

FORTUNES LOST

an Adventure of Duty and Deception
in the vein of the Intrigue series

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*"Sometimes horrors are caused by mortal men,
horrors so great, the kings of demons themselves,
were they present, would stand up and applaud."*

-- Doji Satsume

Far from the Emperor's capital, in the Spine of the World Mountains, lies the provincial Ojatara Valley. Here terraces of rice dot the mountain towns, forests ring the valleys, and jade and sulfur mines draw the attention of daimyo. The peasants of the Scorpion and Unicorn fraternize openly this year, for now they have something in common. They are refugees.

In the remote end of Rokugan, an unsanctioned war has burst forth between two shugenja families. The Soshi, masters of illusion, and the arrogant Iuchi who command the Fortunes like servants, each claim the lands between their provinces. How can you dispense justice when the truth is buried in fields of corpses?

The Emerald Champion, hands filled by the war between Lion and Crane, entrusts a team of Imperial magistrates to separate the armies and enforce his rule. In a land without witnesses, you are the key figures of a tribunal of war. You determine which crimes were avoidable, and which were necessary. You are the ones who draw the line between glory and atrocity. And you are the ones marked for death. For when you uncover secrets, you must be prepared for what you find.

What will it cost you to restore order?

* Suitable for 4-6 player characters of Ranks 3-4.

* Filled with difficult political decisions, suspense and fear, *Fortunes Lost* may be used independently of the official *Legend of the Five Rings* storyline, or integrated into any on-going campaign.

* The *Legend of the Five Rings* basic rules are required to use this adventure. But if you've read over *Way of the Scorpion*, *Way of the Unicorn* and *Walking the Way*, it'll sure help.

INTRODUCTION

What is *Fortunes Lost*?

Fortunes Lost is a **Legend of the Five Rings** roleplaying tournament, originally run at Gen Con 1999 under first edition rules. It puts the player characters into a reasonably complex political situation. They are part of a war crimes tribunal, and the problem is, both sides at different places and times were guilty. To get at the truth, they must track down a few missing persons to reveal a conspiracy among peasant and samurai alike. There will be investigation, delicate social situations, and a considerable amount of violence.

There are also a few things the teaser does not and should not tell you about.

Get the hint, players? Stop reading.

Good.

As *Way of the Dragon* says, "there are two concepts taught by Shinsei: what you show and what you do not show." These aren't just words on a page... it's a principle to guide you when you are trying to "defeat" an opponent.

When you're gamemastering, the "opponent" is the player who is determined not to be surprised, amused, or terrified. In order to "defeat" their disbelief, their jaded, complacent attitude that they will not have fun despite the fact they *chose* to spend their Saturday night at your house, you've got to make them have an emotional reaction through your words.

The Truth, More or Less

In *Bearers of Jade*, the section on running horror campaigns suggests that the best way to keep the fear factor high is to hit the players with sudden reversals. Printed plot be damned, never give them what they expect in the way they expect it. Never tell or show them they are in a horror adventure until it's too late. It would not be too strong a statement to say your entire purpose is to distract them away from the trap you are setting.

Otherwise, the dramatic situation of being in extreme peril doesn't last very long. The characters inevitably arm up and try to kill the Big Bad Thing. This can be fun, but the moment shouldn't be anticlimactic because you goofed early on.

We like to practice what we preach.

In *Fortunes Lost*, we are averting this problem very simply. Though the ultimate antagonist is introduced early, the worst villain is not foreshadowed at all. The major evil should be up, running, and nearly undefeatable well before the players realize how screwed they are.

That's why once the tribunal is almost done and the magistrates are congratulating themselves, *Fortunes Lost* will suddenly spin around 270 degrees and won't be an "intrigue" adventure any more. The teaser lies. This is a Shadowlands adventure. Straight- up, fast-paced action in order to save thousands of lives.

Fortunes Lost is a grisly story meant to be solved with ruthless heroism, quick decisions and a willingness to take charge. It pits the players against an enemy that has destroyed an entire clan, an enemy which in the past, has taken all the Elemental Masters and the army of the Phoenix to defeat.

Yeah. That one.

Under no circumstances should you let the players know what it is. No hinting, no flipping through *Bearers of Jade* or dog-eared pages from *Way of the Phoenix* or *Way of the Minor Clans* at the next session. No saying "Bring the Witch Hunter and the Moto, guys, it's gonna be a bumpy ride." As a matter of fact, if anyone asks you if it's a Shadowlands adventure, give them a derisive snort. Say it's more like "the U.N. peacekeeper adventure," the "Unicorn and Scorpion adventure,"

or "just something I found on the Net" and you're "heavily modifying it." Let them read or use the pregenerated player characters we provided in the other document. There's nary a Shadowlands Lore skill among them.

The players should find out when their characters do... the second all of Rokugan depends on them.

Notes On Time

Fortunes Lost takes place before the Scorpion Coup. It is intended for groups who are not following the official storyline, or are taking it more slowly than the published supplements. It is possible to run it during the coup, as a forgotten war in a far-off corner of Rokugan, but it would be nearly impossible to run it after the Scorpion are banished. If your game has already progressed that far, you may wish to make it more of a guerrilla war, with rogue Soshi defying the Emperor's decree and continuing to try to hold their lands, turning the PC magistrates into less of a war-crime tribunal and more of a special- forces unit charged with arresting former Scorpions... until they find the real criminal.

PART I: FAULT LINES

BACKGROUND: THE OJATARA VALLEYS

In the Spine of the World Mountains, between Shiro no Soshi and Shiro Iuchi, lie a series of valleys that are collectively known as the Ojataras. One lowland is very like the next, and the peaks stretch on in every direction. Out here, the Emperor is an abstraction; loved in theory by devout peasants, but rarely a political reality. The feeling in the Emperor's court is mutual. The disputes between Iuchi and Soshi are largely economic, and take no great priority compared to the more influential families.

Twenty years ago, the Soshi made a move to expand their territory into traditional Unicorn lands. The Iuchi, under their daimyo Kurosho, retaliated with brutal force, driving the Soshi back to the very doors of their own castle. Desperate, the Soshi daimyo agreed to peace at any cost, and for the last two decades there has been a shaky truce between the families. Now it has ended.

Bayushi Shoju, clan daimyo of the Scorpion, has (or had) a lot of plans. About a year ago, he suggested to Soshi Shinobu, Soshi Bantaro's wife, that it was a good time to take back the lands that were theirs, ones rich in jade and diamond mines, perfumeries, and rice fields. The Iuchi's war-monger daimyo Kurosho had long since been replaced with his incompetent son, Daiyu, and Shoju felt it would be far quicker to defeat him on the battlefield than argue in court against an enemy who rarely bothered to show up. Bantaro agreed. From Shoju's perspective, this had the added benefit of creating an important event that court spies would notice, distracting them from other Scorpion operations, such as the upcoming Lion-Crane war and... well, more important things.

Bantaro got permission from the Emperor to conduct war for past grievances, and at first the Soshi did well. But after some hard losses, the Iuchi troops proved more adaptable, and carved through the Scorpion troops with great efficiency. No one at Shiro Soshi was entirely sure how this happened. Either they had broken the Scorpions' codes or tortured their captives for information that should not have gotten out, for the horsemen fought harder and smarter than before.

The Scorpion sued for peace, taking their complaints to Otosan Uchi, and this time, the Unicorn followed, to argue their claims before the Emerald Champion. Both sides claim the other violated the Imperial rules of warfare and have a list of complaints as long as their obi. With the

Crane and Lion at war and some greater things on the way, the Emerald Champion had more important things to worry about than who hit first in this little sandbox fight. He asked Mirumoto Sukune, default commander of the Dragon's fighting arm, to send troops as a show of strength until Emerald Legions arrive. Sukune was at first hesitant despite the favors Satsume offered, but two days later he quickly reversed course and ordered some fourteen hundred of his men to separate the combatants.

The Assignment

Now Satsume needs someone to serve as his eyes and voice in the provinces. Both the Iuchi and Soshi representatives happily suggest relatives in their own clans. Knowing that any decision he makes -- to allow the matter to be supervised by Unicorns, Scorpions, or to take it out of their hands and into a third party -- will only add more fuel to political fires, Satsume makes a declaration.

There will be three teams of magistrates to investigate the matter and dispense justice. The first represents the interests of the Scorpion, but not the Soshi, and is led by Shosuro Norie. The second represents the interests of the Unicorn, but not the Iuchi, and is led by Shinjo Tsune. The third will be led by a player character -- one not from the Unicorn or Scorpion clans, with as high a Glory as possible, preferably an Emerald Magistrate. The three teams will conduct independent investigations into all grievances, then meet together to decide on suitable punishments. Only when the order is signed by two teams will any sentence be considered official. Though no one says so directly, it should be clear to the players that as the only neutral party, it is their findings and signature which will carry the day.

If necessary, Satsume can drive this point home in a private conversation. *"This is a grave year for Rokugan. Keeping order between the left and right hands of the Emperor gives me little time to handle a third faction, and that makes me suspicious.*

"It is important in times like these to keep a strong face for the Hantei. Shugenja families think knowing the secrets of the elements lets them run the world. Teach them that even in great crisis, we are ruled by law. Their crimes shall not go unchecked or unpunished, for even the smallest concession to chaos is the crack that may one day break the Empire. I cannot trust the magistrates of the Unicorn and Scorpion to see with a clear eye when their Clan calls out in pain. It is you I entrust to determine the truth."

Each character who is lacking will be provided with a horse and servants: a dresser (who doubles as an armoring assistant), a sword boy, and a groom. To assist the team as a whole will be four eta. Three are to help search or clean bodies and dig graves. The other is a professional torturer. Their attributes are straight 2s and their primary skill is at a 3. They rarely speak to samurai without being spoken to, and are mostly for the sake of appearance and convenience. In the case of battle, they will flee and hide.

The magistrates are advised to bring armor, as aggressions have not entirely stopped despite the official cease-fire. Other provisions (within reason) may be requested, but generally Emerald Magistrates are trusted to rely on the Emperor's authority to fulfill their duties.

Getting the Samurai Involved (Important!)

To be honest, *Fortunes Lost* was written as a tournament adventure in which the players play pregenerated characters, and part of the plot in Round Two hinges on certain advantages one of those characters has. Specifically, the adventure requires a PC to have royal blood in their veins. Any of the following qualify:

- 1) Any character with an Ancestor advantage of one of the kami.
- 2) Any character with the Gentry or Holdings advantage from *Winter Court*, or who has "descended from a daimyo" somewhere in their character history.
- 3) Any Seppun, Otomo, or Miya character, or one whose mother was one.
- 4) Most Crane with the Color Blind, Epilepsy, or other inbreeding-based flaws.

If your stalwart heroes don't have at least one aristocrat among them, we recommend that you play Doji Himeko (of the pregenerated player characters) as an NPC that Satsume assigns to their team. She has the necessary qualifications.

This scenario removes some drama in Part 2, since an NPC will be making the tie-splitting vote, but if you use Himeko to provide a voice in the party, it is easy enough to have her be so shocked by the carnage she is consumed with doubt. In such a case, she asks the PCs to help her make the ultimate decision.

If you are using Himeko, it is not so difficult for regular magistrates or ronin characters to be assigned under her or hired if they seem reputable enough. Even if your usual group has a spotty reputation, things are shaky enough in the Imperial Capital that Satsume will go with less-than-stellar operatives, whether or not it insults the Soshi and Iuchi. After all, it's only the spiteful moron and the woodchuck-loving barbarian... why not send a message by giving peon samurai his official seal of approval?

But generally speaking, the easiest characters to integrate are Emerald Magistrates, or one Emerald and her retinue of underlings, as is the case in the pregenerated player character team. It is the province of Emerald Magistrates to assign blame and punishment in times such as these, and it insures they will have the necessary Glory to meet with Daiyu and Bantaro, if not talk with them as near-equals.

When the players are ready to go, give them the following hand-out and map:

DUTIES OF EMERALD MAGISTRATES IN THE OJATARA VALLEYS AND PROVINCES

PART ONE -- DECLARATION OF THE INTENT TO RESTORE CIVIL ORDER

Being a war unsanctioned by the Emperor and Emerald Champion, it is the duty of the Emerald Magistrates to reaffirm Imperial presence in the provinces defined as those Spine of the World Mountains west of Shiro no Soshi and east of Shiro Iuchi, at all times to be south of White Shore Lake, and not to extend further onto any plain where at its lowest altitude, more horizon is visible than not. This declaration is to be made public to all military personages above the rank of *taisa*, who are to inform their troops or suffer all appropriate consequences.

It is the duty of the Emerald Magistrates to notify the local authorities of the presence of any Emerald Legions. In all such cases, the Charter of the Emerald Magistrate remains binding.

PART TWO -- FORCIBLE CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES

It is the duty of the Emerald Magistrates to end all armed warfare in the aforementioned province, including any and all troop movement and orders to such troops to perpetrate violence upon others of the samurai caste or lesser peoples.

Blood feuds shall be suspended until such time as hostilities cease as determined by the Emerald Magistrates. Matters of honor are not to be settled by mortal duel, but only through combat to the first blood. Violation of this prohibition is to be punished with the breaking of the offender's sword and death by beheading.

PART THREE -- INVESTIGATION AS TO VIOLATIONS OF IMPERIAL LAW

The Emerald Magistrates are to catalog and address the testimony of all witnesses present to any crimes that have violated the Imperial Code of Warfare: notably assaults upon noncombatants; unnecessary escalation of Clan involvement; malicious destruction and injury above and beyond military goals; organized blasphemy; alliances made with forces outside Rokugan or the Celestial Order; interference with Imperial roadways, waterways, and taxation; and other dishonorable tactics unbefitting samurai.

It is imperative that a forcible precedent be set so that such crimes are not repeated. A joint decision by a minimum of two Emerald Magistrates will allow command of the Emerald Legions to enforce such purposes.

PART FOUR -- REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES AND SENTENCING OF CRIMES OF WAR

The Emerald Magistrates shall prosecute those criminals of equal to or lesser station than themselves and dispense justice as determined by a majority of said presiding Magistrates. If personages of higher station than the Magistrates are brought under suspicion, it is the duty of the Magistrates to provide the case for their prosecution to the Emerald Champion.

The Emerald Magistrates are granted the authority to draw up divisory contracts of borders and redress of grievances on behalf of the Empire, to be approved by the Emerald Champion.

Matters brought to the Emerald Champion's attention include:

- 1) Assassins entered Shiro Iuchi and slew Iuchi Ayano (the captain of the guard) and Iuchi Shikako (the daimyo's wife).
- 2) The well in the village of Jiochi was contaminated, leading to dishonorable deaths among heimin and samurai.
- 3) A caravan of Shosuro actors were assaulted, giving the actors' families the right to ask for a blood feud and assistance from the Shosuro family in a war previously limited to Soshi and Iuchi involvement.
- 4) The fields outside Shiro Soshi have been salted, negating their ability to pay Imperial tax.
- 5) A temple to Jizo, the Fortune of Mercy, has been destroyed by spellcraft.
- 6) The funeral of a landed daimyo, Soshi Katsu, was interrupted by an assault.
- 7) Both Soshi and Iuchi representatives claim the opposing side added soldiers of other families within their Clan without notifying the Emerald Champion of this escalation of hostilities.
- 8) Jade production has all but stopped due to the assaults on heimin; this being ultimately a matter of Imperial security, we require an estimate of when production will resume.

The Magistrates' Responsibilities

In plain English, the job of the player characters is to speak with the combatants and victims on both sides of the war. They have three primary responsibilities.

1. Determine the truth of what occurred.

Remember, in Rokugan "truth" is established by the testimony of witnesses, whose high Glory and Honor make them more true to the Celestial Order than mere fact. Only samurai, whose noble births signify the nobility of their souls in past lives, can be trusted to understand truth. Lesser people, such as heimin and hinin, are assumed to be willing to lie for their lord, as are wives and children for their husbands and fathers.

As a rule of thumb, samurai can be divided into Glory brackets of Ranks 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10. An accusation will only be considered if the suspect is in your bracket or lower -- no one, of course, can accuse the Emperor, and a Glory 0 peasant will be ignored. This justice system has prevented the peasants from getting dangerous ideas.

For conflicting high-Glory witnesses, bulk matters -- three Glory 5 samurai can out-testify a single Glory 6, for instance, but generally the benefit of the doubt goes to the higher rank. Evidence remains useful because player characters can use it to convince high-Glory samurai to testify on their behalf, or use it to break what is more or less a tie.

2. Punish those under whose orders the crimes were committed.

If Soshi Bantaro or Iuchi Daiyu ordered any intentional violation of Imperial law, the PCs must make a formal accusation against them to the Emerald Champion. If he finds them guilty, they will be asked to commit seppuku. At the very least, the contested lands will be given to the wronged party in apology.

Lesser criminals (from peasants up to anyone the PCs' Glory rank and lower) may be executed or granted seppuku any time a two-thirds majority of the magistrate teams agree on it. Remember, seppuku is considered a mercy -- real criminals get executed or cut loose from their families and made ronin. If they are already dead, their families or fellow soldiers are expected to suffer their sentence. Either daimyo will do what he can to ensure lesser men take the blame -- and it is not uncommon to find a samurai willing to die for his lord in this manner.

3. Make sure aggressions have ceased and will not begin anew.

To this end, the characters are given the use of a battalion of Emerald Legions to enforce peace in the area. The Legions travel slower than the small magistrate teams, and will arrive halfway through Part One of the adventure. Again, the troops will only act when commanded by at least two of the magistrate teams. The characters are also empowered to take actions such as ordering hostages (sending the Iuchi and Soshi heirs to live with the other side), or taking Imperial control of contested land to keep the peace.

The Crimes

These can be explained to players who find the official statement confusing.

1. Both sides claim the other one padded their troops with bushi of other families. War in Rokugan is a civilized affair. When a family wishes to go to war, they petition the Emperor, via the Emerald Magistrates and Champion, and he decides whether the cause is just. The war is limited to those parties named in the initial petition; if the Iuchi and Soshi did request aid from the other Unicorn and Scorpion families, this is tantamount to declaring a *second* war which was *not*

approved by the Emperor. This is a serious charge.

2. The Iuchi claim that Soshi Bantaro sent assassins to enter Shiro Iuchi in the night, who slew Iuchi Ayano (the captain of Iuchi Daiyu's personal guard), and Iuchi Shikako (Daiyu's wife), as well as several lesser people. The use of assassins goes against all rules of bushido and is prohibited in warfare. The trick here will not be so much proving that assassins attacked as to find a solid connection to prove that they did so on Bantaro's order. Unless someone can be found who gave the order, the assassins must be assumed to have acted on their own.

3. The Iuchi claim that the well in the village of Jiochi was poisoned, killing everyone. A similar problem to the last: the characters must prove not only that there was poison used, but who ordered it. Jiochi is a small village no one outside this area has ever heard of. Even if the Scorpion did stoop to using poison, why did they do it *here*?

4. The Soshi claim that uniformed Iuchi troops attacked a troupe of Shosuro actors who were on an unrelated trip from Dragon lands to Soshi palace. It is against Imperial law to kill non-combatants, and if the characters find that the Iuchi did make an "unmotivated" attack against the actors, the Shosuro have legal ground to declare a separate war against the Iuchi.

5. The Soshi claim that the Iuchi salted the fields outside Shiro Soshi so that they will never be able to grow rice again. This is a serious offense. Rokugan does not practice total warfare. The land does not technically belong to individual families, but to the Emperor. If the Iuchi did in fact "attack" the rice fields, they are guilty of stealing from Imperial coffers, as well as endangering hundreds of non-combatants. Again, though the evidence of the salting is clear, the real trick for the magistrates is to prove it was done under orders, and find someone (of the highest Glory possible) to take the fall for it.

6. The Soshi claim that the Iuchi made an unprovoked magical attack against a temple to Jizo, the fortune of peace and healing. This is an offense against Heaven, and all soldiers involved would be required to make restitution or commit seppuku.

7. The Soshi claim that the Iuchi violated the official mourning peace for the local daimyo, Soshi Katsu. By Imperial law, both sides refrain from fighting out of respect for high-ranking dead, taking off three days to mourn for any daimyo or general. Any commander who ordered an attack against this tradition will be executed or made ronin (no seppuku here; Rokugani take disrespect to the nobility seriously).

8. The Emerald Champion has requested that the characters examine whether the war has done permanent harm to the jade mines which supply much of the Imperial Guards' jade.

The Itinerary

The first third of *Fortunes Lost* is not a linear adventure. The idea is to present the players with the utter complexity of a war zone and the difficulty of making sense out of a glut of evidence and accusations. They will see clear crimes and ambiguous responsibilities, irrelevant data, and a constant stream of unlikeable people, and they must put aside any personal opinions to mete out Imperial justice.

When the characters arrive in the Ojatar valley, they first are confronted by Shosuro Norie on the road, then have four main options for how to begin the mission.

1. Go to Shiro Iuchi and speak with the Unicorns before Shinjo Tsune does.
2. Go to Shiro Soshi and speak with the Scorpions before Shosuro Norie does.
3. Go to the sites of the grievances and gather evidence before confronting either daimyo, allowing the other magistrates to get their stories straight with their clans.
4. Split up and try any combination of the above.

Regardless of these choices, the player characters should come together again to meet the Emerald Legions, commanded by Akodo Kenjiro, who will be meeting them in the town of Buried Leaves at the hour of the Dog (approximately two and a half hours into the first round of tournament play; halfway through the first session in home campaign play). This event will change the course of the entire story, and should be staged when you feel like the clue-finding is winding down.

The events for each area are covered below. Please read them all over carefully before starting to play.

MEETING NORIE

As the characters near the fork in the road which leads to Shiro Soshi, they can see up ahead the banner of the Imperial Chrysanthemum flying over a small baggage train of samurai, three in red and one in orange, followed by a wagon and servants. The PCs can choose to hurry ahead and meet her, or carry on. (Ignoring Scorpion magistrates and letting them do what they please is rarely a wise idea.)

An Intelligence + Courtier roll, TN 25, lets the characters know that Norie is widely reputed to be about as fair as Scorpions get. In the past, she has apparently taken the interests of the Empire over those of her Clan, and is also known for brokering deals, even over matters of what would normally be considered personal honor.

If they approach, Norie is an extremely smooth speaker, acting warm and friendly, as if everyone she meets is an old friend, but every line is carefully rehearsed. If she cannot pick her words to say precisely what she means, she would rather not say anything. Norie used to be a resident magistrate at Shiro Yogo, and is quite used to dealing with schemes, lies, and people with sick psychological hang-ups. She makes introductions for:

Bayushi Junro, a quiet, burly man with dueling scars and three blue and silver ribbons tied to his scabbard (the mark of successfully dueling three Cranes – Norie says "Junro was recently freed of duties from Shiro sano no Kakita.") Junro's anxious to please Norie and while his voice doesn't give it away, he does look to her for direction.

If, for some reason, Norie needs him to duel, Junro is a Rank 2 Bayushi bushi who has the nasty surprise of knowing the first-rank Shiba technique. His Rings are all at 3 and his Iaijutsu a 4.

Bayushi Hoji, a bulldog of a man with piercing eyes and a reputation for extreme luck in obtaining confessions. ("You may have heard of Hoji from the Topaz Championship of 988.") He's smooth and unflappable, and pays off servants left and right for information, though his temper comes through when he deals with his own attendants.

Isawa Ichiro, a young, sheltered shugenja-monk whom Norie saved from committing seppuku over a misstep in court, and who now serves her. ("Ichiro is accompanying us for mutual education. Can't have a thorough report without speaking to the universe, now can we?") He is Rank 2, but his Rings are all at 3, with Void 4. Ichiro has not visited the Isawa school in two years: such is the price of constant travel.

The five heimin and five eta she has along don't get introductions. And they really are peasants, not disguised ninja or anything else suspicious PCs might suggest.

Norie asks the PCs what they've thought of the journey, and expresses her regrets about the "horrible events" that brought them here. War, she says, is such a terrible thing; the victories are rarely worth the costs.

Norie doesn't necessarily believe what she's saying: she throws out statements like that to gauge the PCs' reactions. If they contradict everything she says, she'll consider approaching them

under her second persona, that of Kitsuki Uyeko, and seeing what she can learn from them then. If they are polite, she knows that enforcing the strict hierarchy of Glory, Honor, and etiquette may get her farther than deception.

Norie wants to get the PCs on her side for purposes of ending the war. She suggests an even division of the Emerald Legions once they arrive for each team's personal protection (rather than turning all of them over to the magistrate with the most Glory, Shinjo Tsune), and recommends a meeting spot in the neutral Town of Buried Leaves. Perhaps late tonight, after they have all had a chance to get the lay of the land?

Oh... and she saw Shinjo Tsune. He passed her on his way to Shiro Iuchi, and he didn't seem inclined to slow down.

Shosuro Norie

Rank 3 Shosuro Actress

EARTH 3, FIRE 3, WATER 2, Perception 4, AIR 3, Awareness 5, VOID 4

Skills: Acting 4, Calligraphy 2, Commerce 2, Courtier 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Forgery 3, Heraldry 2, Horsemanship 1, Investigation 3, Knife 3, Law 3, Locksmith 1, Lore: Scorpion Clan 3, Meditation 2, Poison 2, Seduction 1, Sincerity 4, Stealth 4, Tea Ceremony 2.

Honor: 1.8 **Glory:** 5.5

Advantages: Allies (many Scorpion nobles), Social Position (Emerald Magistrate), Read Lips, Clear Thinker, Blackmail (lots)

Disadvantages: Obligation (Doji Satsume), Compulsion (cleanliness)

School Techniques: Rank 1 adds 3k3 to her Awareness when attempting to influence or persuade, or when others are attempting to test her candor and sincerity. Rank 2 lets her make unlimited Raises to hit someone who isn't expecting it (base TN 5). Rank 3 gives her the following persona (Void + Meditation, TN 5x Skill Rank, to use her skills from the other persona when not in it):

Kitsuki Uyeko is her primary other persona, a surly, Hercule-Poirot-like Dragon magistrate. Norie keeps around a Dragon outfit in order to get into Unicorn towns without being stoned to death. "Uyeko" says she's with the Mirumoto army, and is trying to discover what happened because the truth is worth seeking. If pressed, she'll mention her lord is curious. One of Norie's heimin maids wears green and may be mistaken for Uyeko at a glance.

Skills: Courtier 2, Heraldry 2, History 2, Herbalism 3, Law 3, Lore: Dragon 3, Lore: Shugenja 2, Meditation 1, *Nazodo* 3.

After a brief conversation, Norie heads down the fork toward Shiro Soshi. Letting her talk with the other Scorpion before the PCs do will give them a chance to clean up, plan, and set their stories straight. Not a great idea.

The next three sections can be played in any order as long as at some time the characters head back to Buried Leaves and meet the Emerald Legions.

SHIRO SOSHI

It is a dreary day. The sun is wreathed in clouds and the wide roads are empty swaths of mud. After cresting a hill trampled bare of grass, the magistrates see the gray walls of a castle rising out of a sea of people.

If you've picked up a *Worldwatch* or *National Geographic* in the last few years, you may have an idea of what a refugee camp looks like. If not, here's an idea.

Imagine your favorite football stadium or rock concert amphitheater, filled with about ten thousand happy, cheering, well-fed people whose biggest complaint is the smoke and the fact that a cup of beer costs three-fifty. Now seal the exits and windows with concrete so no one can leave. Kill the football team before their eyes.

Watch them run. Watch them realize there's no way out. Come back in ten days.

By that time, the food is gone and the toilets have backed up. What you will see are a lot of restless, angry people. And hungry, crying kids. And desperate parents who will do anything to feed those kids. And a whole mob ready to tear apart the first person who looks like he's been hoarding or comes from outside.

Emerald Magistrates, for instance. And these guys have been here for six months, not ten days.

The refugees swamp the characters, asking for handouts, offering their children, claiming to be samurai caste and deserving of protection, asking to become the magistrates' servants and so on. Any new, non-Unicorn samurai will be mobbed with requests. Make the scene uncomfortable. These people aren't bad; most of them don't even know what the war was about, only that they are suffering the consequences. Enforce the characters' awareness of their rank; as magistrates, they are the only ones who can insure this land is returned to its proper celestial order.

PCs traveling incognito (dressed as peasants or Scorpion, for some reason) face much less hassle. Any Unicorns openly wearing their family colors... well, they're the enemy. What do you *think* happens? They may be spat upon, screamed at, have rocks thrown at them (1k1 damage) and if alone, better watch out. A single katana won't deter a mob, nor is wading through them particularly easy, even on a horse.

The Soshi house guard keep a clear zone around the castle a couple hundred yards wide, where the peasants fear to tread on pain of death. The drawbridge is extended for the magistrates, the portcullis opened, and on the other side waits a well-dressed Scorpion woman -- Soshi Shinobu -- with some bushi.

Shinobu and Norie greet each other like old friends, though a hellacious Awareness test (TN 35; they're both actors) shows that they really don't care for each other. Shinobu smiles and invites Norie in, ***assuming at first that the PCs are part of her staff***. As she finds out the real situation with the three magistrates, her smile stiffens.

Shinobu politely hints that after such a long time on the road, the magistrates should bathe and have some refreshments before speaking with Bantaro-sama. This *is* proper etiquette, but any PCs who forego these comforts and sneak a look around, can roll Perception + Investigation, TN 25, to notice Norie leaving down the back hallway.

Why? To help Shinobu save face, of course.

The White Tent

As soon as Shinobu gets the PCs out of the way, she acts quickly to cover up all evidence objective magistrates may seize upon. With Norie as witness, she commands Soshi Furayaru, the general of the Soshi army, to commit seppuku. While the characters are bathing, he whips out the

white robes, throws together a tent, and has his family assembled in twenty minutes.

PCs who follow Norie find her heading among the white sheets arranged in the rear courtyard. Intelligence + Etiquette, TN 15, lets them recognize it as a seppuku tent. There are at least a dozen bushi guarding it, making it impossible to sneak close enough to hear any conversation. Listening magically attracts the attention of several shugenja-guards.

If the PCs interfere directly, before Furayaru's death, Norie simply claims to be getting a jump on her interviews, and both swear the robe and tent are for Furayaru's lieutenant Takeda, who committed the heinous crime of killing a few Unicorn women along with the men. If the PCs accuse Furayaru of lying or of trying to cover things up with seppuku, he takes it as a slight to his honor, and demands a duel. Even if it is to first blood, he throws himself on their sword, adding his Strength to theirs for determining damage, in the hopes of killing himself cleanly (and bringing shame on them for killing a man in a duel to first blood). Naturally, the Scorpion witnesses won't hold this "accident" and violation of the Emerald Champion's provisions against the magistrate... as long as they're willing to do a few favors in return.

If the PCs didn't follow Norie *immediately*, Furayaru is dead by the time they ask to speak with him. He was "appalled by the dishonorable actions of the troops he thought he could trust, and wished to absolve his family of his shame." By Imperial law, this officially closes investigations into his (and by extension, his commanders') role in the crimes. It's a Scorpion trick to keep the truth of the matter from emerging at the trial.

Master of the House

The characters who accept Shinobu's invitation get treated to baths and food, and eventually led in to meet with her husband Bantaro.

Soshi Shinobu

Rank 3 Soshi Shugenja

EARTH 2, FIRE 2, Intelligence 4, AIR 5, WATER 2, Perception 4, VOID 2.

Skills: Acting 3, Calligraphy 3, Stealth 3, Poison 3, Seduction 3, Courtier 4, Dance 1, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 2, History 2, Investigation 2, Law 2, Commerce 3, Meditation 2, Theology 2, Sincerity 4, Tea Ceremony 2, Lore: Ninja 2, Lore: Shadowlands 1.

Honor: 0.5 **Glory:** 7.4

Advantages: Blackmail, Social Position, Gentry, Heartless.

Shadow-Brands: she rolls and keeps 3 extra dice for everything in dim light.

Disadvantages: Spoiled (she owns 150 kimonos, has hair down the hall, and servants everywhere).

Shinobu is Shoji's chief spy in her husband's court. Though all the orders for the assassination and poisoning came through Bantaro, the ideas were put in his head during his wife's late-night pillow talks. Shinobu is cultured and gentle, accustomed to getting her way (she was the daughter of the old Soshi daimyo; Bantaro's nobility is through marriage), and adept at simultaneously playing the innocent, out-of-the-loop noblewoman, while covering for any verbal slip-ups of her husband.

She has recently had her first child -- Ichiro, age 10 months -- and has carefully controlled her husband through Kotoyo, a personally trained geisha. Kotoyo may be probed for information if the PCs can get to her (she's in Bantaro's private wing). Shinobu herself sees sex primarily as a means of controlling her husband, and possibly others.

How can one describe the august presence of Soshi Bantaro? He's difficult, he's conniving, and oh, yeah... he couldn't pour shit out of a boot if there were instructions on the heel.

As *Way of the Scorpion* indicates, the patriarch of the Soshi family has an Intelligence and Agility of 1, and Awareness and Reflexes of 5. This bizarre combination means the spiteful, cruel little man knows how to wheedle and abuse his power, without any understanding of the complexities of his responsibilities. He also doesn't learn. But he got his instructors to teach him the path to increasing his Air, the only elemental attunement that ever interested him. And there he has stayed, doing only what was necessary. Think of an irritating, ambulance-chasing lawyer with lands, servants, and a title, or perhaps Vizzini the Sicilian from *The Princess Bride*.

Bantaro's physical appearance is no more palatable. His mask is red and black face-paint, which is most reminiscent to players in our world of a skinny old guy with bad teeth going as Darth Maul for Halloween.

Further, he has no Etiquette skill and no Tea Ceremony... and the proper etiquette for meeting a daimyo includes performing such a ceremony with him.

Role-play out the ceremony, with Bantaro immediately jumping on any improprieties by the magistrates (including talking business during a tea ceremony) while feeling free to pick his nose, speculate on Matsu Tsuko's sexual virtues, and toss bowls of rice out the window just to watch the peasants run.

Halfway through, Bantaro's hunting dogs (named Ambition, Judgment, Revenge, and Desire) come snuffling into the room, drooling on the floor, and sniffing the characters' crotches, tea, or scabbards. Bantaro, if they're near him, may or may not gently pull their snouts away from the tea. This is a simple task with a TN of 5.

Of course, we did mention he has an Agility of 1.

Shinobu watches the characters closely. If they maintain their professionalism in the face of Bantaro's rudeness (Willpower + Tea Ceremony or Etiquette, TN 25, and/or good roleplaying), she will treat them with a little respect: more like Scorpion-to-magistrate than noble-to-peon. If they get offended or stoop to Bantaro's level, she has little use for them, and assumes they will put up with any lie, intimidation, or blackmail she can attempt.

Soshi Bantaro

Rank 3 Soshi Shugenja

EARTH 2, FIRE 1, WATER 2, Perception 4, AIR 5, VOID 3.

Skills: Calligraphy 5, Courtier 3, Herbalism 4, Law 3, Lore: Maho 2, Meditation 4, Shintao 4, Sincerity 3.

Honor: 0.5 **Glory:** 7.4

Advantages: Higher Purpose (Ambition), Shadow-Brand (rolls and keeps one extra die in dim lighting).

Disadvantages: Brash, Dark Secret, Reputation (Overconfident), Weakness (Fire).

School Techniques: Free Raise to Air spells. He and Shinobu have been briefed on pretty much all the Air spells in the book, and have two Unicorn family secret spells, The Penetrating Drop and The Burning Sands, on scrolls in their personal library (you know how it is... wars, ninja, these things happen).

Once the talking begins, Bantaro complains, self-importantly, about the horrid crimes of the Unicorn, name-dropping whenever he can, trying to impress the characters with references to how well he knows Shoji, the Emperor and the Fortunes.

He says the Iuchi have salted fields, which is unforgivable: that rice doesn't even belong to the Soshi, it belongs to the Emperor. But this is about the last complete truth he utters. He claims the Unicorn killed unrelated Shosuros, "bereaving his dear friend Bayushi Kachiko." (Intelligence + Courtier, TN 25: Kachiko can't stand him). The Unicorn violated a sacred temple of Jizo, "where he himself asked a blessing over his son only weeks before." (If asked, the monks at the temple have never seen him before). The Unicorn violated the mourning peace for his loyal retainer Soshi Katsu, "whose family was once honored by Hantei himself." (Intelligence + Courtier, TN 25: this never happened). And these Shinjo troops brought into a private war? Unthinkable!

If the PCs try to bring up charges against him, he dismisses them as Unicorn lies, and demands to know what punishments they will devise for the Iuchi. If later presented with evidence or testimony, he passes all blame to his general, who (if the PCs haven't stopped it) has already committed seppuku to atone for his deeds. Bantaro's not going to swing for this... and if he has his way, no Soshi will.

Shinobu covers for Bantaro's more blatant mistakes. She starts off many sentences with her rote phrase, "If I am to understand my husband correctly, what he means is..." then fills the magistrates in on the history of how the barbarian Unicorn stole their land and carried off virtuous Scorpion maidens for their depraved gaijin pleasures. Of course, this is only from what she's heard people say (innocent blink), she knows nothing of history or law herself; she's only a lowly woman, concerned about her people (demure look). She's even got abused peasants and samurai downstairs right now if they want to hear testimony (wave of fan).

The third court functionary at the meeting is Bantaro's aide, Soshi Yasamari, a stylishly dressed bean-pole of a man who backs up Bantaro and Shinobu only when necessary. During a formal meeting, his role is mostly to take attention and social pressures off the royals. In more informal, one-on-one conversation, he'll do what Scorpions do best: not let a PC leave until he finds out all their Disadvantages, low Traits, and personal interests in the Ojatarra valleys.

Unfortunately, he's a little condescending (he's used to explaining things in very simple terms to Bantaro) and his initial approach relies on Clan stereotypes, since he doesn't get out of the backwoods much. He'll assume Lions and Cranes don't get along, that all Scorpion Emerald Magistrates are willing to be team players for the Clan, and other preconceptions that can earn him a rude surprise.

Yasamari is a Rank 3 Bayushi Courtier, with Awareness 4, most social skills at 3, and a Glory of 4.7. He has the disadvantage "Uninformed Hick" (treat as Benten's Curse).

Have Fun Exploring the Castle

If the PCs make a serious effort to spy, some Stealth and Investigation tests and roleplaying to get past the guards (and dogs, who will bark if they see the characters somewhere they shouldn't be) can lead them to Bantaro's personal offices.

There are orders here for "special operatives" to be sent to Shiro Iuchi, to "eliminate key assets." However, the orders are not signed; they just bear the Soshi family chop. If brought forward, Soshi Takeda (or the next in line, if he has already been executed) claims responsibility for giving the orders, letting Bantaro off the hook.

During this walkabout, (use the Small Castle map in the core rules if necessary), PCs may also run into two people of interest: Oiranko and Soshi Oshiro.

Oiranko is an apparently friendly and, shall we say, "available" young heimin maid. She helpfully directs the magistrates anywhere they ask (or at least to the duplicate rooms with no important papers) and answers questions about life during the war, including the brutal deprivations they went through because of the Unicorn: she had to eat rice with sawdust at one particularly rough siege. Oiranko is actually yet another of Shoju's many spies, and her loyalty ensures she will try not to make the Scorpion look foolish. Her Awareness and Sincerity are 3 each: all else is at 2.

Soshi Oshiro is the castle karo and an ally of Doji Himeko. While he is intimately familiar with the ins and outs of the castle, Oshiro was not in the army or near the command centers during the war and knows nothing of battlefield orders. But he can tell them about the Red Bamboo room built for the Soshi daimyo fifty years ago, or the storage room in the noble wing where Shinobu's sister Nihime used to live before she died of a wasting disease about twenty years ago. Nihime will become important later, so this is a good opportunity to work her into the conversation. ("Ah, I see you had... tea... with the master. Let me get you a fresh kimono. This used to fit Nihime, so it might be a little small, but I assure you it is cobweb-free...")

THE MIRUMOTO ARMY

If the player characters to head north on the road to Shiro Iuchi, they see another intimidating sight: the Mirumoto army is in their way.

With orders to exit the town of Buried Leaves before the Emerald Legions arrive, about 1,200 Mirumoto drag a rather small baggage train of 800 people. (The Dragon, largely ascetic, don't require a high ratio of servants.) The soldiers themselves are in a foul mood. The average hohei was called out of his land for a police action on Yokuni's orders, was never very clear on the goal of the not-very-glorious battles, and had the thankless job of separating two armies. There were no fabulous charges, or even a clear line of battle: just orders that changed from day to day as part of the "peace process" that somehow made them a target for Unicorn and Scorpion alike.

Mirumoto Tsukaru and his second-in-command, Tabezu, share the sentiments of their men. They're not particularly deep -- they're ascetic because it's good for troop discipline -- and the orders from the mysterious-yet-wise crowd frustrate them. Tabezu in particular is annoyed; now that his men have bled, it seems the Emerald Champion wants to bring in Cranes to take credit for the Dragon's work. He has a grudge against Doji Himeko, and while he can't have her dragged behind a tent and beheaded, he will do everything that side of rude.

The characters do not have to interact at length with the Dragons. A simple bow as they pass in the road works fine, but it's important that the PCs know they are around for later in the adventure.

Mirumoto Tsukaru and Mirumoto Tabezu

Rank 4 Mirumoto Bushi

EARTH 3, FIRE 5, AIR 3, Reflexes 4, WATER 4, VOID 4.

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 4, Bard 2, Battle 4, Courtier 2, Defense 3,

Iaijutsu 1, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Shugenja 3, Mountaineering 3, Navigation 2, *Nazodo* 2, Sincerity 3.

Honor: 2.2 **Glory:** 6.1

Advantages: Voice, Clear Thinker, Social Position (In Charge of About a Thousand Walking Blenders of Death).

Disadvantage: Stubborn.

SHIRO IUCHI

Even if the magistrates pour on the speed early and get a representative to Shiro Iuchi, Shinjo Tsune's Unicorn horse is likely to get him there first. The odd architecture of the Iuchi castle is reminiscent of Shiro Shinjo (found in *Way of the Unicorn*) whose triangular shape is said to be a collector for the eddies of supernatural forces. The decor is closer to what we would consider Indian or Chinese than orthodox Rokugani.

The castle is an unsettling place. Its entrance faces north, forcing the traveler to walk around a winding road. There are tall mountain crags to either side so steep as to be barriers to an army. A harsh wind howls constantly through the narrow pass, and the road is dense, hard-packed earth. The only animals to the south are pigeons that live in the cliffs... but to the north, in the protected valley by the lake, lies a verdant woodland.

Like Shiro Soshi, Shiro Iuchi is surrounded by a refugee camp, and unsurprisingly, Scorpion PCs showing their colors may suddenly find gobbets of spit or rocks flying at their heads. But among the crowd is the occasional purple uniform. The Unicorn bushi try to see to the well-being of their peasants, as Shinjo long ago commanded. Perception + Investigation, TN 15, will reveal that there are three squads of men ordered to provide what relief they can, and Iuchi shugenja skilled in medicine are working hard to halt disease and treat injuries.

Those who are new to the palace are offered baths and a moment to eat and freshen up. While they bathe, casually slip into your description that a man with withered flesh, a porcelain mask, glowing red eye sockets and a towel over his shoulder pops his head through the door, notices the bath is occupied, and leaves.

It's a false alarm, as anyone in the castle can tell you. The servants are used to the presence of Iuchi Karasu, the daimyo's nephew. Karasu, as mentioned in *Way of the Unicorn* and *Bearers of Jade*, was a prisoner in the Shadowlands for several months and came back a little... changed. But seeing him is quite a jolt to anyone without a good Intelligence + Courtier roll, TN 20.

If asked what he knows about the atrocities, Karasu says, totally deadpan, his voice deep and raspy: *"I have eaten the hearts of infants. I have bathed in virgins' blood and dried myself on their hair. I have ridden with the armies of death and slept in their beds. (pause) But it was not here."* Understandably, the few thousand deaths of the last year haven't gotten many tears out of Karasu's eye-sockets.

Iuchi Kurosho, Daiyu's father and the former daimyo, is also on the grounds, dressed as the retired monk he is. An Intelligence + Courtier roll, TN 20, will indicate he was a beloved and fierce leader and skilled shugenja, and people around the castle still bow as he passes. He seems kind, but with a spark of fire still in him. He says little and it is rude to question the elderly. He is about eighty years old, but does not lack for strength.

Whose Family Line Is It, Anyway?

Within moments of finishing their refreshment, our heroes are ushered in to Iuchi Hiroichi, the castle's karo, who is currently speaking with Tsune. (The informal Unicorn will actually allow

themselves to be interrupted by someone of sufficient rank; an odd good-ol'-boy feel to most Rokugani.)

Hiroichi is friendly and open, Unicorn directness only slightly covered up by a proper Rokugani finishing school, and he comes off as the gaijin version of "polite." He answers the PCs' questions to the best of his knowledge, believes completely that the Unicorn's actions in war were no more than what was called for, and bluntly offers his opinion... on all subjects but one.

If they ask to speak with the daimyo, Hiroichi grows slightly evasive, explaining that Daiyu-sama is otherwise occupied right now, and has given Hiroichi full authority to answer the magistrates' questions. He doesn't know when the daimyo will be back. This is the constant response in Shiro Iuchi to any questions about Daiyu, since no one wants to mention he's considered "touched by the Sun," i.e. simple in the head (see pages 73-74 of *Way of the Unicorn*).

The war took a heavy toll on Daiyu. Throughout his sheltered life, his only concerns were himself, his wife, and a deeper understanding of the ways of the universe. His Inner Gift consists of psychometric flashes and the ability to understand about half of what animals say... but it's jumbled. Having experimented with a great deal of gaijin and Rokugani magic, he thinks these half-translatable phrases are messages from a higher power he has yet to understand.

After he succeeded his father at a rather late age, Daiyu never really gave up his philosophic pursuits, leaving the day-to-day running of the lands to Hiroichi. Daiyu was a sheltered heir during the last war, and what little he saw traumatized him deeply. Hiroichi knows that to learn an even worse war is occurring under his own leadership would devastate the fragile daimyo, and has lied to his lord since the beginning of the conflict. Daiyu knows the Scorpion are contesting the lands, but is barely aware that a fight has begun, much less any specifics on battles and casualties.

As far as he knows, his wife's death was an accident.

He has heard nothing of the assassins, the tribunal, or much else, spending his days happily ensconced in the woods with his animal friends (mostly woodchucks). Hiroichi has the unenviable task of listening to disagreeing shugenja advisors before making all the real decisions in Daiyu's name. PCs can notice that when the castle Unicorns say "Iuchi-sama," they usually mean Hiroichi; Daiyu is merely "Daiyu-sama."

A true friend to the Iuchi line, Hiroichi manages his power morally, that is, for the good of the family rather than personal gain. He'll do anything to protect his lord's reputation short of seppuku, since he knows that without him, the family is lost until Daiyu's daughter Shahai is old enough to marry.

Iuchi Hiroichi

Rank 4 Shinjo Bushi

EARTH 4, FIRE 4, WATER 4, AIR 3, VOID 3.

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 4, Courtier 3, Commerce 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 3, History 3, Horse Archery 4, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 3, Investigation 1, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Law 3, Lore: Scorpion Clan 2, Lore: Unicorn Clan 4, Meditation 2, Tea Ceremony 2, Yarijutsu 3.

Honor: 2.3 **Glory:** 6.8

Advantages: Social Position (acting daimyo), Gaijin Gear (telescope).

If the magistrates absolutely demand to see the daimyo, Hiroichi eventually caves and sends out a messenger. Hours later (wait until they're getting good and impatient), Iuchi Daiyu finally returns. He is quiet, soft-spoken, seeming old and perhaps wise. He answers their questions strangely, as though he doesn't quite know what they mean, and if they make an Awareness test, it is clear he is hiding something. If they roleplay with him for a while and win his trust, he eventually reveals his big secret. *"I have talked with the creatures of the wood. The badgers, they tell me of the beauty in the dirt..."*

Daiyu is clueless. Only if the PCs can stave off Hiroichi (basically impossible) long enough to show the daimyo the horrors of the war and make him understand that it was his troops and orders given in his name that created them, will he snap out of his self-absorption and call his armies back permanently.

Iuchi Daiyu

Rank 4 Iuchi Shugenja

EARTH 3, Willpower 4, FIRE 3, Intelligence 4, WATER 2, Perception 3, AIR 3, Awareness 4, VOID 4.

Skills: Astrology 2, Calligraphy 4, Defense 2, Herbalism 3, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 1, Lore: Woodland Animals 5, Lore: Prophecies 3, Medicine 4, Meditation 5, Shintao 3, Theology 4

Honor: 3.4 **Glory:** 7.9

Advantages: Way of the Land, Inner Gift (lets him speak with animals, and have flashes of precognition).

Disadvantages: Soft-Hearted

Spells: See *Way of the Unicorn*.

Shinjo Tsune, Emerald Magistrate

Beyond a polite initial greeting, Tsune has little interest in stopping to chat. He's fully intent on finding out the specifics of Scorpion crimes. He's had Scorpion criminals slip past on legal technicalities before, and this time, somebody will pay. He believes in the nobility of battling for a just cause, and finds war crimes appalling. ("They claim they only do what they must, yet they use assassins and poisons to avoid doing what they must -- standing up and fighting!") He is sincere in his belief in his clan's innocence, and has long trained himself in the doublethink necessary to both know and uphold strict Rokugani law, and forgive all the little improprieties which his own clan willingly accepts.

In his retinue are some twenty servants, several of whom seem trained in investigatory procedure, as well as:

Otaku Bushatu: An irritable Otaku man who went to the Shinjo school, and has little patience with other clans.

Kakita Hiko: The flirtatious young daughter of a Shinjo and Kakita, given as a magistrate to the Unicorn so she wouldn't do anything embarrassing in Crane lands.

Shinjo Tsune

Rank 3 Shinjo Bushi

EARTH 3, FIRE 4, WATER 3, Perception 4, AIR 2, Reflexes 3, VOID 3.

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Courtier 3, Commerce 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 3, History 3, Horse Archery 4, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 3, Investigation 3, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Law 3, Lore: Scorpion Clan 2, Lore: Unicorn Clan 3, Meditation 2, Shintao 1, Tea Ceremony 1, Yarijutsu 3

Honor: 3.3 **Glory:** 5.1

Advantages: Higher Purpose (uphold the law), Luck (level 2), Social Position (Emerald Magistrate), Ancestor: Shinjo (Free Raise for figuring stuff out by experimenting).

Disadvantages: Colorblind, Haunted (by ghost of Shinjo Uto, killed by a Scorpion he failed to convict)

Accusations and Evidence

Hiroichi has already gone over the assassination attempt with Tsune. If asked to reiterate, Hiroichi explains that several masked men appeared in the palace, four upstairs and three downstairs. The four upstairs killed the captain of the guard and several others as they made their way straight to the daimyo's room and stabbed Shikako, Daiyu's wife, where she lay in bed. Her dying screams alerted the guards, who intercepted and killed the assassins before they reached nine-year-old Shahai's bedroom.

As soon as they heard the scream, the three downstairs assassins started running (providing a distraction). It was fortunate that the daimyo was not in his rooms at the time (Hour of the Ox, 3 AM). In reality, he was out with the woodchucks, but PCs may get paranoid about why he was away from home at such an hour.

The Iuchi have the bodies of the assassins frozen with a unique Water spell. If the PCs want to look, the corpses have strange black scars on their backs (Shadow-Brands). The Iuchi insist that this is evidence enough of "Soshi magic," and therefore the daimyo's involvement. If the PCs don't buy that (evidence is not as valued as testimony, remember), there are suddenly three high-Glory Unicorns who swear that this particular body was one of Soshi Bantaro's closest aides. Awareness tests will reveal they're full of it. The Soshi, if confronted, will deny all accusations.

What do the PCs do?

They don't have much else that will stick on the Soshi, whom they can guess performed some atrocities... but will they perpetuate a lie to bust the Scorpion?

Some ways to get around this include searching the Soshi court to find evidence of shadow-branding equipment or a sensei that teaches assassination. Again, when the chips are down in Part Two, this lets them, at best, bust a sensei and add another crime to stick on Takeda. Bantaro just oozes slime and slips away (if someone can get his clothes off and point out the similarity of his brand to the assassins', they may have better luck, but... ewww).

Tsune and Hiroichi are righteously angry about the poisoned well at Jiochi village, asking, quite directly, *"Who else would have done it?"* However logical this might be, it's not legal tender.

The Rights of War

If the magistrates confront Hiroichi about the Iuchi's supposed crimes, he is not defensive at all. Everything the Unicorn armies did, he says, were not crimes but justified actions. Really, what were Shosuro doing in Iuchi lands if *not* as part of the war; they had no performance scheduled. The Soshi armies *chose* to hide in their temple (*"If they chose to convert their temple to a place of war, that is their right, but once they did so, it was our right to attack it."*) The mourning

peace was not violated; the Scorpion attacked first and the Iuchi merely pressed their advantage up to the castle walls.

The salted fields he is unaware of, and calls in his generals -- Iuchi Naoki and "Iuchi" Takanobu (Perception + Unicorn Lore, TN 20, will reveal he's pretty obviously Shinjo by birth). Naoki is the chief shugenja and knows nothing about the fields, but Takanobu, a gruff, impatient Mongol of a man, says, *"Wars are for winning. If the Emperor did not wish this matter settled with force, he would not have authorized war. Only fools and children will play at war, but stop short of what is needed for victory."*

Takanobu has a very un-Rokugani view of combat, and it's easy to guess he's behind some of the atrocities. Hiroichi objects if they accuse his general, but will ultimately accept his seppuku, or even execution, in exchange for land or vengeance.

THE OJATARA VALLEYS

Outside the immediate vicinity of the castles, the countryside is a wasteland. The heavy winds spread man-made fires quickly, and most of the grasslands and forests are now muddy military camps. Whole towns were razed to the ground, and there are gangs of peasants living in shacks of sticks, eating tree bark. Half of them have burn scars, or open, festering wounds. Some, if asked, used to be samurai, before their homes were destroyed. Their lords wouldn't accept more refugees.

Peasants offer themselves to serve the magistrates, even agreeing to do eta work as long as they'll get fed. They try to sell their daughters as geisha or ladies' maids. It is technically a crime to steal someone else's peasants, but it is clear they'll die if they stay here through the winter. Minor samurai families offer the magistrates food and gifts, then beg them to bring their sons to Otosan Uchi for training. They want their children to grow up somewhere other than here.

What do the PCs say?

Jiochi Village

This place has swarms of crows in the air, fat dogs trotting about, and when the characters get close enough they can see a Jonestown-style massacre, some 750 bodies or more. The poison got the eta, too, so all the bodies remain unburied, covered in flies.

A Perception + Investigation or *Nazodo* roll, TN 15, reveals many of the bodies were shot with arrows as well as poisoned, and there are drag marks indicating most corpses were moved after they fell. Most of the bodies have Unicorn features, but there are some Scorpion corpses here as well, more than would be needed to do the killing. And a lot of the Scorpion dead, if inspected or even undressed, bear the marks of torture: removed fingernails and teeth, broken fingers, broken ankles and knees, burn marks. There are torture tools inside many buildings.

Asking refugees at Shiro Iuchi, Shiro Soshi, or the next village, and an Awareness + Courtier roll, TN 20, reveals that this was where the Iuchi took prisoners for interrogation. Prepared for Soshi tricks, they kept shugenja with Hands of Jurojin around in case the captives tried a suicide capsule. Obviously, the well poisoning was the Soshi way to silence the enemy shugenja, their own men, and any interrogators.

If the magistrates investigate Shiro Soshi (either sneaking around, or with the help of Himeko's ally), characters with the Poison skill can identify many of the "decorative herbs and shrubs" as poisonous, including the oleander flowers used to poison the well.

However, they have no samurai testimony. If they trust their evidence, they can make the accusation themselves, but are they willing to put their lives and reputations on the line, and bet the

Scorpion can't wiggle out?

Salted Fields at Hafuna Village

There aren't too many clues to find here, only the human drama of peasants who know they will die in a winter without food. The land smells fetid and swampy, and many peasants will tell of the fur-clad riders who swept down on them with bags of white salt, trampling it deep into the ground.

Temple to Jizo at Motobu Village

Motobu is on the PC's map... but it won't be on any new ones. The houses were thoroughly burned. The temple itself is a smoking crater: what's left after shugenja called upon the Fist of Osano-Wo.

The monks have retreated to the nearby village of Denshi. The head monk, Hitoro, is suffering from post-traumatic stress, often trailing off in his descriptions and forgetting to eat or sleep unless told to. In a halting conversation, often interrupted by disturbing crying bouts, he tells the magistrates how the Soshi armies had been hiding in Motobu until the Iuchi burned them out.

The Soshi then stormed into the stone-walled temple and showed their lack of respect for the Fortunes by ordering the monks out. The Iuchi compounded the blasphemy by destroying the temple, *without* attempting any kind of negotiation. The monks want both sides to suffer for what they did. Hitoro is a retired Ikoma samurai, and his testimony is valuable... as long as he can be convinced he won't have to duel or face death for speaking up.

Soshi Katsu's Manor House

The manor house is burned and Soshi Ichihito, Katsu's son, is said to be ruling the lands from Shioden Village.

Ichihito is fourteen, brash, and feeling his new power. He watched his father die from the sidelines of the battle where his sensei kept him protected, and ordered a surprise attack on the Iuchi the next day, after putting up banners of truce and mourning. His exhausted troops were defeated, and the manor house razed, with his father's unsanctified body inside. He and his mother escaped to Shioden.

By Rokugani law, Ichihito is technically in the wrong here, but is also just an angry, hurt kid, trying to fill his father's shoes too soon. Do the magistrates execute him, too, and end his family line? Or is there another solution? (Perhaps if he marries an Iuchi girl, it would create an alliance instead of enmity?)

The Temple of Mountain Snow

This is where Shosuro Mayumi is recovering from the wounds she took on the road. Part of the acting troupe which was massacred by a group of Iuchi soldiers, she is righteously angry (as far as the PCs can tell), and honestly innocent (as far as they can tell, unless they can beat a 9k6 Contested Sincerity roll). Unfortunately, the only testimony she can give is a great description of a group of Iuchi soldiers who were killed a few days later. Unless the PCs can trace the chain of command, the case is considered closed on the perpetrators' deaths. If they mention this, Mayumi says she will testify that she heard them say the attack was under Daiyu's orders. This is unlikely and contradicts her earlier description of a sneak attack with no chance to say or hear anything. On the other hand, it's testimony from a samurai-caste person, which is in short supply.

The Jade Mines

The PCs can find refugees and a lot of crows picking through the ghost town by the mine. A huge battlefield covered in dead warriors is just over the hill. Again, no one has cleaned them up, since the Dragon were too busy with the living.

The peasants are bitter Unicorns. Most blame the Soshi for the devastation, but if asked who did this, one just snarls "Samurai."

A Perception + Investigation or *nazodo* roll, TN 15, reveals a number of ravens flying into the mouth of a collapsed mine; it looks like it was taken down with an Earthquake spell. If they investigate, there is enough space to crawl inside, but a foul stench greets them, overwhelming even the carnage of the battlefield.

Inside the cave is the stuff of Holocaust literature.

There is no floor. There are only bodies. Hundreds of them, going back into the mine, out of the range of torch-light. The level of gases from the rot calls for an Earth test, TN 20, or the characters will vomit. Failing a second test means they pass out.

Anyone with the stomach to investigate finds the mass grave consists only of women, children, and the elderly, executed by arrows and slashed throats. Attached to the most recent bodies is a long, rusting iron bar with manacles. At either end are hooks to attach great stone weights. An Intelligence + Torture test, TN 15, reveals its function. It shackles twenty victims in place at a time and holds them still for... whatever.

Asking the spirits what they saw is not a good idea, because they'll tell you. Killing contests. Blade testing. Volunteers hurling bodies and their pieces further into the mine because the gore means the soldiers won't find you attractive before they line you up, clamp the shackles down, and...

Right.

Neither side claims to know about this, and they are telling the truth.

The spirits' only descriptions of people says they were all wearing peasant brown.

THE TOWN OF BURIED LEAVES

When the characters head back to their assigned meeting spot for the Emerald Legions, they find a mid-sized town grown up around what used to be an Imperial tax office. There is an inn here, the Welcome Road, where the characters' servants have prepared their rooms. The town, on an Imperial road, in a neutral zone between the families, is both strangely hushed and packed to the gills with refugees, which triples its size. The peasants are subdued and demure; the Dragon kept order reasonably well.

The commander of the Emerald Legions, Akodo Kenjiro, will take direction from any of the three Emerald Magistrates. Tsune and Norie are careful not to abuse this power; they do understand that order should be maintained, especially since Kenjiro is very good at writing reports to the Emerald Champion.

Give the players time to pool their information with Kenjiro or Tsune (Norie is not back yet) over a little noodle shop or in a tent that Kenjiro's servants are setting up across the street from their inn, and once they are relaxed or starting a digression...

BOOM.

Splinters fly across the street. The colorful, forty-pound sign for the Welcome Road comes raining down from the sky, spinning and bouncing. The explosion blasted a hole in the kitchen at lunch, and dozens of wounded people are running and screaming, blinded by the flames. A grease fire has started, the kitchens themselves are black with foul smoke, and almost everyone inside is

dead. Crushed beneath the ceiling, blown apart... kimono bits keep together some hunks of flesh of the Unicorn general, "Iuchi" Takanobu. Four Emerald Legionnaires are also dead.

If the characters investigate, there is a body at the heart of the explosion -- most likely the one who detonated it.

Compassionate characters will have their hands full here. The heroic can try to lift a flaming second floor off of the two first-floor patrons who are, at this moment, still alive. Their names are Matsu Soyo (a Legionnaire) and Hogiri (a kitchen worker), and they both have Earth 2 and 10 Wounds of damage. Lifting the floor is a Strength + Athletics or Engineering roll, TN 30, and those gripping the wood take 2k1 damage from flames and sharp nails each round. Pulling the trapped people free requires a Strength test and an Earth test to avoid further injury (see **Carrying Fallen Comrades**, p. 138, *Bearers of Jade*). While one samurai could reach both of them, the core rules for **Working Together** (p. 103) make it much easier. After all, if the floor is lifted and then dropped, Soyo and Hogiri take at least another 3k2 in damage. Up to four samurai can get the leverage to help out.

Other PCs may try to administer medical attention, put out the fire, calm down hysterical family members, or organize the aid from the Legionnaires.

Once everyone is calmed down, some witnesses can write or mime what they saw, since the closest samurai and heimin were deafened from the blast. But they can identify the detonator's body as Ukoto, a kitchen worker who has been here for months. He is a local peasant as far as anyone knows.

Talking to the Fire spirits afterward is an odd experience -- they have satisfied, almost sexual smiles in their flames. They *enjoyed* that blast.

If the characters can get the spirits to talk, they remember a man in peasant clothes moving in several barrels which caused the explosion. Anyone with the Explosives skill can figure out that this was a large quantity of "gaijin pepper," or black powder. Ukoto must have lit a roll of paper, tossed it on the barrel, put a serving tray over it to conceal it, and got about one step to the door before it went off.

Where Do We Stay Now?

The bomb changes everything. The Unicorn general is dead, the bomb might have been meant for the magistrates or Emerald Legions, and the ambiguity of the investigation is over. Someone dared attack the representatives of the Emperor. They've got to go down. For less moral PCs, be sure to point out that whoever gets pinned with such an accusation is a dead man, his entire family might be made ronin, and his enemies will surely shower the investigator with niceties.

The town headman, Makicho, offers his life as apology for the tragedy that just occurred in his town, and invites the PCs to stay in his home if they wish. If you are using the pregenerated PCs, Mirumoto Seiji also has an ally of a retired Dragon bushi, Hotoshi, who is now a monk at a nearby monastery, in a relatively untouched area. There are no guards at the monastery save those they bring themselves... which limits the chance of being betrayed.

Make sure you know where the heroes are staying. It will matter in Part Two.

The Clues

The murder weapon here is scandalous. The Emperor banned the use of explosives centuries ago, though it is not unknown for the Scorpion or Daidoji family to use such things in war. However, there is also a reason it is called *gaijin* pepper... pointing perhaps to the Iuchi.

Shosuro Norie was nowhere in the vicinity, which is a good jab to start the magistrates

suspecting who sent the assassin, especially given the odd coincidence that the brutal Unicorn general whom the Soshi hated now lies dead from the blast. (Norie was actually in the middle of discovering the collapsed mine; but let them wonder why she didn't show.)

Gaijin pepper is very rare, and composed of two to three parts; charcoal (made from heating wood and burning it down) sulfur (easy to find in this mountainous region, and used in perfumeries), and saltpeter, which the Agasha have not yet learned to add to their fireworks. A shugenja who speaks to the Earth in the residue or rolls Intelligence + Explosives, TN 25, can find out that the last ingredient was included, pointing to a non-Rokugani origin.

Where does one get saltpeter? Bird droppings, combined with alkaline soil.

At an appropriate time, such as when the PCs return to their room or are about to run after a red herring, their servants announce a note has just arrived by carrier pigeon:

*UNICORN PEASANTS SERVE NO SCORPIONS
ALL SOSHI WILL LEAVE IUCHI LAND
OR THERE WILL BE NO MORE INNS.*

The letter is poorly written, with ink blots and bad calligraphy, as if written by a child or someone just learning to write.

If the magistrates don't keep track of the pigeon, their servants will sell it to a refugee for the stew pot. This isn't such a great idea, since the most direct route to find out where the bird came from is through the Heart of Nature spell, persuading the pigeon to fly back to its roost and following by horseback.

Asking around about pigeons lets them know that the village of Yotomo is known for breeding and selling courier birds. It's a half a day away in the mountains, and the terrorists could strike again at any time.

YOTOMO VILLAGE

Yotomo was supposed to have been purposefully evacuated early in the war, yet there are clear tracks of a large group of people and animals moving to the east, some time since the last rainfall.

As they start on that path, characters can make a Perception + Investigation test, TN 15, to see Sabu, a teenage boy, watching them from the shadow of a barn. He is a member of the "terrorist" squad sent to pick up supplies, such as abandoned water jars. (Their hideout is not near a river, and it's proving thirsty.)

Sabu tries to slink off (Agility 3, Stealth 1) or run (Athletics 1) and if captured shouts that he will tell them nothing. He's not impressed by samurai. He *can* be intimidated by obvious threats, but he says that the peasants of his land will not tolerate either Scorpions or the Emperor trying to take what belongs to the Unicorn. He thinks the Emperor is just another warlord.

With some effort, they can trick or intimidate him into telling where his group is hiding. They're in a cave, about an hours' walk east past the river (he has mud on his bare feet, though it hasn't rained recently).

THE HIDEOUT

The true culprit behind the bombing and mass killings is Naohida, Iuchi Kurosho's illegitimate son (under no circumstances let the players find this out yet). Raised as a peasant, he took his father's side in the war, training other local farmers into a band of guerrilla fighters,

currently manufacturing bombs from inside a filthy, pigeon-laden cave.

Before running this mini-climax, it matters significantly whether or not the protagonists brought a squad of Emerald Legionnaires with them, as is their right. If they didn't, the fight can be significantly more heroic. But if they're tramping along with sixty soldiers in tow, it's going to look a lot less like a *Highlander* duel and a lot more like the siege in Waco, Texas.

The primary entrance to the cave is narrow, with perhaps enough room for two samurai to fight side by side, three if they are packed in formation and only stabbing with spears. It's dark, but a Perception + Explosives test, TN 10, lets them recognize the smell of gaijin pepper. Maybe it's time to reconsider bringing that torch?

If the characters look for a back entrance, they can find one, of sorts. A few hundred yards through the lightly wooded hillside is the downward slope of the hill, and an asymmetrical fissure reveals there are people and supply sleds below. (Supply sleds are a Rokugani device similar to a stretcher dragged behind a single carrier.) These are sheltered from the rain beneath a bulbous overhang some thirty feet wide. Climbing down is effectively impossible -- at best one would drop about twenty-five feet onto irregular rock (4k2 damage). While this is a decent vantage point to get off a single arrow shot, it is easy for those below to get beneath the overhang or into the cave in a single turn.

The place is also plastered in pigeons and their droppings. An Agility + Stealth test, TN 15, 25 in wooden sandals, is required to get a close look. Failure indicates the pigeons are startled and take off. Rolling less than 5 means the unfortunate character has slipped (yuck) and ends up at the bottom of the ravine with the appropriate damage.

Inside waits Naohida, a bearded ronin padded in two kimonos beneath his armor. The outer one is dirty cotton; the inner, silk that the average ronin cannot afford. Eight of his peasant supporters are also in the cave, outfitted in hodgepodge scavenger style, along with an Iuchi shugenja who has joined his cause and coordinated a larger band of ronin in the massacres at the jade mines. Three of the peasants are eating in the cool dark of the cave; most of the others are manufacturing explosives under the overhang where the breeze is. All of them know what their fate will be at the hands of samurai, and they know how to shout warnings. The dishonorable dogs are not above mobbing a fallen samurai and kicking him to death. Naohida, a trained Shinjo bushi, will wade in and soak up attacks by parrying constantly.

The most dangerous place to fight is the storage room near the fissure. A single spark (such as from Naohida's parrying) has a dramatic chance of setting off the explosives in an enormous 6k5 blast to everyone within the first ten feet, with a 1k1 reduction for every ten feet thereafter. ("Dramatic chance" is another term for "make the players nervous and make them pay for it if they're stupid.") If the fight drags on for more than a round or two and it looks like they are done for, one desperate criminal will take his turn to pull out a little wooden stick with a gray tip. (Unicorn Lore or Explosives, TN 10, will reveal this is a match). In one more turn, there will be a bright white light.

If the players cheese out and simply send in waves of soldiers, they are soon responsible for the deaths of a dozen Legionnaires in this dishonorable explosion.

Naohida

Rank 4 Shinjo Bushi

EARTH 3, Willpower 4, FIRE 3, AIR 2, Reflexes 4, WATER 3, VOID 3

Skills: Archery 3, Armorer 2, Athletics 3, Bard 2, Bojutsu 3,

Defense 4, Explosives 3, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Heraldry 2, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 5, Investigation 2, Medicine 3, Meditation 1, Mountaineer 2, Naginata 2, Sincerity 1, Stealth 2, Weaponsmith 2

Honor: 0.2 **Glory:** 0.5 (some reputation among hardened killers)

Advantages: Quick, Perfect Balance, Way of the Land, Heart of Vengeance (Scorpion), Gaijin Gear (a dai dao, or Chinese broadsword, 2k3 damage).

Disadvantages: Driven, Social Disadvantage (Peasant), Dark Secret (War Criminal and his birth)

TN To Be Hit: 20 (25 in light armor)

Bloodthirsty Peasants (4)

EARTH 2, FIRE 2, Agility 3, AIR 2, Reflexes 3, WATER 2, VOID 2.

Skills: Archery 2, Bo Stick 2, Commerce 1, Craft: Farmer or Carpenter 2, Defense 3, Explosives 1, Hunting 2, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 2, Mountaineer 1, Nofujutsu 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth 1.

TN To Be Hit: 15 (17 in bits of Unicorn leather armor)

Weapons: Tonfa (3k2), Nunte (5k2), Kama (4k2), Yumi with arrows (4k2).

Advantages: Heartless

Disadvantages: Driven, Social Disadvantage (Peasants), Dark Secret (Terrorists).

Peasant Bruisers (4)

EARTH 3, FIRE 2, Agility 3, AIR 2, Reflexes 3, WATER 3, VOID 2.

Skills: Athletics 3, Bo Stick 2, Commerce 1, Craft: Farmer or Carpenter 2, Defense 3, Explosives 1, Hunting 2, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 2, Mountaineer 1, Nofujutsu 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth 1.

TN to be Hit: 15 (18 with a loose breastplate on).

Advantages: Large, Heartless

Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage, Dark Secret.

Weapons: Wakizashis (6k2), sai (4k2).

"Sato," the Ronin Shugenja

EARTH 2, FIRE 2, AIR 2, WATER 3, VOID 2.

Skills: Athletics 1, Defense 2, Hunting 2, Nofujutsu 2, Shintao 3, Stealth 2, Tantojutsu 1.

TN To Be Hit: 10

Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage, Dark Secret.

Spells: (all spells, due to *meishodo*, take 1 round to cast, no raises, see page 116-117, *Way of the Unicorn*)

Bo of Water (Water, Innate): TN 10, no concentration, lasts for 10 rounds. Creates a magical weapon, 3k3 Bo.

Master of the Rolling River (Water): TN 15, lasts 1 round. Target is hit with a magical tsunami, range of caster's Water x10 feet. DR of caster's Water, and target must roll Willpower, TN caster's Water x5 to stay standing. Target must roll Awareness + Meditation, TN 25, to do anything this round. Near a body of water, DR is Water +2, TN to remain standing gets +10. Failure indicates the target has been swept into the water and carried off.

Calling the Elements (Earth): TN 10, duration 8 rounds, casual concentration. 10' square foot area grows roots and brambles. Anyone in the area must roll Agility, TN of the casting, or be ensnared. Strength roll at TN 10 to move 1 foot per action. Unintelligent animals panic.

GLORY, HONOR AND EXPERIENCE

This round is numbing shock after numbing shock, and there's a reason it's called an "unrewarding" job. There aren't a lot of opportunities for Glory just yet.

That said, it is likely that the first PC to stop the Soshi general's suicide can earn 1 Glory point for quick thinking once the report is made to the Emerald Champion. Any samurai heroic enough to pull a flaming beams off helpless people will also no doubt get some acclaim (2 Glory points, 1 if they had assistance). Stopping Naohida is also probably worth 1 point; the enemy were only ronin, but they were a threat to many high-Glory samurai. Bushi player characters who send a dozen Legionnaires into the cave to their deaths lose 5 Glory points; non-bushi lose 2.

Honor awards are far more subjective. What gives confidence to a Unicorn PC and what helps a Scorpion get through the day are quite different this time around. Disillusionment about one's family, clan, or human nature can all be a severe psychological blow. Encourage the players to discuss Honor and how their characters feel about serving themselves, their Clan, and the Empire. Some examples:

A Crane artisan who makes his living painting all that is beautiful in the human spirit takes a look inside the mine: -3 Honor points.

An individualist Phoenix shugenja declares this level of misery is not allowed in his Empire and creates rice to feed the mobs around the castles: +2 points.

A Scorpion magistrate who believes in his clan more than the Empire successfully covers up evidence, such as distracting the others from Norie's little walk: +1 point.

A Unicorn Emerald Magistrate who believes in the rule of law and of the Empire puts aside Clan loyalty to convince the other PCs to accept Shosuro Mayumi's testimony against the Iuchi: +2 points.

If the gamemaster finds players suggesting gains left and right for something she thinks would have traumatized the character, the matter can be settled as a Test of Honor according to the basic rules. The GM sets the Target Number.

All participants earn 5 experience points.

PART 2: TRAILS AND TRIBULATIONS

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

This section begins with the magistrates still in the caves, surrounded by the bodies of the terrorists they just killed. They should have a number of questions about what just happened. Where did these peasants learn how to fight and cast spells and make gunpowder? And where did Naohida get his silk kimono and gaijin sword?

Searching the camp reveals a fair bit of junk looted from the gang's victims (if the camp was destroyed by exploding gunpowder, let them find Naohida's secret treasure trove under a rock a few yards out of the blast range). While the furnishings are sparse (hammocks, water jars, and a stolen, unmarked supply wagon), there are a few chests containing clothes, blankets, and personal belongings. In one is a small, exquisite netsuke holding a collection of letters, mostly in very fine calligraphy. Several are signed by the name Sensei Miyahana, but the real gold mine is the one ordering Naohida to commit his men to total warfare. This unsigned letter (in different calligraphy from Miyahana's) practically drips venom toward the Soshi and says that Naohida should not rest until the Soshi have been removed from the land, one man, woman, or child at a time. *"Every one of them is trained to wreak revenge if they live,"* it says. *"Break them with death."*

This is the first real evidence the magistrates have found that there is someone behind the atrocities, and those who went to the jade mines can put together that those bodies were probably Naohida's work. The question now is, who wrote the orders?

Unfortunately, there is little time left to ask this, for they are supposed to meet with the other Emerald Magistrates in just a few hours to discuss their conclusions.

BACK TO THE TOWN OF BURIED LEAVES

Encourage the PCs to return to their rooms (in Makicho's house or the monastery) before the meeting. They are sweaty, dirty, covered in blood and smell like gunpowder. A proper samurai would seek a bath and change of clothes.

Once there, allow them to make an Intelligence test, TN 20 (with a bonus for the Perfect Memory or Clear Mind Advantages), to notice a piece of paper on the floor which they remember having left on the table. It has blown down as if someone opened a door. If they search the rooms, they find the window in Doji Himeko's (or whichever "royal-blooded" PC in your group) room is unlocked. A Locksmith test, TN 25, reveals that the mechanism is broken; even when the lock appears fastened, it can be opened from the outside. *Someone deliberately set this up so they can get back in.*

If they try to Commune with the spirits in the room, they have been silenced, and the ones outside saw no one enter or leave. Checking the ceiling (Investigation, TN 15) reveals that something has disturbed the dust on the rafters.

This is a level of competence far beyond what Naohida's group has shown. This is someone new, and he's after *them*.

If this doesn't get the paranoia-meter on high, try these encounters:

- A heimin kid tags after the magistrates on the way to their meeting, asking who they are, where's they're from, where they're staying, what they're doing today, whose side they're on in the war, and so on, like a fan-boy who wants to know what the heroic samurai are like. But if they ask why he's doing this, he says the new men in the village gave him two bu. The men are gone now, but they said they'd be back for the answers.

- A servant in the kitchen collapses. If the magistrates check into it, they find she ate from

a samurai's tray. The one going to their rooms.

- Guards do a double take as they pass. If they ask why, the guards say "I thought I saw you go that way a few minutes ago," or "Did you get the message yet? These four samurai were looking for Doji-sama. I didn't get their names... I've never seen them before."

- The "man in the big hat" gave Seppun Ichiko (Akodo Ryuko's dependent in the pregenerated group) rice candy and told her if she put it under her pillow and left her door open tonight, she'd get a visit from the Fortunes. ("I didn't think he was lying. I thought he was stupid. Only shugenja can bring the Fortunes here.")

Who can they think of who would want Himeko dead? Anyone with an interest in prolonging the war. Her swing vote on the tribunal is an essential one.

Don't give them enough time to thoroughly discuss their options. The tribunal is *now*, and they have a duty to the Emperor to be there.

THE TRIBUNAL

If your player characters have not visited all the sites in Part One, the other two magistrates pick up the slack, along with some overlap. While they are both aware that the case for the prosecution is pretty shaky on many charges, they have each gathered enough "witnesses" and accusers to satisfy them. The explosion just makes them all the more determined to finish voting as soon as possible. After all, it's pretty cut and dried, right? The other guy's clan was wrong.

Only the player characters have found Naohida and the orders linking him to the deaths of so many Soshi. If they explain the situation and show the other magistrates the letter, it is possible to convince them to postpone the final judgment until the Naohida connection has been thoroughly investigated.

Don't make this easy for them. The characters will have to combine some fast-talking with a lot haggling for favors and appeals to the other magistrates' senses of justice.

Norie actually *wants* the PCs to continue investigating, since it helps her side, but she'll invoke the name of the Emperor, and pretend it is a great inconvenience to extend the deadline; she wants concessions in return for agreeing to let them investigate. She'll settle for something small... like definitive rights for the Soshi for one of the remaining jade mines. Smart PCs might convince her to agree to something riskier, like all three jade mines for the Scorpion if Daiyu is behind the terrorists, but nothing up front.

Tsune wants the Scorpion punished for their crimes, and is rightly afraid that those will be forgotten if the Unicorn are convicted of something worse. He suggests that the tribunal punish those obviously guilty parties first before running after what may or may not be a genuine lead. He will settle for nothing less than the execution of the Scorpion general (or whoever's next in line). Seppuku won't cut it; he wants the enemy's good name as well as his life. Norie protests any hasty judgment, but both she and Bantaro (if the magistrates involve him in the decision) eventually agree to hand over Furayaru or Takeda, *if* the Unicorn general is punished as well. "Iuchi" Takanobu died in the explosion, but Naoki will volunteer to commit seppuku for his lord. Neither he nor Hiroichi will agree to execution.

Oddly, if the characters try to find other high-ranking Iuchi military leaders, many of them seem to have died or disappeared during the war. No one they talk to knows specifically how, making the chain of command somewhat confusing.

Once the deals are concluded and the other magistrates agree to delay their prosecutions until the criminals are found who assaulted the Emerald Legions, Tsune feels comfortable telling the PCs who Shinjo Miyahana is -- a prominent and respected Shinjo sensei who retired over a

decade ago, taking his horse and planning to spend his twilight years exploring the Spine of the World. He was last seen living in a cottage in the northwest corner of the war zone. *"I am certain he was not involved in such dishonorable actions, but perhaps he unknowingly possesses information on the killer."*

IN SEARCH OF MIYAHANA

By the time the meeting ends, it is almost nightfall. Miyahana's last known abode is at least a four-hour ride. Do they leave now or wait until morning?

The suspense is heightened if they are riding at night, through unfamiliar woods broken occasionally by burned and torn-up areas, some still with exposed bodies in the wreckage. As they ride, have the characters make a succession of Perception + Hunting tests, TN 25. Unless they make Raises, any success reveals only far-off hoofbeats or footsteps, as if someone is following them from a great distance. If they stop and try to listen, the sounds cease. If they search, the noises disappear for a while, but an hour later they start up again.

It is well after dark (or after noon the next day), when they come upon a small cottage. It looks recently abandoned (the food remains are still fresh), and a Perception + Hunting roll, TN 20, reveals a trail heading further east into the war zone. A Raise on the Hunting test, or a separate Intelligence test, TN 15, lets them recognize the trail leads in the direction of Naohida's cave.

The trail follows a difficult, mountainous route, possible only for an excellent horseman (Horsemanship, TN 20). As the characters struggle to keep their animals upright as they head down a muddy, nearly seventy-degree slope, they see a man at the bottom, in a kimono of Unicorn style. He whirls around as they approach, relaxing only if he sees a banner or mon of the Emerald Magistrates.

Once reassured that the characters are on legitimate business, he greets them warmly, with a thick Unicorn accent, slurred by an old scar which has misshapen his mouth. He introduces himself as Shinjo Miyahana, and offers to share his food (fresh rabbit; all non-Unicorn characters should be suitably appalled).

Miyahana is an open, friendly old man. He has made peace with his age and coming death, and is as relaxed as someone can be only if he knows the world poses him no danger. He is a Rank 5 Shinjo bushi with the Soft-Hearted Disadvantage (use Naohida's stats if you need to). At first, he seems totally unaware why the magistrates are here, though after a moment he guesses that the war is ending. This is a great relief to him; he sees the war as a great waste of lives for little reason, and shakes his head sadly at the thought of so many dead. *"There are times when it might do a lord good to be doubted."* The elderly have leeway to say such things in Rokugan, but it should still blister high-Honor characters' ears a little.

Miyahana does not bring Naohida up, and if the magistrates ask about him, the old man is reluctant to talk, though not defensive, and a Perception + Sincerity test, TN 20, will suggest there is no guilt or shame he is hiding. If the characters seem sympathetic, he will speak, though he asks that they not repeat the information unless Naohida is in trouble. Miyahana was asked by Naohida's mother, a local peasant, to train the boy when he was just five years old. The child's father was samurai, Miyahana was told, but Naohida could not be acknowledged or receive proper schooling because of the circumstances of his birth. The boy was promising, even at that age, and Miyahana gladly agreed to brighten his twilight years by teaching him.

As far as the old sensei knows, Naohida has used his gifts to be an honorable ronin, protecting the local peasants from the worst of the war. If the characters suggest his student fought in the war, let alone perpetrated mass carnage, Miyahana is stunned almost mute with horror. He

stands up loyally for his student, but cannot argue against the testimony of six high-ranking Emerald Magistrates. Breaking down, he begs the characters to talk some sense into the lad, saying that he is a kind-hearted boy, eager to please his parents. He does not know what would turn him to such deeds. They never spoke of politics when training -- it is against tradition in a Unicorn dojo. If the characters ask, Miyahana agrees to testify to this.

Hoping that Naohida's mother can talk some sense into him (presuming the characters have not told him the boy is dead), he tells them her name -- Waruko -- and the town she lives in -- Perfume Petal Blossom -- where the Iuchi cultivate and prepare flowers for making perfumes to sell to the Crane.

ASK NOT FOR WHOM...

Whether the magistrates stay the night with Miyahana or trudge off into the darkness, it's time for another Perception + Hunting test, TN 15. The footsteps are a lot closer this time, and characters who make a Raise can also hear breathing. Right there.

Their spy runs as soon as he's spotted, but even though he knows the woods much better, the well-trained samurai are in better physical shape and should catch him easily. He's got a head start, so they must beat him on three successive Contested Agility + Athletics rolls (he rolls 5k2). Once he's caught, he only defends himself if none of the samurai draw weapons...he's not looking forward to being interrogated, but he's not ready to die.

The man's name is Gochu. He's a miner from a village back toward the beginning of their trail. If sufficiently threatened, he gushes out his whole tale: *"I didn't mean no harm by it, yer lords. It was just this man, he came just a few minutes after you gone by, and he was dressed real rich-like. He was all in silk and nice leather boots, and he asked us if there's anyone in town who wants to earn five koku tonight."* For a peasant, the characters should know, that's a fortune. *"All he wanted was that we follow you and if we ever see the honorable lady alone..."* He nods his head at Himeko (or whichever of your group has royal blood) *"...we just ring the bell. Please don't hurt me, lords. He was dressed like a samurai. I figured he had a right to what he was doing..."*

The "bell" in question is about the size of a baby's fist, made of ceramic, and has no clapper. It does not look like it can make any noise. Gochu has never tried shaking it. He does not know what ringing the bell will do, who his employers are, or what they want with Himeko. He does know there were at least four other bells handed out to the other miners who, like him, have families and haven't had jobs since the war began. Under questioning, he eventually breaks down into incoherent sobbing and begging for his life.

Whether they spare Gochu or not, the magistrates now have a valuable tool. If they ring the bell, it might draw out the people who are stalking them... in a time and place *they* can control. Encourage them not to do it here, at night, in a place they don't know. Waruko's village is on the way back to their lodgings, perhaps it would be better to visit her first?

If you know your group will ring the bell as soon as they get their hands on it, you might want to move this encounter to after the meeting with Waruko, so they don't miss out on important information about Naohida's background.

This scene does not work as well if the characters are not already paranoid, so if, for some reason, they have not yet discovered the open window and other clues that someone is stalking them, it might be better to postpone the scene until after they return to the lodgings. In that case, Gochu can be found working as a servant (a keen Perception + Investigation, TN 25 may reveal his hands are very rough for the guy bringing tea). In such a case, he was told to ring the bell after Himeko-sama was asleep or alone in the bath-house...

PERFUME PETAL BLOSSOM

Perfume Petal Blossom village is a beautiful little place, with happy, well-fed heimin tending fields of blooming flowers. Not a plant is out of place, heavenly smells drift on the breeze, and overall, the characters should feel like they somehow stepped through a portal and wound up somewhere far-removed from the horrors of war.

They are more right than they know. Perfume Petal Blossom is such a haven because the refugees who came here *were* removed... to the mine.

The peasants are politely deferential, and will willingly direct the characters to Waruko's sprawling, multi-room home, hugely luxurious by peasant standards. But when the characters arrive, no one answers the front door, and anyone who looks around the other side finds Waruko leaving through the back entrance.

She stops when she sees them and bows respectfully, demurely saying that she did not hear them at the front, and was just on her way out to buy rice. She is a well-trained liar, and plays the humble peasant woman to the hilt. Even suspicious characters should be close to convinced that she was not actually trying to escape. She invites them in, offering them food and asking politely about their families and health. A Perception + Etiquette roll, TN 20, might suggest that she seems a bit too articulate and self-possessed to be an untrained peasant.

She does admit she has a son, but claims his father is long dead, and tries to change the subject, refusing to get drawn into a lengthy conversation about him.

"Waruko" (Soshi Nihime)

Rank 1 Bayushi Courtier

EARTH 2, FIRE 2, AIR 2, Awareness 3, WATER 2, Perception 3, VOID 2.

Skills: Axe 1, Craft: Sewing 2, Craft: Woodcutting 2, Courtier 1, Etiquette 3, Forgery 1, Knife 1, Law 1, Sincerity 3, Seduction 2.

Honor: 1.2 **Glory:** 0 (5 by birth)

Weapons: Axe (Strength + 1k3), tanto (Strength +1k2)

Advantages: Benten's Blessing

Disadvantages: Black Sheep, Social Disadvantage (peasant), Dark Secret (affair with Kurosho).

If they reveal Naohida is dead, the magistrates see rage build behind her downcast eyes. Depending on what they tell her (remember, that Rank 1 technique gives her a Free Raise for every two points of Disadvantages the characters have), she breaks her peasant act and demands the PCs tell her how and why he died, and who killed him. "*Was it Scorpions?*" she asks, cursing the Fortunes for doing this to her son.

If she realizes the PCs are the murderers, especially if any of them are obviously Scorpion, she tries to calm down and keep her intentions masked until she can get to a knife and slit one of their throats while serving tea. If not, she'll go for the axe by the door. "*That is the price for destroying the hope of a family!*"

An Awareness test, TN 20, or any ambush-detecting School Techniques, allow the characters to know the attack is coming. Otherwise, the TN to hit her victim is 5.

Once physically subdued, she will break down, in varying states of despair and poisonous hatred, as she tells her story. She despises the Soshi, screaming at the PCs to "*Tell the Soshi I am*

their servant no longer!"

Waruko was once Soshi Nihime, youngest daughter of the Soshi daimyo, and Shinobu's sister. She had an affair with Iuchi Kurosho when she was fifteen and he was thirty-five and a ruling daimyo. They were in love, and Kurosho tried to get the Unicorn daimyo's permission to put aside his first wife and marry her, but his wife was a prominent Shinjo and refused to take such insult. Before they could try another solution, Nihime's parents found out about the affair, and sold their "ruined" daughter to a geisha house... where she found she was pregnant. Still caring for her despite the demands of his lord, Kurosho bought her contract and gave her a home in Perfume Petal Blossom Village with a stipend to raise their son.

Kurosho visited her as often as he dared, heaping affection on the young Naohida, who he saw as the perfect samurai child, a balm to his pride after fathering the simple-minded Daiyu. He wished out loud many times that he could acknowledge Naohida and disown his useless legitimate son. If the magistrates have killed Naohida, Waruko tells them, they have destroyed the Iuchi family and left the blackhearted Soshi to do what they will to Rokugan. She will not say if it was Kurosho who gave Naohida the orders to kill so many, and she would kill herself sooner than testify against either of them, but it is clear from her story that Naohida adored his father and would have done anything to please him.

Once they have the story, the characters must decide what is to be done with Waruko. If left alone, she would most likely waste away without her lover's money or the son who was her reason for living. She'll calmly submit to execution if condemned; she considers her life over the moment Naohida stopped breathing. If the characters take her back, she seeks out the first way she can find to kill herself.

ALONE IN IUCHI CASTLE

The PCs now have two options: deal with their would-be assassins, or confront Iuchi Kurosho. This section assumes they will go after Kurosho first. If they do choose to lay an ambush, use the stats for the Iuchi shugenja and description of the assassination attempt below. The PCs have their choice of where to set it. Give them plenty of time to design whatever counter-trap they want; it might make the fight almost even.

If they ring the bell in the woods or in an isolated area, the assassins don't bother with silencing spells, but instead concentrate on walling the area off and separating the PCs from each other.

If the magistrates head to Iuchi castle, they find the place strangely empty. There is only one guard at the gate, only two or three servants, no visible court functionaries. Hiroichi isn't anywhere to be found, and asking the guard or servants about Kurosho gets conflicting answers. Some say he just left the castle and may be on the grounds, others suggest he is in Daiyu's chamber, still others say he went toward the guest quarters. One maid says she saw a messenger arrive from the Town of Buried Leaves, and soon after, Kurosho was livid with grief and executed the messenger. She doesn't know where he is now.

If the characters stay together while searching, the majority of servants say they last saw Kurosho in the bath house. When the characters enter the steam-shrouded room and start looking, the bell gives a soft DING, and the wooden door swings shut, trapping the group inside the stone-walled room.

If they split up, give both groups time to search through a number of empty rooms before... DING. Whichever group has the bell just heard it go off. They can guess what that means.

Roll initiative.

Then make them wait. Draw out the moment as a seemingly innocent servant pass them in the hall. No attacks. Roll again. Another round with no attacks. Then...

Six shugenja burst out of the ground beneath them, one at a time, like a giant whack-a-mole game, using the Embrace of Kenro-ji-jin spell. They're wearing basket hats, masks, and are festooned with minor amulets they twist, hold, or read from in order to fire off spells.

One of them makes an adjustment, and the wind dies. No sound will escape. Katanas of fire burst from their hands, roaring like blowtorch flames.

They want Doji Himeko alive. The rest of the group are just inconveniences.

Iuchi Shugenja Hit Squad (2 normal, 4 Meishodo)

Rank 4 Iuchi Shugenja

EARTH 3, Willpower 4, FIRE 3, AIR 3, WATER 4, VOID 3

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 4, Bojutsu 3, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 4, Herbalism 3, Hunting 4, Kenjutsu 3, Meditation 3, Poisons 3, Stealth 3, Shugenja Lore 2, Sincerity 2.

Honor: 1.2 **Glory:** 5.9

Advantages: Innate Abilities (starred), Death Trance, Heartless, Crafty, Loyal (Honor is effectively 2 ranks higher when in direct service to their lord).

Disadvantages: Driven, Dark Secret (assassins).

Spells: (Meishodo shugenja cast spells in 1 round, but cannot Raise)

* **Embrace of Kenro-ji-jin (Earth, Innate):** Caster can sink into earth, stone, etc. and move at walking speed. Caster is immune to injury while in the earth.

* **Katana of Fire (Fire, Innate):** TN 10, lasts 10 rounds, no concentration. DR 3. Wielded using Kenjutsu. If the caster is knocked out, the katana vanishes.

* **Sharing the Strength of Many (Earth, Innate):** TN 15, lasts 10 rounds, full concentration. Target gets additional 1k1 on ALL rolls for the duration.

* **Curse of the Jackal (Water):** TN 15, lasts 1 hour, no concentration. Target makes simple Willpower roll, TN 20, or become bestial. Awareness, Willpower, Intelligence drop to 0 and cannot be raised by any means. Target may not spend Void points, or use most skills.

* **Suitengu's Embrace (Water):** TN 20, permanent, no concentration. Fills target's lungs with sea water. Range of caster's Water x5 feet. Drowning characters take DR1 the first round, then DR 2 and so on. Applying first-aid allows victim to roll Willpower, TN 15, to restart the wounds to 1k1. Consecutive successes end the spell.

* **Wall of Bamboo (Water):** TN 10, lasts 30 minutes, casual concentration. Creates a bamboo wall 10' high, 5' thick and Water x5' long, within 50' radius. Bamboo can be hacked through with three attacks of Athletics + Weapon, TN 25. After the spell expires,

the wall can be broken.

* **The Elements' Fury (Fire):** Ritual, TN 25, lasts 1 round, full concentration. A great hurricane of elements is directed at target, DR equal to the lowest Fire in the ritual, a number of times equal to the number of shugenja participating.

* **Light of Amaterasu:** TN 20, lasts for rounds equal to the caster's Fire, no concentration. Subject glows with sunlight, and ignores all wound penalties and pain for the duration.

* **Earthquake (Earth):** TN 15, lasts 5 rounds, total concentration. Cause earthquake for 50 yards around target. All actions in area at -2, area vulnerable to falling ceilings, mudslide, etc..

* **Calling the Elements (Earth):** TN 10, duration 8 rounds, casual concentration. 10' square foot area grows roots and brambles to hinder movement. Must make Agility vs. TN of casting or be ensnared. Strength roll at TN 10 to move 1 foot per action. Unintelligent animals panic.

* **Torrential Rain (Water):** TN 30, lasts 1 hour, focused concentration. Creates violent storm within one mile. Visibility drops to 1', and all physical actions are at -3.

* **Reflective Pool (Water):** TN 10, lasts 3 minutes, focused concentration. Cast on still water, and can observe any area caster is familiar with. No sound.

* **Whispering Winds (Air):** TN (Target's Int. x 5), inst., no concentration. Determines if what target said was a lie.

* **Know the Shadows (Air):** TN 5, lasts 10 rounds, no concentration. Bends shadows to hide the caster. TN to see the caster is raised by 5.

* **Quiescence of Air (Air):** TN 5, lasts 10 actions, casual concentration. Spell generates a soundless bubble 5' around the caster. Ruins spellcasting inside the bubble, no sound can be made inside it. (The two shugenja with this spell do not use Meishodo. It takes 2-3 Raises to make a sound "bubble" allowing sound inside, but not through it).

The fight should be frightening and messy. Inside the bubble, the Fury of the Elements tears through paper screens, boiling the waters of the bath house, and setting tatami mats on fire. Outside, any members of the group who weren't with Himeko (or the royal-blooded target), hear nothing as they watch their friends get mauled.

The shugenja use Walls of Bamboo to cut off PCs from helping each other, use Sharing the Strength of Many and Light of Amaterasu to make their own Katana-of-Fire squad nearly invulnerable, and are a good example of the frightening effectiveness of a combat-trained magical team. At any time, at least three will have Katana of Fire up, while others help with the support spells isolating PCs, holding them in place, or driving them mad. Don't forget to add School Rank in roll dice to the DR of their spells.

It is important not to kill or cripple all the characters here (they'll need everyone they can get in for Part Three), but few if any of them should get away without injuries.

AND THEN THINGS GET REALLY BAD

After the bleeding, exhausted, and quite possibly barking-mad PCs kill the shugenja, they can unmask their enemies and see that Kurosho is not among the bodies. (Those who now have the mind of a jackal may want to roll in the bodies. Remember the Rokugani taboo against blood and corpses.) An Intelligence + Courtier test, TN 20, lets the magistrates recognize their assailants as the high-ranking Iuchi military officers who disappeared during the war.

Further searching of the Iuchi castle will reveal it is now almost completely deserted. It is strangely silent, with not a human being to be found in most hallways. Doors are open as if people left in a hurry, and a strange stink hangs in the air. But there is one closed door... you can see it down one flight of stairs... it's the door to the basement.

Now you, the gamemaster, have a decision to make.

Iuchi Kurosho needed someone of royal blood. He wanted to use Himeko, but if all has gone well, the PCs have just foiled that attempt. Now he needs someone else.

So he found another option, and he found a room. Where that room is and who he chose depends on who the player characters guarded the least.

If using the pregenerated group, did they remember to carefully keep track of little Seppun Ichiko? If not, then when they return to their monastery or the headman's house, that's where the special room is. Did they warn the other magistrates that someone was stalking them? If not, Shinjo Tsune is a candidate. Otherwise a minor Iuchi daimyo can be found, with his closest retainers crushed by a Bo of Water that hit with the force of a tidal wave.

For home groups running Himeko as an NPC, it is possible for one of the Iuchi hit-team to make off with her while the rest of the group is fighting. If they don't go after her immediately, they next find her behind the door.

The Crime Scene

A bloody kimono is wadded up near the door, and the stripped body is soon evident. A few traces of blood from defensive wounds spatter the floor, but the majority of it is... well... contained.

The body lies face-down in the center of an eight-pointed star drawn in black grease. There is a long slit in the corpse, tracing the path of its generative meridian (a cut directly down the center of its body). Its limbs are stuck to the floor with metal pins between the bones, and acupuncture pins with kanji characters on them for the eight great Kami are sticking out of the body. The character for Hantei is in its navel; Akodo, the heart; Hida, the liver; Shinjo, the eye; Doji, the lips; Bayushi, the hand; Togashi, the lung; Shiba, the top of the head. Its head points southwest.

The blood drained out in great gouts, reaching the borders of the grease but no farther. At each apex of the star's points are eight more characters. An Intelligence + Calligraphy test, TN 20, reveals that the characters represent *noble*, *blood*, *appeases*, *renshi* (a term like "sensei," but implying "great grandmaster teacher"), *Fortunes*, *multitudes*, *spreading-like-water*, and *Fu Leng*. The character for "Fortunes" is upside down in relation to all the others.

It takes no roll to recognize this is *maho*. An Intelligence + *Maho-tsukai*, Shadowlands, or Shugenja Lore test, TN 15, lets the magistrates know its purpose. Something has just been summoned.

But this is not an oni. There is no containment circle. There are no scrolls that give away the summoner's name. Whatever this brought up, no one is controlling it at all.

GLORY, HONOR AND EXPERIENCE

Magistrates who enforce Imperial justice in the war tribunal become well-known names in Rokugan. How well-known depends on whether the magistrates and daimyo they worked with want to spread word of the PCs' valor. Fair, even-handed characters who maintained cordial relations with both magistrates and clans receive 5 Glory points. This award drops to 2 if they earned the enmity of one clan through dishonorable actions or favoritism, and to 0 if they managed to aggravate *both* sides.

The group's leader earns an extra 3 Glory points... unless she takes care to mention the contributions of her support staff, in which case each member of the team earns 1 additional point.

The main opportunities for Honor loss or gain come at the ending sacrifice. If the group managed to keep Ichiko, Tsune and Himeko safe, they all earn 1 point of Honor. If Ichiko dies, Akodo Ryuko loses 1 *full Rank* of Honor, and the other characters each lose 1 point (this applies to any personal dependent character in any group). Such a horrible death for any of the people Satsume technically placed under their protection may mean an Honor loss of 1-5 points per character depending on their personal code of ethics. Setting a trap for their stalkers may gain them 1 Honor point each if it helps them feel more in control of the situation.

All characters earn 3 Experience Points for successfully completing the tribunal without major concessions (1 point if Norie walks all over them), 2 Experience Points for surviving the kidnapping attempt, and 2 Experience Points if they managed to prevent Ichiko and Tsune from being sacrificed.

PART THREE: THE NOBLEST BLOOD

GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

This section opens with the magistrates staring down at the ritual sacrifice in growing horror. It doesn't take a genius to realize that they're gonna need to know everything about this demon, or it's going to kill a whole lot of people.

Preferably, the group should not have enough Shadowlands or *Maho-Tsukai* Lore to figure it out on their own. Those who succeeded at the Calligraphy test and have the appropriate Lores can attempt to make a test, at TN 30, to realize the connection to an old, little-told story of the destruction of the Snake Clan (see *Bearer of Jade*, p.87). This ritual is the summoning spell for the Shuten Doji.

This doesn't, however, tell them any other information, such as how to stop it.

Luckily, one of the seven best shugenja libraries in the empire is about a flight of stairs away. (If this takes place somewhere other than the palace, it's still pretty easy to herd them toward the library; no one else in town has any familiarity with *maho*.)

The library has a large section on sacrifices, summoning oni, and vengeful ghosts, but none of it describes the eight-pointed star and ritual mutilation they just saw. Let them roll Perception + Calligraphy, TN 15, to read through as many books as quickly as possible. Raises can increase the numbers of books covered or the accuracy of the result. The most successful roll finds them a few notes from an old shugenja who studied with the Isawa. *"It is believed that the creature which destroyed the Snake Clan must first be appeased by a sacrifice of the noblest blood."* The kanji used for "appease," "noble," and "blood" are dead ringers for the archaic symbols used in the summoning.

A Phoenix Clan Lore roll, TN 25, lets them know that the Snake Clan was destroyed by a Shuten Doji, one of the spirit kings of Fu Leng, and the creatures the Council of Five fear above all else. Raises let them know there are some "lesser" Shuten Doji, but any ritual this potent is intended for the original three – there is one that embodies Fear, one for Desire and one for Regret. Each works differently, but their control always spreads as quickly and unstoppably as plague.

Just as the PCs realize the magnitude of what they're facing, there is a noise from behind a nearby bookshelf. PCs can look over to see a red glow from beneath the distinctive curves of a porcelain mask. What do they do?

Nothing, we hope, because this is no demon, only Iuchi Karasu in his usual library haunts. Assuming the PCs treat him politely, he approaches... sees the scrolls they have out... and immediately demands to know what they are looking for. Seeing strange magistrates researching demons in your library is never a good sign.

Intelligence + Courtier, TN 15, lets the characters know they are currently in the room with one of the greatest living Shadowlands experts. Did they need information?

The Bad News, or *The Exorcist Meets Outbreak*

When they describe the ritual, Karasu lets out a raspy breath. *"The characters of noble here, teacher here, and Fortunes here, reversed? Hhhhh. I hesitate to tell you of this creature, for you would no doubt wish to destroy it. It is best if we flee now, totally and completely. We must leave the valley and send word to the Yogo, the Kuni, and the Elemental Masters immediately, and perhaps only a few thousand shall die.*

"If you stay here, you shall fail your ancestors like you have never imagined. There is no winning when you face the Shuten Doji. It does not merely eat human flesh or wantonly kill. It

forces a samurai to destroy his own soul. And unless you are prepared for such possibilities, I suggest the faint of heart among you commit seppuku now.

"Anyone who sees the Shuten Doji of Fear may be possessed by it. Anyone who hears the Shuten Doji of Regret, likewise, and Desire, touch. But that is not the limit of its power. Anyone it has possessed is likewise contagious. Imagine, if you will, a fire that spreads from building to building in a city. Now imagine if that fire were demonic possession, and the buildings human beings. And once burning, those flames were all told by the same intelligence to run, and like in a children's game of tag, touch every other person they could find. How many could you possess? How fast?"

"That is the Shuten Doji summoned here. There are three of them, one for each of the sins of Fear, Desire, and Regret. They are the Dark Brother's sensei of maho, a thousand years old, the evil counterparts to the Fortunes themselves.

"Forgive me if I pack as we talk..."

Karasu knows The World Is Not Heavy and starts tossing all of his belongings into a large canvas blanket larger than he is. If asked which Shuten Doji is in town, Karasu answers:

"It depends on the sin in the mind of the summoner. If it is who you say, and he cared for his son, I cannot imagine that he lives without regret."

Of course, he could be wrong.

If asked how the things can be killed, he says:

"Obsidian, the blood of Lord Moon, terrifies the being of Fear. The tears of Amaterasu, jade, cause pain to Regret, and the purity of crystal banishes Desire."

As they finish talking, a terrified peasant runs by the library, turning and fleeing in terror when he sees the characters... unless they speak or walk toward him, demonstrating they are still human. At that point, he nearly collapses in relief.

"I am sorry. I have seen something terrible. It is not my place to speak of it."

He doesn't want his lord to lose face, but if the PCs reassure him they won't believe/blame/punish him, he says:

"Kurosho-sama, he is crazy. I saw him... with a knife and a bucket. He was going into [the room where they found the sacrifice victim]. He was talking to himself. He said everything he had ever wanted has come to nothing. I thought he would... he did not look well, so I went into the kitchens. But when I came out the sun was down and no one had come in to fix dinner. So I walked outside. They are all there. All the servants are gathering with the samurai down by the lake. It made me nervous. All of them... they step at the same time. A few of them looked at me, and... I was afraid, honored ones."

He saw the victims and survived. That means it's not Fear. Desire's pretty unlikely. The magistrates can be confident it is Regret.

Karasu throws his final scroll into a bag and opens the door. He advises the PCs to come with him. *"If it travels on speech, we must not listen to anyone. We must cover our ears and run. Everyone who stays will become one of them. Regret is the most poisonous of all, for only if every one of its hosts is dead can it be returned to the demon lands. We need an army. If they reach the Ide lands, no Unicorn will be safe. If they reach the road south of the Soshi... then the rest of Rokugan could fall. I will warn who I can, but these lands are lost."*

What Do The Magistrates Decide?

It's certainly possible that the samurai will want to take Karasu's advice, burn hoof out of town, and pass the buck to the Elemental Masters or the Emperor. That would cut the adventure

(and probably the history of Rokugan) very short. Remind them that Isawa lands are about two weeks' ride away, and this thing can possess maybe a hundred people a *minute*. If they walk out to the courtyard, or worse, down by the lake where the mob is, they can see this in living color.

PCs with a long-distance communication spell or *nemuranai* which lets them contact their daimyo or the Elemental Masters are told to hold "the monster" off until help arrives. Of course, by that time, it'll all be decided one way or another. The valley will be completely possessed in two days if they don't stop it and the Shuten Doji's tendrils will extend down the Imperial Road, making it next to impossible to root out every victim.

If you need a way to encourage the characters to stay and fight, let them run into the Mirumoto army on the road out. General Tsukaru demands to know what they are running from, and if they explain, he commands them to escort him back in so he and his armies can save the Emperor's lands. Having 1,200 Dragon bushi at their backs should help even the most reluctant heroes.

For honorable PCs who are unwilling to leave without trying to help, there are two main things to get across:

1. By Rokugani logic, their highest priority is to get the daimyo and their heirs to safety, so even if the lands fall, the family lines are preserved.

2. They can't do this without an army.

Karasu warns them that the Shuten Doji can get anyone. *"Keep your ears plugged, and trust no one,"* he says. *"It will never give you a second chance."*

The players will probably realize that they'll have to split up. There's at least four places they need to be -- rescuing Daiyu, warning the Soshi, getting jade, and getting an army -- and time is of the essence. These events can happen in any order, but first:

Stopping the Voices

Whenever the Shuten Doji's servants speak or scream, everyone within earshot has a chance of getting possessed. They make a Contested Void roll with Kurosho (Void 3); failure means they join the hive-mind. If the sounds come from a great distance, the listener receives a +10 bonus on his Void roll. Void cannot be spent on this roll unless the character is willing to sacrifice those points permanently, thus lowering the rating for next time. If the victim feels regret, at gamemaster option, you may lower their Void by one for any Contested rolls with Kurosho's Void.

The Void roll is repeated every 5 seconds while the noises continue, and the Shuten Doji is going to keep trying until every one of its servants passes out from lack of air. So the samurai had better cover their ears. Putting hands over the ears adds Raises as if the sound is distant; plugging the ears with wax or cotton blocks the sound completely.

Of course, the Shuten Doji's servants aren't zombies. They can pull victims' hands away from their ears with a successful contested Strength roll, screaming the whole time. Remember, a samurai with fingers in his ears can't hold a sword.

While their ears are plugged, characters will have a lot of trouble detecting anyone sneaking up behind them. Rather than using Perception, such a surprise test will use what samurai call *zanshin* -- a Void roll with a TN of 20 to detect the attacker's chi. Failure means the assailant gets one free attack; success means a normal roll for Initiative and the character's TN to be hit is normal.

Where are the Emerald Magistrates during all this?

Depending on what the PCs told them in Part Two, Norie and Tsune may still be investigating the villages (where the Shuten Doji has probably already consumed them), at their respective castles (in which case, Norie may become a valuable ally in helping them save the Soshi, and Tsune is dead or possessed), or on their way back to Otsan Uchi with a decision. We recommend the second option, as this gives the PCs a familiar (and, most importantly, rational) face to deal with at Shiro Soshi.

HORSES AND THE HEIR

The magistrates will probably realize that it'll be a lot of cross-valley riding to get the Emerald Legions and warn the Scorpion. While their own horses could do it, the Unicorn horses stabled at Shiro Iuchi could cut the time in half. If they don't think of it, Karasu suggests it as he goes to find his own mount.

The Iuchi horses are usually allowed free range on the huge pasture in back of the castle. Lamé, old or pregnant mounts stay in the stables, where the bridles and saddles are kept. About a dozen possessed peasants and three possessed bushi remain in the area, between the PCs and their goal.

It is possible to sneak past them with a Stealth + Agility test, at TNs 10, 15, and 20 as they draw closer to the stables. At the first failed roll, the blank-eyed minions turn (yes, all of them at once) and let loose the wailing of the damned. If the PCs don't join them, their second action is to grab pitchforks (4k2 for attacking and damage – their stats are straight 2s), and try to knock the characters over and rip out any earplugs.

Once they reach the pasture, it takes an Awareness + Horsemanship roll, TN 15, to catch the horses. Unfortunately, each person can only lead two horses and still keep up to speed, not enough to bring more than a dozen soldiers back. Four raises on the test, or a Heart of Nature spell, lets a character compel the whole herd to follow in a thundering stampede. If it's noisy enough, it can give bonuses to any possession test. Animals cannot be possessed.

Iuchi Shahai

While in the pastures, ask the players to roll Void + Battle, TN 25. Anyone who succeeds gets the sense of being watched from above. In a tower window, nine-year-old Iuchi Shahai looks down at them. She saw and heard the Shuten Doji's army forming, and made her Void roll successfully. (Actually, she tied, and the mark of its evil has been left invisibly within her, where card game fans know it will manifest later in life.) Terrified, she has barricaded herself in the tower and plugged her ears with wax. Several possessed servants are at her door right now.

Characters who looked for Shahai immediately should receive an extra Experience and Honor Point for their quick thinking.

For those out in the pasture, there are two ways in. Going through the front entrance means a running sword battle with the goons who are busily trying to smash down her door with a stone vase-stand. Their mouths are constantly open, bellowing not the moan of a zombie, but the disturbing scream of deranged man-children. They have all Rings and skills at 2.

Scaling the outside wall takes a Strength + Athletics test, TN 40. It is fifty feet high (1k1 damage for every ten feet a character falls), and made of rough stone with plenty of crevices, but free-climbing it in the three rounds it takes for Shahai's door to be broken down is truly a feat Never Done Again. Hurling a weighted rope (they're near the stables; there's rope all over the place), up to Shahai's room is a Strength + Athletics test, TN 25. Once attached, the rope can drop the climbing TN to 25.

Spells such as Call Upon the Winds make this much easier.

Communicating with Shahai is basically impossible unless they all take out their earplugs (writing big Kanji flash cards is possible if they find paper and ink, but they have to stick to a nine-year-old's vocabulary). If they mime or use charades (an Awareness + Sincerity roll, TN 30), they can communicate for her to check that rope arrows are firmly attached, or even convince her to climb down a rope herself. She rolls 3k1, TN 20, to make the climb, and there'd better be someone to catch her if she falls. A samurai climbing down with her on his back has TN 25, +5/10 if wearing Light/Heavy armor.

If the magistrates want to abandon Shahai, remind them she is the only heir to the Iuchi name. If she is killed and anyone ever finds out they could have saved her, they will be stripped of their names, executed, and their families made ronin. If they debate too long about it, a hand drags her away from the window. If Karasu is still with the PCs, he will not allow them to ignore his cousin's plight.

Or, for that matter, her father's.

Iuchi Daiyu

Daiyu, as the magistrates learned in Part One, spends most of his time in the woods to the north of the castle, the opposite direction from where the Shuten Doji's forces are spreading. This may keep him safe, but will they bet the daimyo's life on it?

It takes a Perception + Hunting roll, TN 15, to track Daiyu to an untouched area of forest, strangely beautiful and pure compared with everything they have witnessed lately. Daiyu is sitting still, eyes shut, meditating upon the sound of the trickling brook, with a single bodyguard standing watch. As they enter, he places a stone in the water, and says (without acknowledging their approach), *"Ah, that is far better. Do you not feel that the music of the water has been improved?"*

Unless the players already brought the reality home to him in Part One, he is oblivious to the last few months of war, and certainly unaware of the Shuten Doji. He shows little concern at first if they say there is trouble, suggesting they let Hiroichi handle it, and inviting them to relax in nature and let their worries go.

If actually told the horrible truth about the Shuten Doji, Daiyu is flabbergasted. He clutches at straws, trying to find any rationalization to convince himself that they are mistaken. But he is a shugenja, and his Inner Gift is telling him they speak the truth.

Once he realizes what his indifference has allowed to happen (especially if he understands the role his father and unknown brother played in the atrocities), he decides that it is his duty as daimyo to destroy the monster. This man has obviously never fought anything in his life; even possessed peasants could quickly overpower him. The players must convince him to leave his family in their hands.

"But... the animals," he says, "all the creatures of the land. What if they too hear this monster's call? Who shall protect them?"

This is a good opportunity for the players to take a daimyo to task. Daiyu's bodyguard is too stunned to interfere in any argument and his own understanding of rank is minimal. If they make him understand just how many people and animals were harmed because he chose to bond with nature instead of leading his people, that may be just the wake-up call he needs to become a better daimyo.

If Shahai is here, she can also help convince him.

Karasu and Daiyu's bodyguard take on the task of escorting the daimyo and heir out of danger while the PCs go south to gather an army.

THE EMERALD LEGIONS

As the PCs probably realized right away, there's a legion of the best soldiers in the Empire less than a half an hour away in the Town of Buried Leaves. Now is a good time to ride back and take command.

The lands as they ride out of Iuchi castle seem as deserted as the palace, with whole towns seemingly abandoned in mid-thought, doors left swinging open and clothes half-washed. In one place, roasting meat has charred to a crisp, the fire spreading among the paper houses. Do the PCs stop and help?

And while they are deaf and surrounded by smoke and buildings, how do they watch their backs?

As they ride, they notice a very few confused samurai and peasants trying to get their attention. An Intelligence test, TN 15, lets them remember these faces -- the people who were deafened in the explosion in Part One. *They can't hear the Shuten Doji*. With a little writing and miming, the PCs may have just acquired a few allies.

The Legions

When they reach the Town of Buried Leaves, the characters find the Legions' tents undisturbed, and they can see the silhouettes of soldiers inside, still alive and intact. A few work outside, not speaking.

Make the description as normal as possible. They've gotten here in time, they'll get what they need. Draw it out as they go inside the command tent... tell the troops what happened... command them to go after everyone who has been possessed... *and then the Legions turn around as a single being and nod in unison.*

So... did the PCs take out their earplugs to talk to these guys?

The legions start advancing, and civilians appear from nearby buildings, falling into step, surrounding them. *As long as a single person can see the characters, the Shuten-Doji knows exactly where they are.*

If, for some reason, they don't have their ears plugged, terrify them with the thousand voices in unison calling their names, repeating everything Akodo Kenjiro says...

Kenjiro: *Himeko.*

Rest of Town: *Himeko.*

Kenjiro: *The war is over, Himeko.*

Rest of Town: *The war is over, Himeko.*

Kenjiro: *Let us take care of you.*

Rest of Town: *Let us take care of you.*

Kenjiro: *You won't ever cry again.*

Rest of Town: *You won't ever cry again.*

Kenjiro: *We all agree.*

Rest of Town: *We all agree.*

Now's the time to whip out the fast-paced description, and not give the players room to breathe. This is *intense*: the characters are trying to outrun the entire town, and they can't tell if anyone's gaining unless they stop and look back. All they can hear is their own huffing breath, and there's peasants cutting off the road ahead, and if they ever slow down long enough for someone to pull the cotton from their ears, it's a fate worse than death. Whenever they think they've outrun one person, it just takes one innocent to hear the screams and then he's in on the game.

It takes a Stamina + Athletics test, starting at TN 15 and increasing by 5 for every five minutes, to outrun the mob; three consecutive successful tests and they're safe. Give the characters a Free Raise or two if they do anything to specifically throw off their pursuit, like block the road or take a circuitous route.

Failing the Athletics tests isn't certain death, but it means the samurai gets cut off from his teammates, grabbed by one of the pawns, or shot at by an Emerald Legionnaire. Other arrows fly around them, sometimes felling peasants by mistake (the Shuten Doji doesn't care). Other minions are coming from the north to join the mob.

The magistrates need an army, fast. It would take days to ride to Kyuden Shinjo or Bayushi. The Iuchi army may already be taken. But the Mirumoto peacekeepers only left a few days ago, and armies travel slowly on foot...

If the characters haven't split up by now, it is a good idea to remind them that someone needs to warn Shiro Soshi as well.

GETTING THE MIRUMOTO

It takes only an hour to reach the Mirumoto when racing at top speed (roll Horsemanship, TN 25). That could be another 6,000 victims for the Shuten Doji.

As they ride up, the Mirumoto turn, swords out, and for a sickening moment, the players may wonder if they are already too late. But it is only Tsukaru, preparing his troops to face the cavalry he heard coming over the mountain.

The players' roleplaying abilities in the next ten minutes are critical. Can they convince an army from a clan with no personal stake in the area to burst their eardrums (wax is not fail-safe, and they're running out of supplies), ride into a land filled with possessed servitors of Fu Leng and slaughter everyone they meet, including Emerald Legions, then likely commit seppuku after, since attacking Emerald Legions is an Imperial crime? Worse, will they accept the leadership of a Doji courtier (or whatever school your group is led by) to do so?

They're going to need a persuasive speaker.

The Mirumoto are not very inclined to believe wild stories about summoned monsters. These are the down-to-earth troops kept to deal with other clans, and none of them have much interest in history or magic. No one has *heard* of the Shuten Doji.

The Dragons flat-out refuse if the PCs try to pull rank and make it an order, so the army must first be convinced there is a genuine threat, then convinced that the Soshi and Iuchi armies and Emerald Legions can't handle it alone, *then* convinced that in that case they won't just be throwing their lives away if they go back in.

Mirumoto Tabezu tries to convince his commander not to listen to anything Himeko says (they are both much more open the argument if it comes from a mid-to-high-Glory Dragon). If anyone suggests the magistrates *let* the Emerald Legions get possessed, Tabezu will throw down his wakizashi and command the speaking magistrate pick it up so he can either commit seppuku or let Tabezu kill him with honor. On the other hand, he may realize at that point that he has been convinced the PCs believe what they are saying... and he is taking them at their word.

The PCs don't have a set TN for Sincerity tests here. In all fairness, it would be sky-high, but they're going to need to save Rokugan, so roleplaying is more important than the dice.

When they finally get the Dragon to commit, the first thing Tsukaru suggests is to cut off the road to prevent the mobs from contaminating other lands, while the PCs lead a contingent of 100 soldiers to get jade from the nearby mines, since fighting the Shuten Doji without it is an exercise in futility.

The Jade Mines

The Shuten Doji, though it cannot enter the actual mines, is a paranoid creature, and it knows enough to try to stop the characters from getting any jade. With Kurosho's memories, it knows about mines, and better, the hundreds of corpses stuffed inside.

Thus, after a hard ride into the night with dozens of blazing torches and a long train of armored bushi, the PCs arrive at the mines, only to see a forest of shapes ahead, like short trees... moving slowly.

The massacred victims of the mass grave have risen as zombies, rotting, bloated women and children who walked out of the mine shaft and now stand in hunched, putrid ranks in front of the mine entrances.

To get jade, the PCs have to get through *them*.

If they have the Mirumoto with them, you can use the Mass Combat or Clan War rules, with a PC as general in the Tides of Battle roll. The zombies have no leading intelligence, and only roll 2k2 for generaling. The PCs' forces are sentient, better trained and better led, but the zombies outnumber them at least three to one, making the odds disturbingly even, and the fight nightmarish as zombies flail at them in dead silence, continuing to attack even as their arms, legs and faces are hacked off.

If the PCs are being cautious, it is possible for a small team of humans to try to get past the zombies without fighting. Simple stealth would be very difficult due to the number of eyes looking around (TN 35), but the zombies aren't very bright. If the characters pose as zombies themselves, they have a better chance. They just have to catch a few stragglers, take their porcelain masks, cover themselves in rotting flesh or Shosuro makeup, and move very slowly (roll Awareness + Acting, TN 15). Magic such as The Embrace of Kenro-ji-jin could allow them to bypass the zombies completely.

Zombie statistics are on pp. 197-198 of the first edition basic book.

There is enough jade in the mines to be turned into a *lot* of jade powder to coat weapons. However, getting a mine cart past the zombies on the way out would take an additional roll at least as difficult as the one on the way in.

SOSHI CASTLE

As the characters ride up, life continues as normal at Shiro Soshi (if refugees on your doorstep can be considered normal). Inside, the samurai have had no word of the disturbances, and expect the PCs to go through formal greetings, baths, a meal and tea ceremony before meeting with the daimyo. If the PCs demand to be let in, the guards get extremely huffy, see them to a room, and keep them waiting for a very long time. Convincing them that there is a great emergency which some foreign magistrates saw before their spies did? Awareness + Sincerity, TN 20 at least.

When Bantaro and Shinobu get around to meeting with the characters, they are not inclined to let a few panicking magistrates upset their routine. *"So there's an oni running around,"* Bantaro says, *"You're magistrates. Go kill it."*

If they explain that they need an army, Shinobu reminds them they have Emerald Legions. If they say the Emerald Legions were possessed, Shinobu smiles like they just stepped in the cow flop.

"Well," she says, *"That wasn't very expedient of you to allow the Emperor's troops contact with an unknown Shadowlands creature without your..."* (she rolls Courtier and realizes how few of them have fought the Shadowlands before) *"...expert guidance.' It would certainly be a shame*

were word to get out about such poor planning on the parts of otherwise excellent magistrates... those same magistrates who so wisely decided which family was the most wronged in the war of Ojatar Valley..."

Yes, the Scorpion would just *love* to take advantage of circumstances like this to advance their political goals. They won't even lose sleep over it. Why don't they just draw up a peace agreement and the magistrates can sign right *here*?

If the characters mention that it was Iuchi Kurosho who summoned the Shuten Doji, that makes Shinobu's day. *"Don't you think that we poor beleaguered neighbors of such blasphemous, cretinous people are sorely in need of some jade mines for our own protection in case of future Shadowlands incursion?"*

Neither Bantaro or Shinobu has ever heard of the Shuten Doji, and they assume that the PCs are exaggerating and over-reacting to their first sight of an oni. They volunteer to send a spy out with the PCs who can summon troops if the magistrates "require assistance," then nod and humor the PCs' "crazy" suggestions like bursting the troops' eardrums. A Perception + Sincerity roll, TN 15, lets them see that Bantaro has no intention to do so. Any troops he actually sends out are going to be horror movie extras.

If Norie is here, she can use her alternate personality's Shugenja Lore to remember the story of the Shuten Doji if the PCs convince her it's important. Once she realizes the severity of the situation, she'll be willing to strike a bargain -- if they agree to prosecute Kurosho and the Iuchi to the fullest extent for this crime, she'll convince Bantaro and Shinobu to get to safety, so the characters aren't blamed for the destruction of the Soshi family. She can also get them a unit of Soshi shugenja to support the Mirumoto.

Without Norie's help, the magistrates have little chance of getting the spoiled and sheltered Soshi couple to leave their rich doss for the uncertainty of the road. A *much* easier Sincerity roll (TN 20 or so) can get them to agree to lock the castle up tight and shoot anyone who approaches. Unusual strategies, such as appealing to Shinobu's concern for her son or former sister, might spark a little self-preservation instinct. Dragging out the royals by force is possible (an enthusiastic Mirumoto army would help), but it'll be hell on their reputation afterwards.

THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

The real hell begins when the characters get back with the jade and lead the Mirumoto armies through the gathered forces of evil to find Kurosho and the Shuten Doji to put an end to it all. They must kill each and every person they encounter. If a single possessed human survives, this will start up again in a few days. The horror here is that the slaughter is desperately necessary, and it must be done without regret.

Encourage the PCs to come up with nifty war-fighting strategies. While they have a good many troops, there's only a few Soshi and Agasha shugenja, trained primarily in Air and Fire magic. Lightning bolts and flying archers are flashy, but they do not make an overall difference against innumerable enemies who feel no fear. Ingenuity is what will save the day:

Earthquake spells can cause landslides that will break the mob into manageable pieces if they can get a casting shugenja within fifty yards of the target zone. A blaze started with lantern oil and whipped up by Air magic could turn into a wildfire much more devastating than a few artillery shots.

Smart players will prepare hand or torch signals for the deafened troops, or the army will turn into a disorganized mess very quickly.

Turn the lights low. If you're up for it, have your players block their ears and mime all

communication. Once they take command of their squads and start up the road to Shiro Iuchi, the characters are plunged into total silence.

The battle progresses in three stages:

The Calm

Before they engage the enemy, build up the tension as the PCs and Tsukaru plan their attack, poring over maps in flickering torch-light to decide whether they'd rather wait alone in the darkness as the first swarm comes down the road, or take the fight to the enemy, since if the Shuten Doji builds enough mass, even the Mirumoto will be overwhelmed.

They send out their best trained scouts, unarmored and barefoot to move like shadows past the armies... then wait... and wait... and wait for their return. When Tsukaru gives up and assumes the worst, the scouts finally come running. Do the characters dare unplug their ears to listen to the news? (That Read Lips advantage sure comes in handy.)

The Storm

Once swords are crossed and the charge into darkness begins, build the horror slowly as their carefully laid plans fall apart in the face of *maho* and chaos. Start small, with the terror coming from the sheer numbers and ferocity of the opponents, frightening, but not far worse than other wars.

Then build up the enemy's dreadful nature:

A PC loses touch with his unit, cut off by a line of possessed children he must harden his heart to slaughter. He fights his way back to the unit, finds them... and they are with the Shuten Doji now; they took out their earplugs to find each other in the darkness.

A character sees one of the innocent deafened samurai in the path of charging Dragons, cutting down anything that doesn't wear green. The PC screams to warn him, but no one can hear and the man dies where he stands.

Lightning flashes, illuminating the field for a moment, and a character sees Dragon fighting Dragon and no one knows if it is friendly fire or half their army has fallen to possession already.

Naturally, this section should be resolved with Mass Combat rules. We don't recommend switching to Clan War, as it is important that players remain intensely in-character and able to jump to Skirmish Level at any moment.

Mirumoto Tsukaru rolls 8k4 for Generaling, with one Free Raise against the Iuchi house guard, and two Free Raises against the peasants. PC-led groups also get the Raises. The Shuten Doji rolls 5k5 for Generaling, and gets four Free Raises against any troops who are still able to hear.

Duel results mean one-on-one combat with a possessed Emerald Legionnaire (Agility 4, Earth 3, Reflexes 3, Kenjutsu 4, Defense 3, no Void, no School Techniques) or a pair of possessed peasants (straight 2s) attempting to double-team the PC and rip the earplugs from their ears.

"Heroic Opportunities" is not a term that has much value here. By the time this is over, it is most likely no one will ever want to speak of this battle again. As per the rules in *Bearer of Jade*, all Glory awards in battle are halved.

And All Jigoku's Fury Is Unleashed

When the armies draw close enough to Kurosho to worry the Shuten Doji, it brings out its cadre of peasants who have been telepathically learning *maho*. They don't know a lot yet, but they

get Free Raises for delivering wounds, and their possessed brethren will bare their throats for the others.

And they can do absolutely anything with it.

The Shuten Doji are the *sensei* of *maho*. As we said in *Bearer of Jade*, heading into a village held by the Shuten Doji is like walking into a world in which Fu Leng won. During this battle, feel free to make up entirely new spells, steal from other games' more bizarre magic, and hit the PCs with as many supernatural surprises as possible to keep them from predicting the next move.

On the most basic level, every *maho* spell in the book will be hitting the Dragons. The Shuten Doji burns out its possessed victims to power its spells, so many of the victims will suffer spontaneous internal injuries or jump on the Mirumoto's swords to power white-hot blasts of the Touch of Death.

In the terrifying strangeness, each familiar face only makes it worse. Nearly everyone they met in Parts 1 and 2 are here now. That old monk they talked to? He's bending young women over backwards and tearing their ribs out to build an altar to Jizo. Iuchi soldiers? They are breaking all their horses' knees in frustration that the beasts won't get possessed. Soshi Ichihito? He has dug up his father's grave and is dragging the corpse around on a leash.

The constant stream of assailants includes familiar servants from the town, monks and old men, charging in groups or alone, stalking the characters from behind, hiding in alleys, spitting blood in their eyes, and tearing out infants' throats with their teeth if they have no sharp implements to get the Free Raises for their evil master. Demented freaks throw their bodies onto Mirumoto formations to weigh down their blades before mobbing them.

If Seppun Ichiko is still alive and wasn't the very first thing they went for after they found out about the Shuten Doji, she's on the steps of Iuchi Castle, looking untouched at first, with cotton in her ears. *Cotton she could never have known to put in*. If Ryuko hesitates to cut the child down, she runs forward for a thankful hug, careful not to let her body language betray anything before she grabs for those earplugs. If cut apart, she disintegrates into her weight in small leeches.

The grotesquerie should seem unending. There's an animated tornado of blood with thousands of cat-sized claws in its funnel, abrading and tearing like a sand-storm. The tornado bends around corners, goes horizontal, and fires off enormous jets of mud it has sucked up. Once it knocks down a few samurai, it reverses flow and sucks them right in. When Mirumoto troops hack rents in its side with jade-encrusted weapons, purple ichor sprays off like gunk off a potter's wheel.

The town square outside Shiro Iuchi has the grass woven together like a scab around holes in the stone fountain. An iron spider-web radiates over the square, piercing a number of bodies. Anyone who touches it gets grasped by wires that burrow through them. The wires are hollow, like syringes, and the fat ones by the fountain are filling with bone marrow. Inside, where the marrow drips, a dark blur is taking shape, like a jellyfish, becoming more real with each droplet. The earth beneath this place has veins, and the sediment is already changing to look like brown-gray layers of muscle.

Four Shuten Doji servants collapse, holding their spines, writhing and screaming, until their vertebrae extend out beyond their skin, and their heads burst off like penanggalans. The first ones pull the skin free from the others until they are in their mature form -- skulls with saw-toothed spines that run through the grass like snakes.

This section should be heavy on description and horror, and light on numbers. The Shuten Doji's creations continue doling out the Mass Combat Table damage, but there is no need to roll dice for a fight with a tornado of blood. Once Iuchi Castle is in sight, forget the armies and give the

PCs their shot at glory as they run up the steps to take on Kurosho and demon that invented *maho*.

SILENCING THE SCREAM

Shiro Iuchi is built into a wind tunnel, which focuses storms to honor Osano-Wo and the air spirits. The storm is raging now, and the wind is strong enough to tear through bags of jade powder and rip spell scrolls out of people's hands.

The players should be careful as they pound up the stairs to the throne room, because the steps are likely to bite them.

The Shuten Doji has flesh-crafted together three dozen possessed Iuchi into the stairs, a long body with arms and legs protruding into the wall where the support beams once were, their faces protruding at odd intervals and wailing unendingly.

Inside the throne room are Kurosho and the Shuten Doji. As the characters enter, the storm shatters the glass windows, sending glass and rain flying everywhere.

The Shuten Doji of Regret is a grotesquely elongated human, thin and stretched, with eyes that pour constant tears and a mouth contorted into a permanent wail which, if the PCs unplug their ears, is the most mournful sound they've ever heard. Its body trails off into a bloodstained, salty cloud of tears that spray everywhere as it writhes around like a snake.

Kurosho now has the kanji for Void burned through his flesh and into his skull and his eyes have the same blankness as the other victims, but he remains a powerful, canny shugenja, with both regular scrolls and *maho* to work with, and he has nothing left to lose. The Shuten Doji can perform all *maho* spells, *maho-bujin* techniques, and most oni powers. Its version of oni armor *discards any damage die that rolls a 1-9* unless the attacker made 3 Raises to ignore the armor. And jade powder lessens in effectiveness after the first hit.

If characters die here, so be it. Dealing with the Shuten Doji is like that.

The rules for sacrificial magic (*The Way of Shadow*, page 135), can be used by both shugenja and samurai to give their dying actions a number of Free Raises equal to twice their Void. They may also burn out Void points permanently if they want to keep spending after their Ring is exhausted.

Iuchi Kurosho

Rank 5 Iuchi Meishodo Shugenja

EARTH 4, **FIRE** 3, **Intelligence** 4, **WATER** 6, **AIR** 3, **Awareness** 4, **VOID** 3.

Skills: Acting 2, Athletics 2, Bard 2, Battle 4, Bojutsu 3, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Heraldry 4, Herbalism 2, History 3, Horse Archery 2, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 2, Law 3, Lore: Shugenja 2, Lore: Unicorn Clan 3, Medicine 3, Meditation 2, Shintao 3, Stealth 3, Tea Ceremony 2.

Honor: 0.6 **Glory:** 7.6

Advantages: Social Position (former daimyo), Allies (Shinjo Yokatsu, Naohida, others), Death Trance, Innate Ability (starred), Voice

Disadvantages: Driven (increase Iuchi's power), Dark Secret (bastard son, maho), True Love (Soshi Nihime), Social Disadvantage (monk), Hatred (Iuchi Daiyu).

School Techniques: Can cast any spell in one round. Cannot make Raises for spells.

* **Sense, Commune, and Summon.**

* **Counterspell:** TN 10. Target another shugenja in the process of casting a spell. The shugenja summons opposing elements (Earth / Air, Water / Fire). Success raises the TN of the spell by 10, +5 for each raise taken.

* **Sukinjin's Gift (Water):** TN (TN of spell being reflected), instantaneous, no concentration. Target must be within Water x5 feet. Success reflects the spell back at the caster.

* **The Penetrating Drop (Water):** TN 5, instantaneous, no concentration. The shugenja pours his Water into a target, making it warp as if it were wet.

* **Path to Inner Peace (Water):** TN 5, permanent, no concentration. Heals one wound rank.

* **Earthquake (Earth):** TN 15, lasts 5 rounds, total concentration. Causes earthquake for 50 yards around target. All actions in area at -2, area vulnerable to collateral damage.

* **Force of Will (Earth):** TN 10, lasts 3 rounds, no concentration. The target has a wound penalty of one less for the duration of the spell.

* **Accounts of Shorihotsu (Air):** TN (Target spells mastery x 5), inst., no concentration. Requires a raise to analyze an instantaneous spell. Allows shugenja to identify and analyze a spell that is currently being cast. Can learn: the element, caster's clan and school, intended target, etc.

* **Know the Shadows (Air):** TN 5, duration 10 rounds, no concentration. Invisibility in shadow. Adds 5 to the TN to see the target for each raise.

* **Cloak of Night (Air):** TN 10, lasts 1 day, casual concentration. Conceals a target item on a character. The caster must touch both the target and item to cast the spell.

* **Command the Mind (Air):** TN (Target's Willpower x 5), lasts for 1 command, full concentration. Target must roll Perception against caster's Air x5 to notice and stop attempt. Otherwise, caster can implant a thought in the target's head. Subtle suggestions only.

* **Echoes on the Wind (Air):** TN 15, special duration, no concentration. Leaves a message of 10 words or less in a specific place, can be activated by specific or any person. When they enter the area, they hear the words whispered.

* **Secrets on the Wind (Air):** TN 10, lasts 10 minutes, full concentration. Caster may listen to any familiar area within 10 miles. Soft or indistinct sounds require a Perception roll.

* **Wind-Borne Speed (Air):** TN 15, lasts 12 actions, full concentration. Target is lifted through air at (caster's Air x10) feet per round. Can be up to 30' above the ground.

* **Fury of Osano-Wo (Fire):** TN 5, inst., no concentration. 7k2 lightning bolt.

* **Wings of Fire (Fire):** TN 10, lasts 2 minutes, full concentration. The target grows fiery wings allowing them to fly (caster's Fire x5) feet per round.

* **Bo of Water (Water, Innate):** TN 10, no concentration, lasts for 10 rounds. Creates a magical bo, Str+8k3 damage.

* **Castle of Water (Water):** TN 10, lasts 5 minutes, focused concentration. Creates a 10' deep by 5' wide by (caster's Water x5)' radius moat around caster. Cannot be used in man-made foundations.

* **Heart of Nature (Water):** TN 15, lasts one month, no concentration. Links caster with an animal. Can be summoned and will always be friendly to caster. Caster may roll Awareness, TN 15, to know how far away animal is. Cannot communicate with animal.

* **Torrential Rain (Water, Innate):** TN 30, lasts 1 hour, focused concentration. Creates a violent storm for one mile diameter. Visibility is 1', and all physical actions are at -3.

* **Reflective Pool (Water):** TN 10, lasts 3 minutes, focused concentration. Cast on a pool of still water, caster may observe familiar area.

* **Reversal of Fortunes (Water):** TN 10, lasts 10 actions, no concentration. Target may re-roll one unsuccessful roll.

* **The Ties that Bind (Water, Innate):** TN 10, lasts 10 actions, full concentration. Caster can locate one individual or object. Need something associated with item or person

* **The Four Winds' Favor (Air):** TN 5, lasts 5 minutes, focused concentration. Caster can hear sounds from all directions within five miles.

* **The Burning Sands (Fire):** TN 15, lasts (caster's Fire) minutes, focused concentration. Summons a 20' long, 5' high wall of flame, in any shape. DR 3k2.

The Shuten Doji's Mortal Form

Lore TN: 30 (20 with Phoenix Clan Lore)

EARTH 8, FIRE 5, WATER 5, AIR 8

Attacking: 5k5 **Damage:** 8k3

TN to be Hit: 25 **Armor:** 10

Wounds: 25: -1; 50: -2; 75: -3; 100: Dissipated

Special Abilities: Fear 2 (6 for the Shuten Doji of Fear)

Invulnerability (only hurt by jade)

Shugenja Ability: Can cast any *maho* in one round.

Maho-Bujin Abilities: Has a number of additional attacks equal to the highest Honor Rank of its opponents. May use the

damage it inflicted in its last strike as initiative total for the following round. May recover a number of Wound Ranks equal to the Honor of anyone they bring to Down, Out, or Dead. This takes effect immediately.

Possession: Each time someone hears the Shuten Doji, the summoning *maho-tsukai* makes a Contested Void roll with the target; if he succeeds, the Shuten Doji possesses the target. Void may not be spent on this roll. A failed possession attempt feels like an odd, frightening adrenaline rush. Another roll occurs every round (3-5 seconds) the victim is within the appropriate sensory range.

The possessed suffer three points of Taint, and remain aware but helpless as the Shuten Doji directs their bodies to unspeakable acts. Possessed people fight with their normal skills and Traits. Only the summoner, the Shuten Doji's own form, and any possessed *maho*-users can cast *maho*. The Shuten Doji of Regret is only dispelled when all its victims are killed. It cannot be re-summoned for a number of years equal to its slayer's Honor.

Snuffing the Candle: Can deliver 8k3 damage (internal organ ruptures) to any possessed victim. Such damage counts as a blood sacrifice for *maho*.

If the characters think to look for a solution other than charging in with the troops, it is possible for them to tell Waruko/Nihime what her lover has done. Though desperate for revenge, she is not far gone enough to resort to the Shadowlands, and if the PCs can keep her alive through the battle to bring her before Kurosho, she curses him, awakening him to the horror he has become. Burning out all his Void to ignore the possession for one round, he kills himself, leaving the players with only the Shuten Doji to fight.

For purposes of the Doji Courtier ability Test of Honor, the Driven disadvantage gives Kurosho an effective Honor of 3. The Shuten Doji is not human and is unaffected.

When the characters finally destroy both the Shuten Doji and its caster, just as the Mirumoto outside track down the last infected peasant, the creature disintegrates like a draining whirlpool, and is banished to Jigoku for a number of years equal to the Honor of whoever strikes the killing blow.

THE WILD CARD

The pregenerated character Mirumoto Seiji has a scroll of unknown magic, and probably will use it in the climactic battle. At first, it merely rains jade jellyfish (1k1 damage). Then the jellyfish flow together into an enormous puddle, and out of the puddle rises an elephantine stone creature with the head of a serpent and jade tusks. It is large enough to ride through hordes of the enemy, and having the head of a snake, has no ears. Unfortunately, it will not fit up castle staircases. If Seiji summons it in the throne room itself, it could provide a critical advantage... or possibly just collapse the floor. The spell ends at the dramatically appropriate moment, and when it does, Seiji's scroll erases itself.

EARTH 4, Stamina 8, FIRE 3, WATER 4, Strength 8, AIR 3

Attacking: 7k3 **Damage:** 8k4

TN to be Hit: 15 **Armor:** 9

Wounds: 25: -1; 50: -2; 75: -3, 100: Destroyed

HONOR AND EXPERIENCE

Once the dawn breaks and the constant trauma fades into memory, the player characters must make an Honor roll, TN 25, or lose 5 points of Honor in the horror of what they had to become. (This roll can be avoided or the TN lowered if the PCs did something particularly clever to avoid carving their way through possessed people.) It is likely they will have nightmares for years, or flashbacks triggered by formations of people marching together. Any scars received from Shuten Doji *maho* will remain visible and not fade with time.

For surviving Part Three, characters receive the skill *Maho-Tsukai* Lore 1 if they do not already have it. In addition, they receive experience as follows:

Surviving: 2

Saving Shahai and Daiyu: 1

Convincing the Mirumoto to fight: 1

Keeping Ichiko and other dependents alive: 1

Creative roleplaying or tactical considerations: 1-3.

And any player whose character went out with a heroic bang sacrificing himself to save others gets 5 extra points for use with the Karma rule.

GLORY AND PUBLIC REWARDS

The surviving magistrates should return to Otsan Uchi and present their findings to Doji Satsume. Unless the PCs make good arguments to the contrary, he grants possession of the mines to the Soshi. However, in light of the Scorpion's crimes, he demands all content produced by one of the three mines be shipped to Imperial coffers for the next five years. He orders Bantaro's young son fostered with the Shinjo family and Iuchi Shahai fostered with the Shosuro, hostages to ensure continued peace.

Besides recognizing the awards from the first two sections, Satsume will commend the PCs for their quick thinking and undeniable courage in defending the Empire, and grant them a Glory rank each. Next time, he promises, they will be assigned to the *dangerous* wars.

If the magistrates rescued Daiyu and Shahai and brought Daiyu out of his shell, they gain a new Ally in the Iuchi daimyo, who has finally come out of the forest and started to take care of his family. Soshi Bantaro owes them a favor or two he might reluctantly pay back, and Shosuro Norie recommends them to her Scorpion superiors (i.e. Bayushi Hametsu, Aramoro and Kachiko) as magistrates deserving of attention.

Both shugenja families are financially devastated by the loss of so many peasants, and their fields will grow weeds for some years to come. The Ikoma historians will teach future generations the fallacy of Iuchi Kurosho and how for want of a son, fortunes, and Fortunes, were lost.