

Fate's Merciful Hand

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

Month of Bayushi, 1344 (Fall)

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Supernatural, Combat
Part Six of Shifting Sands.

Sometimes the most dangerous act is doing what you think is right

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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

The return of the Soul of Shinjo has resulted in misfortune after misfortune for the Unicorn clan. Chiefly, her corruption by the former Jade Champion resulted in their lands being the target for Toturi the 9th's invasion of Rokugan.

The path that led to this moment was circuitous and marred by attempts to thwart prophecy. Moto Sartaq, the khan of the Moto, was ultimately behind many of these attempts, which had great cost and in the end still failed to avert the foreseen doom. Even in the face of this, he still intends to 'save' his clan.

While Moto Sartaq commands what remains of the Unicorn armies engaging in hit and run attacks against the Shadowlands in their former home, Shinjo Ritsuke has gone to the Dragon lands to demand the return of the black scroll containing her sister's soul.

Ide Ekuan has led the civilian population and non-combatants of the clan to refuge in Owl lands.

Problematically, Iuchi Kanetsugu and Utaku Fujita have split away from Sartaq, with Kentsugu believing that he can leverage the power of the Obsidian Hand to fashion a critical weapon against the Shadowlands.

Sartaq believes, rightly, that this will only bring ruin the clan, but lacks the resources to address the situation himself. Ergo, he turns to the PCs to assist him in wiping away the failed and fractured leadership of the clan, in the hope that new samurai can restore the focus of the Unicorn and lead it out of its crisis.

The daimyo have taken refuge in the Tower of the Kelet, the unicorn library of gaijin magics. To enter it unprepared would be impossible, so the PCs will be required to venture across the unicorn lands, risking shadowlands attack, to reach one of the only people that can access the tower, one of the triad of shugenja that lead the Battue vassal family.

Then they must enter the tower proper, confront the daimyo, and employ the true power that was inside them the whole time to resolve the situation – the power of incredible violence.

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. Note which PCs have any of the following:

- Noticed by, Ally, or Sworn Enemy: The Khan Moto Sartaq, Moto Noritoshi, Ide Ekuan, Utaku Fujita, Iuchi Kanetsugu, Ide Akio, Ide Kazuyuki
- Bad Fortune: Moto Curse, the Shadowlands Taint, Rumourmonger, Disbeliever
- any Disadvantage related to Fear, Desire, or Regret
- Inner Gift: Lesser Prophecy, Mark of the Thunderer (see: CIT38 – The Lost Path)
- Offering of Steel cert from CIT42 – Courage in Death

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

All PCs lose 3 pips of Glory.

This cannot reduce a PC's Glory Rank to less than their Insight Rank, and the Fame Advantage increases their Insight Rank by one for these purposes.

Taint Progression

If a PC possesses the Shadowlands Taint, they will need to roll at the beginning of the module to see how much it has grown over the intervening time since the last module. The TN of this raw **Earth Roll** is **20**. If

a character is growing close to being Lost (Shadowlands Taint Rank 4.5+), it is recommended that the player have another PC ready to replace them.

Crafting

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

Preparation Techniques

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

Ronin Survival

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

Experience Expenditure

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

Introduction

The PCs have been sent by their daimyo in response to a request by Ide Ekuan, daimyo of the Ide, or in the case of ronin accepted payment to assist him (3 koku now, 3 on their return).

As you travel the roads of the Owl, it becomes swiftly obvious that the clan's resources have been stretched to their limits and beyond. Across their southern lands the scars of the battles with the Scorpion are obvious – farms sacked, villages occupied, and guard posts leveled. Heichi bushi patrol in states of high alert, vigilantly checking and rechecking your travel papers as you approach your destination; a wide plain that used to be a minor tradeport along the Drowned Merchant River.

The village, if it could ever have been truly called a village, is gone. Leveled in the Scorpion advance. Now it is home to a massive variety of tents in all manner of garish colors and designs, many of them obviously gaijin but all recognizably unicorn.

The banners which fly are primarily Ide and Iuchi, but all the families of the clan can be seen as you wend your way through the tents. Courtiers, monks, and the occasional shugenja, all appearing very out of place in what is quite obviously a refugee camp, go about their business as you seek the largest tent in the camp's center.

You are ushered inside swiftly and led into a central area of the tent, where a pair of men study a map. One, tall and thin, even thinner than the last time you saw him, turns to you.

Ide Akio, hatamoto to the Ide daimyo, gives a short bow, "Greetings, samurai. Thank you for coming so quickly in response to my lord's missive. On behalf of the..."

The elder man interrupts his subordinate with a wave of his hand. "Akio-san, go see to the latest Owl shipment. It seems the Hantei have some problems, again."

With a bow the younger courtier turns and leaves the room. The daimyo of the Ide, Ide Ekuan, gives you a nod before continuing, "Time is short, so I shall be brief. I require a group of samurai to perform a task for me, which will involve travelling through my clan's lands. It will be exceptionally dangerous. I sent what I could from the samurai here, but they never arrived, so I am forced to ask outsiders. Will you assist me?"

Presuming the PCs agree or ask what the task is:

"There is a priest, Iuchi Shino of the Battue. He has taken refuge in the Temple of Death, the center of worship for the Shi-tien Yen-wang. It is in the Moto lands and was abandoned in the face of the foe. We attempted to communicate with Shino via magic, and when that failed a group was sent to find him, but never arrived."

"Shino must be found and brought to the camp of the khan, Moto Sartaq, as quickly as possible. "

"Do you understand?"

- How will we find Shino?
“I cannot say specifically. The temple complex should be abandoned, so hopefully he is the only person there.”
“The priests here believe they confirmed his presence with magic but were unable to communicate with him due to warding magic.”
- Why do we need to find Iuchi Shino?
“I do not know. We received a communication from the Khan stating that he must be found and found quickly. That was the last we heard.”
- Why is Shino important?
“I do not know. The Khan’s message mentioned him by name, so I can only assume it relates to his family’s specific responsibilities in the Iuchi lands.”
- Followup – ‘And what are those responsibilities?’
“The Battue are responsible for maintaining a library of magical knowledge. I can only assume that Sartaq needs something from it.”
- Can we wear armor / carry battlefield weapons?
“Our homeland is beset by monsters. You would be foolish to do otherwise.”
- Where is the Khan?
“Our armies have broken up into small groups, fighting independently and harrying the enemy, then retreating before the dark lord can bring significant forces to bear against any one point. The Khan is somewhere in the northern plains, coordinating their movements, but always moving himself, so I cannot say precisely where he is on any given day.”
- How will we find the Khan after we locate Shino?
“I was given a compass, which should lead you to him. More specifically, it points towards an enchanted talisman carried by one of the Khan’s advisors. Regardless, it will guide you to the Khan’s camp, wherever that may be.”
- Where is Shinjo Ritsuke?
“Shinjo-san has taken the remains of the Shinjo house guard on a... diplomatic mission to Dragon Lands. Apparently she has a personal matter to discuss with lord Hoshi.”
- Why aren’t you sending Unicorn to do this?
“The people here are not warriors. We sent all that we could, and they failed to reach Shino. Ergo, I am forced to turn outside for aid.”
- How are things in the Unicorn lands?
“Bad”
- What kind of threats should we expect to face?
“I do not know. Monsters? Corrupted Samurai? Your own doubts, fears, and regrets? Our lands are, for now, lost to us. You will not be safe while you travel within them.”
- Will we need to take Jade?
“My priests assure me that it will not be required. The land itself is not so far gone that it is suffused with that power.”
- Where is the Temple of Death?
“On the north end of the White Shore Plain, in Ikoku province, just across the river from Shiro Moto.”
- What can you tell us about the Temple of Death?
“I have never visited it myself, but it was the center of worship for the Shi-tien Yen-wang, the lords of death. It is a large temple complex, training grounds, and library.”
- How has the war been going?
“Poorly. Our people are refugees, and our armies fight delaying actions in our own lands. Three imperial legions have been swept aside, the Lion barely hold their lines, and the Scorpion are hard pressed to avoid collapse.”
- How is the Unicorn clan faring?
“We managed to evacuate most of our people from the horde’s path. It did not tarry long in our lands and proceeded down into the Scorpion and Lion lands to meet the armies there. It has smashed aside three Imperial Legions already, but its focus on military targets gave us time to move most of our people out of harm’s way.”
- Has a new Champion been named for the Unicorn?
“No. The issue remains unresolved; the Utaku and Iuchi daimyo supported for Sartaq, but the Shinjo were steadfast in their support of Ritsuke. Ritsuke’s leadership in the face of the Dark Lord’s army impressed many of the visiting outsiders, but it was not long before blame fell on her shoulders for allowing the infiltrator into the castle. It was after all her responsibility to see to her guest’s security, and many of her house guard, including their captain, fell that day. However, the Khan was not able to rally the imperial contingent to his cause, so the matter was not closed.”

If the PCs fail to ask how to locate the Khan after finding Shino, Ekuan will hand them the enchanted compass described above and instruct them to follow the compass to the Khan's camp.

If the PCs ask about supplies, Ekuan will direct them to the quartermaster, Ide Tonkatsu.

If the PCs ask about maps, Ekuan will direct them to the local cartographer, Shinjo Hiruko.

If the PCs ask for more details about the Temple, he will direct them to Moto Ryutaru.

The Quartermaster:

The quartermaster, Ide Tonkatsu, is a man in his late 30's, and has his hands full trying to keep the camp running. Supplies from the Owl are thin, and Tonkatsu is not happy about it. The Unicorn sent four times this much to the Owl in the wake of their war with the Scorpion, and now they are too stingy to return the favor.

He can provide the PCs with most mundane supplies, such as horses, and camping gear. He can scrounge up suits of Ashigaru armor if the PCs ask for it, along with extra arrows. He will give them 2 weeks of rations each, but in doing so will mention that this will mean some refugees will go hungry.

The Priests:

There is one resident Moto Death Priest in the camp, Moto Ryutaru. He trained at the temple complex and can give the PCs some basic directions. Specifically, the Library is in the eastern buildings, the training grounds and dojo are in the west, and the huge main shrine to the Lords is central to the complex. If asked where Shino might hide – the dojo would likely provide the most comfortable living quarters, the library and its underground sections would be the most likely to avoid notice, while the shrine would be the most spiritually repulsive to the Dark Lord's minions and the stone building could provide lots of sheltered space.. It is impossible to say which Shino would prioritize.

Ryutaru will also give any PC shugenja a warning. As they were fleeing Unicorn lands, he felt something 'wrong'. The spaces between were twisted; something was snarling the use of movement magic. He thinks the PCs should use extreme caution before trying to teleport while within Unicorn lands.

The cartographers:

Shinjo Hiruko is the senior cartographer present among the refugees. She has a variety of maps of the

Unicorn lands and will happily lend the PCs maps of any specific province they desire.

If they ask for directions to the temple, she can recommend them two courses: One that will arrive the most quickly, and one that will be more likely to avoid notice by the Shadowlands forces.

If they ask for likely locations to find Moto Sartaq's army, she can make some educated guesses based on where the compass is currently pointing, but she won't be able to offer any specifics. If the PCs decide to take the fast way, they gain +2k0 on all their Stealth rolls in Part One.

If they take the safe way, they gain +2k0 on all their Hunting: Trailblazing Rolls in Part One.

Ide Akio:

If the PCs go seek out Ide Akio, they will find him having a discussion with an Owl samurai who apparently just arrived with a shipment of supplies.

Akio is incensed, since the Owl, Hantei Haranobu, has once again delivered much less than was promised.

He is quite busy negotiating over further assistance but will spare a few minutes to explain the situation to the PCs if they ask. The Owl's debt to the Unicorn has been called in, but they have sent far less than expected, and significantly less than the Unicorn provided to them last year.

GM's Note: On the use of Teleportation Magic

The Dark Lord, wise to the specialties of the Iuchi, has set up a series of wards at strategic locations in the Unicorn lands.

Any attempts to teleport into, out of, or while within Unicorn lands will automatically fail. When attempted, the caster must roll Raw Void at TN 25. Failure causes them to begin to be pulled into an endless void between realms, only to catch themselves at the last moment, they lose one Void Point. On a success, they catch a fleeting glimpse of a yawning abyss, hungry for them if they attempt to step outside the world again.

Deciphering that this is the result of powerful warding magic requires Spellcraft / Intelligence at TN 25.

A clever PC will realize this trap is what ensnared the earlier group of Unicorn sent to retrieve Shino.

Part One: The Long Road back

While it would be swifter, travel through the lands of the Lion is currently impossible as the clan of Akodo holds back the assaults of the horde.

Instead, you are forced to trace along the southern and western borders of dragon lands, the cold breeze of late fall pulling at your cloaks as it whips across the plains.

A road leads you away from the mountain foothills to Dark Edge Village, now entirely deserted with neither peasant left to tend the fields nor monk to tend the shrines.

It is here you must make your first choice – do you follow the roads to Shiro Moto and then to the Temple of Death beyond, or do you cross the rolling plains of the Unicorn in the hope of avoiding the dark lord's patrols?

The choice here is a simple one. The PCs must elect whether they wish to cross the open plains of the Ikoku province, hoping to avoid the patrols and supply caravans of the Shadowlands Horde, or take a chance on the roads.

The roads will be much faster, but the odds of an encounter with shadowlands forces are markedly higher.

The plains are safer but will take longer and require the PCs to blaze their own trail across the lands of the Unicorn.

The roads / the fast way:

The roads of the Unicorn, normally well maintained, seem to have fallen into a state of disrepair. There are obvious signs of overuse from both foot, horse, and wagon traffic. However, being entirely empty, travel is still exceptionally swift.

It is on the afternoon of the first day that you realize the primary problem of the roads – just after passing a copse of trees and cresting a small hill, down in the plain below you spy a large caravan flying the flag of Toturi the Ninth, Dark Lord of the Shadowlands. The wagons are pulled by huge beasts that may have once been oxen, and it is accompanied by a mix of samurai in the grey of the Crab and hulking brutes standing twice the size of a human.

Thankfully they have not yet seen you, as you have the advantage of the hill, but that will not last long. You are heavily outnumbered; is it the hour for battle, stealth, or flight?

The PCs are being approach by an obviously superior force. Getting an accurate read on the numbers requires Perception / Battle (Skirmish) at TN 15, but even on a failure it is obvious they are outnumbered. Success notes that they are outnumbered about 2 to 1, without counting for the tainted pack animals, but many of them don't look like dedicated combatants.

Option 1: Stealth

The easiest choice here is to hide. Hiding in the trees requires Stealth / Agility at TN 30, which may be done cooperatively.

Failure results in having to flee (see option 2) or having to fight (see option 3). If battle is given the PCs combat roll takes a 2k0 penalty.

Presuming the PCs hide successfully, it is recommended to describe the very smelly shadowlands caravan passing by with a wagon full of food, spare weapons, and what appear parts for siege equipment. It should feel like the PCs just barely escaped notice, regardless of how close they were on the TN.

Option 2: Flight

Normally flight in the face of your foes would be very dishonorable. But here, much like in the shadowlands, it is potentially the wisest course of action.

Thinking better of the choice to stick to the roads, you turn your horses to the open plains and put as much distance as you can between yourselves and the monsters.

Move 'The plains / the slow way', and due to the delay the PCs will suffer an additional -5 penalty to the Raw Stamina roll to resist the fatigue from the storm.

Option 3: Battle

If the PCs elect to launch their attack from ambush, they should first roll Stealth (Ambush) / Agility cooperatively at TN 40. On a success they gain 2k1 on the following roll:

As you launch your attack, the caravan is caught clearly unprepared for battle - the guards were not expecting to encounter battle-tested samurai on the open plains.

One PC must roll Battle (Skirmish) / Perception at a TN of 30. For each point this roll is failed, every PC takes one wound.

Every PC makes either a [Weapon skill of choice] / [Corresponding trait, usually Agility or Reflexes] roll or Defense / Reflexes roll at TN 35. For every point this roll is failed, that PC takes one wound, to a maximum of their Out wound rank.

The fight is bloody, ogres are never to be underestimated, but the PCs should ultimately be victorious.

You continue along the roads, taking slightly greater care to avoid being spotted by further shadowlands caravans.

The plains of the unicorn are oddly silent and barren as you travel. No people, no animals, only grass, the occasional tree, and yourselves. Far off in the distance other tiny dots move along far-flung roads, most heading south, but none cross your path as you head to the west.

You make swift progress across the Unicorn plains, but as you do the winds pick up and storm clouds threaten on the horizon.

With another hour's progress the sky darkens early, the air grows cold, and peals of thunder draw close. Night will come soon and with it the storm, and you have no chance of reaching the temple until tomorrow.

An abandoned inn is in sight perhaps a quarter hour down the road, but is it safe and can you reach it in time?

Nearer, a copse of trees could provide shelter from the winds and rain, but would not obscure you from anyone, or anything, that might come down the road. Lastly, not far off, is gully where you could shelter and pitch your tents shielded from sight of the roads but fully exposed to the wrath of the storm.

Scouting the inn ahead of time difficult, since by the time the PCs reach it the storm will be upon them.

The PCs are of course free to split the party here, each side will have to deal with the appropriate hazards.

GM's Note: Each path here has the potential for a PC to be struck by a thunderbolt and receive a vision from Osano-Wo. In each case, if no PC qualifies but someone is brave (or foolish) enough to taunt or challenge the Fortune directly, they will be struck by the bolt and receive the vision. If there is still no qualifying PC, choose one at your discretion that you believe most fits the criteria for Osano-Wo's esteem.

Option 1: The abandoned inn

As you cautiously approach, it becomes clear that the inn has been abandoned recently. While it appeared rundown from far away, the building is in surprisingly good condition, abandoned only in the past few months. Some shutters hang loose or are missing, and the sign lies face-down on the ground, but the front door appears intact, as does the upper floor and the stables.

The winds make the cellar door creak on its hinges and heavy raindrops begin to fall as you approach. The ground shudders as the lightning grows ever closer.

If a PC has either **Inner Gift: Lesser Prophecy** or **Mark of the Thunderer**, they will be suddenly struck by a lightning bolt, raising them to the Hurt wound level (unless they were already worse than Hurt, in which case it deals no further damage)

Give them **Handout 2: A Vision of Storms**.

The inn is entirely deserted except for a single corpse in one of the rooms upstairs, but the PCs should be concerned about it.

Play up the creepiness factor as you feel appropriate, but the inn was abandoned when the Shadowlands attacked during the summer. It has seen a few months exposed to the weather without maintenance but is in habitable condition. There is no spare food or water, but there are beds and shelter from the storm.

Encourage the PCs to feel paranoid about being in the creepy abandoned inn, but fundamentally nothing should happen to them.

Option 2: The trees

Retreating into the trees, you have a few minutes to make your preparations before the storm reaches you. The wind tears at your belongings and tents while the lightning draws ever closer.

Just as you finish setting your encampment, a lightning bolt slams into a tree above you, causing a tree limb to drop onto one of the tents... which was thankfully still empty.

If a PC has either **Inner Gift: Lesser Prophecy** or **Mark of the Thunderer**, they will be suddenly struck by a lightning bolt, raising them to the Hurt wound level (unless they were already worse than Hurt, in which case it deals no further damage)

Give them **Handout 2: A Vision of Storms**.

The rain hammers down on your tents, and the winds howl throughout the night, while the sounds of... something... approach in the dark.

Nothing is approaching the PCs tents, it's just the storm. Perhaps a Perception / Investigation (Notice) could be called for; the PCs should be paranoid about something coming to attack them in the night, even though nothing does.

Option 3: The gully

You move off the road, past a low rise and then down into the gully, stopping beside a stream which begins to swell with rainwater. You are comfortably out of sight of the road; no one or nothing passing in the night would have a chance to see you, so long as you are careful about your lights.

Raindrops fall hard as you finish setting your tents, and the horses neigh as the lightning draws close. Close by, you can see it strike one of the trees in the nearby grove, sending a branch toppling to the ground.

If a PC has either **Inner Gift: Lesser Prophecy** or **Mark of the Thunderer**, they will be suddenly struck by a lightning bolt, raising them to the Hurt wound level (unless they were already worse than Hurt, in which case it deals no further damage)

Give them **Handout 2: A Vision of Storms**.

The storm overnight is relentless. Everything is drenched, and the stream threatens to overflow.

Give the PCs the ability to come up with appropriate preparations, and by morning make a Raw Stamina roll at TN 15, with a raise if you feel they came up with a particularly clever way to keep out the rain. Failure results in the PC begin Fatigued for Part Two

Regardless of how the PCs weather the storm, they will arrive at the Temple of Death after another hour's ride the next day after crossing the Firefly river at one of the bridges between Shiro Moto and Shiro Ide, keeping careful to avoid either city.

The next day:

The storm passes in the night, leaving a chill day under a grey sky. A quick ride along the roads brings you to the banks of the Firefly River, far enough south of Shiro Moto that you are safe from any passing patrols.

The river is swollen from the storm, but the bridge seems unguarded and safe, and soon brings you to the imposing temple complex.

The Plains / the slow way:

The open rolling plains make for easy travel. Far off in the distance, the occasional speck moves across the roads, but the green plains seem to roll on and on forever. The air is warm, but the wind is fierce, and blows into your face all day, sending specks of dirt hurtling into your eyes as you ride.

Rainclouds loom on the horizon, edging closer and closer as the day wears on.

In midafternoon, you pass the felled corpses of a group of Unicorn samurai, surrounded by bodies of goblins, lost samurai, and an ogre. All have been shorn of possessions and left to rot under the mid-day sun.

If the PCs wish to stop and investigate they can, but there is nothing hidden or special to find. It was three Moto and two Utaku samurai; their daisho are gone.

A single set of footprints lead away from the battle site. Following them requires Hunting (Tracking) / Perception at TN 20. Success follows the footsteps and a small trail of blood about half a mile to a small stand of trees where a single unicorn lies dead. He is carrying the daisho from the other five Unicorn samurai. He was clearly killed by a stab wound to the stomach.

Once they continue:

By the late afternoon the clouds have grown thick and dark, thunder rolls across the open plains, and the air turns swiftly from a warm to biting chill.

Your progress has been swift, but the Firefly River is at least another half day's ride ahead of you, and the temple another few hours beyond that. There is no option except to brave the storm barreling towards you. The sky darkens early, and peals of thunder grow close.

Cover is scarce on the plains, and the storm's wrath will soon be upon you.

If a PC looks to find cover, a Hunting (Trailblazing) / Perception roll at TN 30 can locate a gully that will provide some cover and a free raise on the roll to weather the storm.

If a PC has either **Inner Gift: Lesser Prophecy** or **Mark of the Thunderer**, or if they happen to personally challenge the storm or Osano-Wo to strike them, they will be suddenly struck by a lightning bolt, raising them to the Hurt wound level.

Give them **Handout 2: A Vision of Storms**.

The storm overnight is relentless. The rain beats down on their tents (or their heads if they didn't bring any tents). Feel free to narrate the storm and winds as appropriate. Small objects may be lost in the winds, tents or other fragile objects may be destroyed, etc.

Give the PCs the chance to come up with appropriate preparations, and by morning they should all make a Raw Stamina roll at TN 20, with a raise if you feel they came up with a particularly clever way to keep out the rain. Failure results in the PC begin Fatigued for Part Two

The storm passes in the night, leaving a chill day under a grey sky. A long ride across endless plains brings you to the banks of the Firefly River, far enough south of Shiro Moto that you are safe from any passing patrols.

The river is swollen from the stream, and clearly unsafe to cross. Thankfully, half an hour travel south finds an unguarded bridge to cross and brings you to the imposing temple complex as the sun slips out of the sky and darkness falls over the Unicorn provinces.

Part Two: Spooky stuff

On the edge of the White Shore plain, just barely within sight of the onion shaped domes of Shiro Moto on the horizon, stands a dour and foreboding structure. Constructed from wood and stone, the sprawling complex is a mixture of Rokugani and obviously gaijin architectural styles.

The central building, rising highest and the only one constructed mainly of stone, offending your architectural sensibilities, is clearly the temple dedicated to the Shi-tien Yen-wang, the Lords of Death. Next to it to the east, in sharp contrast to the gaijin stylings of the main temple, is a large building which is obviously a library, bearing all the markings of a center of study. Finally, a hybrid of the two styles, the building flanking the main temple to the West appears to be a sprawling combination of living space, dojo, and large open gardens.

As you approach closer, the damage to the complex becomes much more apparent. The doors to the library have been smashed from their hinges, and the signs of looting and destruction are obvious.

The entrance to the dojo stands wide open, and a cursory glance reveals similarly extensive damage.

The only building in the complex that seems to have been undamaged is the very empty looking central temple. Perhaps because there was nothing worth destroying or stealing?

How the PCs go about locating Shino is up to them.

If they think to ask which building has seen the most traffic, a Hunting (Tracking) / Perception roll at TN 30 will suggest at least a handful of people have entered the central temple within the last week.

If the PCs want to explore before heading into the central temple, they are free to look around at the Library and the Dojo

The Library:

The library was once home to the largest compilation of stories and legends of the Lords of Death, as well as many ancient records of the Unicorn from their time outside the empire, in addition to a large collection of gaijin writings. All of those things are gone; they have been either stolen, evacuated, or destroyed.

Even the archives in the basement of the building seem to have been stripped bare – There are soot stains on the ceiling and a central burn-pile in one of the rooms where someone clearly incinerated a large quantity of records, but who did that is impossible to say.

There are no signs of fighting having occurred within the library.

The Dojo:

The living quarters fared better than the library. There does not appear to have been a battle here or the mindless destruction that the library was subjected to. The living quarters instead were thoroughly packed up and taken with, scavenged, or looted. Virtually everything of use has been taken from the buildings, and the rest abandoned.

Trying to piece together what happened here is difficult but not impossible – a Battle / Perception or Investigation (Search) / Perception at TN 35 can put together that the dojo was looted in waves – a large initial group left in a hurry taking what they could with them, then another group moved through stealing and looting whatever they could, then they also left.

The Temple:

The entrance to the temple is both very plain and very foreboding. As you reach the doors, you are struck by the austerity of the temple. There is very little decoration of any kind, only plain simple stone. Perhaps that is why this building escaped the fate of the other two – there was simply nothing worth stealing or destroying.

At your first steps into the shrine, its gaijin design is immediately jarring. On the far side is the entrance to the shrine proper, between you and that door stand ten massive stone statues, one covered with a cloth, circling an otherwise featureless stone room. The visages of the lords of death stare down at you. But they are just stone statues, and nothing more.

Somewhere, deeper in the temple, the glow of lantern light is visible. Someone is here, so you proceed across the dour stone, and as you do, the doors, both into and out of the room, slam shut, plunging the temple into darkness.

<GM's note: Pause here to let the player's react to the darkness, which resists attempts to create light.>

Then, ten pinpricks of light flicker into existence. A subtle, sick green glow fills the temple, and ten emaciated skeletal figures, nine men and one woman, glare down at you out of the gloom.

Raspy voices echo in the chamber as all ten speak together, "Go backkk. It is not given to you to sway them from their path. They must be judged for their corruption. Those that have turned away from us must sufferrrr. Flee, and leave this land to us, go back to your fight with the shadows."

Wearing fine robes and lavish jewelry, the ghostly forms of the Lords of Death hover in the air above you.

The PCs have a very short window of opportunity to question the Lords of Death before they disappear again. You should allow the PCs a question or two, but the intent is that the lords will fade away before providing the PCs a full picture of what is occurring.

The lords will not lie, but their goals are served by allowing Iuchi Kanetsugu to create a Champion of Obsidian, so their answers should be honest when they would encourage the PCs to allow Kanetsugu to summon the power of Obsidian, and deceptive by omission or by shading the truth when they wouldn't. The Lords also despise Moto Sartaq and his son Moto Noritoshi, both of whom have failed to properly venerate them, so given the opportunity will advise the PCs to thwart them. However, the Lords of Death hate the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands, Toturi the Ninth, so will encourage confrontation against the Shadowlands.

Things the Lords of Death might be reasonably asked:

- Sway whom?
"The walker between the ways, and the jealous coward, their hearts filled with regret.
- From what path?
He calls to the heavens for help. And the heavens will answer. A weapon to fight the shadow.
- What corruption?
Their sins, their crimes. The mistakes which weigh on their souls, and their failure to pay respect to us. No one deserves redemption, only judgement.
- Where is Iuchi Shino?
Our faithful servant is ahead. Leave him, he protects our worshippers, as is righteous.
- Who turned away from you?
The Khan and his child refuse to bend their knee to us. They must be reminded to whom the Ujik-hai owe their worship, and they must be bear the weight of judgement.
- Who is the shadow?
The chosen of the dark realm. They dared strike us. They must be destroyed for their temerity. Go, fight for us, destroy for us. It is right for you to do so.
- What happened to the Soul of Shinjo?
She is trapped within the scroll, and she suffers, as she should for daring to steal our worshippers.

The ten ghostly figures smirk and fade back into the marble statues, and dull green light of their sickly forms snuffs itself as daylight trickles back into the chamber.

The PCs could choose to leave the module here. Doing so of course only earns 2XP, but it is a possible response to the Lords of Death's exhortations.

Presuming they continue:

The stone passages lead deeper into the temple, and you come to a large wooden door, where a single lit lantern casts a yellow glow. In front of the door is a hastily constructed blockade – furniture, wood planks, and the left half of a statue.

From beyond it, an unsteady voice challenges you, while spears and readied bows protrude, "Who are you? Who sent you?"

This barricade is being manned by peasants. They are afraid, and worried that monsters are coming to murder them.

Hopefully the PCs don't resort to violence but killing the peasants would be trivial if they chose to do so for daring to threaten them as samurai.

Assuming the PCs do even the basics of reassuring the peasants that they are not shadowlands monsters here to kill them, or identify that they want to talk to Iuchi Shino, they will allow the PCs inside and bring them to Shino, who they can confirm is present.

The peasants lead you into a large stone vault. In the middle is a statue of the ten lords of death, facing outward to watch all corners of the room. The stone floors are covered with personal effects and sleeping mats, while about a dozen peasants busy themselves preparing food.

The single samurai in the room approaches you, a man in his late thirties. He gives you a short, cautious bow. "I am Iuchi Battue Shino of the Kelet. What brings you here? Were you followed? You should probably leave, it is not safe here."

Battue Shino is one of the three leaders of the Battue vassal family. He is effectively one step below a family daimyo, though without a Lore: Unicorn / Intelligence at TN 35 it is unlikely that any PC has heard of the Battue or are familiar with their responsibilities.

Things Shino knows:

- The three leaders (the Kelet, or Spirit Guard) of the Battue traditionally stay apart from one

another, at the edges of their families' lands, which is how he escaped the initial attack.

- He took shelter at the temple of Death, as that was the assigned place he was supposed to go in the case of emergency. The other two leaders of the Battue likewise had pre-arranged fallback points, but he has not heard from either of them; he fears that they are dead.
- He found a few peasants along the way here, and since they had no other means of defense he brought them here with him. They have been sheltering in the temple since the attack over the summer.
- He does not know specifically why he would be summoned by the Unicorn leadership, but he surmises it likely has to do with his responsibilities – the Battue family is responsible for ensuring that foreign magic never corrupts the Unicorn, and with guarding the Unicorn clan's most extensive library on gaijin and forbidden magics. Only the Kelet possess the means to enter their tower, so Shino presumes that the Unicorn leaders need something relevant that is stored there.

Presuming the PCs inform him that they have been tasked to bring him to Moto Sartaq, he will agree to accompany the PCs. However, Shino is reluctant to leave the peasants behind. He would prefer to bring them with, since they have no way to defend themselves if they are attacked by shadowlands forces.

Doing so would be exceptionally slow and make the PCs a target as they travel (if you really want to have them throw dice, Intelligence / Battle at TN 15 will tell you this, but dice shouldn't be necessary).

Shino can be swayed to agree with whatever plan the PCs come up with, though he should push back on suggestions that the peasants be abandoned, even if it is the 'samurai' thing to do. The idea here is to make the PCs feel conflicted about whether to take the peasants. It's a bad idea to take them with, but leaving them behind or sending them to Lion, Dragon, or Scorpion lands unescorted has a very high chance of them ending up dead. Regardless, once the PCs have convinced Shino to leave and made a determination on taking the peasants with or not:

If the PCs took the fast way:

From somewhere above you, an alarm sounds, and a peasant comes running down a set of stairs and into the room.

He bows very low before all of you as he breathlessly reports, "Iuchi-sama, Iuchi-sama, a monster. The lookouts, they saw, they saw, a monster, a monster sama. It's coming this way. Its big and white and looks like a huge beast."

The PCs have a few minutes to prepare before the monster arrives. This is not long enough to construct complex traps or don armor if they were not already wearing it, but it is more than enough time to prep weapons or ready spells and similar simple preparations that are measured in the order of a handful (5-10) rounds.

Once the PCs have completed their preparations:

No sooner do you take your positions behind the barricade, then a pale furred creature, vaguely resembling a massive ape, with bright red eyes and blooded fangs charges around the corner of the corridor. It bellows, lowers its head, and surges towards you while the lamp light gutters and flickers in the stone hallway.

If the PCs took the slow way:

From outside, an alarm sounds, then a moment later a scream, a pair of deafening crashes, and the sound of wood splintering to flinders as the door to the hall explodes into a hail of shards.

A pale furred creature, vaguely resembling a massive ape, with bright red eyes and blooded fangs bellows, lowers its head, and surges towards you while the lamp light gutters and flickers in the stone chamber.

All PCs have -10 on their initiative in the first round of combat.

Either way:

All PCs should first test **Fear 3**.

Then, they should roll Investigation (Notice) / Perception at TN 35 to notice the **Shades** making their way into the room. If they do not, the shades will benefit from their Technique bonus in the first round of combat (once detected, the Shades have no way to re-establish stealth).

This combat should be threatening to the PCs, but you should actively avoid killing anyone. The idea is to set the tone that the unicorn lands are dangerous and full of monsters.

There is one Tainted Gorilla, and one Shades for each four PCs (rounded up).

If a PC wants to roll Lore: Shadowlands to understand their foes, the TN is 20 – the shades are manifested air kansen, and the tainted gorilla is a tainted gorilla.

1 Tainted Gorilla

Initiative: 7k4

Armor TN: 35 **Reduction:** 5, 0 vs Jade

Wounds: 55 (+10), 95 (Dead)

Taint Rank: 5

Attack: 10k4 (Slam, Simple)

Damage: 9k3

Air 1 Earth 5 Fire 2 Water 4

Ref 4 Agi 4 Str 6

Primary Skills: Jujitsu 7

Special Mechanics: Huge

PCs / 4 Shades

Initiative: 10k5

Armor TN: 35 **Reduction:** 0

Wounds: 57 (Dead)

Taint Rank: 4

Attack: 10k5 (Knife, Simple)

Damage: 5k2

Air 5 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 3

Primary Skills: Knives 7, Stealth 7

Special Mechanics:

The Hidden Blade – If the target is not aware of their presence, their damage is increased by 2k2 (for 7k4 total).

Living Shadow – They cannot be grappled or disarmed.

After the Shadowlands attack, Shino will angrily imply / demand to know if the PCs were followed – if they led the monsters to his sanctuary (they didn't, but they can't know that for certain). He will initially insist on finding somewhere else to sleep tonight; the temple is no longer safe and he thinks they need to leave immediately, even if it is already dark out. He will however acquiesce to whatever resolution the PCs think is best, but he should give some push back if they want to stay here. The sudden attack has rattled him. Again, this is not a mechanical challenge, but an opportunity to remind the PCs that they are in unsafe territory where attacks could happen at any time.

If any PCs took damage from the Shades, those PCs should roll a Raw Earth roll at TN 10 or gain 1 pip of taint.

One way or another, the PCs should find themselves on the road towards the camp of the Khan, following the provided compass.

Part Three: On the Road Again

If the PCs took the peasants with them:

Together your group of nearly thirty begins the trek north across the Unicorn plains, following the firefly river for the first day until you reach sight of Toshi no Aida ni Kiwa, the city between the Rivers.

The trading hub that once directed much of Unicorn commerce is now obviously a supply hub for the forces of the Shadowlands. Caravans are easily visible leaving it on the roads in great lines, and massive barges flow down the Firefly River to its docks. Wisely, you turn west, avoiding the city as you head for a crossing on the Sleeping River to continue north.

Keeping off the roads, you stay mostly out of sight of the Shadowlands forces, steering far away, until the second afternoon, when the sudden braying of hounds breaks the quiet of the plain.

Three samurai in purple armor, with massive black hounds whose eyes glow red bear down on you. Lances dropped, they charge towards you and the peasants you are escorting.

As the Shadowlands launch their attack, the caravan is clearly unprepared for battle, however the PCs have more than enough warning to adopt a reasonable battle posture. The Lost Shinjo Scouts are stealthy, but it is an open plain.

One PC must roll Battle (Skirmish) / Perception at a TN of 40. For each point this roll is failed, every PC takes one wound.

Every PC makes either a [Weapon skill of choice] / [Corresponding trait, usually Agility or Reflexes] roll or Defense / Reflexes roll at TN 40. For every point this roll is failed, that PC takes one wound, to a maximum of their Out wound rank.

The fight is bloody, and the shadowlands hounds will circle towards the peasants. If the PCs choose to actively defend the peasants, at least 1/3 of the PCs must do so, and each such PC will each take an additional 10 wounds from the hounds, but all the

peasants will be saved. If they do not, most of the peasants will be killed before the tainted War Dogs can be put down.

After the attack from the Lost patrol, your pace is slowed even further by tending the wounded. By the evening you find a suitable location to cross the Sleeping River, but with so many travelers on foot and injured the crossing alone takes the better part of the following day.

The compass leads you towards the heart of the Manaka province of the Utaku, a rolling plain whose winds are thankfully much less biting than the Moto lands you have left behind.

By the end of the following day, secreted in the ruin of a long-abandoned town whose stone marker still shows the symbol of the Lion, you come upon a Unicorn military camp, with perhaps one hundred samurai and twice that many attendants.

Guards stop you at the bounds, but at a sign from Iuchi Shino they summon their commanding officer to meet you at village's edge, a wary distance from the tents laced inside and between ruined buildings.

A chui nods to you, "Samurai. I am Moto Genya. Welcome to what used to be Kusa Mura. Do you require aid?"

If the PCs ask for help, Genya will have their camp's doctor look at them. If a PC is severely injured he can have the camp's priest render magical aid, healing 3k3 wounds.

If the PCs ask, Genya will agree to take on the peasants they have brought with them as laborers and attendants.

Presumably the PCs will explain why they are present, at which point he will disappear for a few minutes, then return to inform them that the Khan desires to speak with them in an hour.

How the PCs fill that hour is up to them. The camp is rustic, and rumors are available (see Part Four), but they can at least rest, eat, and do a modicum of cleaning before they meet Moto Sartaq.

If the PCs did not take the peasants with them:

Together with Iuchi Shiuno, you begin the trek north across the Unicorn plains, following the firefly river for the first day until you reach sight of Toshi no Aida ni Kiwa, the city between the Rivers.

The trading hub that once directed much of Unicorn commerce is now obviously a supply hub for the forces of the Shadowlands. Caravans are easily visible leaving it on the roads in great lines, and massive barges flow down the Firefly River to its docks. Wisely, you turn west, avoiding the city as you head for a crossing on the Sleeping River to continue north.

Keeping off the roads, you stay mostly out of sight of the Shadowlands forces, steering far away, until the second afternoon, when the sudden braying of hounds breaks the quiet of the plain.

At Shino's direction, you take refuge in a gully while three samurai in purple armor, with massive black hounds whose eyes glow red ride past. The hounds sniff the air, looking for something, then carry on forwards along with their masters.

If the PCs wish to ambush the Shadowlands patrol, they can.

If they do, one PC must roll Battle (Skirmish) / Perception at a TN of 20. For each point this roll is failed, every PC takes one wound.

Every PC makes either a [Weapon skill of choice] / [Corresponding trait, usually Agility or Reflexes] roll or Defense / Reflexes roll at TN 30. For every point this roll is failed, that PC takes one wound, to a maximum of their Out wound rank.

After the PCs have either killed the Lost patrol or simply let it go by:

By the evening you find a suitable location to cross the Sleeping River, and your small group finds the crossing swift and easy.

The compass leads you towards the heart of the Manaka province of the Utau, a rolling plain whose winds are thankfully much less biting than the Moto lands you have left behind.

By the end of the day, secreted in the ruin of a long-abandoned town whose stone marker still shows the symbol of the Lion, you come upon a Unicorn military camp, with perhaps one hundred samurai and twice that many attendants.

Guards stop you at the bounds, but at a sign from Iuchi Shino they summon their commanding officer to meet

you at village's edge, a wary distance from the tents laced inside and between ruined buildings.

A chui nods to you, "Samurai. I am Moto Genya. Welcome to what used to be Kusa Mura. Do you require aid?"

If the PCs ask for help, Genya will have their camp's doctor look at them. If a PC is severely injured he can have the camp's priest render magical aid, healing 3k3 wounds.

Presumably the PCs will explain why they are present, at which point he will disappear for a few minutes, then return to inform them that the Khan desires to speak with them in an hour.

If the PCs have questions for Genya, he has the same information as the soldiers (see the Rumors section in Part 4)

How the PCs fill that hour is up to them. The camp is rustic, and rumors are available (see Part Four), but they can at least rest, eat, and do a modicum of cleaning before they meet Moto Sartaq.

Part Four: Big Sad

If the PCs wish to gather rumors either before or after their conversation with Moto Sartaq, the soldiers of the camp are quite willing to gossip and are hungry for information about how the rest of Rokugan is faring in the face of the Shadowlands attacks.

If a PC wants to converse with some of the soldiers, feel free to have them talk to the PC to fill time. The tone of the soldiers should be tired but resolute. Morale is high and they believe strongly in the Khan's skill as a commander, but they know they're fighting a delaying action.

Rumors

The following information is available with a Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness roll.

- 5: The unicorn armies split up into small units after the Shadowlands horde attacked. We've been harrying their supplies and rear as best we can.
- 15: Noritoshi and his squad are overdue to return. They should have been back a week ago. They're probably dead.
- 20: The Junghar are in the north, under Moto Ogedai's command. The Barunghar are in the west, under Utau Fujita, raiding Shadowlands

supply lines and disrupting attacks on the Scorpion.

- 25: We are with the Khol and have been doing our best to prevent reinforcements and supplies from reaching the fighting in the Lion lands.
- 30: We stopped getting reports from the Barunghar a few weeks ago. I hope they weren't wiped out. That would be disastrous.

If no PC shows any desire to interact with the soldiers, have at least one soldier come up to them and ask about their travels, and how things are going in the rest of the empire.

They have been cut off from most news since the attack in the summer, so haven't heard much news from the empire. They are especially interested in the results of the attack on the capital, and whether that was part of the Shadowlands attack on the Unicorn.

After an hour of waiting, the PCs will be expected to arrive at Moto Sartaq's command tent.

You are conducted into the central tent, which occupies the ruined shell of a larger building, shielding it from sight.

Within are the trappings you have come to expect from the temporary abodes of the Moto – cushions, low tables, and stools. In the middle of the tent is a table showing maps of the Unicorn lands, with a set of go stones set in various positions.

After a moment, a giant of a man enters the room, the haori on his shoulders traditional and bright purple, but the rest of his kimono is a stark white.

He gestures, and the attendants and guards all turn and leave.

The Khan's deep voice rumbles, "Can I offer you some tea?" Without waiting for a response and with a surprisingly deft hand, he begins to fill the cups from the tea pot, and takes a sip himself.

"Thank you for bringing Battue Shino here. This is as far south as I was able to bring my soldiers without alerting the enemy, and my scouts were unable to successfully reach the temple without being noticed."

"We likely have very little time left, and I fear the Shadowlands will discover our camp soon, so this unit will need to return north. I am afraid I must ask more of you than I already have."

Sartaq takes a deep breath, "Our military has been harrying the forces of the dark lord as best they are able. The Khol in the center, the Junghar in the north east, and the Barunghar in the south west. We have been successful at denying the shadowlands much of

their supplies and reinforcements. Without our actions, I doubt the Lion or Scorpion armies would be holding. But Utaku Fujita, Iuchi Kanetsugu, and the Barunghar have quit the field. The Barunghar must return to action or the Scorpion's defense will likely fail and fail soon."

"Iuchi Kanetsugu and Utaku Fujita have retreated to the Tower of the Kelet near the Spine of the World mountains, to... conduct a ritual. Battue Shino is the only person who can open the wards that would bar you access. Enter the tower and stop Kanetsugu by any means necessary. He is making a grave mistake that will imperil the Unicorn, and potentially the entire empire."

Presumably the PCs will have some questions, since Sartaq has been worryingly vague.

- What do you mean 'stop' Kanetsugu? / Stop Kanetsugu from what? / What mistake?

"Three years ago, in the wake of the war between the Lion and Crab, Iuchi Kanetsugu came into possession of an artifact – the Hand of Obsidian. He has been researching it, ever since.

He means to use it to invoke the power of Obsidian. He asked for my permission to do so, and I forbid it, but a few weeks later he ceased all contact. I can only assume he means to use it. That must not be allowed to happen – the influence of Obsidian is malign at best and could be disastrous in the middle of a war with the Shadowlands. Do whatever is necessary to stop him."

- What specifically is this ritual meant to do?
"I believe Iuchi Kanetsugu intends to invoke the power of the Obsidian dragon to create some sort of Oracle or Champion of that creature in Ningen-do, and he means to use it to fight the Shadowlands. My spiritual advisors suggest this will be calamitous for the Unicorn; to bring an embodiment of sin into the world and tie it forever to our clan."

- Why did Iuchi Kanetsugu and Utaku Fujita stop fighting?

"Iuchi Kanetsugu believes he has found a way to forge a weapon to fight the Shadowlands. He needs the resources inside the Tower of the Kelet to do so, and I believe convinced Fujita-san to help him acquire them, and the Barunghar have withdrawn to give them the cover to do so."

- Who will Iuchi Kanetsugu and Utaku Fujita have with them?

“I suspect only their most loyal retainers. A large force would draw the attention of the Shadowlands. We have survived this long by remaining small and mobile. Concentrating our forces leaves us vulnerable to being found and attacked.”

- Why is the tower warded / What is in the tower of the Kelet?
The Battue maintain the library which contains the Unicorn’s knowledge of forbidden and gaijin magics. It is kept safe where none can misuse it by a series of powerful wards which only the three leaders of the family can bypass. I suspect the wards are what has kept Kanetsugu from completing his ritual – it likely would take even a priest of his skill weeks or months to bypass them. But that is also why we likely have very little time left.
- Where is Shinjo Ritsuke?
“Ritsuke has left. She took what remained of her house guard and went on a ‘diplomatic mission’ to the Dragon lands. I have been coordinating our actions against the Shadowlands for the past few months.”
- How has the war been going?
“Our cities and castles have been lost, but most of our people survive. We fight as best we can from behind the enemy’s lines, but we are still fighting. I will not lie to you and say it has been easy, or that we are winning, but we prevent the other fronts from collapse, and we buy the empire time.”
- Has a new clan champion been named?
“No. The events at Shiro Shinjo left things... divided. I had secured the endorsements of the Ide, Iuchi, and Utaku daimyo, but to be frank the rejection of my suggestion in the face of the horde ruined my attempt to forge unity. However, it was Ritsuke’s responsibility to secure her court and keep its guests safe, at task at which she failed and saw yet more of the Shinjo house guard killed, and that weakened her political position considerably. So, in the end neither of us were able to draw the situation to a conclusion. But she has left military command to me, so I have been directing our armies in the fields.”
- Why would Iuchi Kanetsugu do this?
The Khan shakes his head, “Kanetsugu was always a man that wanted to show the empire the value and strength of the Iuchi. He was heavily involved in seeing his cousin, Iuchi Katachai elevated to Jade Champion. He feels responsible for the damage that was

done as a result. He seeks a path back from his failures. He seeks to save the Empire and is blind to the risks that would entail.”

- Why would Utaku Fujita help Kanetsugu?
Moto Sartaq sighs deeply, “I believe she seeks redemption for herself, and for Kanetsugu and no longer cares how it is achieved. What do you know of the circumstances of her elevation to daimyo of the Utaku?”
<pause for PCs>
“When the prior daimyo was on her way to be married, Fujita-san was a member of her entourage. The caravan was attacked by bandits, and she was the sole survivor. The stated reason was they defeated the bandits at great cost and her predecessor died in the fighting. The husband’s family, the Miya, suspected that Fujita was involved and have demanded investigations. In truth Fujita-san was simply overmatched and fled. A handful of us knew, and we agreed that losing both the daimyo of the Utaku and her successor would only cause chaos, so kept the truth between ourselves. Ever since Fujita has demonstrated great courage, so I have never had cause to question that decision... until now.
Even if she thinks it will help Kanetsugu, or herself, gain redemption for their actions, summoning the power of Obsidian is a grave mistake”
- Why are you wearing a white kimono?
“We will speak of that in a moment. First, we should finish discussing your task”
- Where is Moto Noritoshi?
“My son was sent on a mission to destroy a supply caravan two weeks ago and is six days overdue to return. He and his men are almost certainly.”
- Followup – If Noritoshi is dead, who is your heir?
“My daughter is... with the Barunghar. I do not know if she yet lives. If my line has ended, then the son of my father’s brother, Ogedei, is next in line for the mantle of Khan.”
- Why have you never spoken of your daughter?
“We... had a disagreement, at her mother’s funeral. We have not spoken in years. She trained as a priest and chose to join the Barunghar.”

Once the PCs have finished their questions about the mission:

Sartaq sighs.

“Before you go, there are some things you must understand. But you must give me your word that you will never speak of what we say here, to anyone. Do you agree?”

The PCs are free to disagree, in which case Sartaq will politely ask them to wait outside. If a PC lies about their intent to keep Sartaq’s secrets, you should roll his Investigation / Awareness (10k5) against their Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness. If Sartaq prevails, he will ask that PC to wait outside as well.

If any PC has Sworn Enemy: Moto Sartaq, he will also ask them to step outside at this point.

Otherwise:

Sartaq nods gravely, and removes his purple haori, placing it upon a stand, leaving only the white kimono. He sets aside his katana and scimitar, and then turns back to you.

“I have made many mistakes, samurai. I tried to thwart the events of the past few months; I tried to thwart prophecy. I failed. My son is dead, and the clan is more divided than ever.”

The khan of the Moto sits and begins to write on a small piece of paper as he speaks. “A decade ago, long before the rest of the empire knew, the priest to my court had a vision. He told me that Shinjo had been reborn, and that her actions would lead to the Shadow falling on our lands. He said he saw a way to avert that disaster, but it would come at great cost. Lives would be lost, but many more lives would be saved. He refused to tell me specifics of the cost; he only asked my permission to do what was necessary to avert calamity.”

The khan draws a deep breath. “I gave him my permission, and he left my court to pursue his ends. I did not hear of Iuchi Jinsoku again until after he had sacrificed the Horiuchi to his scheme. At first I had trouble believing it was possible that he could have done such a thing. But eventually I realized that he always intended that sacrifice, and I grieved for their loss.”

“For a time, I thought his plan had succeeded. I thought he had avoided disaster; that at horrible cost

we had averted prophecy and the shadow. But it was not to be. Shinjo Hazumi awakened.”

The khan pauses and sets down his pen. “I have wondered many nights if events would have run the same course had Jinsoku not intervened, but I am no seer.”

The khan shakes his head, “When she turned, I knew that Jinsoku’s scheme had failed, and that the darkness would come. So, I prepared. I meant to establish unity. But now I see that in grasping, it all slipped away.

Folding the paper carefully and placing it in his obi, the Khan of the Moto stands.

“Another must step forward to lead, and I must face the consequences of my deeds. If Fujita-san and Kanetsugu-san are too far gone, it will fall to you to make choices in the critical moment. I have made some preparations for that eventuality, but it is impossible to be truly sure.”

He places his wakizashi at his side. “Do you have any final questions?”

The Khan obviously means to commit seppuku and is taking the opportunity to confess his sins.

The combination of his failure to consolidate power and now the death of his son has finally broken his resolve and convinced him that the current leaders of the Unicorn all need to be replaced.

Moto Sartaq is ultimately responsible for the attempt on Shinjo Hazumi’s life and eagerly embraced the idea that he could ascend into the power vacuum left behind to make himself clan champion. He will present the facts to make himself appear well intentioned; he was not entirely malicious, though his desire for power played no small part in his decisions. If a PC suspects he is shading the truth, have them roll Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness against his Sincerity / Awareness as appropriate.

- Why did you allow Jinsoku to do this? – Broadly speaking, he did not know what Jinsoku planned to do, so by the time he understood it was already too late. Of course, it also played into his desire to become Clan Champion, but he prefers to omit that part. Sartaq prefers to shade this information in terms of ‘sacrifice for the greater good’.
- He was instructed not to reveal details of the prophecy if he hoped to prevent it, so he did not speak of it to anyone. No one knew of the prophecy except Sartaq.

- Sartaq does not believe Ritsuke is qualified to lead the Unicorn; he doubts her competency and feels she abandoned the clan to press her grievances against the Dragon.
- He has become convinced that Kanetsugu and Fujita are flawed individuals who can't be counted on to lead, and vaguely prefers that both be killed or convinced to step down as daimyo so they can be replaced.
- More broadly, he no longer has faith in any of the current daimyo's ability to lead and believes it is time for the next generation of Unicorn to lead. He'd prefer that all of them, perhaps other than Ide Ekuan, be replaced.
- Kanetsugu has a son, who is in the Owl lands in the refugee camps. The next in line for the Utaku is Utaku Hana, a niece of Utaku Fujita and is with the Barunghar. Hana is a friend of his daughter Moto Sorano, who apparently speaks highly of her. He is not concerned that either family will lack leadership, as all have been prepared to take command.
- Sartaq fully intended to claim the mantle of Clan Champion after his success, but with the death of his son has finally accepted that his ambitions were thwarted and that he has failed.

If the PCs decide they want to talk Sartaq out of committing seppuku, that is possible but exceptionally difficult. The base TN for Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness is 80, which it can be rolled cooperatively. One free raise is available (for a total of three) for each of the following themes that is stressed:

- The lack of an alternative military leader for the Unicorn.
- The importance of Duty, or putting Duty above Honor when fighting the Shadowlands, or suggesting he find an end in battle instead of seppuku.
- Emphasizing that the Greater Good was the right course or the necessity of sacrifice.

Otherwise, he will request one of the PCs stand as his second, preferring Unicorn, though if all refuse he will call one of the guards to do so.

Regardless of how this plays out, the PCs will need to leave the camp in the morning to journey to the Tower of the Kelet.

Part Five: Why didn't we take the Eagles?

In the morning the Unicorn begin to break camp and wish you well. They start to make their way North across the plains as you turn back the way you came, heading to the southwest.

By noon you reach the White Shore Lake, far from any roads or patrols, and you follow its coastline west. In the late afternoon, you pass the burned wreckage of what used to be Shiori Kishi Mura, a village that used to be renowned for its artisans.

The night is cold on the plains as the temperatures plunge, and chill winds blow down off the mountain. The next day dawns grey, and clouds begin to fill the previously blue sky.

Pulling your cloaks around you, you carry on, hugging the edge of White Short Lake as it turns south. In the early afternoon, just after midday, you reach the abandoned Plains Wind Monastery, a former home of the worship for the Lords of Death, now empty. A sense of... weight, hangs about the place.

As you set to eat your rice, a cough echoes from the empty monastery, then a moment later a man emerges, his clothes torn, his armor damaged, a conspicuous bandage around his left leg, and a nasty wound running across his left eye.

The distinctive voice of Moto Noritoshi, son of Moto Sartaq rings out, "Come to finish me monsters?! Face me and die!"

He draws his sword and drops into a fighting stance.

If any PC has the Offering of Steel cert:

Suddenly, the spear point you have been carrying since your time in Meido grows hot, threatening to burn you through your clothes.

You know exactly what it wants.

The Shi-tien Yen-wang want Moto Noritoshi to die.

Otherwise:

How the PCs navigate this situation is up to them. There is no one else here, so there is no immediate consequence for fighting or killing Moto Noritoshi. If the PCs worry about what Shino thinks, he will simply nod gravely and say "You were challenged. Unfortunate mistakes happen during wars."

They are free to leave or talk to the Khan's son, presuming they inform him that they are not in fact Shadowlands monsters. If for some reason the PCs don't inform Noritoshi (who can't tell due to his injured eye and resultant poor vision) within their first

few exchanges that they are in fact samurai and not monsters, he will launch a (likely suicidal) attack on the “monsters”.

If the PCs mount their horses and flee Noritoshi has no meaningful way to pursue them. He is severely wounded and cannot travel without either being lent a horse or given powerful healing magic.

- A little over a week ago Noritoshi’s unit was ambushed and most of his soldiers were killed, as was his horse. He was severely injured and took refuge in the abandoned temple until his leg healed enough to travel.
- If the Khan committed seppuku, he is very surprised. If the PCs inform him that his father confessed a variety of crimes he will be quiet for a moment then nod, saying he had long suspected his father was scheming but his own investigations hadn’t turned up anything concrete.
- If the PCs explain their mission, Noritoshi will offer to help, even if one of the PCs is his Sworn Enemy. The good of the Unicorn takes precedence over a personal feud.
- If the PCs ask about his sister (who they likely had never heard of before), Noritoshi will immediately become noticeably prickly. He does not get along with his sister; they last spoke at his mother’s funeral where she had a heated argument with Noritoshi and Sartaq before leaving. He does not trust her, thinks she is too eager to put her personal beliefs before the good of the family, and believes her to be something of a religious zealot.
- Noritoshi does not have a high opinion of Iuchi Kanetsugu; he thinks Kanetsugu is easy to manipulate and gullible. The Iuchi daimyo is so focused on proving the value of the Iuchi to the empire that he makes rash decisions and can be tricked with praise.
- Noritoshi is suspicious of Utaku Fujita. Something about her feels off; she tries very hard to always be Courageous and make ‘tough choices.’ Maybe she’s just a very honorable samurai who fears nothing, but Noritoshi is skeptical. If the PCs tell him that she fled the bandit attack against her predecessor, he will make a derisive noise and say, “So the courageous act was to compensate for something” then pause for a moment, seem to reflect, then quietly add “Or perhaps to learn from a mistake.”

If the PCs offer to take Noritoshi with them, he will accept and promise to render what aid he can.

One way or another, the PCs should eventually continue to the tower.

Part Six: The Tower

After two more days of travel across the rolling plains of the Iuchi, you arrive at the edge of a foreboding forest. It is surrounded by a trench and a ring of short stone pillars inscribed with glyphs.

Iuchi Shino takes a moment to examine them, then pronounces the wards intact and suggests you move on, as you are drawing very close to the tower.

You travel around the forest, hugging its edge but never entering or passing the ring of stones. Something about it feels... wrong. As the light of lord sun begins to slip from the sky, you come to the foot of the tower, where a small Unicorn garrison encamps.

You approach cautiously through a line of brush and Shino draws his hand to his lips.

“We should consider stealth. I can use the wards to mask us. They are not many, and I have every confidence in your abilities, but perhaps violence is unnecessary?”

Unicorn samurai, mostly on foot, circle the tower warily, while at least one is visibly sitting next to a fire to cook dinner. Stone pillars, like the ones near the forest, encircle the tower and glow with a low orange light.

If the PCs wish to resolve the situation via combat instead of stealth, one PC must roll Battle (Skirmish) / Perception at a TN of 20. For each point this roll is failed, every PC takes one wound.

Every PC then makes either a [Weapon skill of choice] / [Corresponding trait, usually Agility or Reflexes] roll or Defense / Reflexes roll at TN 30. For every point by which this roll is failed, that PC takes one wound, to a maximum of their Out wound rank.

Shino will be kept busy preventing Sorano from activating the wards against the PCs, but in the end the Unicorn troops should not seriously threaten the PCs.

If the PCs try to talk their way past the guards, the guards should challenge them in a hostile fashion and demand they leave. The TN to talk your way past them is 45. Appealing to the authority of the Khan reduces the TN to 40 and showing the guards the Khan’s mon

reduces it to 30. If the PCs mention Shino's authority, the TN is reduced by an additional 5.

Due to the wards, sneaking past the guards is relatively easy. I recommend some narration as the PCs weave their way through while the wards cloak them in shifting shadows, with the guards almost seeing them and having to stop a few times to build tension, but regardless it mechanically requires an Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility roll at TN 20, which can be done cooperatively – if any PC is in armor then the cooperative roll suffers a penalty equal to the worst single penalty of any PC due to armor (that is, the cooperative roll takes a penalty based on the worst armor type, rather than the average or roller's armor type)

Regardless of how they do it, the PCs should manage to enter the tower.

The Tower of the Kelet is a tall stone edifice, with less taper than is normal for a Rokugani building. The halls are silent within, and Battue Shino swiftly leads you past the front door, through a court chamber, and towards a narrow stairway.

At the top of the first set of stairs is a locked door with a glowing rune, which Shino opens with a touch of his hand.

He then leads you through what seems to be a large library, with shelves upon shelves of books, small boxes, and odd gaijin objects.

Reaching the far end of the room, at what must be another stairway, Shino again presses his hand against the door, but this time pulls it away in pain as a vicious red symbol flares to life and the scent of burnt skin assaults your nose.

“Someone else has warded this door. We need to get past it. They are almost certainly on the roof; it is the most protected location and is where rituals are conducted when the family has need. We must get up these stairs.”

While Shino quickly bandages his hand, the pause affords you the opportunity to glance around yourselves at the library and the realization of what these shelves contains hits you – they are books of forbidden lore and prohibited knowledge. Many with inscrutable gaijin titles, but a few that are obviously maho.

If the PCs choose to confront Shino (angrily or not) about possessing illegal magic, he will confirm that this is the Library of Nagol, where the Unicorn store all their knowledge about evil and forbidden magics. The Battue were founded to combat evil magic; part of their mandate includes safeguarding everything the Unicorn learn about it. That is why the tower is heavily

warded and the Kelet themselves usually do not visit – to ensure no one can enter.

Presumably the PCs won't decide to attack Shino, though if they decide to destroy the library he will demand they stop and failing that attempt to restrain them. If the PCs collectively turn on Shino, he will flee down the stairs and out of the tower, disappearing for the rest of the module.

Opening the door can be done with one of several approaches:

- **Violence**
The PCs could simply smash down the stone door. This requires a Raw Strength roll at TN 30 (free raise for having an appropriate tool like a Sledge), which may be done cooperatively by having multiple PCs add their strength score to the total of one PC which attempts the roll. Any participating PC will be burnt due to their contact with the door, so anyone that makes the roll or contributes to the total will suffer 5 wounds.
- **Engineering**
Disassembling the mundane components of the door is possible but difficult. Engineering / Intelligence at TN 35 can provide a suitable methodology, though it is not quick, as contact with the door swiftly burns the PCs involved (anyone that makes this roll, successfully or not, takes 5 wounds)
- **Magic**
A Sense spell can easily determine that a Fire ward has been placed on the door, presumably on the other side to prevent it being tampered with.
Undoing that ward either requires casting Banish: Fire or altering the physical door itself via Earth magic - A Commune with 4 raises. The castle itself cannot be altered; the Earth kami within it are fortified by advanced wards that would take days or weeks to unravel.
- **Climbing the outside of the tower**
It is theoretically possible for the PCs to decide to instead scale the outside of the tower, at least up to the next floor. This requires an Athletics (Climbing) / Strength roll for any PC doing so at TN 35. Any use of magic to climb the tower will fail, due to the heavy presence of warding magic keeping the kami away.
If every PC climbs the tower they can of course proceed to Part Seven, otherwise so long as one succeeds they can find their way back to the stairs and unlock the door from

the other side by pulling down the piece of paper which is tacked to the back of the door.

If the PCs come up with another approach, assign a suitable TN (25 to 35 or so, depending on PC cleverness). Any solution that involves touching the door should cause 5 wounds (as above), due to the warding magic presuming PCs take caution not to touch the door more than they absolutely have too. If it involves prolonged contact with the door, feel free to increase the damage to represent the door burning them.

Part Seven: The Power of Obsidian

After you pass out of the library and up the next set of stairs, you come to... another library. And then another. And another. It is not until the six floor of the tower that you finally pass out of the archives and into the living quarters.

Past the living quarters, a final door stands between the interior of the tower and the massive roof.

Unfortunately, three samurai sit in front of that portal – two women and a man. One woman is tall and strong, wearing the colors of the Moto and the mon of the Iuchi, and bearing an uncanny resemblance to Moto Sartaq. The other, an Utaku, is shorter but no less an obvious combatant, as even at rest the stance of a swordswoman is obvious.

Finally, a man you are likely familiar with paces back and forth – with the bowed legs of a lifelong horseman, the purple sash of a Unicorn clan magistrate, and the distinctive long drooping mustache he has sported for years, Ide Kazuyuki turns to you, holds out a hand, and in a loud voice proclaims, “Halt! In the name of the Unicorn, you are under arrest.”

The two women look back and forth, unsure of what to do, clearly expecting neither your arrival, nor Kazuyuki’s attempt to arrest you.

If Moto Noritoshi is with the PCs, he will hiss out, “Sister... I should have known.”, and Sorano will respond, “What are you doing here, Noritoshi?”

Moto Sorano is the daughter of Moto Sartaq, and a skilled shugenja. She will not initially volunteer her relation to Sartaq, but will confirm it if questioned and a canny PC will remember Sartaq mentioning her name.

Utaku Hana is the niece of the Utaku daimyo and was brought along as the military commander of the squad which is / was camped outside.

Ide Kazuyuki is a Unicorn clan magistrate who the players have likely met before and is a jerk.

This situation can play out a number of ways.

There are three NPCs that in same need to be dealt with. If the PCs could utilize violence against any or all of the NPCs, they could convince Hana and / or Sorano to stand aside, or they could duel Kazuyuki to the death.

Kazuyuki is the only NPC that can not be convinced towards a non-violent resolution, though the arguments and approaches that are persuasive towards Sorano and Hana will differ (see below). If the Kazuyuki is alive while they are talking to Sorana / Hana, he should attempt to counter the PCs arguments as much as possible, though he is only moderately eloquence.

Unmitigated Violence:

If the PCs can’t convince some or all of the NPCs to stand down, they will likely have to fall back to violence. Any NPCs that were convinced will stand aside while the PCs resolve the rest via a quick manifestation of violence.

One PC must roll Battle (Skirmish) / Perception at a TN of 20 + [5 * Participating NPCs]. For each point this roll is failed, every PC takes one wound.

Every PC then makes either a [Weapon skill of choice] / [Corresponding trait, usually Agility or Reflexes] roll or Defense / Reflexes roll at TN 20 + [5 * Participating NPCs]. For every point by which this roll is failed, that PC takes one wound, to a maximum of their Out wound rank.

This is not intended to kill any PCs, just tax their resources before the final confrontation.

Things they all know:

- The group of five Unicorn (Utaku Hana, Utaku Fujita, Ide Kazuyuki, Moto Sorano, and Iuchi Kanetsugu) entered the tower yesterday. Kanetsugu spent most of the day reading, then about an hour ago ordered the three samurai to remain outside and guard the door.
- Kanetsugu, Fujita, Sorano, and her squad of soldiers arrived at the tower two weeks ago. She and her soldiers kept watch while Kanetsugu worked on bypassing the wards.

Moto Sorano:

Moto Sorana is not aware of the specifics of the ritual being attempted; she was told that it was important to the war effort against the Shadowlands. She was brought here to help defeat the tower's wards.

Fundamentally, Sorano was kept in the dark about the particulars of the ritual because she has a strong sense of right and wrong, and while Kanetsugu needed her skill with wards he did not trust her motivations. Arguments that appeal to her idealist (though not necessarily 'honorable') nature should be persuasive.

Convincing her to stand down requires a Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness roll at TN 40. Having Moto Noritoshi present increases the TN to convince her to stand down by 5.

- Mentioning her father's seppuku will shake Sorano and provide a free raise to convince her to stand down.
- If questioned about it, Sorano has noticed that Iuchi Kanetsugu possesses a black gauntlet on his left arm which he seems to always wear. If the PCs actively identify this gauntlet as the Hand of the Obsidian Dragon and its rather-malign origin, reduce the TN by 5.
- Moto Sorano despises her brother and has not seen him in two years. She considers him vain, overconfident, and spiteful; he is every negative quality of her father increased five-fold. If Noritoshi is present and a PC makes a sincere argument that Noritoshi has grown as a person and tempered his faults, the TN penalty for his presence can be waived.
- If the PCs make arguments based on spirituality, piety, or the importance of the traditional roles of celestial beings (such as the Obsidian Dragon not interfering in mortal affairs), reduce the TN by 5.

Utaku Hana:

Utaku Hana knows that Utaku Fujita and Iuchi Kanetsugu are doing some form of morally questionable ritual but doesn't know the precise details, nor did she ask. She knows that her aunt, Utaku Fujita, believes there is a chance she won't survive but that the result may save the Unicorn, which Hana finds to be exceptionally brave.

Hana's faith in what is being done rests on her faith in her aunt. Hana has long thought Fujita was a pillar of Bushido and Courage, so arguments that shake her trust in her aunt should be persuasive or arguments that appeal to her sense of honor.

Convincing her to stand down requires a Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness roll at TN 40.

- Mentioning her Aunt's cowardice in the face of the bandit attack shakes her faith in the cause and reduces the TN by 5.
- If questioned about it, Sorano has noticed that Iuchi Kanetsugu possesses a black gauntlet on his left arm which he seems to always wear. If the PCs actively identify this gauntlet as the Hand of the Obsidian Dragon and its rather-malign origin, reduces the TN by 5.
- Appeals to the need for the Baraungar to return to duty in order to help save the empire reduce the TN to convince her to stand down by 5.

Ide Kazuyuki:

Note: Ide Kazuyuki cannot be convinced to stand down without some form of violence.

Further, if skirmish combat is chosen, and he's the only NPC fighting, feel free to use your judgement on whether to use the abbreviated battle rules above instead of his stat block below for time. This mod could run long, so be careful about running a skirmish, though if he's the only NPC it may be quick and one-sided.

Note: If the PCs are all rank 4, then Kazuyuki is only Air 3, and his dueling statistics and armor TN should be adjusted as appropriate

Ide Kazuyuki

He uses his scimitar if attacked in the open, or his katana in a duel.

School/Rank: Moto Bushi 4

Initiative: 9k4

Armor TN: 25

Reduction: 0

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

Attack: 9k4 + ½ opposing wound penalties (Katana or Scimitar, Simple)

Damage: 7k3 (Scimitar) or 7k2 (Katana)

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 4 Water 3 Void 4

Honor: 5.5 Status: 3.0 Glory: 5.0

Primary Skills: Kenjutsu (Scimitar) 5, Iaijutsu 5, Lore: Law 5, Investigation (Interrogation) 5, Lore: Heraldry 6

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Position (Unicorn Magistrate), Swift 1

Special Mechanics: See core book for Moto Bushi 4

Significant Dice Pools:

Assessment: 10k5 (He is 9k4 base and voids)

Focus: 10k6+9 or 10k8+9 (assessment win), either way he voids for 1k1 (included above)

Strike:9k4 (uses the 1k1+4 bonus on damage)

Regardless of how they do it, the PCs should manage to move past the door and confront the individuals arrayed on the balcony:

You open the large stone door, revealing a huge balcony atop the tower, the floor covered in strange symbols, many of which are clearly not Rokugani in nature.

A woman in her late thirties with the gait of one who has spent the better part of their life in the saddle paces at the edge of the circle while a thin man with greying hair sits, his eyes closed, in the center of the diagram.

The woman looks up, and her hand goes to her sword, “Kanetsugu! There are intruders! Finish your ritual!”

The man, clearly straining in some fashion against unseen forces as he speaks through gritted teeth, “It doesn’t work like that, you can’t just demand it go faster.”

Utaku Fujita draws a sword in one hand and an axe in the other, “This is not the place for you! We are going to save the Unicorn and we are going to save the empire.”

Then her stride is broken as a voice behind her rings out, clear and cold. “One moment, Utaku-san.”

And the daimyo of the Utaku simply halts mid-step.

Standing next to the kneeling form of Iuchi Kanetsugu is a pale man wearing an impossibly, painfully, black robe.

He nods to you, “Good evening samurai. I assume you know who I am. I further assume that you have come to stop them, and I would like to politely ask you not to do so. They are adrift, these two. They are consumed by their sins and their failures; regret for choices made, desire for recognition, acclaim, and acceptance, fear of, well, dying. Fear of losing everything. Let me take them and remake them. It will benefit us both. I have need of an oracle and a champion, and you, well, your problems are rather obvious.”

He steps to the edge of the circle of runes and regards you. “So, what do you say? Do we have a deal?”

This is the Obsidian Dragon. PCs may have briefly encountered him in CIT 52 – Pale Reflection

There are no mechanics for this portion of the module. The dragon is going to appeal to the PCs to allow Iuchi Kanetsugu to complete his ritual.

He should flatter, lie, and otherwise attempt to manipulate the PCs by appealing to their baser instincts. He has through knowledge of any specific glaring sins (Fear, Desire, Regret), so feel free to leverage any disadvantages a PC may have in his arguments.

He intends to invest a portion of his power into Kanetsugu and Fujita to increase his sway in Ningendo as part of his larger plans. In the short term, that means helping humanity fight the forces of the Shadowlands (which anyone that can pass an Intelligence / Lore Theology check at TN 25 will know is usually not the purview of the heavens).

If the Obsidian dragon convinces or tricks the PCs into leaving, and he should be persuasive, skip to Conclusion – Victory of Obsidian

Presumably he will not.

With a sigh, the black clad figure walks back to the center of the circle of runes to stand next to Iuchi Kanetsugu, who still remains frozen in place.

“Well, it is very unfortunate that we could not reach an understanding. I assure you, this is for the best, and it is such a shame for the empire to lose defenders as valiant as yourselves.”

With a puff of overly dramatic black smoke, the man vanishes, and Utaku Fujita resumes her stride towards you, her step faltering a moment when she realizes you have all shifted slightly from the positions you held a moment ago.

She levels her weapons and prepares a charge when Iuchi Kanetsugu from the center of the ritual circle lets out a surprised yelp. She half turns to look at the Iuchi, as do you, to see that the black gauntlet on his left hand appears to be... growing.

Inky black tendrils grasp his arm and begin to race up it, winding their way around him.

Then the entire world goes black, and all light goes out. For a moment there is no sound, then a quiet far-off laugh pierces the gloom.

“I... I see now. Fujita-san, there is nothing left to be afraid of. It worked.”

Utaku Fujita takes a deep breath, and steps backwards into the ritual circle. As soon as she crosses the boundary, the symbols on the ground flare, and then

disappear entirely as darkness wraps around the daimyo of the Utaku.

She breathes deeply, “Turn and leave, samurai. I will save the Unicorn clan, and the empire. Do not attempt to stop me.”

She levels her blade and axe and drops into a fighting stance.

If the PCs choose to, or are forced to retreat, the Obsidian Dragon’s new minions will not pursue. Continue to **Victory of Obsidian**, though you will have to paraphrase the box text to remove the references to turning away from the ritual.

If the entire part is Rank 4 or lower, reduce their armor TN’s by 5 and decrease the wound scaling to be 5 per combat PC instead of 15.

Luchi Kanetsugu, Nascent Oracle of Obsidian

School/Rank: Luchi Shugenja 5

Initiative: 9k4

Armor TN: 25 (34 in defense stance)

Reduction: 5, 0 vs Crystal

Wounds: 150 + 15 per combat-PC

Attack: 8k4 (Unarmed, Complex)

Damage: 9k3 (Unarmed)

Air 4 Earth 5 Fire 4 Water 6 Void 5
Int 5

Honor: 5.0 Glory: 3.5

Primary Skills: Defense 5, Jujitsu 4, Defense 5

Special Mechanics:

Oracular defenses – Kanetsugu is Invulnerable to mundane damage (Nemuranai, crystal, magic, and fire all ignore this invulnerability)

Black fog – Kanetsugu can, as a free action, exit a grapple by momentarily become a cloud of black mist.

Font of Power – Kanetsugu is immune to any effect that would alter his rings or traits, the Stunned and Entangled condition, and any effects that cause instant death. He is immune to Fear effects.

Obsidian Empowerment – Kanetsugu can cast spells as Simple actions instead of Complex. He must still cast raises to reduce the casting time as normal, but the base increment is a Simple Action instead of a complex. **This Means Kanetsugu can theoretically cast two spells in one turn.** Kanetsugu has unlimited spell slots.

Significant Dice Pools:

Spellcasting: He has access to all spells, but the ones he is most likely to use are:

Earth (10k7): Earth Becomes Sky, Wolf’s Mercy, Strike at the Root

Fire (9k5): Fires from Within

Water (10k8): Path to Inner Peace, Strike of the Tsunami, Heart of the Water Dragon, Cloak of the Miya

Air (10k5): Howl of Isora, Tempest of Air

He has theoretical access to every spell, but will likely fall back on the ones above as his go-to options

Utaku Fujita, Champion of Obsidian

School/Rank: Utaku Battle Maiden 5

Initiative: 10k5

Armor TN: 35, 40 with both weapons out (40 or 45 in light armor)

Reduction: 8, 3 vs Crystal

Wounds: 150 + 15 per combat-PC

Attack: 10k7 (Katana or Masakari, Simple)

Damage: 9k2, exploding 9’s (Katana) or 7k3, exploding 9’s ignoring 2 reduction (Masakari)

Air 5 Earth 6 Fire 4 Water 4 Void 5
Agi 6 Str 5

Honor: 6.0 Status: 7.0 Glory: 5.5

Primary Skills: Battle 5, Kenjutsu 7, Heavy Weapons 7, Horsemanship 6, Jujitsu 4.

Special Mechanics:

Black fog – Fujita can, as a free action, exit a grapple by momentarily becoming a cloud of black mist.

Font of Power – Fujita is immune to any effect that would alter her rings or traits, the Stunned and Entangled conditions, and any effects that cause instant death. She is immune to Fear effects.

Power of Obsidian – Utaku Fujita can make Simple Action attacks with her katana, and once per round may make a free action attack with her Masakari as long as it doesn’t target anyone she attacked with her katana that turn.

Utaku Battle Maiden 5:

- 1) +Honor Rank (6) to one attack per round
- 2) At the beginning of each combat round, may increase her Initiative or Armor TN by 5
- 3) Simple Action attacks with melee weapons (see above)
- 4) Overrun while mounted (she’s not).
- 5) At the beginning of her turn, she can spend a void point to add her Honor Rank (5) to all damage and Bugei skill rolls that turn.

Both monsters have an additional ability, but I don’t want to write it twice:

Power of Sin: For each Sin related (Fear, Desire, Regret) disadvantage present, the two gain a shared pool of banked points that they can use throughout the fight which can be used either as free raises on any skill or spellcasting roll, or as additional void points. If used as void points then the cap on how many points can be used on a single roll or enhancement in this

fashion is equal to the number of sin-based disadvantages of the PC she is using them again.

If the PCs are curious what Shino is up to during the fight, he is attempting to counteract the ritual to prevent the Oracle of Obsidian from fully manifesting (a fight which the PCs would have no way to win).

Once the PCs are (presumably) victorious, proceed to **Conclusion – Victory of Virtue**.

If no PC makes a strong argument about what to do with the hand (or forgets that it's an issue), Battue Shino will store the glove in the tower and relock the wards.

Conclusion

Victory of Obsidian - If the PCs allowed the Champion of Obsidian to be summoned without destroying it:

With a grin on his face, the manifested Obsidian Dragon disappears in a puff of overly dramatic black smoke as time reasserts itself.

You turn, and walk away from the ritual, leaving behind a somewhat confused looking Utaku Fujita who makes no move to pursue you.

You regain your horses at the foot of the Tower of the Kelet and ride south towards the Plum Blossom Pass, through the lands of the Ide, past the ruins of Kyuden Miya, and finally back into the lands of the Scorpion.

As you do you could swear that the nights are darker, the days more overcast, and Shadowlands patrols slightly thinner, but it could all be coincidence. Only the future can say what this will mean for the wider war, or the future of the Unicorn clan.

The module is over.

Victory of Virtue - If the PCs destroyed the Champions of Obsidian:

With a small escort from the Barunghar, you are spirited through the Plum Blossom Pass into the lands of the Ide, and then past the ruins of Kyuden Miya.

The Unicorn bid you well and return north to rejoin their army while you continue south into the Scorpion lands and away from the fighting.

If Moto Sartaq survived, the module is over. If he committed seppuku, proceed to Part Eight.

Part Eight: You thought it was over but nope its more politics

Presuming at least one of Sartaq's children survived (If not, skip to the segment where Moto Ogedei becomes Khan):

The next night, still a day's ride from the defended areas of the Scorpion lands, you stop to make camp alongside the road, starting your fire and preparing dinner.

As the smell of cooking wafts to your nose, Iuchi Shino suddenly cocks his head to the side, as if listening to some urgent message that you cannot hear.

After a moment he shakes his head to clear it, and then looks to you.

"I have received a message, from Ide Ekuan-sama. News has reached him of Moto Sartaq's death. He has... well, you were the last to see him alive. Ekuan-sama wants your recommendation on who should next bear the mantle of Khan."

The PCs must choose who to recommend to Ide Ekuan, last remaining political figure within the Unicorn, who should be gain the mantle of Khan. Proceed to the appropriate sub-conclusion based on their choice. There are no mechanics here, it is simply a majority vote, and Shino will explicitly not provide an opinion.

In the coming days the courts are abuzz with the news of the reorganization of the Unicorn leadership that you bring.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module:	1 XP
Good Roleplaying:	1 XP
Confronting Iuchi Kanetsugu:	1 XP
Defeating the Champion and Oracle of Obsidian	1 XP
Total Possible Experience:	4 XP

Favors

Any PCs that agree not to speak of Moto Sartaq's secrets gain a favor, unless they have **Sworn Enemy: Ide Ekuan or Ide Akio**, in which case they get no favor.

Honor

Stopping the Champion of Obsidian is an H9 honor gain.

Other Rewards and Penalties

If a PC murdered Moto Noritoshi and they conceal it, they gain Dark Secret – Killed Moto Noritoshi.

If a PC murdered Moto Noritoshi and they choose not to conceal it, they instead gain 2 ranks of Infamy, but there are no legal consequences due to the chaos surrounding the event.

If a PC with the Offering of Steel cert elects not to kill Moto Noritoshi, they gain the Momoku disadvantage.

Glory

Being present at Moto Sartaq's seppuku is a G6 glory gain.

Defeating the Champion of Obsidian in combat is a G12 glory gain.

GM Reporting

- 1) Was the Champion of Obsidian defeated?
- 2) Did Moto Sartaq commit seppuku?
- 3) Did Moto Noritoshi survive?
- 4) If Sartaq committed seppuku, who was recommended as the next Khan of the Moto?
- 5) Did Utaku Hana survive?
- 6) Did Moto Sorano survive?
- 7) Did Iuchi Shino survive?

The GM must report this information by (date three months after release) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

Moto Noritoshi

Son of Moto Sartaq

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 5, Kenshinzen 1

Initiative: 10k5+16

Armor TN: 30 (35 in armor) **Reduction:** 0 or 3

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

Attack: 10k6 or 10k7 (Katana, Simple)

Damage: 8k2 (Katana, exploding 9's)

Air 5 Earth 4 Fire 5 Water 4 Void 5

Honor: 3.5 Status: 4.5 Glory: 6.5

Primary Skills: Iaijutsu (Assessment, Focus) 8, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Etiquette 5, Courtier 5

Advantages/Disadvantages: Overconfident, Bad Eyesight

Wounded: Noritoshi's Health and Grazed wound ranks have already been filled.

Significant Dice Pools:

Assessment: 10k9+5 -5 for wound penalties for net 10k9, which includes using a void point.

Focus w/o Assessment: 10k10+19, which includes using a void point.

Focus with Assessment: 10k10+33, which includes using a void point.

Note: Due to Kakita Bushi 3, he only needs to win by 3 and receives a free raise for each additional 3 by which he wins.

Strike: 10k8+5

Iuchi Shino of the Battue

Spirit Guard of the Battue

School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 5

Initiative: 8k3

Armor TN: 27 (Defense Stance) **Reduction:** 0

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

Attack: 9k4 (Jujitsu, Complex)

Damage: 7k1

Air 3 Earth 4 Fire 5 Water 6 Void 4

Honor: 6.5 Status: 6 Glory: 2.5

Primary Skills: Jujitsu 4, Defense 4, Spellcraft 7, Lore: Maho 6, Lore: Gaijin 6, Lore: Theology 7, Lore: History 5

Advantages/Disadvantages: Soft-hearted

Spells: Most low rank water spells – he does not have all his scrolls with him. Many were lost in the flight.

Moto Sartaq

Khan of the Moto

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

Initiative: 10k7 + 7

Armor TN: 30

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

Attack: 10k7 (Nemuranai Katana, Simple), plus half TN penalty of opponent

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

Air Earth Fire Water Void
5 5 5 5 5

Honor: 3.5 Status: 7.5 Glory: 8

Primary Skills: Courtier 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 7, Etiquette 5, Iaijutsu (Focus) 7, Kenjutsu (Katana, Scimitar) 8, Battle (Mass Combat, Skirmish) 7

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

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

Player Handout #1: News From the Empire

Honored Samurai,

Never has the news I share been so disastrous and bleak.

The forces that shall not sully our courts with their descriptions have moved with unholy speed across the plains, and though the Clan of Shinjo fights alongside the Imperial Legions for every inch of territory, the Unicorn lands have fallen. The Minor Clans of the north are likewise overrun. The Badger, Frog, and Hare Clans have either left their provinces behind or been slain by the invaders. Refugees from the territories beset by war are seeking protection from their neighbors and allies.

The battle-lines have moved as far south as the Lion and Scorpion lands. This division in the enemy's forces is perhaps the only good news, for if they were concentrated, who knows how long even the stalwart samurai of either clan could stand? Reports indicate that Shiro Soshi and Ryoko Owari are under siege, while the main force of the enemy closes on Shiro no Shosuro. Likewise, the Lion have been forced to give ground to a line between Shiro sano Ken Hayai and Kyuden Ikoma. These two strongholds serve as anchors for the Lion defense, but the Clan of Akodo has so far been unable to mount an effective counterattack – though thousands have gone to their ancestors in honor.

There are signs that the foe does not seek indiscriminate destruction. While all military forces arrayed against them have met with an utter lack of mercy, cities of political or economic value have only been raided and abandoned. Little effort is being spent to hold these places, unless they hold a position of strategic importance. What this portends is surely unspeakable.

Even the East, the direction of the Sun's Blessings, presents difficulties to overcome. There have been reports of raiders striking at smaller Mantis holdings. The source of this is unclear so far, but it is difficult to imagine it is entirely unrelated to the other issues the Empire faces. The matter of the Phoenix rebellion is much on peoples' minds, even in the press of these other concerns. The actual fate of the clan will likely be determined by the Imperial Winter Court, to be held in the Phoenix city of Mikui Toshi. While both the Clan Champion and the Master of Water were killed, most of their military was able to retreat and are now under the command of the new Champion.

Darkness threatens our glorious land once again. Now is truly the time for heroes to step forward, to keep the light of honor shining bright for all of Rokugan to see!

With Hope in Honor, my Friends and Comrades in Arms.

Otomo Yusuke

Player Handout #2: A Vision of Storms

The blinding light clears from your eyes after a moment, leaving a painful after image seared deep. Blinking to clear them, the world looks... strange.

The raindrops have stopped. They hang suspended in midair. Somewhere, far off, there is the cry of a bird. Nearby, an old man sits on a fallen tree, a man you are sure was not there a moment ago. A massive warrior who looks... tired.

“Strange winds blow across these plains. Foul winds. Dark days are coming for you. What lies ahead will take all your strength, and maybe more.”

He sighs and hefts his massive axe onto his shoulders. “Even though the battle rages between humanity and the dark realm, there are some who see the tumult as opportunity. A chance to... maneuver their pieces upon the board.”

His gaze sweeps across the plains to the south. “My uncle and the ten gaijin put their plans into motion while the empire struggles against monsters. Do not trust them, their ambitions serve only themselves.”

The old man rises and gives you a nod, his black hair stained with grey. “Good luck, samurai. You will need it.”

The raindrops splash onto your face.
There is no old man. The treestump is empty.

Lightning cracks somewhere further off on the plain, then another, yet further, and another, echoing across the open fields as the storm continues to roll across the land.

Player Handout #3: The Puzzle of the Winds

Any module that contains a significant number of NPCs that the PCs encounter should have at least one list that can be handed to the players. Court modules in particular benefit from this, though investigative or exploration modules may have more than one handout to allow for the PCs to meet groups of characters. The descriptions should be brief, and contain public information and titles or positions held. No game mechanics other than Glory or School (but probably not School Rank) should be included.