

Burning Dreams

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

Month of Hantei, 1344 (Late Spring)

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Investigation, Intrigue, Supernatural
Part Four of Shadowed Dreams.

Well, well, well, if it isn't the consequences of my own actions.

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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

Last spring during an attack on Shiro Hiuma Isawa Miki, a powerful priest of the Phoenix, fell to the influence of Jigoku. She also arranged for her companion Isawa Kai to be reanimated as a powerful undead. Miki and Kai have reentered the Empire to take revenge on the remaining people she blames for the actions of the Phoenix and to acquire a set of ancient writings and artifacts belonging to the Isawa which could constitute an incredible weapon.

Concurrently, the lost Phoenix city of Gisei Toshi was discovered by happenstance. Unable to bear the idea of a city going untaxed for thirteen hundred years, the Imperial Bureaucracy swung into motion to conduct a thorough audit, much to the annoyance of the Phoenix.

Thanks to the sudden influx of strangers, Miki and Kai were able to slip into the city undetected. However they found their targets were thoroughly warded. They decided to create a series of other conflicts to create a distraction while they worked on breaching the protections around their real target. The thefts seem trivial and unrelated, and easy to pass off as failures to file documents correctly or as strife between the auditors and the resident Phoenix. However, one Phoenix inquisitor has become suspicious.

Asako Munetaka suspects that the thefts are related, rather than isolated events or mere clerical errors. As he is far too busy dealing with the fallout from last summer's events and the impending invasion, in addition to not trusting either the Emerald or Jade magistrate organizations, so he has elected to enlist the PCs to handle the investigation.

The PCs will be required to travel to Gisei Toshi and investigate the latest thefts. Miki has spent the better part of two months in the city using her illusion magic to impersonate various samurai and stir up trouble to

provide cover for her thefts. The PCs will likely need to both unravel the thefts and hopefully some of the chaos by realizing that illusion magic is at play.

Meanwhile, the hatamoto to the Master of Air is attempting to regain control of the situation before her mistress arrives tomorrow.

Miki's plan is to lure the Master of Air into the open and kill her, then escape back to the Shadowlands with her stolen scrolls. However, the Earth Kami's rejection of Kai has led her to resent the Shadowlands. At the moment Miki tries to put her plan into action, Kai smashes an ancient ruby and unleashes Hakai, Onisu of Death, who has promised to end her unlife in exchange for setting him free.

Miki will attempt to escape with her family while Hakai will try to kill the Master of Air. Whether the PCs fight Miki or Hakai is up to them.

Upkeep

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

Character Notes

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

- Friendly Kami: Earth
- Onisu's Mark, Yume-do's Judgement, Consumed: Knowledge, Cursed by the Realm: Yume-do, Gullible, Phobia, Soft-Hearted, Wrath of the Kami, Driven

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 2 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 **25**. 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, or in the case of ronin accepted payment to assist Asako Munetaka (5 koku).

The city of Otsan Uchi has healed quickly from last summer's violence and bustles with activity as you make your way to the Phoenix embassy.

With only a short delay, you are shown into the office of Asako Munetaka, who is apparently some sort of magistrate - your instructions on the point were very vague.

Munetaka's desk is covered in papers, and behind it is a middle-aged man with hair beginning to show grey, and with noticeable bags under his eyes.

He gestures to the chairs around his table as he fetches a teapot from a small burner.

"Thank you for coming samurai. I realize circumstances in the empire are dire, so I am grateful that you would make time to help me address what might seem a very mundane matter. But these are not normal times, so I have been compelled to look outwards for assistance."

He sighs, "I suppose I should start with the basics.

As you may be aware, the Phoenix city of Gisei Toshi was recently... noted... by Imperial Authorities, along with a... potential accounting inaccuracy. Accordingly, an audit was authorized by the Imperial Bureaucracy, and representatives of the tax office descended upon the city. For the past few months, they have been at work, under the guidance of Otomo Yokano. Things have been tense, to say the least."

"I received a report a few days ago that some irregularities had been noticed, and a lethal duel resulted. As I am sure you can surmise, tax audits do not normally result in lethal duels, so I investigated further. Apparently this is the third instance of either a duel or an accusation of criminal behavior being levied during the audit. The latest duel was over some historical documents that 'went missing' during the audit and that has me gravely concerned."

"I hate to ask this of you at time such as this, but Gisei Toshi houses some of my clan's oldest and most important historical documents and relics. If things are going missing, well, I need to understand what is happening. Whether there is something malicious afoot, or if it's just bad record keeping, or individuals looking for excuses to settle grudges, or perhaps someone looking to destabilize the Phoenix when we most need unity to deal with the greater threat. I realize this sounds like an internal Phoenix matter, but with the eyes of the Otomo on my clan and an audit that is composed of representatives from almost all the other

clans, I believe that no one would give any credence to the results if I deployed solely internal resources.”

“I suspect someone is trying to disrupt the smooth functioning of the audit. Can I count on you to assist me?”

- Are we yoriki?
“Of a sort. You will bear the seal of my organization.”
- Are you a magistrate?
“Of a sort. We are technically a sub-group of the Emerald Magistrates, though that tie has become tenuous over the centuries. More usefully, we have jurisdiction as Phoenix magistrates, somewhat, in this case.”
If the PCs press for a more specifics:
Munetaka is a senior member of the Asako Inquisitors. In the wake of Norimichi’s attack, the Inquisitors have been given responsibility for keeping watch for any further internal Phoenix threats to the throne, in addition to their normal duties policing corruption and maho.
- What do you want us to do?
“I am afraid I have very few specifics. If you could ascertain the location of that missing ‘historical documents’, that would be helpful. My associate, Isawa Noburo, should be able to provide more specifics. You can find him in the city. He has been acting as an envoy of sorts.”
- What can you tell us about the document that went missing?
“Not much, I am afraid. Apparently it was very old and of significant historical curiosity but other than that was supposedly quite ordinary. My associate, Isawa Noburo, could probably provide more information.”
- Why aren’t you going yourself?
“My organization has been given significant additional duties in the wake of last summer’s events. As you can see <he waves his hand at the papers on his desk> I have many cases that I must see to here, so I cannot go galivanting off to Phoenix lands on a hunch. Fortunately, however, I can send you.”
- Do you think the events of the duels or crimes are related?
“I do not know. I am worried they might be, but I’m also very worried that they’re not, and I don’t know which is worse. It could be someone looking for an excuse to settle grudges, or a thief taking advantage of a rare

opportunity to enter the city, or some malefactor looking to stir up trouble. Or maybe all of these, or something else entirely.”

- Why aren’t the Phoenix investigating this internally?
“Otomo Yokano has demanded that he and his auditors be given a very wide berth, and with the individual matters ‘settled’ via duels or convictions there has been neither call nor opportunity. As outsiders you are best poised to look into the matter while avoiding arousing Yokano’s ire.”
- Who was involved in the duel?
I don’t know specifics; it was apparently a Phoenix and a Dragon. My report says that the Phoenix won but had no other details.
- Do you have any suspects?
“None. As I said before, it could be many individuals, or it could be a single person stirring up trouble. It could be individuals looking to settle grudges from last summer, it could be a thief taking an opportunity. Perhaps my greatest fear is that is it someone who cannot let go of the hatreds which gave rise to last summer’s events.”
- What can you tell us about Gisei Toshi?
“The city is mostly a collection of libraries, schools, and temples. It houses some of our oldest records and historical documents, as well as much of the clan’s collected wisdom, as well as, err, uh, a few items of historical curiosity. No one from outside the Phoenix has visited in hundreds of years, so you can imagine the situation inside the city now with samurai from every clan traipsing about.”
- What can you tell us about Otomo Yokano?
“I only know him by reputation and by reports. He is by all accounts an honorable man, but also one that is incredibly stern and exacting. His entire career has been in the imperial tax offices, and he has supposedly unraveled a number of very complicated cases of tax evasion.”
- How is the audit going?
“Things are... tense. This is the first-time outsiders have been in Gisei Toshi in hundreds of years, and now there are samurai from almost every clan, asking questions and making demands. I think most of the Phoenix involved realize the stakes of noncompliance, but I don’t think anyone there is happy about it. The scholars, librarians, monks, and priests which make their home there are not used to be dictated to by outsiders.”

- How are the Phoenix reacting to the audit?
“As far as I can tell, there has been some grumbling and some ruffled feathers, but they have been complying with Otomo Yokano’s requests.”

Once the PCs have finished their questions:

“A final word of warning: No one that I am aware of has dared directly oppose the authority of the imperial tax assessors. It seems the only thing truly guaranteed in life is taxes. But above all else, this cannot descend into chaos. Not after what happened last summer. If the imperials decide that the Phoenix are plotting against them, while a war is on, well, I don’t know what would happen next, but it would not be good.”

Munetaka will provide them with any mundane provisions they may require and if they do not already possess horses he will temporarily supply the PCs with steeds.

Give the PCs a chance to collect anything they need from Otosan Uchi before they head for Gisei Toshi.

Part One: Gisei Toshi

Travel up the coast from Otosan Uchi is swift and unremarkable until you reach the borders of Phoenix lands. There, instead of the normal guard station manned by Phoenix bushi you would have expected there is a mix of Phoenix troops along with Lion, Crane, and Crab bushi wearing the mon of the Imperial Legions. Your papers are dutifully expected, and you are waved through, leaving the obvious tension between the guards behind.

The roads of the Phoenix, much like the Imperial roads, are in excellent repair, but the similarity stops there. While the marks of the Spider’s attack had largely been wiped clean from the Imperial and Crane coasts, the Phoenix villages and farms are clearly still damaged. The progress of reconstruction has obviously been slow and uneven, though once you turn to the road to Pale Oak Castle you are able to leave the devastation behind. North, through a narrow pass and then a broad tunnel in the mountains and into a hidden valley, you emerge to the sight of the high ancient walls of Gisei Toshi.

Passing shrine after shrine, library after library, and dojo after dojo you finally arrive at your inn, with no name adoring the building, only a hanging wooden placard with a blue fish.

The innkeeper gives you a low bow, “Oh, samurai. Welcome. I... umm, there has been some letters for you. I think one Noburo-sama left for you. He left this morning on some personal business and asked not to be disturbed, but uhh... I’ll have a messenger find him.”

Give the players **Handout 2: Letters** and **Handout 3: Noburo’s summary of persons**.

The innkeeper has noodles and tea ready for the PCs and can give them basic directions to any of the points of interest in this section. If they want to do so before starting their investigation, they can also take a hot bath and change clothes.

If they ask about Isawa Noburo, the innkeeper will confirm that he is staying here, but he left early this morning but doesn’t know where he went.

Give the PCs time to visit a couple locations, but not enough

The Markets

There is nothing here related to the investigation, and it is a very modest market.

There are very few interesting goods here since the city sees very little commerce. What is available tends to be of a religious nature, with lots of curios, supplies for temples, and other accoutrements one would expect for making a pilgrimage to a shrine.

While not excellent for buying things, the market is an optimal place to gather rumors:

Rumors

The following information is available with a Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness roll. A PC from the local clan may be granted a Free Raise on this roll (or certain Advantages may apply).

- 10: These candles are ideal for devotionals to the fortunes! And very reasonably priced!
- 15: Rebuilding has been hard. We lost a lot of people two summers ago. Well, not here, but on the coast. There wasn’t a lot to eat that year. Or the year after. Things were hard. Where were the imperials back then?
- 20: We haven’t ever had non-Phoenix here before. It is... strange. But good for business!
- 25: Lots of people have been asking questions. Daidoji Isao and Chise Takiyo wanted to inspect

my records. Do you know when the last time someone demanded to inspect my records was? So rude.

- 35: There was a duel last week! It was between an out-of-town Phoenix and one of the auditors. And the auditor died! I think it was Shiba Yori. She's famous!

NPCs from Noburo's list of people:

See the relevant list in Appendix 3 for what the various audit participants know about the situation.

Otomo Yokano:

If a PC wishes to speak with Otomo Yokano at this time, his secretary will politely inform the PC that they can make an appointment.

If they give their names, he will note that they already have a dinner reservation with Yokano and is currently busy with the business of coordinating the audit and is quite interested in speaking with them – he will give no information on why Yokano will speak with them and will defer all other inquiries to his superior.

Shiba Yori:

Shiba Yori's residence is in a clearly upscale neighborhood, meant for visiting Phoenix dignitaries.

A servant invites you to wait for a few moments while he fetches the renowned duelist, then bids you enter a parlor appointed with tasteful but generic furniture. Well-made but entirely impersonal.

Shiba Yori, quietly enters from a side room, gives you a nod, and then sits while her servant pours tea.

“What is this about, samurai?”

Yori is quiet and unassuming, but after nearly three dozen death duels has grown blasé about the number of lives she has ended and become comfortable with her role as a tool for ending lives for political purposes. The emotions to emphasize in the PCs interactions with her should be cold detachment. None of this matters to her, and so long as the PCs don't get in her way, neither do they.

She was politically tied to the former Master of Water, but ultimately was not a true believer in his cause. As a result, the new administration of the clan has sidelined her, though she is far too useful a tool to discard entirely. She has been quietly obsessed with perfecting her dueling technique, and desires a day when she can finally kill Doji Makibesu who she blames for many of her clan's woes.

She views everything else as a steppingstone towards that day, which means she needs powerful sponsors, and so she obeys whoever is currently in power in the clan. She has grown to enjoy killing Kakita duelists, since each win gives her more insight into the techniques that Makibesu will invariably use.

She was assigned to the city to ensure that any lethal duels end in the Phoenix's favor. It is Isawa Toroki's job to see to the Phoenix's interests in this matter, and as far as she is aware Toroki has been instructed to cooperate and facilitate the audit and see that it ends as quickly as possible with minimal damage to the clan.

Her assignment is to ensure that any potential scandals are contained, and that Toroki is free to do his job.

She does not know what caused the issue with Kitsuki Shikaku, and frankly she doesn't care. She didn't bother to ask. Toroki knows; you'd have to ask him.

The Phoenix that was arrested was a minor functionary. The functionary worked in the Asako archives, but Yori never bothered to find out what he did.

The Asako Archives:

This is where the latest theft happened. Any NPC can direct the PCs here if they need to find it.

The Asako archives are a hushed place, scholars roam rows of shelves filled with scrolls and other curios. In an open area near the center, a pair of scorpion samurai study texts, one reading at the table while the other paces back and forth behind him.

“What is this about, samurai?” A voice rings out from a desk near the entrance, drawing your attention to an elderly Phoenix samurai who looks preemptively irate at your presence.

“Do you have permission to be here?”

This is Asako Yoshito, the custodian of the Asako Archives. He is very protective of the archives and will refuse the PCs entry unless they are a member of the audit (they are not, though they could choose to lie about it – his Awareness / Investigation is 8k5).

He will answer some basic questions if the PCs want:

- Kitsuki Shikaku was accused of stealing some first century texts from the archives by Isawa Toroki and killed in the resulting duel, though the texts were not recovered. Asako Yoshito suspects that the Scorpion were actually to blame for stealing them and has

had his assistants watching them constantly ever since.

- Yoshito's protégé, Asako Kotone, was killed by Shosuro Hasano in a duel. The Scorpion demanded entry to the archives when cleaning was in progress, citing a source that said the Phoenix were concealing documents. Kotone denied them and issued the challenge but was cut down by Shosuro Hasano.
- Yoshito strongly dislikes Otomo Yokano, and thinks this audit was only coordinated to spite the Phoenix. During a war is a foolish time to tie up resources determining taxes, so he believes this is political retaliation for Norimichi's actions last summer.
- If the PCs ask who supports Norimichi in the city, Yoshito will claim that the only Norimichi supporters he knows of were Shiba Yori and Isawa Toroki, but both denounced Norimichi's actions after the battle last summer and claimed they didn't realize he'd go so far.
- Yoshito blames Daidoji Isao and the Crane for causing the circumstances that led to the attack on Otsan Uchi. The Crane stole the Miya's Blessing from the Imperials, and the Phoenix were given nothing to help them rebuild. Yoshito didn't agree with Norimichi's methods or choices, but the Phoenix were wronged by the other clans.
- The scrolls that were taken contained 'historical records' from the life of Isawa; they were the fourth installment from a set of five.

If a PC gains access to the archives (likely by lying), then they can research in the stacks while supervised by a Phoenix.

There are many texts present spanning the entire history of the Empire but finding any given text would be exceedingly difficult. If the PCs are trying to figure out what was stolen, an Investigation (Search) / Intelligence is required at TN 40. Success will find the place the scrolls were taken from – they were records of the life of Isawa from the time before the Tribe of Isawa pledged its loyalty to Shiba. In case the PCs did not ask before, it was the fourth scroll in a set of five and described the magical practices of the tribe from the pre-kami era.

Isawa Toroki:

Iaawa Toroki is not seeing visitors today. His office is easy to find, but his assistant will reiterate that he is currently busy and the PCs should come back tomorrow.

Finding Isawa Noburo:

Noburo has gone to the shrine to Emma-O to pray, but basically cannot be found until after dinner.

If the PCs put in a concerted effort to tracking him down, feel free to rearrange the scenes, but do your best to get them to start the investigation instead of searching for Noburo.

After the PCs visit one or two places or people, it should be time to attend their dinner invitation.

Refusing an invitation from Otomo Yokano is certainly possible, but extremely unwise. They will gain Yokano as a Sworn Enemy, and no members of the audit will speak with them for the remainder of the module. This may impact their ability to complete the module successfully.

Part Two: Time for dinner

The market district of Gisei Toshi is quite sparse, and the shops present clearly cater primarily towards religious visitors. The *Repose of the Elemental Dragon*, a clearly upscale eatery, has an elaborate carving of the elemental dragon of fire above its doors.

Your arrival was clearly anticipated, as a well-dressed peasant bows to you as you enter, then ushers you to a private dining room without stopping to take your names. He gives a final low bows and retreats, leaving you alone for a few minutes before a tall, thin, and exceptionally severe looking man enters, his facial features pointed and sharp. He gives each of you an evaluating glance, waves a hand to bid you sit in case you had not already done so, and then sits down at the head of the table.

“Good evening. Please, sit, let us have dinner. The noodles here are excellent. Tell me about yourselves; I do not believe I have had the pleasure of making your acquaintance in the past.”

If the PCs eat the spicy noodles, they must roll Etiquette / Stamina at TN20 or lose face due to the heat, costing them one pip of honor.

Yokano is a skilled courtier, but his purpose is to find out what the PCs are present.

He should ask the PCs some leading questions like:

- What do you feel has been your most impactful choice? (Not something they did, or were forced to do / asked to do, but something they chose)

- What do you think the future of the Phoenix is?
- If you felt your clan was suffering because of imperial neglect, and you could choose your clan's path, what would you do?
- In times of crisis, should all laws be followed, or only some laws? If the latter, which laws can lapse?

If the PCs probe him in response, especially in relation to his take on the audit or taxes in general, compose an appropriate and circuitous response; he is after all a very skilled courtier.

His value system is roughly:

- Disobedience to the emperor is flatly unacceptable, as is flouting his laws; to this end he intends to remind the Phoenix that they do not have special permission because they "know better" to hide a city or its people from tax collection, but only to the extent that the law prescribes. To go beyond that would be no better than the Phoenix, or any other criminal.
- It is the responsibility of all samurai to administer the emperor's lands in the most efficient manner possible. If a lord is failing to administer their lands properly, those lands should be taken away from them.
- Most 'local issues' such as poverty, hunger or minor property crimes are usually systemic in nature and reflect failures by the lord in question to properly administer their lands. Such lords should probably have their lands taken, even if an underlying accepts 'responsibility' for the failure in question.
- To properly administer the emperor's domains, his servants must usually evaluate causes beyond the obvious or superficial. Even if no crime has been committed, sometimes corrective action must be taken to ensure the smooth functioning of the empire. Incompetent vassals and incompetent lords must be removed from positions of authority. They don't need to be killed or imprisoned, but samurai who fail in their assignments should be shorn of their responsibilities.

After the PCs have been probed, he should come to his point:

Yokano smiles and puts down his chop sticks. "Well, quite interesting dinner companions. I rarely get to be visited by such famous persons. But I am afraid with dinner done we must proceed to business."

"I know you are here at the behest of Asako Munetaka. I also know his agent in the city, Isawa Noburo, does not seem to be assisting you with your investigation and instead is at the temple of Emma-O, and has been there all day today, and all yesterday. So, what is your purpose here?"

Whether the PCs answer honestly or not is up to them.

Once they have done so, Yokano will thank them for the conversation, and promptly leave the table.

Otomo Yokano nods, "because Munetaka-san has a reputation for only investigating when it is warranted and bringing cases to successful conclusions, I will allow you to proceed. You have two days, and then you will leave the city. Good evening, samurai."

Yokano rises, gives you a nod, and then leaves the table without waiting for response.

As the PCs are leaving the restaurant, a messenger will arrive, requesting that they meet with Isawa Noburo at their earliest convenience at the table of Emma-O.

Part Three: Big Sad

The temple of Emma-O is a foreboding place in the daytime, constructed of black woods and grey stone, sharp corners and harsh angles. At night, in a strange city as fog rolls down the mountain, it becomes weighty, disconnected from the world, as voices far away echo to you through the fog.

No candles or lanterns light the entrance, but once you step within the flicking lights of braziers illuminate the twilight hall.

At the far end kneels a man in his late 20's, a streak of white in his hair but otherwise quite handsome. He rises as you enter, and nods. "Forgive my absence samurai. I... things have not... I apologize. Asako-sama instructed me to help you with the investigation, and I fear I was not much help to you today, nor will I be able to be tomorrow."

"It is the anniversary of my wife's death, as well as the time to mark the loss of many of my former family, so I have come here to pray for her soul, as well as the souls of my relatives that perished. So many have been lost lately. But I apologize, is there anything I can do to help your investigation?"

If the PCs want to ask what he's talking about:

- His wife, Isawa Miki, as well as her best friend Isawa Kai, were killed in the Battle of Broken Dawn last year in the Crab Lands. A month before that, his former family's castle was attacked and destroyed and many of his relatives were killed. If the PCs press, he refers to Kyuden Miya, as he used to be Miya Noburo.
- Noburo was told his wife died in battle, fighting the Shadowlands.
- He has a young daughter. She is only two but can hear the kami already. She was sent to the western phoenix lands to begin training. Noburo is very proud of her.

About the investigation:

- Noburo suspects that more than one person is agitating, but he doesn't have solid leads on who or why.
- If the audit fails dramatically, it could bring even harsher imperial reprisal.
- It is not necessary to arrest anyone to resolve the situation; convincing either Yokano or the local emerald magistrate to expel them so they stop the disruptions would be sufficient.

Make sure that Noburo works into the conversation that he thinks there is more than one person agitating to sabotage the situation and increase tensions. He doesn't know who, or why, but there's a bigger plan afoot.

Likewise, **make sure that Noburo emphasizes to the PCs that they don't need to convict anyone of a crime** – Having the problem samurai thrown out of town is sufficient. The objective is to make sure the audit is completed with a minimum of trouble, not necessarily to arrest criminals.

Once the PCs have finished their questions for him, he will invite them to join him in reflecting on those that they have lost, who's souls Emma-O now judges.

After listening to whatever the PCs wish to say before lost friends or family, he will retire for the evening and suggest the PCs do the same.

Part Four: He tricked me into living well and letting go

Two armies, both samurai, one with banners of glossy black and the other with shining emerald, glare at one other from two hundred paces. Killing distance. No one moves.

The wind sweeps across the plain. The tall grass sways.

Two figures, alike in almost every way, face each other, just over a blade's distance apart. Both wear the mon of Toturi. One in black, one in emerald. Father and son.

They move. Both draw. Both cut. Both fall.

Silence as both corpses lay on the ground.

Then a laugh. Cold and cruel.

And you awaken in a cold sweat, moments before the rooster heralds the dawn of lord sun.

The vision is meant to freak the PCs out more than stupefy them. If they begin chasing down their weird dream, the innkeeper should helpfully remind them of their agenda by asking how the investigation is going while serving their breakfast, to make conversation. If the PCs persist, he will suggest it was perhaps the spicy noodles they had for dinner.

At this point the PCs should have a lead or two in their investigation into why things have been going wrong.

If the PCs reach the start of the second day without a plan of action, or if they're waffling, a discussion with Isawa Noburo to remind them that they only need to have a reasonable argument to expel a problematic samurai, not necessarily to arrest someone. The goal is to get the audit completed, not solve crimes.

The two primary mundane culprits are Chise Takiyo and Isawa Toroki.

At this point they should have no concrete reason to suspect the disguised Tsukai.

If the PCs want more information they are free to visit any of the locations from Part 1

Otherwise, they can interview either of the two suspects.

Interviewing Toroki:

Isawa Toroki's office is in a very bare building; clearly converted only recently into office space from some other more mundane usage.

The sideboard of his office is largely bare, with only a string of prayer beads with the kanji for the elements and a single medal of commendation in a frame adorning it.

The man's hair is dark black and slicked back around his traditional topknot. His expression is a mixture of dislike and disdain as he waves to a small stack of

paper, in front of him on the table, “How can I help you samurai? As you can see, I am reviewing these reports to ensure their accuracy and so am quite busy.”

If the PCs ask about the items on his sideboard, he will explain that they are keepsakes he was awarded for his meritorious service.

An Investigation (Notice) / Perception at TN 15 will pick up that the medal bears the mon of Isawa Norimichi, the former master of water, and the prayer beads likewise are stamped with the elemental kanji of water.

If the PCs push Toroki on that point, or the origin of these items, he will instantly become defensive. Both were awards from Isawa Norimichi for exceptional service on two different occasions for his efficacy in the courts, lobbying on Norimichi’s behalf. If the PCs push the matter, he will defend them as ‘innocent reminders of his own service’ and rebuff any accusation that his loyalties remain to the disgraced master of water (this is a lie – Toroki believes all of Norimichi’s actions were justified).

If the PCs ask about the stolen scroll, Toroki will lie and say he does not know where it is (his Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness roll is 9k4, opposed by Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness). If the PCs conspire to search his office (with or without permission), an Investigation (Search) / Perception roll at TN 20 will find the scroll placed carefully in a draw of his cupboard.

There are two main avenues of approach:

If the PCs can provoke Toroki into causing a scene (Intimidation, or another reasonable social skill, at TN 40, 30 if he’s already been jostled by having his loyalty to Norimichi pointed out) he will begin ranting about outsider interference in his clan’s cities and affairs, as well as how they keep causing pointless problems. The outsiders should just leave!

This is not quite a confession, but it should be sufficient to prod the PCs into realizing he’s one of the sources of problems.

Convincing Toroki to give up his feud:

Convincing Toroki to give up his involvement is extraordinarily difficult. He believes the Phoenix were justified in seeking redress for their mistreatment, blames the Crane and Doji Makibesu specifically for the suffering in the Phoenix lands, and assumes this audit is yet another overreach by the Emerald Champion.

The only course to convince him to stand down is to emphasize that fighting the Imperials here will only result in more suffering for the Phoenix people and peasants. Making such an appeal to Compassion

requires a Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness roll at TN 50. Success will cause Toroki to realize his actions have caused more problems for his clan, and he will leave the city peacefully.

Interviewing Chise Takiyo:

Note – if the PCs are simply here to seek information and don’t yet suspect Takiyo, use the information in Appendix 2.

In case the PCs did not interview him earlier, Takiyo is set up in a temporary office between the Merchant District and the Governor’s office and is reviewing census records.

A canny PC (or one with precise memory) will recall that fraudulent census records were the cause of the seppuku of a Phoenix courtier.

If asked about the matter, Takiyo will note that the fraudulent document entered showed a difference between the population the Phoenix reported (and paid tax on) and the actual population of the city. If the PCs press him on whether seppuku was an appropriate response, Takiyo will smugly state that it was – While Takiyo feels this is the case, normally it would not be.

Takiyo is clearly pleased that the Phoenix courtier died. If the PCs ask if he was responsible for finding the document (or bringing it to Saito), he will freely admit that he was. He has no reason to hide this fact; he simply brought a false document to the attention of the appropriate authorities. This is technically true, though an Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness at TN 35 or Lore: Law / Intelligence at TN 20 will bring up that this was a significant overreach given the nature of the problem; Takiyo was looking for a ‘gotcha’ to pin on someone rather than conducting a useful audit.

If the PCs ask if he caused the incident at the Asako Archives, he will play dumb and declare that how was he to know the issue would result in a duel to the death. This is another lie of omission; he was fully aware the matter would immediately escalate from his previous dealings with Asako Kotone.

Convincing Chise Takiyo to give up his feud:

Takiyo would need to be convinced that his actions are endangering the empire instead of solely punishing the Phoenix. The PCs will need to make him see beyond the immediate problem of his vendetta. This requires a Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness roll at TN 40.

Arresting or expelling someone:

If the PCs want to arrest or expel either Toroki or Takiyo, they will need the magistrate Usagi Saito or the head of the audit, Otomo Yokano to agree.

Either will be somewhat skeptical, but both are willing to listen. Arresting Toroki is much easier than Takiyo, since it is almost impossible to point to a law that Takiyo broke without lying.

Convincing one of them to order Toroki's arrest or a search warrant for his office (which will turn up the stolen scroll and immediately result in his arrest) requires a Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness roll at TN 40.

If they have testimony from multiple sources, the TN decreases by a further 5.

If the PCs recover the stolen scroll from Toroki, the TN to have him arrested or expelled is reduced to 10.

The TN to have either man expelled from the city is 30, with testimony from multiple samurai again reducing the TN by 5. At your discretion a particularly good argument for why the NPC in question is hindering the audit beyond a reasonable degree could reduce it by another 5.

If the PCs hit a logjam because they feel like they need enough evidence to convince either man of a crime and don't have it, Isawa Noburo should remind them that they don't necessarily need to arrest either one; the goal is avoiding disruption to the audit so expelling them from the city should solve the problem, and that only requires convincing their superiors.

If the PCs manage to arrest or expel both, move on to Part Five. Otherwise move on to Part Five when you feel they have hit a roadblock, either because their investigation has hit a dead end or because they have failed to convince both authorities to deal with either culprit.

Part Five: I didn't sign up for this

As you walk down the streets, a peasant comes running up to you, face red and out of breath.

"Samurai-sama, I" he stops for a moment to bow and catch his breath. "I, I have a message. Your presence is requested" he stops and coughs, "Your presence is requested at the governor's residence."

Presuming the PCs go.

The Governor's residence looks a strange hybrid of samurai dwelling and shrine, with statues of fortunes lining the entry.

Within, three men stand, clearly already engaged in discussion. Yokano's voice is distinctive, "I know nothing of this matter, Takehide-san, and have given specific instructions to my auditors to see that this does not happen."

A raspy voice from an overweight man, the local governor Asako Takehide, responds, "This is the second time this has occurred, Otomo-san." The honorific obviously intended to bite.

Yokano's voice becomes quiet and pointed "Are you accusing my auditors of theft?"

Both men stop their conversation and look to you, while the third man in the room, Usagi Saito, steps forward. "These are the samurai I spoke of. I am told they are here at the behest of one of the Asako Inquisitors. I propose we enlist them to solve the matter, since they are already tasked with its investigation. The inquisitors are members of both your organizations, so surely we can agree that they have no inherent conflict of interest."

Yokano turns to you with a harsh glare, before nodding. "I acknowledge that the Asako inquisitors are indeed a branch of the Emerald Office."

Saito nods, then turns to you, "Three more scrolls have gone missing from the archives. Dangerous ones, old spells. They need to be returned."

- What was on the scrolls?
Spells from near or before the dawn of the empire.
- Who has been in the archive lately?
I don't know, you would need to ask the archivists.

The archivists know:

- Four people have been in the library today – the two scorpion and the two Agasha.
- The scorpion left just before the theft was discovered; the archivists suspect that the Scorpion were responsible.
- They did not see dragon leave; they're probably still in the archive someone. They didn't make a thorough check for people.
- The scrolls were stolen sometime today, between their routine check this morning and their check about an hour ago.

Evidence:

- A set of footprints through the dust show where two people walked up to the shelves, paused, and then walked to the wall and the footprints stop.
- The wall in question is an exterior wall
- The kami will confirm that two people took the scrolls and used magic to walk through the earth to leave the library.
- The footprints resurface in the alleyway and tracking them to the southern gate of the city requires Investigation / Perception at TN 35 or Hunting (Tracking) / Perception at TN 20.
- Asking the gate guards will inform the PCs that a pair of Dragon left the city about an hour ago, heading south, and they match the descriptions of the two Dragon shugenja if the PCs think to ask.

The thieves were Agasha Kimiko aka Isawa Kai and Agasha Tori aka Isawa Miki. The thieves have fled to Pale Oak Castle, and Isawa Noburo has been kidnapped.

If the PCs get wrongfooted by the suspicion of the Scorpion, the twins are at lunch at a restaurant nearby and will helpfully note that they were in the central room of the library all day and there was at least one Asako that can attest to this..

Part Six: This would be easier if we had a flying bison

The ride south to Pale Oak Castle is swift; leaving Gisei Toshi seems to take much less time than it did to reach the city, the forest and mountain tunnel flying past as you gallop. The overutilized fields of the countryside and the occasional building, still half destroyed building, speed by.

By nightfall, you reach the gates of the castle, and the guards give you pause for a few moments while they confer before admitting you.

You are ushered swiftly into a central chamber, where a man in a tall courtier's cap paces next to the vacant chair normally occupied by a daimyo.

His voice barely conceals his anger, "I am Shiba Akemi, hatamoto to the Mistress of Air, Isawa Himeko. The guards tell me you bear imperial papers. I am very busy finding ways to prevent our peasants

from starving, so be quick about your business- why are you here at this late hour?"

Presumably the PCs will explain themselves.

The Hatamoto should be very skeptical of their story and challenge them on every point of evidence. Also, he should not-very-subtly accuse them of being tools of Kazetora and the Imperials, here to punish the Phoenix. He is furious with the various Imperials and non-Phoenix, and openly resents the PCs for barging into the castle.

Some example retorts:

- No Dragon have arrived here in weeks; our last guests were a trio of Phoenix – two Isawa and a Shiba, along with their servant. We have not seen anyone matching your descriptions.
- We are very busy; the last group from the Imperial Advisor's offices reallocated almost all our guards to Lion lands, we don't need you traipsing around looking for red herrings or demanding more from our resources.
- Our peasants are on the verge of starvation; we still have not recovered from the Spider's attack, no thanks to anyone else, and the imperials keep making more and more demands on us. No one cares if our peasants starve.

This is a role-playing challenge; there is no mechanic needed to convince Akemi to help, or at least to stop impeding the PCs.

He is enraged at the Crane and sees the Emerald Magistrates as just another tool of Doji Makibesu to harass the Phoenix.

If the PCs suggest that the latest guests were tainted infiltrators, he will sarcastically allow the PCs through, "Well, perhaps if most of our guards hadn't been reassigned to the front. By all means, go ahead they are in the central gardens."

They could of course take offense and force the Hatamoto to defend himself.

He knows the most recent visitors (as he should mention at some point in the argument) were Phoenix and have gone to meet with the Mistress of Air in the central courtyard, near the castle's eponymous tree.

Eventually, the PCs should be allowed to either convince him to stand down and let them meet the visitors, or they will need to take offense and challenge him. His function is to present the Phoenix grievances and then let the PCs proceed.

Part Seven: Death Unleashed

The central garden of Pale Oak castle is a picture of calm. Or it should be.

The Mistress of Air stands with teeth gritted as the air kami whirl around her, flinging themselves forward from her hands to meet a similar deluge from her opponent, a lovely young woman dressed in the orange robes of the Isawa, her face marred with black lines running from the corners of her eyes and out across her face, clear signs of the taint of Jigoku.

A single other woman, looking morose and clearly undead, glances between a large ruby in her hands and the massive tree that gives the castle its name.

A group of Shiba lie dead on the ground as a single bushi in the orange armor of the Shiba with glowing red eyes and pasty white skin wipes their blood from his blade. Dark shadows flow into the armor of the fallen Shiba, lifting it away to don it themselves.

Isawa Noburo lies bound on the ground, wearing the clothes of a servant instead of the kimono of a Phoenix. He begins to struggle as he sees you and manages to shout out “That... creature! That used to be Miki, my wife! I think she’s undead!” He is swiftly silenced by a kick from the Shiba.

The woman, apparently Isawa Miki, looks immediately to you as she strains against the Mistress of Air, talking through gritted teeth, “Woshunji, Kai, deal with the intruders.”

The Shiba, Woshunji apparently, advances towards you, while the shadows steal the armor from the fallen guards and fall in alongside him.

Fear 3.

Have the PCs roll initiative and begin the combat.

On the first turn, Miki’s initiative will be two higher than the fastest PC and will use her action to blast the Mistress of Air with Maho, knocking her unconscious for the remainder of the fight while yelling “You should have stopped him! You let him ruin our clan!”

Kai will take no action and remain in the defense stance. If PCs attempt to attack Kai, magic used against her will drain into the ground via obvious

earth-magic, and damaging attacks will have minimal effect. The Shiba and Woshunji will interpose themselves between the PCs and the two shugenja, and it should not be meaningfully possible to bypass them in the first round of combat. Big picture – encourage the PCs not to waste time fighting Kai but if they really want to they can, it just won’t be productive.

The rest of the kansen guard and ‘Woshunji’ itself a powerful air kansen wearing the face of a person as a disguise.

During the **Reactions** stage of the first round, Kai will free Hakai:

The undead woman sitting by the tree, Kai, lifts the ruby to her ear, seemingly uninterested in the other people in the garden. Her voice is soft, but audible. “You want me to... okay.”

Kai makes a chopping gesture with her hand, and the old oak tree collapses, falling to the ground with a crash.

Isawa Miki, still panting from the effort of the spell that knocked down the Mistress of Air, gasps out, “Kai, what are you doing? That’s not helping...”

Then a flash of light and a shockwave comes from the ruby, knocking yourselves, Isawa Miki and Kai to the ground. From the ruin of the tree a massive grey skinned man appears, wearing a black and orange kimono. He smiles. “What is it you wish?”

The undead Isawa Kai looks up at him, her expression filled with sadness, “I don’t want to be a monster anymore.”

The massive man nods. His voice is cold and crystal clear. “Done.” Kai’s eyes immediately go dead and her body collapses.

As you regain your feet, Isawa Miki screams “HOW DARE Y...” and then is silenced as with a casual flick the creature sends her flying.

“I am Hakai, the Onisu of death, and I will not be shouted at.” The monster turns to regard you. “The Dark Lord of the Shadowlands and I had a bargain; If I was imprisoned or banished, he was to call me back. A bargain he failed to fulfill. As payment for not ending your lives this moment, I require you to perform a service for me – end his and let him know that one does not idly break an agreement with Hakai.”

The monster smiles, gruesome and wide, then vanishes.

Note: On the second round of combat, unless the situation has gotten well out of hand by the time it's her turn, Miki should cast Burning Dreams, and should spill enough blood to get at least 2 of the needed raises.

Isawa Miki

Tainted Shugenja

School / Insight Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Air) 5, Akutenshi

Initiative: 10k6

Taint Rank: 6

Armor TN: 42 (Defense stance) **Reduction:** 10

Wounds: 220 (Dead) **Invulnerable** (see below)

Attack: 6k4(Dagger, Complex)

Damage: 5k1 (Dagger)

| Air | Earth | Fire | Water | Void |
|----------|-------|------|-------|------|
| 6 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| 0 points | | | | |

Primary Skills:

Defense 5, Spellcraft 7, Lore: Maho 8

Significant Dice Pools:

Spell casting:

Air: 10k8+5. Earth: 10k4. Fire: 10k5. Water: 10k4.

Maho: 10k8.

Miki has access to any given spell, though she is most likely to use either Maho or direct combat spells like Slayer's Knives or No Pure Breaths. She also has some custom spells, detailed below.

Special Mechanics:

Above and Beyond the Elements: All non-Maho spells cast on Isawa Miki are at +20 TN penalty.

Invulnerable – Miki can only be harmed by magic, jade, or Nemuranai weapons.

Mastery of Darkness: Miki can cast Maho spells without spelling blood and knows all Maho spells. If she elects to spill blood, she gains one free raise for every two wounds she inflicts (max of 5). Note that since her allies are kansen they have no blood to spill – only her own blood is available.

Switcheroo: The first time in the combat that Miki is hit, she will swap positions immediately with a PC, who will take the attack roll (and damage if applicable) from that attack.

Hands Free: Miki can cast spells even while grappled.

Custom Spells:

Dark Flight - Maho Air 4 – Mikki can call upon the Air Kansen to lift her into the air and maneuver as they

do. The user can Fly and gains Swift 4. Miki should only resort to this spell when she is being grappled or similarly restrained to temporarily escape the situation, not to escape the combat; She is unwilling to retreat from the fight because she wants to kill the mistress of air and kidnap her husband.

Burning Dreams – Maho Air 5 – Mikki infests the minds of her foes with Air Kansen, manifesting their greatest fears. They are assaulted by visions of their every nightmare, every doubt, and every failure.

Up to 2 targets (raises for an extra target per raise) suffer an immediate Fear 6 effect for their next turn if they fail. At that point, they can attempt the Fear check again, but it is reduced to a Fear 4 effect. The Fear continues to degrade by 2 each round until the affected character either passes or it reaches the fourth turn in which case it ends automatically.

Additionally:

If any affected PC has the Onisu's Mark disadvantage, they automatically gain the Cursed by the Realm: Yume-do disadvantage, regardless of whether they pass the initial Fear roll.

For any PC that fails the initial Fear roll, they must make a Raw Willpower roll at the end of the encounter at a TN of 23.

If that PC already has the Cursed by the Realm: Yume-do disadvantage, it worsens, and they now require 12 hours of sleep each night to recover void, instead of 10.

If that PC does not already have the Cursed by the Realm: Yume-do disadvantage, they gain it. At the start of each subsequent module, they may roll **Raw Willpower** at TN 25 to end this effect.

Vacuum Bomb – Maho Multi-element Air Fire 6 – This horrific spell calls upon the air kansen to disperse their cousins the fire kansen throughout the local atmosphere, then calls upon those fire kansen to ignite everything in the area, burning away all the local air kami leaving everyone except the caster burnt and gasping for breath.

For the rest of the encounter, the TN to cast all non-Maho air spells is increased by 10 due to the depletion of air kami in the area.

Each character (friendly and enemy) in the encounter suffers damage equal to their own Air or Earth ring, whichever is higher, in rolled and kept dice. All human characters that suffer damage from this spell suffer a +10 TN penalty to all actions until they receive magical or otherwise supernatural healing.

Miki should use blood to gain 6 free raises when she casts Vacuum Bomb to reduce the casting time.

“Shiba Woshunji”

An air kansen in a coat

Initiative: 10k5

Armor TN: 35 (40 in light armor) **Reduction:** 3

Wounds: 100 (Dead)

Attack: 10k8 with emphasis (Katana, Simple)

Damage: 10k4, exploding 9's (Katana)

| Air | Earth | Fire | Water |
|-----|-------|------|-------|
| 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

Primary Skills: Kenjutsu 7

Advantages/Disadvantages: not all NPCs need either

Special Mechanics: Spirit - Half damage from sources other than spells. Nemuranai weapons are still halved.

Air Kansen – Can disincorporate to leave grapples as a simple action

[PCs – 1] Dark Soldiers

Shadows wearing Shiba armor

Initiative: 8k4

Armor TN: 25 (30 in armor) **Reduction:** 3

Wounds: 60 (dead)

Attack: 10k4 (Katana, Complex)

Damage: 8k2 (Katana)

| Air | Earth | Fire | Water |
|-----|-------|------|-------|
| 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 |

Primary Skills: Kenjutsu 6

Special Mechanics: Spirit - Half damage from sources other than spells. Nemuranai weapons **will** bypass this reduction.

Conclusion

If both Takiyo and Toroko are arrested, expelled, or convinced to stop:

Two weeks after finishing your investigation, you receive word that the audit has been completed, finding that between underpayment and penalties, the Phoenix owe a large amount of money, but that due to the current crisis and ongoing rebuilding it will be allowed to be paid back over a period of a few years. Murmurs in court seem to think this will cause likely hardship within the clan, but they will recover.

If at least one of Takiyo or Toroki was arrested, expelled, or convinced to stop:

Two weeks after finishing your investigation, you receive word of a minor diplomatic incident in Gisei Toshi; a member of the audit team died in a duel with a Phoenix. In the wake of this, Otomo Yokano declares the audit complete, finding that while the Phoenix did pay some tax on the city, there was a greater share that was undisclosed. Accordingly, the Phoenix owe a

significant portion of over one thousand years of taxes on the city. However, in deference to the current crisis, it will be allowed to be paid back over a period of years. Murmurs in court seem to think this will likely cause famine, though won't cripple the clan.

If neither Takiyo nor Toroki was arrested, expelled, or convinced to stop:

Two weeks after finishing your investigation, you receive word of a major diplomatic incident in Gisei Toshi; a Phoenix and an Owl had a death duel resulting in the Owl's death. In the wake of this, Otomo Yokano declares the audit complete, finding that between underpayment and penalties, the Phoenix owe the full amount of over one thousand years of taxes on the city, to be paid immediately. Murmurs in court seem to think this will cause massive upheaval in the clan, and likely famine.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

| | |
|--|------|
| Surviving the Module: | 1 XP |
| Good Roleplaying: | 1 XP |
| Arresting, expelling, or convincing at least one of Isawa Toroki and Chise Takiyo to stop: | 1 XP |
| Confronting Isawa Miki: | 1 XP |
| Total Possible Experience: | 4 XP |

Favors

If the PCs save the Master of Air, they gain 1 Favor.

Honor

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

Glory

Saving the Master of Air is a G10 glory gain.

Saving Isawa Noboru is a G6 glory gain.

GM Reporting

- 1) Did the Master of Air survive?
- 2) Was Chise Takiyo arrested / killed?
- 3) Was Chise Takiyo convinced to give up his feud?
- 4) Was Isawa Toroki arrested / killed?
- 5) Was Isawa Toroki convinced to give up his feud?

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

Appendix #1: NPCs

Bayushi Hisoka

Scorpion Duelist

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 5

Initiative: 10k6

Armor TN: 30

Wounds: x5 (+0), x2 (+3), x2 (+5), x2 (+10), x2 (+15), x2 (+20), x2 (Down, +40), x2 (Out)

Attack: 10k5 +5 (Katana, Simple)

Damage: 7k2 (Katana)

| Air | Earth | Fire | Water | Void |
|-----|-------|------|-------|------|
| 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 4 |

Honor: 2.5 Status: 3 Glory: 5.0

Primary Skills: Iai 7, Kenjutsu 6

Advantages/Disadvantages: Dangerous Beauty

Significant Dice Pools:

Assessment: 10k7 (voids)

Focus: 10k7 + 9 (voids)

Strike: 10k6, uses stance bonus on damage

Shiba Akemi

Phoenix Hatamoto

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 4

Initiative: 9k5

Armor TN: 30

Wounds: x5 (+0), x2 (+3), x2 (+5), x2 (+10), x2 (+15), x2 (+20), x2 (Down, +40), x2 (Out)

Attack: 9k4 (Katana, Simple)

Damage: 7k2 (Katana)

| Air | Earth | Fire | Water | Void |
|-----|-------|------|-------|------|
| 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 |

Honor: 2.5 Status: 3 Glory: 5.0

Primary Skills: Iai 6, Kenjutsu 5

Significant Dice Pools:

Assessment: 10k8 (double void)

Focus: 10k8 + 9 (double void)

Strike: 10k6 + 4

Appendix #2: Members of the Audit

Hiruma Izumi (Status 2.5) –

Izumi is a former Crab scout that was lamed by a Crane trap during the Crane / Crab conflict and has since been reassigned to the courts. She has an intense dislike for the Crane as a result and has also become somewhat hostile to the Lion since their attack on the Crab. She is an effective courtier but does resent when people assume she's a Yasuki since her skills are not rooted in commerce.

Izumi knows that Kitsuki Zatsu thinks the Scorpion delegation is up to something and that Zatsu has begun a subtle investigation into them. She also thinks that the duel between Shiba Yori and Kitsuki Shikaku was ginned up by Isawa Toroki, to get revenge on the Dragon for who knows what.

Daidoji Isao (Status 4) – Isao is a member of the Daidoji Trading council, and before that was a Daidoji scout though he avoids presenting himself as a bushi so that he can pass any requests for duels off to more specialized members of the Crane. His specialty is accounting, which is why the Crane sent him. He has been working with Yokano to verify the numbers that the Phoenix have supplied, and so far has concluded that the Phoenix have indeed been significantly underreporting their taxes on the city. He is biased against the Phoenix, and should bad mouth them where appropriate, but has not (so far) taken action to undermine the audit.

Further, he suspects that there are elements within the city that remain loyal to Norimichi's causes, if not also his methods, and so is concerned that they may look to stir up trouble for the sake of causing conflict between the Phoenix and Imperials, or perhaps just for petty revenge. He knows that Toroki and Yori were both politically attached to Norimichi, and believes it was not a coincidence that Yori arrived to defend Toroki just when he happened to find some incriminating evidence against an auditor.

Kitsuki Zatsu (Status 4) – The leader of the Dragon delegation after the death of Kitsuki Shikaku. Zatsu.

Zatsu suspects that the Scorpion twins are up to something. He thinks they stole the scroll from the archives and blamed it on Shikaku. He has been devoting a great deal of effort into keeping an eye on the Scorpion twins, and suspects that they're going to undermine the audit by stealing Phoenix records for the Scorpion clan and means to sooner or later catch them in the act. If the PCs mention they're trying to find disruptions, he will point out that he believes the scorpion are up to something and will be the most likely culprits.

In addition, he actively distrusts Chise Takiyo – Zatsu thinks Takiyo purposefully set up the initial confrontation at the Asako Archives by implying to the Scorpion twins that the archives were hiding something. He believes it was because Takiyo has a vendetta against the Scorpion for the war and was trying to get them killed in a duel.

Agasha Kimiko (Status 2) – A priest sent by the Agasha, and an expert in dealing with the kami of objects. She is not very talkative, though not overly impolite about it. I suspect the Agasha sent her to assist with understanding and cataloging any objects with unusual properties.

She is actually Isawa Miki in deep disguise and will do her best to deflect the PCs if they ask her specific questions. She knows that Toroki is a Norimichi Loyalist who only disavowed the Master of Water to continue his work and is actively stirring up trouble. If the PCs get nosy, she'll point them at Toroki.

Agasha Tori (Status 2) – The second of two priests sent by the Agasha. She seems to spend her time in discussions with the priests of the Phoenix; I suspect that her function is primarily to ensure that her associate, Agasha Kimiko, can do her job cataloging and assessing artifacts.

Tori is actually Isawa Kai in disguise and is naturally somewhat antisocial. She will only want to talk to strangers in someone else's company (usually Kimiko, but occasionally Zatsu), and will keep her answers short and clipped. She has been spending her time learning about the various relics of the Phoenix, and most recently has been researching a very old and interesting ruby, which she will helpfully tell the PCs about if they show any interest. It's at least two hundred years old and has a very active earth kami living inside it. Eventually Kimiko or Zatsu will remind her not to share the Phoenix's secrets and she'll apologize and withdraw. If the PCs talk to Tori, she should drop the hint about the ruby, though not why it's important.

Ikoma Taro (Status 4) –

Taro plays himself off as a doddering old codger full of funny stories that don't make much sense. In fact, his mind is sharp and he has excellent recall, but finds that he works best when people dismiss him or think him harmless. If the PCs are fooled by his silly stories, he should quietly imply that they investigate Chise Takiyo. If they insist that

he knows more than he is letting on and that he needs to help prevent the audit from failing, he will slightly drop the act, and suggest that Chise Takiyo is acting on his own agenda and that the PCs should investigate.

Moshi Atsuko (Status 3) – A moshi priest. An expert in nautical matters and trade. Does not seem to get along well with Otomo Yokano or the Phoenix. She is a bit disappointed in having been assigned to this audit and would rather be on a ship with the Yoritomo. She was heavily wounded during the events at Kyuden Miya and then after healed was sidelined from the Mantis military. She suspects that she lost the trust of at least one of her superiors and so was reassigned. She's been doing her best to help catalog the religious artifacts of the city, but frankly this isn't what she's best at, and it's hard to keep track of everything. Especially with the shoddy and conflicting record keeping of the Asako Archives.

If the PCs press her on that point, she will recommend they visit the Asako Archives and try to reconcile for themselves the oldest records – the ones that catalogue the relics left over from the first century of the city. She will give them her pass to do so. Beyond that, she's annoyed that the Phoenix used the ships her clan built to attack the Imperial capital, which makes the Mantis look complicit. If a few things happen to go wrong during the audit for the Phoenix, and they need to end up paying a little extra tax, that's no skin off her nose. If the PCs push back she'll clam up, but if they play along she'll hint that Chise Takiyo and Daidoji Isao feel similarly.

Shosuro Hisano (Status 3) and Shoruso Hisoka (Status 3) -

A set of twins, courtier (Hisano, the brother) and a duelist (Hisoka, the sister).

If the PCs go looking for them, they will be found in the Asako Archives, though if the PCs wish to speak with them privately they will oblige.

Hisano is an excellent auditor, if a bit rude, and is excellent at ferreting out people with something to hide. His sister is a solid B+ duelist; enough to keep everyone but the big sharks away from her brother. Despite Zatsu's paranoia, neither Hisano nor Hisoka are here to steal anything. Neither of the twins likes the Phoenix much, and they fully intend to report everything they learn back to their lord so that the scorpion can take maximum advantage of the opportunity, but they will not do anything illegal. They have, however, been ordered to be as obviously sinister as possible, so whenever in the presence of non-Scorpion they will play up the 'villain' persona of the Scorpion, to keep attention focused on them, especially Kitsuki Zatsu.

Their butler, Tobu, is in fact Shosuro Tobu, a very skilled shinobi, who has on the other hand been ordered to engage in whatever underhanded actions will advance the Scorpion position. So far that has meant stealing records, making copies, then returning the original so the thefts go undetected. Only in the presence of loyal Scorpion will Hisano and Hisoka discuss their real mission or Tobu, but they will assure the PCs that their and Tobu's instructions are not incompatible with the PC's – their primary goal is to see the audit complete successfully. After all, dramatic attention increases the odds that Tobu is caught. They would rather things proceed to an orderly conclusion so they can leave the city with their purloined intelligence.

They suspect that at least one of the Phoenix is not on the level, but don't know whom. They will freely admit that Hisano caused the first lethal duel but maintain that they did not expect the swift escalation from the Phoenix to the point of lethality – Hisano expected that his bluster would secure access to the library, not require someone die.

Chise Takiyo was the one that suggested that they visit the library, and that something in it was being hidden. They assume due to animus towards the Scorpion.

Chise Takiyo (Status 4) - A skilled tax expert, but an unfortunate target of gossip from certain quarters regarding his associations with other members of his family.

Takiyo despises the Phoenix for attacking the capital and wants them to suffer. Accordingly, he has been fomenting conflict between the Phoenix and the audit team but has been trying to do so in a way that makes it look like the Phoenix are to blame. If that means some of the auditors are killed in duels he doesn't care, if it's not him, since that is itself likely to eventually bring condemnation from the Imperials. He knew the Phoenix would get prickly if the Scorpion demanded access to the archives, so he suggested they investigate there. He also dislikes the Scorpion, so it was a win-win if the Scorpion died in the process.

If the PCs visit him, he will suggest (rightly) that Toroki is behind some of the conflict between the Phoenix and the Audit team, and suggest the PCs investigate him.

If the PCs confront him about his actions, see Part 4.

Miya Masako (Status 4) – Imperial expert in disaster and calamity relief planning. Assigned to the audit team to assess repairs (if any) that were needed or made in response to the events of two summers ago. She suffered a severe

injury during her escape from Kyuden Miya, and is still somewhat hobbled as a result. She has not made it public, but she has begun secretly taking jade petal tea as she is worried that she became tainted during her escape. She didn't, but she isn't aware of that.

She is here because she's an expert in disaster relief, and specifically has been assigned to determine if the Phoenix took efficient action to repair their lands in response to the calamity or if they devoted their resources to equipping, provisioning, and enlarging their army to attack the capital instead. She knows that her superiors want her to find that the Phoenix misappropriated resources for their attack that should have been used to rebuild, and she chafes at being told to come to a specific finding. She's even grumpier because her superiors were right – the Phoenix did reallocate resources that could, and probably should, have been used to rebuild to instead bolster their military. As a result she has dragged her feet during the audit because she doesn't like the conclusion she's going to have to render. She wants the audit to be done so she can leave, and she thinks Chise Takiyo is dragging his heels to find things to complain about instead of helping. She also suspects the Crane of being overly persnickety in finding variances.

Usagi Saito (Status 4, Emerald Magistrate) – A magistrate from the Hare lands. His expertise is in addressing bandits and riot response, though he does seem to have an eye for forgeries and suspicious documents.

Saito was assigned this position mostly as a punishment for his failures as a magistrate, and he is fully aware of that fact. He hopes that if he executes this mission well he will be allowed to go back to tracking criminals. He has largely been responsible for carrying out Yokano's orders, being the visible face of the Emerald Magistrates in the investigation, and occasionally confirming or disconfirming suspicious documents.

The Phoenix courtier that committed seppuku, Asako Tomo, submitted a set of census records that were apparently suspicious. Chise Takiyo brought this to Saito's attention, who confirmed that the records were indeed falsified.

Yokano wanted to set an example, so publicly declared that the courtier had shamed his family and clan by trying to mislead the imperial authorities. In response the courtier committed seppuku. Saito thinks the situation was blown a little out of proportion, but he is not an expert on taxes and Takiyo assured him that the fraudulent documents, when compared to the city's records of its population, were indeed evidence of significant undercount of population and so underpayment of taxes by the Phoenix.

Player Handout #1: News From the Empire

“Samurai of Rokugan,

Even as I think there may be light coming to the Empire, it seems a Shadow falls upon us all. The Army of the South has pushed into the Heartland of the Empire, occupying much of Lion lands, and threatening into northern Crane and Imperial Lands. Dragon Lands have also been under siege, with reports of the fall of Shiro Kitsuki and Shiro Agasha coming in recently. The High House of Light also sits under constant siege.

The Badger lands are gone, as are the lands of the Frog. Fortunately, the Frog were able to evacuate their lands in good order, and with the blessings of the Miya are currently being sponsored in Imperial Lands along with the Hare. The Badger have been generously brought into the fold of the Dragon with Hoshi's blessing, and the Ichiro family now stands proud as a family of the Dragon. I hear they are working diligently to help take back the lands that have been stolen from the Tonbo by this fell army.

An assault on the Owl lands was defeated only by the inexplicable summoning of a Glacier that now surrounds Toshi Ranbo and all of the plains surrounding it. Rumor has it that an artifact found in deep in the sea is responsible for this action, and that the Glacier does not show hints of melting soon even as the heat of the Summer dwells upon us. If this is true, Owl lands may well be buried for a generation or more.

The Scorpion, with the support of the returning Ivory Legion and surging Crab, have managed to largely oust the South's forces from their lands. While stragglers do remain, we have been blessed by the renewed resolve of the Clan of Hida, emboldened by the loss of Hiruma Miraiko. By all reports, the Crab have fought with near fanatic fervor, fighting as silent sentinels in honor of the lost Crab Champion.

In all of this, Samurai, we endure. Hopeless as it may seem, it is clear that the spirit of Rokugan is not lost. Though I am but a humble Courtier, I will do my part to help, as I am sure all of you shall as well!

Utz!

Otomo Yusuke”

Player Handout #2: Letters

A packet of letters, bound with twine, awaits the PCs.

The first, in a plain envelope:

Samurai,

Asako-sama has informed me that you are on your way to the city. Please forgive me that I am unable to greet you in person, but my duties demand my attention.

I have arranged rooms for you and attached the current state of the audit in case you are interested.

In the meantime, I have collated my notes regarding the incidents I reported to Asako-sama for you:

- The first lethal incident ensued when an auditor, Shosuro Hisano, demanded access to a library and was refused because ‘cleaning was ongoing’. He accused the Phoenix in question of hiding records. The Phoenix was killed in a duel, and the library was searched. It is unclear if anything was actually being hidden.
- The second lethal incident occurred when in not entirely clear circumstances an auditor declared that a falsified census document and statement had been entered. Otomo Yokano declared the auditor correct and the Phoenix courtier committed seppuku. The auditor was Usagi Saito, the hare representative.
- The final lethal incident was a duel between Shiba Yori and Kitsuki Shikaku. Shikaku was accused by a Phoenix of stealing a historical document and was killed in the duel. No document was recovered.

Yours,

Isawa Noburo

The second, folded neatly and smelling vaguely of lilac:

Dear guests,

I was informed that you were arriving in the city today, and I would be rude and remiss if I did not extend an invitation to join me for dinner so that we may make proper introductions. If it does not trouble you, please join me this evening at half past 7 at the Blessed Repose of the Elemental Dragon.

Otomo Yokano

The third, four sheets of paper creased in half:

A current accounting of the population and production of the City of Gisei Toshi:

Section 1: Baseline calculation of taxable property and production

Subsection A: Comparable cities (and surrounding lands) for establishment of baseline

See addendum 1: Arable and nonarable dimensions and current census for further information on estimated size of the city of Gisei Toshi

Identified Comparable cities and their approximate tax revenues:

Section 3: Identified Taxable Agricultural and other non-manufactured products and exports

Subsection A: Agricultural production

Gisei Toshi has a large amount of arable land (see Addendum 1), only 32% of which is currently under cultivation. Accordingly, (see Addendum 3 – current discount rates and surcharges for suboptimally utilized land) a surtax rate of 1.7% of shall be assessed due to inefficient utilization of the emperor’s lands.

Player Handout #3: Noburo's summary of persons

Hiruma Izumi (Status 2.5) – Former Crab scout, now frequently assigned to courts. Known dislike for the Crane clan, more subtle dislike for the Lion clan. Initially assigned to assist with auditing balance of trade information, then transferred (demoted?) to being liaison to the city's mercantile organizations.

Daidoji Isao (Status 4) – I suspect Isao is a member of the Daidoji trading council, but I was unable to find specific notes on his formal role.

Kitsuki Zatsu (Status 4) – The leader of the Dragon delegation, after the unfortunate death of Kitsuki Shikaku. Zatsu has struck me as a very suspicious man by nature, which only seems to have deepened since Shikaku was killed. He has on more than one occasion asked me my opinion on the other members of the audit, especially the Scorpion twins.

Agasha Kimiko (Status 2) – A priestess sent by the Agasha, and an expert in dealing with the kami of objects. She is not very talkative, though not overly impolite about it. I suspect the Agasha sent her to assist with understanding and cataloguing any objects with unusual properties.

Agasha Tori (Status 2) – The second of two priestesses sent by the Agasha. She seems to spend her time in discussions with the priestesses of the Phoenix; I suspect that her function is primarily to ensure that her associate, Agasha Kimiko, can do her job cataloging and assessing artifacts.

Ikoma Taro (Status 4) – An elderly Lion courtier, and a direct servant of Ikoma Shabiko. Affable, but I question his function as a member of this audit. He seems to spend his time in discussion with various Phoenix, particularly those that are notably resistant to the audit.

Moshi Atsuko (Status 3) – A moshi priestess. An expert in nautical matters and trade. Does not seem to get along well with Otomo Yokano or the Phoenix. She has primarily been assigned to assessments of the temple complexes.

Shosuro Hisano (Status 3) – A Scorpion courtier that is best not trifled with. His tongue is sharp, and he does not seem to suffer fools readily. He raises the hackles of the Phoenix wherever he goes since he seems to have developed the habit of simply demanding immediate entrance to whatever building he has decided is relevant to his investigation. But he has proven effective at the business of the audit, which I suspect is why Yakano favors him.

Shosuro Hisoka (Status 3) – The twin sister of Shosuro Hisano. No, they are not identical; they were offended when Chise Takiyo asked. Hisoka is an excellent duelist and killed a Phoenix that took offense to her brother's brusque mannerisms. She strikes me as much easier to get along with than her brother, but I wonder if that is an intentional coordination between them.

Chise Takiyo (Status 4) – A skilled tax expert, but an unfortunate target of gossip from certain quarters regarding his associations with other members of his family. I noticed that initially he frequently worked with Hiruma Izumi, but once she was transferred he took over as primary auditor for the city's trade.

Miya Masako (Status 4) – Imperial expert in disaster and calamity relief planning. Assigned to the audit team to assess repairs (if any) that were needed or made in response to the events of two summers ago. She seems to chafe at the assignment for unknown reasons. Suffered a severe injury at some point in the recent past, certainly since I last saw her three years ago.

Usagi Saito (Status 4, Emerald Magistrate) – A magistrate from the Hare lands. His expertise is in addressing bandits and riot response, though he does seem to have an eye for forgeries and suspicious documents. Based on Yokano's assignments for him, and the moroseness with which he executes them, I suspect this is an intentional hardship posting for him.