speak with. These kami will not explain specifically how to open the portal, but offer the following phrase instead: ***"Rising flame, wind above, falling rain, stone below."***

These words, along with the portal's peculiar shadows, are the key to opening the portal. The positional words - rising, above, falling, below - indicate the sun's position in the sky (or below the horizon, in the case of night), and the four shadows mark the locations of the sun at four different times of the day. The four shadows are as follows: a very small one, just enough for a person to stand in, to the portal's north; a very long shadow, stretching off to



the east; a much more vaguely defined sort of “darkening” spilling off to the south; and an equally long one stretching off to the west. If a person stands within one of these shadows, they see the sun jump to a different place in the sky, matching the location needed to cast the shadow they are standing in. It is midmorning when the PCs arrive in the courtyard, but when standing in the northern shadow, the sun is directly overhead (the fact that the shadow falls to the north is a reflection of Rokugan’s position north of the equator); in the eastern shadow, the sun is setting to the west; in the southern “darkening” there is a clear night sky, filled with stars and a full moon; and in the western shadow, the sun is just rising to the east.

Other than the position of the sun and the light and shadows it casts, nothing else in the courtyard changes, and only the person(s) standing in the shadow sees the change. The characters enter the courtyard from the northeast, but it is impossible to cross into the southern part of the courtyard without stepping into either the eastern or western shadows, so eventually the PCs should realize what’s happening.

In order to open the portal, an elemental representation must be placed within one of the shadows: fire in the western shadow (the rising sun), air in the northern shadow (the sun above), water in the eastern shadow (the falling sun), and earth in the southern darkness (the sun below). Whenever the proper elemental representation is placed within the proper shadow, the portal reacts by increasing its brightness and the somewhat sickening rainbow shimmer, so it is possible to determine where each item goes by simple brute force trial and error. Note that activating the portal requires an act of deliberate intent: the incidental presence of earth already in the southern shadow or air in the northern one has no effect on the portal. If the PCs get truly stuck and seem in need of assistance, Soari can offer hints or advice to get them back on track.

Once the elemental representations are all in place, the portal opens, a process that looks like a section of braid being pulled apart in the middle. The grey column splits open, leaving a vertical oval wide enough for a person to step through. A brilliant, shimmering rainbow light prevents any view of what lies on the other side. The opening appears to be “flat,” as though it were a door facing a specific direction, but the facing is always toward the person viewing it. Once the portal opens, moving the

elemental representations has no further effect; the portal remains open.

## Part Two: Secrets Hidden in Dreams

With the spirit portal now seemingly stuck open, the only remaining option appears to be entering it and seeing if it can be closed from the other side, which Soari will explain. She gently dismissed concerns about being stuck in the Realm the portal links to. “Closing a portal is like closing a door. You can generally choose which side of it you want to be on when it shuts.” She will determinedly lead the way through the portal as soon as the PCs are ready to go.

Stepping into the brilliant light, there is a subtle sense of something... shifting... before you step out again into dimness. You are in a huge, vaulted throne room, the ceiling far above you supported by wide green columns of stone. At the room’s far end, a raised dais holds an enormous throne, apparently sculpted from a single titanic emerald. The Imperial chrysanthemum has been carved into the chair and inlaid in brilliant pearl, placed so it would sit just above the head of any who sat on the throne.

The air is thick with shadows and haze, as though everything were seen through the smoke of dozens of oil lamps. The shadowy haze does not cling to you or your companions, but everywhere else seems wrapped in a cloying miasma.

Nine figures are visible in the center of the throne room. Three are dead: a man with the shaven head of a monk and the drab armor of a ronin lies staring blankly upward, fingers closed spasmodically over a viciously torn-open throat; a handsome man with the dyed white hair and powder-blue armor of a Crane slumps against a column, his heart having been ripped from his chest; and a woman in heavy riding armor in the colors of the Unicorn has been beheaded, her eyes still staring in frozen horror back at her own body. Prostrate between the bodies is a shaven-headed woman wearing green and gold armor with a black tattoo of a dragon crawling across her scalp; the right half of her body appears to have been turned to stone, but her fingers are tight on the hilt of a katana as she presses her forehead against the floor.

Behind the kneeling woman are three men, two of which are holding the struggling third between them.

The struggling man is a truly massive figure, wearing only plain green hakama and with glowing yellow eyes. Every inch of visible skin seems to be covered in tattoos. Despite his size, though, the two men holding him are nearly his equal in mass and he seems unable to break free. One of those men is wearing heavy Crab armor, but the thing that most draws your eye is the gigantic crab-like claw where his left forearm and hand should be. His skin is grey and peeling back from his skull in places, an effect only heightened by his mad laughter. On the other side of the struggling man is a figure in a red, sharp-shouldered kataginu vest trimmed with yellow and plain black hakama pants. He too is broad-shouldered and strong, though he lacks the height of the other two men. A broad-brimmed straw hat shades most of his face but does nothing to hide his glowing left eye, which burns with a sickly green flame. Something seems to writhe and pulse beneath his skin, pressing from within with barely visible black tendrils.

Facing the three men and the obvious focus on the kneeling woman's obeisance is another man, every bit as tall and broad as the struggling tattooed monk, wearing the rich green robes of the Emperor of Rokugan. He is in the midst of stepping off the dais, a vile sneer twisting what might otherwise have been a handsome face. In his right hand is a katana, its blade covered in gore. Blood coats his left hand up to the wrist and drips down onto the polished flagstone floor. The final member of the scene is an astonishingly beautiful woman in the black and red of the Scorpion, her face completely bone white except for her black lips and the oily ichor oozing from the corners of her eyes and mouth. She leans indolently across the back of the Emerald Throne, watching the scene play out with hungry eyes while she idly readjusts the obsidian hairpins in her finely-arranged hair.

At first, it seems as though the scene is frozen, unmoving, but after a few breaths it becomes clear that, while entirely silent, the figures are all in motion. They move incredibly slowly, as though a single heartbeat might take a minute or more to complete. The imposing figure in the Emperor's garb is reaching his bloody hand out toward the chest of the monk being held for him.

Characters trained in Lore: History immediately recognize most of the figures as being the Seven Thunders (Akodo Toturi, Doji Hoturi, Otako

Kamoko, Mirumoto Hitomi, Hida Yakamo, Isawa Tadaka, and Bayushi Kachiko), the heroes who joined Shinsei's Heir to face and defeat Fu Leng on the Second Day of Thunder in the year 1128. Anyone else can roll **Raw Intelligence**, TN 15, to recognize them as well. The scene before the PCs, however, is not at all how that famous battle turned out: on the Second Day of Thunder as history records it, only Doji Hoturi and Isawa Tadaka died; in the battle's aftermath, Akodo Toturi was acclaimed the new Emperor and founded the Toturi Dynasty, which still rules Rokugan to this day.

Even as the PCs come to grips with this realization, another figure steps into view from behind a column near the dais. She, like Saori and the PCs, can be clearly seen, lacking the clinging shadows, but a dull red aura glows around her as she kneels next to the broken and heartless body of Doji Hoturi. Like Hoturi, she wears powder-blue armor and has dyed her hair pure white, but the mon on her armor is that of the Doji family only - there is no Clan emblem. She is remarkably graceful and lovely, but her expression is one of rigid determination as she examines Hoturi's corpse.

As soon as the PCs make themselves known to her, she leaps to her feet, spinning and starting to draw her blade. The motion is lightning fast - characters skilled in Iaijutsu recognize a master of the art - but she halts it before the blade can clear its saya. She resheathes the weapon but does not take her hand from the hilt as she approaches and asks who she is speaking to. The request is polite but firm, the tone of someone used to command. Only once she knows who the PCs are does she fully relax.

Once the PCs introduce themselves, Saori does likewise and then asks the other woman's name. Her reply is puzzling: "Doji Hotaru, Champion of the Crane Clan, eldest child of Doji Satsume, sister to Doji Kuwanan and Doji Shizue, fool, dupe, and long-lost soul." Anyone who recognized the Thunders before likewise knows that the person she seems to be talking about is actually Doji Hoturi; those who did not succeed at the previous recognition roll can attempt a **Lore: Crane / Intelligence** roll, TN 10, or **Lore: History / Intelligence**, TN 20, to identify Doji Hoturi from the woman's description. (Doji Satsume and Doji Kuwanan were both Crane Clan champions; Doji Shizue is more obscure, but beating the TN by 5 identifies her as a renowned poet and storyteller from the early 12th century. All three share the relationship with Doji Hoturi that Hotaru

claimed they share with her.) If asked to explain the discrepancy, she simply shrugs and replies, “This is not a place where truth wears only one face.”

The PCs likely have more questions, and Hotaru is generally willing to answer them, though not always in a non-cryptic fashion. Some of the most likely questions the PCs might ask, and the answers she gives, are below.

***Where are we?/Which Spirit Realm is this?*** “You are in Yume-do, the Realm of Dreams, and in particular, in a dream of a Rokugan that, from your perspective, never existed.”

***What is a “Rokugan that never existed?”*** “It is said that the world was made by Nothing, which first feared to be alone, then desired something exist to take the loneliness away, and finally regretted what it had done, and so created the Three Sins of Fear, Desire, and Regret, but in the process also created all of existence. Most think of that as a single event, but it is not so; every time someone regrets an act of the past, fears a possible future, or desires for something in the present to be other than it is, that dream of what is not takes shape in the Realm of Dreams and becomes a place, a world, as true and real to those within it as the world you know - or the world I knew once.”

***Which is the real Rokugan?/Are you real or a dream?*** Hotaru gives a short bitter laugh before replying. “Am I a woman who dreamed she was a butterfly, or a butterfly who dreams she is a woman?” Should the PCs press the matter, she points out that ideas like “real” and “true” hold very little meaning within dreams, and beyond that, they can make up their own minds.

***Why are you glowing red?*** “It is the mark of a promise I never should have made.” Hotaru’s bitterness only increases when she says this, and she refuses to explain further.

***We are here because of a spirit portal. Do you know anything about it?*** “There are tales in Yume-do of the yumemusha, an order of dream warriors brought together from throughout the many dream-versions of Rokugan. It is said that they once fought a great battle to protect every Rokugan that might ever be from destruction by the Shadow Dragon, and afterward, returned to the worlds from which they came. The portal’s presence means there is a yumemusha in your world, and if it is active, then the

yumemusha is dreaming of something that happened to them during that battle. I have sensed the connection; it is part of what drew me here, so close to your portal. I can guide you to that dream, and perhaps you can learn who it is and why they are called back to it. Setting them to peace is the only thing that can cause the portal to close and return that part of your world to normal.”

***Is this scene here part of the problem?/Why did we end up in this dream specifically?*** “This has nothing to do with you. I... suppose you might say I brought it with me. At some point, I am going to have to deal with it.” As she says the final phrase, she looks directly at the Tainted Bayushi Kachiko leaning against the throne, and her face is briefly filled with anguish.

## **The Origins of a Blade**

Once the PCs have asked all the questions they wish, Hotaru offers to guide them to the dream of the yumemusha who has created the spirit portal. As she has spent quite a bit of time in Yume-do, she is extremely adept at navigating it, and the task is simple for her. Assuming the PCs agree - though if they suspect an ambush or in general seem to be taking precautions against wherever they might next arrive, Hotaru just offers a crooked smile and says, “You are already wiser than I was when I first came here” - she leads them to the large doors that are the primary entrance into the throne room, pushing them open and stepping through. As the PCs follow behind her, the scene changes again.

You find yourselves standing at the entrance to a building that seems to be a combination of both temple and blacksmith’s workshop. The building is one story and just a single room, the eastern wall of which has simply been left open to the elements. Behind you there is a large torii arch and a shrine is in one of the far corners, but the space is dominated by a single gargantuan anvil near a blazing forge. As it was back in the throne room, everything appears hazy and shadowed.

All around you are the bodies of fallen bushi in the armor of the Imperial Legions, most of whom show clear signs of having been Tainted. Standing side-by-side at the temple entrance are two more men, both badly wounded, with bloody katana in hand. Each also bears a red aura, along with Owl mon on their armor. Behind them, a third figure with dyed

white hair works frenetically at the anvil, hammering out not just one blade but seven at once.

Hotaru looks genuinely shocked to see them, but hesitates only a moment before speaking. “That one,” she begins, indicating the man at the anvil, “calls himself Kikuchiyo in this place, but history remembers him as Asahina Yajinden.” History remembers him as far more than that, you know; few could ever forget the monster who created the infamous Bloodswords and nearly condemned the Empire to the tyranny of the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban. Hotaru then gestures to the two men at the temple threshold. “That man calls himself Sukune Takeshi, and that one is-”

Saori cuts her off before she can continue. “Toturi IX!” The Mantis shugenja’s eyes are wide and her tone disbelieving as she stares at the man.

Hotaru frowns at the interruption, but lets Saori take a moment before she finishes, “...is Kobe Reizan, but he thinks of himself as Toturi Reizan, and this is his dream.” Saori seems even more flabbergasted when Hotaru names the warrior, for no one could fail to recognize the pre-regnal name of your late and much-lamented Emperor.

Though this scene, like the one in the throne room, seems to be moving incredibly slowly, Hotaru concentrates for several moments and the figures begin to move faster, returning to regular speed. Kikuchiyo hammers with frenzied haste on each of the blades, then cools them and attaches tsuba and hilt to each. As he lays the final one back down on the anvil, two of them lift into the air of their own accord and float directly into the waiting hands of Takeshi and Reizan. As Takeshi grasps his blade, the kanji for Duty appears etched on it near the tsuba, while Reizan’s suddenly shows the kanji for Courage. As their hands close around the hilts, Hotaru stops concentrating and the image stills once more.

Any PC who succeeds at a **Raw Intelligence** roll or a suitable **Lore / Intelligence** roll at TN 15 knows that Toturi IX did indeed carry a sword named Courage throughout his reign, but where it came from was never made public. (Saori knows this if none of the PCs do.) The blade was believed lost, along with the Emperor himself, in the Battle of Broken Jade almost six years ago.

If any PC thinks to inquire, **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence**, TN 15, confirms that there has never been either a Sukune or a Kobe family in the Empire’s history, though Hida Sukune was a renowned hero during the period just before the Second Day of Thunder. It is entirely unclear why Toturi Reizan would have been using the Kobe family name.

Saori protests that, even if Toturi IX had indeed been one of the so-called “yumemusha,” he cannot be responsible for opening the spirit portal because he’s been dead for several years. Hotaru, however, firmly maintains that she and the PCs are standing in his dream right now, meaning he must be alive somewhere in their Rokugan and is dreaming about how he came to possess Courage.

Once it is clear that the topic has reached a stalemate, Hotaru changes the subject, warily sliding her wakizashi partway from its saya and revealing the kanji for Sincerity on the blade. It does indeed look exactly like one of the swords on the anvil. Hotaru explains she was not present for the swords’ making, acquiring hers “a short time later,” but informs the PCs that the swords are powerful nemuranai. According to Hotaru, each sword reinforces the virtue it represents in its bearer. It also permanently loses its power if the virtue is violated by its owner.

“Despite their creator, they are not Tainted, but I know from experience that they carry their own weight and make their own demands on you,” she says heavily. She does not know for sure, but speculates that Courage probably requires its wielder not to retreat from a challenge, and possibly even to seek out conflict wherever possible. “It’s the sort of thing that could get someone killed,” she notes dryly, giving the figure of Toturi Reizan a significant glance and offering Saori a small nod.

## Part Three: Wolf’s Lair

Believing the PCs have learned all they can in Yume-do, Hotaru offers to return the group to Ningen-do. There is a door on the far side of the temple-smithy that she leads the PCs toward and through - but what lies on the far side is not the Realm of Mortals, but something else entirely.

You find yourself kneeling on a cool marble floor, iron shackles binding your wrists and ankles. Saori and Hotaru kneel alongside you, similarly bound. All

around are walls covered by folding screens and watercolor paintings in various shades of red, blue, and white. The vast majority incorporate the kanji for Void in them somewhere. Directly in front of you, on a low dais of polished cherrywood, is a man seated on a daimyo's wide stool. He wears long red robes trimmed in white, and a white oval-shaped mask hides his face but not the long white hair he wears tied into a single ponytail down his back. Beside him is a woman dressed in a courtier's exquisite kimono, her white hair almost a perfect match to the man's. Her eyes are a glittering green-gold, and her wide fan also bears the kanji for Void - but it is written backward.

After studying you for just a moment, the man raises a hand to the mask and lifts it away, revealing a handsome if narrow-eyed countenance and a strong resemblance to the woman at his side, close enough that they might be siblings. His eyes too are green-gold, and seem to glow in the lamp light.

“Greetings, samurai of Rokugan. I am Sezaru, sometimes called the Wolf. You may think of me as the daimyo of this place and as such it is my duty to protect the many worlds of Yume-do from corruption by those who would manipulate or threaten them.. I will not allow any of the dreams of Rokugan to again face the annihilation that once tried to consume them all.

“As you have learned secrets from Yume-do that you could not have learned in your own Realm, information that could tip the balance of your Realm's very future, I cannot permit you to leave.” Sezaru eyes Hotaru, whose gaze has been locked on the floor since your arrival here. “I am surprised you were not already made aware of this by your... guide... as she has already run afoul of this proscription, and knows the consequences.”

Hotaru finally raises her eyes to Sezaru. In a tight, carefully controlled voice, she replies, “This situation is different, Sezaru-dono. These honorable samurai did not come specifically to search for the knowledge they gained, nor do they intend to use it for... personal reasons.”

At this, the courtier at Sezaru's side bends down, smiling as though a joke has just occurred to her, and murmurs something into Sezaru's ear. He frowns and makes a dismissive motion, but the courtier straightens and offers the PCs an encouraging wink.

A PC who succeeds at a **Raw Perception** roll, TN 10, reveals that she said, “This seems like just the right amount of chaos to keep things interesting, my lord.” This plus the wink are enough to suggest that the courtier, at least, is on the PCs' side, which might be useful in trying to persuade Sezaru to change his mind about allowing them to leave.. Even if they fail to overhear the courtier's words, a PC can recognize her allegiance in this circumstance with an **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** roll, TN 15.

A **Lore: Spirit Realms / Intelligence** roll, TN 10, or a **Lore: Theology (Fortunes) / Intelligence** roll, TN 20, recognizes the name Sezaru as the ruler and champion of the mysterious Spirit Realm called Kousoku no Chigiri: the Realm of Thwarted Destiny. Exceeding this roll by 10 also allows the PC to remember that Sezaru assumed this position in the 12th century, during the reign of Toturi II. Since that time, though, Kousoku no Chigiri has been a solemn, isolated realm, where not even the Kitsu sodan-senzo like to visit regularly. Either success also allows the PC to recall that Sezaru has never been tied to Yume-do, which suggests that his actions here are self-determined rather than mandated by Heaven or any other mystical laws.

It is also possible for a PC to analyze Sezaru's strictures as he has outlined them and look for loopholes. This is a **Lore: Law / Intelligence** roll, TN 15; with success, the PC determines that Sezaru seems to be concerned most with the idea that events in one version of Rokugan might affect events in a different version. The presence of the spirit portal that first drew them into Yume-do suggests that their world has already been influenced by someone from Yume-do, meaning the PCs would be trying to set things right rather than causing new disruption.

To persuade Sezaru to free them, one PC must make a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll, TN 30, or TN 35 for tables of 6 or more. This can be a Cooperative Roll (as described on pg. 81 of the *L5R 4E Core Book*), with one PC as the lead and any others adding their Ranks in their Courtier to the total of the roll. *Remember that a PC must actually make an attempt to persuade Sezaru in order to make this roll or assist in it.* An assisting PC may also spend a Void Point to add their Air Ring as a bonus to the roll as well; thus a character with Courtier 2 and Air 3 could add +2 to the total of the roll or spend a Void Point and add +5, while someone with no Courtier and an Air Ring of 2 could still spend a Void Point to

give a +2 to the roll. If the rolling PC uses arguments that encourage Sezaru to listen to his advisor, hint that Sezaru can easily make an exception for rules that he and only he has set down, or point out that cross-contamination has already occurred, the PC receives a Free Raise on the roll for each point they make. (This applies whether the PC succeeded on any of the previous rolls, so as not to punish players for creativity or critical thinking.) Any assisting PC that makes the same points increases their bonus to the Cooperative Roll by +2, but this is not cumulative with a Free Raise earned by the same argument from the lead roller.

If the PCs are successful in persuading Sezaru, he considers them thoughtfully for a few moments before giving a reluctant nod.

“Go, then,” he tells you, “and see that the barriers separating your world from this one are restored. Seek out Toturi Reizan and resolve his internal conflict however you must.” He raises a hand and the shackles that bind you fall away. Before he can do anything else, however, Hotaru rises gracefully to her feet and bows deeply.

“My lord, I request your assistance in offering these honorable samurai what help I can provide them.” She reaches for Sincerity and draws it, saya and all, from her obi. “I think it is time that this find a new home. I beg you to send it with them to aid in the completion of the task you have set.”

Sezaru’s golden eyes move from Hotaru’s blue ones to the wakizashi she is offering and back to her eyes again. This time his nod is much more decisive. Sincerity begins to blur, flickering and overlapping onto itself, until it is impossible to tell how many swords are actually in Hotaru’s hand. Sezaru replaces his mask, makes a sharp motion with two fingers, and the world fades away to be replaced by the courtyard of Shiro no Fukuro once more.

Each PC who has neither Failure of Bushido (Sincerity) nor Doubt (Sincerity) gains the Blade of Virtue: Sincerity cert. Skip ahead to “Corrupted Jade,” below.

If the PCs cannot persuade Sezaru, however, his face simply darkens as they continue to speak, until he finally replaces his mask.

“I have heard enough,” says the Wolf, “and my decision is unchanged. You will not be allowed to return to Ningen’do.”

“Sezaru-dono,” Hotaru says suddenly, struggling to her feet despite the shackles. “I know your opinion of my actions and motives, and I have accepted your judgment as a samurai should. This, however, I cannot accept, and most protest in the strongest possible terms. These honorable samurai are working to save their home just as you once recruited me to save mine. If you will not alter this unjust course, I ask permission for seppuku.”

Sezaru goes very still. Behind her fan, the advisor at his shoulder glances eagerly from one of them to the other, as though excited by an unexpected twist in a previously-dull play.

“If that is your choice,” he says after a moment, “then I grant you permission.”

Hotaru bows deeply, lowering herself to the floor and pressing her forehead against it. The shackles binding her disappear as she straightens again, still kneeling. Her eyes turn toward you, considering.

As long as there is at least one bushi among the PCs, Hotaru will ask them to be her second, preferring Cranes to any other, then Scorpion, then the highest Honor Rank. Otherwise, Sezaru himself stands for her.

There is a flicker around Hotaru and her clothes are abruptly a pure, unstained white. She draws Sincerity, saya and all, from her obi, and places it on the polished floor before her. After a moment, she speaks.

“A dream of willows  
Woven together in bloom  
Wake as petals fall.”

With deliberate motions she lifts the wakizshi, slides the blade from its sheath, and bows to Sezaru once more. A single, swift motion drives the point into her stomach, and red pours across the white fabric.

Hotaru completes the three cuts in silence, each motion sure and graceful. As she finishes the last, she lowers her head, allowing her second to finish the ritual.

Sezaru turns to you, eyes grave and unyielding. “I will honor the sincerity Hotaru-san demonstrated by permitting you to move on. See to it that you remember and honor this act as well.” He makes a sharp motion with two fingers, and the world fades away to be replaced once more by the courtyard of Shiro no Fukurou once more.

## Part Four: Corrupted Jade

The transition back to Ningen-do is uneventful and almost instantaneous unless one or more of the PCs has Saori as a Sworn Enemy (in which case, see “Saori’s Disruption” below.) The courtyard is at first as the PCs left it, the sun still high in the sky and the shimmering grey column of the open spirit portal rising into the sky. At the courtyard’s entry to the northeast, however, a group of mounted samurai are riding slowly into view. The leader is in armor painted the blue and white of the Crane and wears the deep green sash of a Jade Magistrate, while the rest wear Unicorn armor, complete with bone-white mempo hiding their faces.

“Samurai!” the magistrate calls out, dismounting to lead his horse forward. His followers stay close behind, their horses’ hooves echoing on the half-buried flagstones. “I am Doji Nisemono, magistrate of the Jade Champion. I must inform you that, by entering these ruins, you have become exposed to the Taint. By order of the Emperor, favored of Heaven, all of you must come with me for testing and quarantine.”

At this point, each PC should make a contested roll of either **Raw Earth** or **Raw Water** against Nisemono’s **Raw Air**, as per his Veil of Corruption ability. Any PC who fails this roll will be surprised (-20 to Initiative) in the coming combat. Success allows the PC to recognize Nisemono’s “yoriki” as zombies, their mempo as sculpted porcelain masks.

If at least one of the PCs recognizes the Tainted foes for what they are, seem inclined to resist, and there is a bushi with at least Iaijutsu 2 among the PCs, Nisemono will offer a duel to the death “in order to avoid unnecessary harm coming to the Emperor’s servants,” with the understanding that the companions of the loser will surrender without further fighting. PCs may be suspicious that Tainted enemies will abide by any such agreement, and they

are right to be so. Should Nisemono die in a duel, the zombies, freed of his control, immediately attack.

In the absence of a duel, combat between the PCs and Nisemono’s forces is inevitable, whether the PCs begin the fighting or not. **There is one zombie per PC in addition to Nisemono himself.** During the first round of combat, the zombies take their entire actions to dismount, but their Fear 3 does trigger. Although they carry daisho, they are incapable of attacking with anything other than their hands.

Each round during the Reactions Stage, Saori can be called upon to assist one PC with her magic on the following Round. She grants the PC +0k1 to either one attack roll or one damage roll on their turn, or can instead cast a healing spell to restore 5k2 Wounds to one PC at the start of their turn

### Doji Nisemono

Air 3    Earth 2    Fire 3    Water 3    Void 2

Honor 3.2    Status 2.5    Glory 3

**Initiative:** 5k3 (+5 on first round only)    **Attack:** 7k3+3e (Satsumata, Complex), 5k3+3 (Katana, Complex)

**Armor TN:** 28 (Light Armor)    **Damage:** 3k2 (Satsumata), 6k2 (Katana)

**Reduction:** 3

**Wounds:** 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 26 (+15), 30 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Doji Magistrate 1/Jade Legionnaire

**Techniques:** *Temper Steel With Honor:* add +Air to Armor TN, add +1k0 to attacks with jitte or satsuma (already included).

*Purity in Purpose and Deed:* if your Honor is higher than your opponent, add the difference to your attack and damage rolls against them.

**Taint Rank:** 3 (Lost; cannot spend Void Points)

**Skills:** Courtier 2, Deceit 1, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 2, Knives (Jitte) 2, Lore: Maho 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Polearms (Satsumata) 3

**Mastery Abilities:** Can make 2nd Search roll without increase to TN; adds +5 to initiative during 1st round of combat

**Special Abilities:**

- *Child of Darkness*: Shadowlands creatures will not attack unless provoked; might obey commands if can be communicated with.
- *Veil of Corruption*: Can conceal Tainted followers behind an illusion that makes them look normal; if examined closely, contested Air roll against the investigator's Water or Earth to maintain the Veil.

### Zombie Yoriki

Air 0      Earth 2      Fire 0      Water 1  
 Reflexes 1      Agility 2      Strength 3

**Initiative:** 2k1      **Attack:** 4k2 (Fist, Complex)

**Armor TN:** 15 (Light Armor)      **Damage:** 3k1 (Fist)

**Reduction:** 6 (3 vs jade, crystal, or obsidian)

**Wounds:** 48 (Dead)

**Taint Rank:** 3

**Special Abilities:**

- *Porcelain Mask*: By declaring two Raises, an attacker can target the zombie's animating mask. The mask has 10 Wounds and Reduction 2 (0 vs jade). If the mask is destroyed, the zombie is instantly destroyed as well, reverting to a lifeless corpse. Learning of this weakness is possible with a **Lore: Shadowlands / Intelligence** roll, TN 15.
- *Fear 3*
- *Undead*

### Saori's Disruption

If any PC has Saori as a Sworn Enemy, she attempts to use her knowledge of the Spirit Realms to strand the PC in the spaces between the Realms. Though she isn't completely successful, she still manages to render them vulnerable during the battle. When they transition back to Ningen-do, the PC must make a Contested **Lore: Spirit Realms / Void** roll against Saori's roll of 6k4. On a success, the PC is Dazed; on a failure, the PC is Stunned. They cannot attempt to recover from these conditions until Initiative has been rolled. Also, Saori will not provide any kind of aid to such a character during the battle.

## Conclusion

When the battle ends, the PCs discover that Nisemono still clings to a mockery of life, even if beheaded or the like. His eyes burn with a sickly

green flame as he gasps, "The true Emperor, Toturi IX, has returned from his exile beyond the Kaiu Wall, and will reclaim his throne and avenge your mistreatment of his dutiful servant. Ready your souls for damnation, samurai, for the end of your insolence rushes toward you."

As the fires in his eyes flicker and die, Saori pales, looking around at the PCs. "Samurai," she says carefully, "the testimony of a Lost monster has no weight in the Empire. Whatever slanders that... thing... might have wanted to spread about our former Emperor should not poison the lips or ears of honorable samurai. Silence will serve you well. What we can be sure of is that the Empire is in danger. We ride for Otosan Uchi at once."

## The End

### Rewards for Completing the Adventure

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Surviving the Module:                                 | 1 XP |
| Good Roleplaying:                                     | 1 XP |
| Learning the Hidden History of Toturi IX and Courage: | 1 XP |
| Defeating Doji Nisemono:                              | 1 XP |
| Total Possible Experience:                            | 4XP  |

#### Favors

Defeating Nisemono earns each PC one Favor.

#### Honor

Returning to the Empire with information about Toturi IX grants an H8 Honor gain. Standing as second to Hotaru grants that PC an H6 Honor gain.

Actions in Zakyo Toshi can cause Honor losses as noted in that section.

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 the Tainted foes is a G5 Glory gain. A PC who wins the duel against Nisemono earns two additional Glory Points.

Actions in Zakyo Toshi can cause Glory losses as noted in that section.



### Allies and Enemies

All PCs who do not have Moshi Saori as a Sworn Enemy gain her as an Ally (Inf 1, Dev 1), or give her +1 Devotion if they already had her as an Ally. If a PC with Sworn Enemy: Moshi Saori has played all three of Legacy of the Ancients, and Pearls of Wisdom, and The Ruins of Shiro Fukurou, Saori develops a grudging respect for the PC's ability to withstand her efforts against them; they may buy off the Sworn Enemy without spending Favors.

### Blade of Virtue: Sincerity

Sincerity is a 3k2 wakizashi nemuranai. If wielded by a character with Paragon of Bushido (Sincerity), it also overcomes Reduction as though it were made of both crystal and jade.

Once per module, as a Complex Action, you may publicly declare your intent to complete a task. The task must be something that can be completed within the scope of the module, and at least one ally must hear the declaration. For the remainder of the module, a number of times per module equal to your Insight Rank, you may add your Ranks in the Sincerity Skill to the total of a Skill or Spell Casting roll. If the task is not complete by the end of the module or if the task was completed without your meaningful and substantive assistance, you trigger Sincerity's Curse.

While carrying Sincerity, you must make an Honor Roll any time you fail a Sincerity Skill Roll. If you still fail the roll or are not permitted to make the Honor Roll (such as by having already used your Honor Roll in this module), you trigger Sincerity's Curse.

Curse: When Sincerity's curse is triggered, Sincerity permanently becomes a mundane wakizashi. You permanently gain Failure of Bushido (Sincerity) and Doubt (Sincerity) without any XP gain.