

HINDSIGHT

An Adventure of Forewarning and Forearming

by Chris and Jennifer Hepler

*"An odd lot, those tattooed men,
always considering destiny immutable,
yet history, a matter of opinion."
-- Kitsuki Yasu*

Looking for a vacation from the austere and the monastic? The Mantis Isles are a leisure spot unparalleled in Rokugan. See the gaudy palaces and ancient ruins, pristine beaches and exotic wildlife. Sample their unusual cuisine, explore the colorful coral reefs, and while you're at it, look for a murdered monk.

The Kitsuki say an ise zumi hasn't returned from the islands and the Mantis daimyo isn't talking. The only name anyone will mention is Togashi Akuro, a renegade Dragon whose faces change with the day.

But surely your samurai have seen this performance before. The criminal mind is the same, whether the charge is robbery, forgery, or murder. All your magistrates need do is to deduce the motive, method, and opportunity of the villain, and the pieces will fall into place. They can apprehend and subdue him just as soon as they know when and where he will strike next.

It's a very simple mission.

The only problem is keeping it that way.

- * Suitable for 4-6 player characters of Ranks 3-4, approximately 2-4 bushi, 1-2 shugenja, and 1-2 courtiers. Especially appropriate for characters with the Great Destiny advantage, the Dark Fate flaw, or a Kharmic Tie.
- * Not recommended for characters with the Rank 3 Kitsuki Magistrate Technique; while not destructive to the plot, it will advance it very quickly and remove a great deal of suspense.
- * Intended for immersion roleplayers and gamemasters who know Rokugan like the hilt of their katana, yet are willing to deviate from the *L5R* card game story line.
- * The *Legend of the Five Rings* First Edition basic rules are required to use this adventure, but *Winter Court: Kyuden Kakita*, *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, *Way of the Minor Clans*, *Way of the Crane*, *Way of the Dragon*, and the map from *Otosan Uchi* will make gamemaster preparation a lot easier.

*****ON THE CREDITS PAGE*****

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Dedication: To the playtesters, thrown together at the last minute and more fun than an entire mis-scheduled tournament anyway. Who needs a crowd when we have you guys?

About the Authors

Jennifer Brandes Hepler is currently placing Chris Hepler inside a particle accelerator at Brookhaven National Laboratory in an attempt to prove the Wheeler-Feynman Advanced Wave Hypothesis. If successful, Hepler will be the first game designer to roll dice moving both forward and backward in time, which really futzes the whole "roll and keep" thing, let me tell you.

INTRODUCTION

Hindsight is an adventure for the **Legend of the Five Rings** roleplaying game, first run at Origins 2000. Intended as an alternative to the story line of the current official **L5R** products, *Hindsight* makes reference to the Scorpion Clan Coup and resulting wars as a future possibility but does not actually require them to have occurred; the adventure can be run in games set before, after, or entirely indifferent to those events.

But that doesn't mean running it will be easy.

Hindsight, by its nature and genre, will not suit the taste of every gamemaster or campaign. A predominately low-magic campaign that relies on the details of feudal Japan will find *Hindsight* over-the-top. Story-line adherents may not like the power we give the player characters, or even the concept of the adventure. Gamemasters who can't improvise Rokugani historical detail, characterization, or consequences may find themselves reaching to the players for help in Rounds Two and Three -- situations that start off complex and become more so with every action the PCs take. They may even find themselves frustrated because while the adventure and the supplements it references have a hefty amount of detail, the GM will have to not only spot and understand retroactive continuity, but make it up on their own.

Quite frankly, it takes a lot of preparation, a lack of distractions, and a keg of mad glee to run *Hindsight* and pull it off right. This is by no means an old-fashioned dungeon crawl in which we write up a map and your players follow it down the road. What players and gamemaster must realize is that *Hindsight* is only half of a road map, and the entire **L5R** story line is the other half.

And as Dr. Emmett Brown would say, "Where we're going, we don't need roads."

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

In **Part One**, the magistrates are asked by the Dragon Clan to investigate into the murder of Togashi Nobue, an *ise zumi* who was last seen alive on the Island of Silk. Once there, they are hassled by an irritable Mantis of the Storm Legion before getting down to business. They find evidence that the victim was actually the third in a series of *ise zumi* troubleshooters who came to the islands, working under the cover story of educating the populace in Shintao. The first two monks disappeared, but left clues for their successors in the form of coded Shinseist doctrine, which leads the characters to the ruins of Kyuden Gusai. There, they find Nobue's notes.

She was here tracking Togashi Akuro, a renegade *ise zumi* who went mad after seeing a vision of the future. Her assistant in the search was Kakita Kumpei, an artisan who, unknown to the characters, has been an accessory to Akuro and helped murder the three monks. Sending the PCs into a trap on a deserted island, Kumpei rejoins Akuro, and the characters catch them just as they disappear into a magical painting, made from the skins of the dead monks. The heroes, presumably unwilling to let a murderer go free, follow.

In **Part Two**, they emerge from the painting in time to save a young nobleman from being killed by his Seppun bodyguard. The man, they soon learn, is the Emperor Hantei...the *Sixth*.

With the blood of Togashi powering the *maya* of a Kakita artisan painting, Akuro and Kumpei have emerged in the Imperial Palace of the year 400, when the Emperor was a puppet, *gaijin* were a common sight, and the *gozoku* rule of three Clan daimyo determined the fate of the Empire. Hantei Kusada does not seem nearly as important in court as the corpulent Bayushi Atsuki, the young Doji Tomeko and her champion Seikidera, and the war hawk Shiba Katsutoshi, the Phoenix behind the ruthless recent purge of the *gaijin*.

As the characters try to keep their secret from the interested nobles, they soon realize that anything they say or do could warp Rokugan's past -- they'll need to remember all the history they can when the rich and powerful ask for favors in return for helping the characters find Akuro. It is not easy -- due to the fading magic of the painting, Akuro arrived a week earlier than the PCs, changing his appearance (using his Chameleon *ise zumi* tattoo) to more easily influence the nobles of the past, from the Scorpion daimyo to the corrupt bodyguard, whom he urged into the attack on the Hantei.

Tracking one of Akuro's guises takes the characters to a small hunting-lodge castle called Shiro Izumida, where they find signs that a gaijin scout force has already penetrated far into Rokugan's borders. There they also learn that Akuro brought with him scrolls from the Ikoma library eight hundred years in the future...outlining the entire Rokugani defensive strategy for The Battle of the White Stag, the combined land and sea battle which kept the gaijin from invading Rokugan.

If the player characters say nothing, Rokugan is doomed.

At that very moment, a gaijin horde is marching up the coast, visible from Shiro Izumida. The heroes race to warn Otsan Uchi, but the person who could best use their news -- Doji Seikidera, Crane Champion and the key figure in Rokugan's winning the sea battle against the gaijin -- sneaks out to try to negotiate peace with the foreign sailors. Unfortunately for all concerned, Akuro (in disguise) has accompanied Seikidera on his midnight sail, taking him straight into his death at the hands of Akuro's gaijin allies.

With Seikidera dead, Akuro has changed history irrevocably...or so he thinks.

In **Part Three**, the player characters must win the Battle of the White Stag in the name of Rokugan and temporal integrity. The horde on land must be stopped; the merchant fleets must be gathered by someone who *looks* enough like the Crane Champion to provide ships for the three arguing Clans; the Mantis must be convinced to abandon the gaijin and side with Rokugan in the coming battle; the enchantments of the Isawa must hold until the Dragon and the Centipede arrive; the sea battle must be fought as the *gaijin* pound Otsan Uchi with cannons, blades, and magic; the future Isawa Asahina must live through the barrage so he can found the Asahina family a few years later; and to top it all off, somewhere in the chaos is Kakita Kumpei, with a few inkpots and the memories of the future that are the heroes' only way home.

As you can probably tell by now, this isn't an adventure for sheep.

BEFORE PLAY BEGINS

Hindsight was initially playtested with the provided pregenerated characters; six samurai averaging Rank 3, in good standing with the Dragon Clan and amiable toward the Mantis. The protagonists have many uncommon skills such as Lore: Mantis, Sailing, Battle, Mimic, and especially History at high ratings to help smooth the plot twists. If you are trying to integrate the adventure into a home group, you may wish to provide a "voice in the party" NPC possessing these skills to shore up any PC weaknesses. It is also possible to alter the characters' skills as needed when they arrive in the past, reflecting the small changes to history that Akuro has already made -- for example all Crane characters may suddenly get Craft: Sailing if the future battle changes history so much that naval warfare becomes a standard part of Kakita bushi training.

We personally prefer making the players stretch their dramatic range and play the pre-gens, but then, we're tournament organizers. Adjusting *Hindsight* to fit the fates of home-grown PCs will take some customization, especially when it comes to the reincarnation

theme.

Hindsight's central conceit allows the gamemaster to create resonance among the players by exploiting such Advantages and Disadvantages as Great Destiny, Nemesis, Kharmic Tie, or a family curse. By making the characters feel glimmers of their lovers, friends, and enemies in the people of the past, the adventure can provide closure or illustrate themes about spiritual justice in Rokugan. Being enemies in one life and lovers in another can add new dimensions to a current campaign relationship; perhaps, as the pregenerated bushi Kanimoto and his Nemesis Tadayasu, your characters find themselves helpless before destiny, fighting in this life and the next; has one always defeated the other, or does the dharmic wheel balance them with wins and losses? And what of the temptation to erase mistakes or change history to your family's advantage?

If it is at all possible, we recommend using Kanimoto's story arc, though whether this is done by playing Kanimoto is less important. The essential idea is that you have a reason for the PC to meet his Nemesis or Enemy on the isles in Part One, get entangled in Akuro's plot and the delicacies of time travel, and just when he least wants it, meet his enemy's previous incarnation in Part Three. This has the advantage of player-proofing at least some drama in the climax. Even if the PC wastes his opponent early on, he can still run into him a second time in a different skin.

If their personal enemies have already been established to live elsewhere, integrating them may prove too troublesome. On the other hand, tossing out Tadayasu and surprising the players with their expectant enemy waiting at Yoritomo's right hand might chill their blood just the way you like it.

A Handy House Rule

Because many Clan Lore rolls will probably be made over the course of the adventure, you may want to institute our house rule: a samurai is considered to have the Clan Lore skill of their own clan equal to their School Rank. The pregenerated characters were not created with this rule.

A Note on Storyline and Later Editions

Hindsight's statistics are written in First Edition rules, since they are more suited to the heroic style of play necessary for this story. In addition, the pregenerated characters' backgrounds assume a setting before the Scorpion Clan Coup. If you are integrating into an existing, post-Coup campaign, the plot should work just as well in a time after Yoritomo has increased the Mantis' power, but before the coming of the Hooded Ronin's revelation and the Day of Thunder.

The exact timeline of Rokugan's important events is somewhat inconsistent from supplement to supplement, and *Way of the Scorpion* makes it clear that recorded history in Rokugan is by no means objective.

Winter Court: Kyuden Kakita attempted to make a single history reference table, but it did so in several places by changing years previously given in the *Way of the Clans* supplements. Since the contradictions and confusions of each individual clan history results in many subplot ideas, *Hindsight* was created using the Clan books for its dates. If you wish to alter the adventure to suit the *Kyuden Kakita* timeline, you are welcome. Cross out a few of the dates and scribble in. It's your printer paper.

Remember, what actually occurs, what a "historian" writes down, what a student interprets from the text, and what the student remembers under stress is a long, easily-broken causal chain. You don't have to know every word of published *L5R* history to run *Hindsight*, but

you should be able to explain it to your players on the fly. When the inevitable discussion sparks in Round Two and Three, tell the noisy players, "Sure, that's what you were *taught*," with a big smile and keep going. The skill is called "Clan Lore," not "Clan Facts."

PART ONE: UNDER THE SKIN

Background: The Death of Togashi Nobue

The characters are summoned to Shiro Kitsuki by the family daimyo **Kitsuki Yasu** (or, if their Glory is not sufficiently high, by an underling attempting to impress Yasu by handling the affair alone). There, in a quick brief, Yasu tells the PCs that a Mantis herald arrived not long ago with a case of some import.

It seems an eta's dog had been searching a garbage heap on the Isle of Silk when it found a body that has been tentatively identified as **Togashi Nobue**, a venerated *ise zumi*. It was not an easy identification -- the body had decomposed for perhaps two weeks, and it had been skinned. The Mantis burned the body as was proper, and dispatched a herald to the Dragon.

Yasu knows little more than this, and if the PCs question the Mantis herald, all he can add is some details on the neighborhood where the body was found. **Cresting Wave Row**, the area which uses that particular garbage dump, is a sheltered sea-side community. The houses are used by samurai and wealthy merchants who plan a brief stay in the islands and don't care about finding a dwelling further away from the ports. Few people stay longer than a year. A Lore: Mantis Clan roll, TN 15, can reveal the same information about the area.

In addition, characters with Lore: Dragon Clan, may roll at TN 25 to recognize Togashi Nobue as a troubleshooter within the *ise zumi* ranks, specially hand-picked by Togashi Yokuni to deal with supernatural problems. It is important that the players learn this eventually; if necessary, provide a Dragon escort or servant, who might be able to assist the PCs with Dragon-specific information. (Kitsuki Fumiko of the pregenerated characters can, of course, serve in this regard.)

The messenger tells the characters that Kanimoto, with whom the pregenerated characters have worked in the past, will be their guide while on the islands. He will meet them there.

ARRIVAL ON THE ISLANDS

Most players should know the importance of their making a formal introduction to Mantis Daimyo **Yoritomo** to inform him of their stay in his lands. If they forget, then they are here without official permission, and GMs should feel free to wait until they are on their hottest lead before having the Storm Legion show up and ask to see their travel papers. If you want to give the players a nudge, an Awareness + Etiquette roll, TN 15, will tell them the proper behavior.

The Isle of Silk is one of a handful of places in Rokugan with a tourist industry. Years of semi-secret trade with the Ivory Kingdoms and acres of silkworm farms have given the island a nouveau riche feel -- both in its visitors and those who profit from them.

Yoritomo's palace is a simple square, stone structure, reflecting hundreds of years of silent protest against the destruction of the beautiful, ornate Kyuden Gusai (torn down when Gusai Rioshida tried to hold the Emperor's son hostage, resulting in the dissolution of the Gusai family, and near-destruction of the Mantis clan). Inside, the castle is a strange mix of Rokugani and foreign decorations, with more furniture than in most Rokugani dwellings, including carved wood chairs and tables, thick rugs, and silk curtains, all of which spell "ostentation" to most classy samurai.

Although Yoritomo is fairly civil to characters who come voluntarily rather than waiting to be summoned, the audience is awkward at best.

Yoritomo, whose statistics are in *The Way of the Minor Clans* (p. 22), is a strong-willed,

powerful man in a lousy position. He is widely considered to be among the top ten bushi in Rokugan and has a Glory of 7.9, so the PCs should technically defer to him on all matters. However, in this instance they are acting as the representatives of Togashi Yokuni (Glory 9), after one of Yokuni's hand-picked monks was just murdered in Yoritomo's backyard.

The Dragon tend to be favored at court because they are the most neutral clan in Rokugan and are often seen as free of deception. With war threatening Rokugan (when is it not?) and Yoritomo making a bid to increase the Mantis' power (when is he not?), he knows the last thing he needs is to be bad-mouthed by the Dragon.

So throughout his conversation with the characters, Yoritomo plays a balancing act, speaking bluntly and giving an impression of unrestrained power and temper, while being very careful not to actually antagonize the player characters. If they cooperate with his requests and seem intimidated, he'll walk all over them. If they argue, Yoritomo growls and bluffs, but doesn't follow through unless the PCs are actively rude, in which case he throws them off the island and risks the consequences rather than seem weak.

Although Yoritomo tries to make it seem like a great concession to allow the characters to search the islands, he is actually more than happy to use a free Kitsuki detective to rid his lands of murderers, and agrees readily to give them access.

With one condition.

Yoritomo wants the PCs to bring all suspects to him before subjecting them to Yokuni's justice. Most PCs will not object; if they do, they'd better have convincing leverage, or Yoritomo will suspect some Minor-Clan "family profiling" on the part of the magistrates.

If the magistrates are polite during the rest of the conversation, Yoritomo is willing to answer a few questions before sending them on their way. If asked about Togashi Nobue, he tells the characters she came to the islands as a missionary, one of a number of *ise zumi* who wished to teach the Tao of Shinsei to the provincial Mantis peasants. Their school is inland, near the farming village of **Rakusho**. Though Yoritomo himself is indifferent to religion, he has learned that the other clans have more respect for the Mantis when he mentions the missionaries' "civilizing influence," so he has encouraged the monks to continue.

Enter Tadayasu

Tadayasu, the captain of the Storm Legion for the area where Nobue was found, enters the room halfway through the characters' conversation with Yoritomo. A corrupt police chief with a violent temper and contempt for those below him, and a smarmy, toadying charm when with Yoritomo, Tadayasu is also the Nemesis of the pregenerated PC Kanimoto.

Tadayasu is a physically imposing man with a shaved head, a tendency to wear armor even in court, and enough trust from Yoritomo to interrupt his meeting and not get killed for it. Though he cares little for politeness, and is furious that outside investigators are being brought into his jurisdiction, he rarely shouts. "Firm menace" is what comes to mind with his few words.

(For those of you without a clear picture of the Legion's station house on the Isle of Silk, visualize the most corrupt police who ever hit the news in your section of the world, carrying kama rather than nightsticks, giving them a lethal force license and the arrogance to use it. Paying off a Legionnaire to go break some dope-peddlin' Yasuki's jaw is not considered abnormal law enforcement in these parts. It's considered the first warning.)

Tadayasu considers any law enforcement the characters go over his head to do to be a direct insult to his entire squad. He fears competent magistrates will discover his brutal practices, and he'd rather soil the characters' names pre-emptively. Once Yoritomo gives him the news of

Nobue's murder and the PCs' roles in the investigation, Tadayasu begins to question the characters' motives and qualifications, and request that his loyal lieutenant **Kosai** accompany the PCs at all times. Unless the PCs can convince Yoritomo that this will be a direct threat to the investigation (without insulting the Storm Legion in the process), Yoritomo agrees. In game terms, this is an opposed Awareness + Sincerity test with Tadayasu, who is rolling 6k2; the TN is five times the opponent's Willpower.

If the players succeed, they are free to investigate alone. If both sides succeed, Yoritomo is pleased with everyone's vigilance, lets the magistrates do their thing, and tells Tadayasu to take five samurai from the castle garrison to step up his own investigation. This will please Tadayasu and get him off the PCs' backs for about a day.

If Tadayasu wins, the PCs are given Kosai as a constant chaperone and shadow.

Kosai is a Rank 2 Mantis bushi (see statistics below) and he's a thug from a long line of thugs. He insists on being the first to talk to the locals (using the opportunity to intimidate them into silence), reports any "suspicious" behavior on the PCs' part straight to Tadayasu, and generally tries to sabotage the investigation to "prove" that the Kitsuki are incompetent.

While Kosai is a pain, he is respected among the Storm Legion, and killing him is a fast way to get into a duel with Tadayasu. Getting into a duel with Tadayasu is a fast way to be woken up in the middle of the night by twenty Storm Legionnaires who don't like to see a Mantis lose.

Tadayasu

Rank 4 Mantis Bushi

EARTH 4, Willpower 5, FIRE 3, Agility 4, AIR 2, Reflexes 4, WATER 3, VOID 3

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 3, Battle 4, Bojutsu 3, Commerce 4, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Forgery 4, Jujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 4, Heraldry 2, Investigation 3, Medicine 3, Nofujutsu 4, Poison 2, Sailing 4, Sincerity 4, Stealth 3.

Honor: 0.5 **Glory:** 6.2

Advantages: Heartless

Disadvantages: Vain

School Techniques: Tadayasu may fight with any weapon as if he has at least a skill of 1, and ignore all penalties for unsure footing or imbalance. He may spend a Void point to make a Full Attack with no penalty. He may attack with a weapon in each hand, rolling separate Initiative for each, and when making a normal attack, his TN to be hit is increased by his Water Ring times 5.

TN To Be Hit: 20 (35)

Weapons: Katana (Str +3k2), Kama (Str +2k2).

Kosai

Rank 2 Mantis Bushi

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

Skills: Athletics 2, Nofujutsu 3, Defense 3, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Sailing 3, Hunting 2, Sincerity 3, Commerce 1, Stealth 2, Battle 2,

Lore: Mantis Clan 2.

Honor: 0.7 **Glory:** 2.5

School Techniques: May fight with any weapon as if he has a skill of 1, and ignores all penalties for unsure footing. May spend Void to make a Full Attack without penalty.

TN To Be Hit: 15 (20 in armor)

Weapons: Parangu (Str + 2k2), Kusarigama (Str +2k2, or can attack to entangle with the chain; this attack inflicts no damage but if successful, double the target's TNs to hit until they attack the chain at TN 20).

Once they have finished their audience, the characters (with Kosai or not) have a few options of where to go, namely whether they want to first investigate where the body was found, or the temple school where Nobue taught. These can occur in either order.

CRESTING WAVE ROW

Exploring the garbage dump where Nobue's body was uncovered doesn't get the characters much. The murder was three weeks ago, so all physical evidence is gone, and transient spirits have dissipated. If shugenja player characters try to Commune with Earth spirits, they are hit with a shrieking, aching voice, "*BLOOD! FIRE! PAIN!*" The spirits have gone insane from absorbing the blood of Togashi (all *ise zumi* have a drop of Togashi's dragon blood in their veins). They cannot speak in anything but heart-rending screams and moans. The communing shugenja must make a Willpower roll, TN 15, or pass out.

If Kitsu Mihime (the pregenerated half-blooded *sodan-senzo*) tries to access the spirits, she hears the voice of an ancestor she has never heard before, screaming "*A text! Take a text!*" with many cries in the background, as if there were more than one spirit attempting to communicate. The voice is high and urgent, and fades away uncontrollably. Feel free to have this same voice speak up at other junctures to provide subtle nudges of weirdness throughout Round One.

Kosai, if present, is slightly shaken by this, but if confronted with his feelings says that real samurai have no emotions except those their lord issues to them. He has little experience with magic and can only theorize that Mantis rocks don't like mainlander shugenja.

Going Door to Door

If the characters question residents in the nearby houses, they meet **Hosho**, an aging merchant who tells them he was not yet living here at the time of the murder. He'll do what he can to excuse himself from the conversation; like other locals, he doesn't want to talk to police. (If Kosai is present, Hosho won't want to talk at all, which Tadayasu will blame on the characters during any debriefing.)

If pressed, he confesses that he bought the house a few days later, from a **young, male monk with exotic tattoos**. The monk did not give his name, nor mention to where he was moving.

Most other non-local residents scrupulously avoided learning anything about the body ("Oh, can you imagine? I insisted they send eta immediately to clean the walkway around my house where she might have walked. I mean, these Mantis, they seem so used to this kind of thing, but *I* am from Shiro sano no Kakita and..."), but can point the characters in the direction of

the mortuary where **Muika**, the eta who found the corpse, currently works.

When they arrive at the small building, Muika is busy painting the face of a corpse to prepare it for burning, but is happy to talk to samurai about his work. While deferential, he tries to make the samurai feel comfortable by putting himself in an open, and therefore, lesser position... in other words, telling them plenty of things they don't want to hear. ("So we put a little plaster in the wounds for smoothness before we paint. Also clots him a bit, so he won't gush when you move him onto the bier. Once we load the honored one into the oven, the fire takes the client, the body goes, and soon all that's left is the fat, um... I mean, 'the pools of heavenly residue.' Careful, the drip pan is full.")

But even Muika turns pale and refuses to speculate when Nobue is mentioned. The fact that the body was skinned terrifies him because it means the death was deliberate and for some terrible purpose. Muika makes a sign for warding off minions of the Fallen (specific to the Mantis' worship of Suitengu and Osano-Wo).

If the PCs interrogate him further (a Willpower + Intimidation roll, TN 5), Muika tells them that the corpse had very little blood in it, and two knife wounds. One was a stab in the lower back, the other a deep cut on the left side of the neck, across the front and turning slightly down. Muika sent the body off quickly before anything *unseemly* happened.

THE TEMPLE SCHOOL

When the PCs arrive at Nobue's temple in Rakusho, they find **Riichi**, a young peasant boy, sweeping the floor. The boy is a bit simple in the head, and hasn't exactly realized that his teacher hasn't been around for the last three weeks. She used to give him food and a few zeni to sweep and mop, and that's what he's been doing, every day, waiting for her to come back and teach him more about Shinsei.

Shintao is Riichi's life. In it, he found respect and an understanding of his place in the universe that lets him accept being born hinin (or not very bright). He knows there is something better further down in the cycle.

He answers any of the PCs' questions without guile, but knows nothing of Nobue's disappearance or why anyone would wish her harm. He can tell them that she was the third of the nice teachers -- **Togashi Ayaru** was the first, and after he left came **Togashi Jotaro**, then when he left Nobue arrived. Each one arrived only days after his predecessor's disappearance. An Intelligence test, TN 10 -- or basic player logic -- lets the characters realize that this means they would have had to begin their week-long journey from Dragon lands long before they could have been alerted to the loss.

A Lore: Dragon Clan roll, TN 25, lets the PCs know Ayaru and Jotaro are also members of Yokuni's elite *ise-zumi* troubleshooting squad. For one highly-trained operative to be on a remote island with no other motive than teaching religion to peasants is unlikely, three is flat-out impossible.

If the characters tell Riichi that Nobue is dead (or ask enough questions to make him nervous), Riichi will wax philosophical and quote the Tao of Shinsei. On a Shintao roll, TN 15, the characters can tell that his version of the wise man's words is far from orthodox. Yet Riichi insists that he's always been told his memory was very good, and if tested (for instance, told a quote by one of the magistrates and asked to repeat it), Riichi isn't wrong. He has an eidetic memory, and can parrot information back perfectly. He just can't form any sophisticated connections about what he's been taught.

The conclusion? The phrases and riddles have been twisted, deliberately distorted from

the Tao. For Riichi to get these verses so wrong, the monks would have to have taught him the mauled quotes deliberately. A Nazodo or Ciphers roll, TN 15, can help clue the samurai in that the monks were most likely passing coded messages to each other through the altered Tao they helped Riichi memorize.

The alterations include:

"Choosing between two steps is still choosing the path." (The real quote is "Choosing between two evils is still choosing evil," proverb 4.)

"The Emperor asked Shinsei how to achieve enlightenment. He said 'there are three stones in the garden. The first stone kills me, the second stone kills your parents, the third stone kills yourself. Are you ready to carry those stones?'" (This is misquoting Verse 33 of the Tao, the "three steps" of Shinsei).

"The impatient man sees nothing before him. The patient man will remember to rise." (This is a misquote of "A patient man learns quickly, an impatient man, not at all," verse 20.)

With Raises to their Ciphers, or a Lore: Mantis Clan roll, TN 20, the magistrates can figure out that the most famous "steps" and "path" on the Island of Silk are the winding mountain staircase into the ancient **Kyuden Gusai**, the Mantis family's ancestral home, which was destroyed hundreds of years ago. The abandoned ruins are on the north side of the island, and Yoritomo's laws prohibit anyone from disturbing the site.

Little else of interest can be found in the temple. Nobue did not leave behind any personal possessions other than a few cotton kimonos, and the place is a school in name only -- no one else visits often enough to be worth talking to.

KYUDEN GUSAI

The lush foliage in the volcanic soil near Kyuden Gusai gives the area a naturally exotic or forbidden feel, only enhanced by the steep hill and overgrown ruins, and the widely spaced stone steps meant to stave off erosion.

Kosai, if present, won't let the characters poke around his ancestors' memorial palace any more than a museum guard would allow a P.I. to dust the Mona Lisa for fingerprints. There's a torii arch to pray to the Gusai family down by the beach, and that's as close as the locals and tourists go. To get any closer, the characters will have to be alone.

Once at the palace, the characters must find the correct interpretation of the clues. A Perception + Investigation test, TN 15, reveals a break in the stairs at the fourth set of steps up the mountain. There is a narrow footpath leading off at that point. This is a good candidate for the meaning of a twisted Verse 4 -- if they choose between the literal steps, they will still find a path. If your players are not riddle fans, let them make a Nazodo or Cipher test, TN 20, to guess at the meaning.

If they follow the footpath, the samurai next find three unusually large stones, each exactly 33 steps apart, a likely meaning for the three stones mentioned in Verse 33. If the stones are lifted, there is an arrow drawn in ink on the bottom of each, pointing to the next. The third arrow, if followed for thirty-three steps, ends at a ruined stone wall.

Twenty stones up (if the characters "rise" as suggested in Verse 20) is a loose brick, behind which is hidden three sets of notes from the three different monks.

Notes From the Dead

According to the notes, all three monks were sent to the islands at different times by

Togashi Yokuni to track **Togashi Akuro**, an elderly *ise zumi* who received his final tattoo a year before, and with it, a vision. Evidently he could not handle the responsibility this vision imparted, for he began talking incessantly about the fate of Rokugan and attacked his superiors when they told him it was not his place to act. With Togashi Ayaru on his tail, Akuro fled Dragon lands and went to the Lion, then to Otosan Uchi, where he was seen near the Scorpion nobles' quarters. Two officers tried to arrest him there in a routine stop.

Akuro somehow poisoned both officers (who died after a few hours) and disappeared before being spotted briefly at Kyuden Ikoma. He was then tracked to the Spine of the World Mountains, then to the coast, and thence to the Isle of Silk, where Ayaru lost him in a crowd. (He notes that Akuro's tattoos gave him the ability to change appearances.) Ayaru's notes then end.

Jotaro's notes say Ayaru broke contact with Togashi Yokuni, though it is not mentioned how the *ise zumi* were *in* contact with Yokuni, nor how that connection was severed. Jotaro was sent to search for Akuro, found Akuro's notes, but not his body, and noted there had been several recent robberies among the Mantis merchants -- Jotaro theorized that Akuro was hoarding money for something. Most curiously, he notes, is that despite Akuro's violent and erratic behavior, and Yokuni's growing unease, Jotaro never felt a trace of the Taint anywhere that Akuro had been seen. Jotaro's notes then end and Nobue's begin.

Nobue was no more able to find her predecessor's body than Jotaro, but her notes end hopefully, stating that she believes she is close on Akuro's trail. A few days ago, she met **Kakita Kumpei**, an artisan who had seen Akuro around the islands, and he aided her by sketching a good likeness for her to show people (the picture of Akuro is included with the notes). The last sentence says that Kumpei has given her a great lead regarding Akuro's whereabouts which she intends to follow up before recording it. She never got a chance to write it down.

LOOKING FOR KAKITA KUMPEI

Nobue's artisan friend is the next likely lead. Kumpei is hardly famous as artists go; while talented, his days of exhibition at Kyuden Kakita were brief due to a number of ill-intentioned Scorpion critics. The prevailing opinion was that he made a better theorist than an artist, and Kumpei retired in shame to the Mantis isles. This does, however, give him enough notoriety that most members of Yoritomo's court have heard of him.

One of the first people the characters encounter is **Aisaku**, a friendly gossip with a lame leg from a childhood injury, whose entire life is following the politics of Yoritomo's court. He's pathetically grateful for any attention, and the biggest difficulty for the characters will be separating the truth from his exaggerations.

Aisaku tells them that Kumpei is a respected artisan ("Absolutely outstanding. His work would be better respected among the ancestral shrines of Otosan Uchi") who has lived on the islands for about a year, in a fine house ("I hear Yoritomo himself recommended it...") on **Spring-Petal-Tide-Way**.

Speeding? We Were Walking!

If Tadayasu has not been a problem for the characters so far, this is a good time for him to catch up with them. He'll invite himself into their conversation with Aisaku ("Oh, carry on, continue what you were saying...") lurk about, listen to what Aisaku tells them, imply ugly things about the heimin, and start asking how the investigation is going. He will then proceed to pounce on any tiny slip-up the PCs make about Mantis law ("You didn't wash after walking out of the mortuary? You have brought impurities into this palace! And you wore geta on the docks! Gusai

Rojo prohibited that five hundred years ago!").

This instigation is, of course, a trap. Assaulting the Storm Legion captain will screw this investigation from now until forever. Anyone who wants a legal duel will need the consent of both his lord and theirs, a process taking a week of travel at best. (An *illegal* duel carries the death penalty, enforced by Tadayasu and a pack of Legionnaires whenever it looks practical.)

Tadayasu doesn't like investigators. He's connected to the highest power on the island, and he certainly can't trust the characters to remain intimidated once this mission is complete and they are home on the mainland. So he must keep them from discovering any tales of extortion, disappearing prostitutes, opium dealing, or black-market Kaiu blades that might happen to fall out of a peasant's lips within the PCs' earshot and prompt an Imperial investigation. As such, Tadayasu wants to find out the "real" reason for their presence, since he's sure that the death of a few monks wouldn't be cause for Yokuni's concern. He thinks the Kitsuki and Togashi want blackmail information on him or Yoritomo, the way he certainly would if conducting an investigation in another clan's lands.

While Tadayasu may not believe an honest answer, it is certainly the safest course.

Spring-Petal-Tide-Way

Kumpei's house is empty when the characters arrive. A Nazodo or Investigation test, TN 15, lets them check the mold on the rice and the dust on the shelves and figure out that any residents left at least two or three weeks ago and in a hurry. Most large items have been left behind, including an easel big enough for a four-by-six-foot painting. *[Note: While the PCs have no reason to pay special attention to the easel now, it is a significant clue, and gamemasters should take care to point out its existence without over-emphasizing it.]*

Considering that Kumpei was assisting Togashi Nobue and appears to have fled around the same time as her disappearance, the PCs may assume he's gone into hiding.

If the magistrates ask Kumpei's neighbors (heimin named **Hisoka and Fusae**), they say they last saw him three weeks ago. Fusae was up late when a covered wagon such as a fruit vendor might use pulled up outside. Fusae turned away politely when she saw Kumpei go out to talk to the driver, and that was the last time she saw the artisan.

Hisoka has not yet heard of Kumpei's disappearance from court, and with a Perception + Sincerity test, TN 15, characters may notice he looks uncomfortable at its mention. With a little persuasion, and a promise from the samurai that he will not get in trouble, Hisoka admits that it is common knowledge among the lower classes that the fruit merchant **Yasuki Korehiro** is a smuggler who transports people on and off the islands. Hisoka assumes from his wife's description of the covered wagon that this smuggler must have been who Kumpei was meeting with.

Korehiro himself is easy to track down. He has a shop a few blocks down which does a brisk business in imported plums and lychee fruit from the mainland. Many servants from minor Mantis houses are there buying fruit, and Korehiro supervises, appearing every bit the forthright businessman. But if the characters wave around some koku and convince Korehiro that they won't turn him in, he takes them into a back room that stinks of rotting fruit and admits that sometimes he accepts payment to get people on and off the island ("Just for discretion, you know. The Storm Legion, sometimes, they, ah, get their books confused and tax everything twice. Not everybody wants to pay, so they come to me."). He was hired by Kakita Kumpei to smuggle him down to the docks three weeks ago, just before dawn, no questions.

Oddly, Korehiro remembers, Kumpei only asked to be taken as far as the docks. Most

mainland clansmen also ask Korehiro to arrange passage on a ship...

Do Mantis Buildings Smoke?

With a few more koku, Korehiro gladly escorts the characters to the area of the dock where he dropped Kumpei off. He has chosen a peripheral area of the port, only in use during the busy summer months, and mostly abandoned at this time of year. The whole area is plastered with locked warehouses and boathouses that would make swell hiding spots. However, Kumpei has to eat, and whenever he cooks rice and mackerel, characters can make a Perception test, TN 10 (20 at night), to see smoke coming from the upper window of a run-down boathouse which serves as his hideout.

No one answers if the PCs knock at the boathouse door, but its lock is a mere bamboo splinter that does little to stop determined samurai. If the characters break in, Kumpei scrambles for his nearby wakizashi and takes up a defensive stance. Any characters who look closely (i.e. don't attack him instantly) notice that his grip on the sword looks tense and amateur. As soon as he sees that the PCs are samurai and not tattooed monks looking to skin him, Kumpei breathes a sigh of relief and puts the sword away.

If the characters tell him any part of the truth, or mention they are investigating Nobue's death, Kumpei seizes on them as his saviors -- he has been hiding in terror ever since he heard what happened to Nobue, and now he's desperately eager to tell them what he knew. He had told Nobue about a sailor he had met who had seen Togashi Akuro on **Tortoise Island**, one of the unpopulated islands at the edge of the archipelago. There's a few old homes there from a time when the Mantis islands were more heavily populated, and it looked like Akuro was living among the ruins. Kumpei doesn't know why Nobue was hunting Akuro, she had said only that it was urgent and he was dangerous.

If shown Nobue's notes and his own sketch (e.g. in answer to Kumpei asking, "How did you find me?"), Kumpei will examine the sketch and mutter that if only he'd had the materials at the time, he would have made a hundred and posted them all over the islands.

Kumpei should seem like nothing more than a sheltered, aging Crane who thought it would be a fine adventure to play detective, and is now terrified that he's put himself in real danger.

He refuses to accompany them to Tortoise Island, claiming to be too terrified of Akuro to even leave the boathouse ("It worked for three weeks, it can work for four"). He will readily agree to stay on the mainland under guard, where it's safer. This is the best situation for him and appears to be the best one for the magistrates; they can continue on unimpeded by a dependent, noncombatant NPC and score points for entrusting an important witness to the Mantis.

Unknown to them, Kumpei has a contingency plan -- a small portal painting wrapped around his leg beneath his kimono...all he must do is unroll it, put it on the ground, meditate, and hop in (see the Artisan abilities in *The Way of the Crane*). Poof, instant escape.

But why, you ask, would an innocent Crane witness want to escape the kind and professional care of our heroes?

For Gamemasters Only

The following information should **not** reach the players: The reason Kakita Kumpei looks so convincingly terrified is that he's had nothing to do but practice that look for the last few weeks. Akuro told him to lay low until the rituals were complete, and he's damned if he's going to cross Akuro.

You see, Kumpei *used* to be a sheltered little Crane, but that was years ago. His story is an all too familiar one: put in a career by unloving parents; his self-expression ridiculed with a few wry comments at court; career ended by Scorpion critics with political rather than aesthetic motives. With the wool pulled away from his eyes, Kumpei became convinced that he alone had seen the corrupt family daimyo (specifically Shoju) for the destructive force they are, and became determined to prevent them from running the empire into the ground. When an *ise zumi* showed up and told him he had a great destiny, Kumpei listened. Since then, he has been working with Akuro to gather as much *ise zumi* blood as he can -- a key step to combine the unpredictable magics of the tattooed monks and Crane artisans in a contorted plan to save the Empire from itself.

Ayaru's murder was the easiest; Akuro drugged the monk and did all the work of murdering and skinning him. But once the grand project began, Kumpei discovered he had a taste for this kind of work, and wanted to gather the canvas and paints himself. Jotaro he killed in his sleep; Nobue was the most difficult. Kumpei led her to Tortoise Island, but she suspected treachery, and Kumpei had to hold her as Akuro stabbed her. Shortly after that, he hired a group of ronin for Akuro, to protect them from further investigation. He uses his Artisan abilities to coordinate the teams, communicating through paintings with both Akuro and the ronin leader...which he uses to warn them that the magistrates are coming the moment the PCs leave his sight.

Kumpei justifies his involvement in the murders as a right and necessary step to save the Empire. He is secure in his knowledge that all of Rokugan will benefit from his crimes, and even if he condemns his soul through his actions, the Fortunes have shown him a unique way to regain it.

Troubleshooting: Do I Smell Another Tainted Bad Guy?

As detailed in *Way of the Dragon*, the process that creates *ise zumi* includes feeding them the blood of the *kami* Togashi. Together, Akuro and Kumpei have been plotting to kill enough monks to use their tattooed skins and god-touched blood as the canvas and paint for a portal painting such as has never been seen before -- one which will let them travel back through time. By using Togashi's blood in his *maya*, Kumpei creates an entirely new metaphysical effect that involves no shugenja magic at all. And Akuro and Kumpei's motives, to be revealed in Part 3, are actually for the greater good.

So is the magic they are doing *maho*?

Only if you want it to be.

Option A: Akuro has hit upon an alchemical *mitsugusuri* formula, using as-yet-undiscovered techniques that tap into natural Void anomalies. At the proper time and placement along the earth's dragon-lines, he and Kumpei can create his portal for a limited time while the paint, as it were, is still wet. This has the convenience of getting around jaded **L5R** players who sniff everything and everybody for Taint. The down-side is, your player characters may want to fool around with it and create their own time-traveling formulae, and you will have to listen to their debates about Rokugani metaphysics until the end of time.

Option B: There's blood in the magic, and that means it's *maho* even if Akuro and Kumpei don't believe it is. This has the benefit of discouraging most PCs from trying their own experiments, but it means Kumpei and Akuro are yet another pair of Tainted bad guys, which is detectable and a bit cliché.

Option C: The magic is *maho*, but Akuro and Kumpei are willing to take the risk

because they believe they can erase their Taint off their souls by altering Rokugan's timeline and thus insuring their souls were never Tainted at all. This brings up paradoxes, reincarnation, and whether or not souls and Taint exist outside of time. You, the gamemaster, can decide if that crazy plan would actually work -- no one ever said evil had to be genius.

Option D: Kumpei is an innocent dupe, and Akuro is working alone. Using weird magics never seen before, Akuro has sucked the knowledge of how to paint *maya* out of this little artisan's head, mixed it together with his insane *maho-mitsugusuri* cocktail, and the only reason he hasn't pulled together his time-hop yet is because he still needs to come back and suck fresh knowledge out of Kumpei's head to get his calculations right.

This has the advantage of not giving the PCs *any* chance of screwing with the time-jump before it happens. Even the most spectacular Lore skill roll will only reveal that there is some kind of magical effect on Kumpei, but it is something the characters haven't ever encountered. The disadvantage of this approach is that the heroes never see the bad guy before they whack him, and Akuro will need another way of knowing the PCs are coming before he sends thugs after them later in Part 1. Considering he could have been any of the *heimin* or *hinin* that they were just talking to, this is fixable.

If you go with Options A, B, or C, be warned that this RPG plot-writing trick of introducing a villain so the heroes will know who he is later can easily get derailed by gamemasters who are better story-tellers than they are secret-keepers.

Letting samurai know you're an evil villain when they first meet you is stupid: Kakita Kumpei is not. He's not rude. He's not slimy. He's not villainous. That said, here are five layers of defense you can use during the scene to prevent PCs from detecting him (particularly if you rule that the time-magic is *maho*, and thus detectable):

1) Kumpei has a hollow back support filled with corrupted jade. Back supports are common additions to hakama in order to improve posture: this handy device adds another 30 or 40 or whatever one needs to raise the Taint-sniffing TN out of the PCs' reach. Since it's concealed under his kimono and obi, wedged in the proper place, it can't be spotted as something unusual. Only if an investigator strips him down and handles the support would they notice anything amiss.

2) Kumpei has other obvious disadvantages which can occupy the PCs' thoughts and character-divining abilities: he has had a history of epilepsy in his family (he can even have an attack, if you're desperate for a distraction), he has fallen out of favor with the court, or he has Enemies on the mainland. Feed these to a Bayushi Courtier first to throw them off the scent of Taint (which, after all, would be a Disadvantage).

3) Keep conversations with Kumpei short and make his story function seem obvious. This is the easiest method to prevent you from letting something slip. Do not call for an Awareness + Acting vs. Awareness + Investigation roll unless the players *ask* if they sense anything amiss. If they assume Kumpei is a terrified extra, then that's exactly what he is. Show the characters that he's scared, he has a problem that can be apparently easily solved, and he really wants to help them and get out of their way so they can find and kill the big, bad, evil man (preferably *before* the player with the Kitsuki Magistrate says "Hey, do I get the impression that this guy is full of it?")

If the player characters press for his expert opinions, he can hit upon the "idea" of staying in communication with them by painting a PC's portrait so he can speak to them across great distances. (Having you, the GM, roleplay through this process with crayons and forcing a player to sit still can be a great deal of fun and can make "evil" the last thing on the players' mind. If

you want to be particularly sneaky, recruit the player with the best detection abilities to play Kumpei for you while the sketching is done.)

4) You have the dice. 9k5 for Acting ain't no bowl full of pepper. You could give him Raises in any contested roll because he's practiced this sob story all week.

5) If you have the sort of players who will kill him on principle so he can't get them from behind, go ahead and use Option D.

Kakita Kumpei

Rank 5 Kakita Artisan (Painting 3, Poetry 2)

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

Skills: Acting 4, Courtier 4, Etiquette 4, Calligraphy 3, Lore: Myth and Legend 5, Painting 5, Sincerity 4, Lore: Maho 4, Poetry 5, Kenjutsu 2, History 4, Manipulation 3, Mizu-Do 3, Athletics 2

Honor: 3.2 (Apparent, actually 1.2) **Glory:** 3.1

Advantages: Perceived Honor, *nemuranai* (back support)

Disadvantages: Epilepsy, Fascination: Battle of White Stag, and Dark Secret

Shadowlands Taint: 0 or 2.5 (see options above).

School Techniques: Create glyphs with magical effects which last until (School Rank) people have seen them. Roll Agility + Painting, TN 25, to make a painting of person with whom he can speak over distances or (with raises) see through their eyes. Roll Intelligence + School Rank to create painting he can travel through. Create mirage based on a poem he recites (to disbelieve, target rolls Willpower + Perception, TN 20). Can whisper back and forth to another person over distances. For complete Kakita Artisan rules, see *The Way of the Crane*, page 58-69.

TN to be Hit: 20 **Armor:** None

Weapons: Wakizashi (Str + 2k2)

TORTOISE ISLAND

The five-square-mile rock a six hour's fishing boat ride out from the Isle of Silk is barely worth the word "island," and the tortoises were hunted to extinction long ago. It will not be difficult for the characters to pay a peasant fisherman to ferry them out to the island, but he won't stick around to take them back if he hears a fight starting. Purchasing or commandeering a boat of their own is also easily possible, and it is a Sailing Test, TN 10, to make the journey and land safely on the tiny, rocky shores.

The characters can see almost clear across the island from where they beach, the skyline dominated by the ruins of a few old stone-and-wood houses in the interior. Play up the suspense as the magistrates walk up the lonely trails of the deserted, silent island. Nothing lives here but sand flies and crabs. The wind and tides sound like human moans as they pass over the mouths of the half-buried caves. The bright white sand and sun play tricks on the eyes. Ask for frequent Perception tests, from which the characters learn only that they are alone.

All the houses are empty -- they were abandoned after an earthquake some ten years back. But if the characters explore the ruins, an Engineering roll, TN 10, lets them find one

house of wood (with barely any stone in its foundation) which was built within the last year.

Inside is an active wood shop, with a number of carving tools, cabinets, and a good deal of sawdust. A trunk by the wall holds a batch of Dragon alchemical equipment (no functioning potions, sorry) and a lot of paint.

And it doesn't take a Perception test to notice the stench coming from beneath it. Under the trunk is a trap door, locked with an iron lock that can be shattered with a Strength test, TN 15, and a good hammer.

As the characters open the door and descend down its ladder to the basement, an overwhelming smell wafts up, and the first light source reveals why. Tossed in a pile on the floor are two decomposed bodies. An Intelligence + Medicine roll, TN 20, let the characters confirm: these are Ayaru and Jotaro, stabbed and skinned.

Earthquakes and Ronin and Chase Scenes, Oh My

As the old comic books say, "Suddenly..."

While the characters are still in the basement, the ground starts to buckle, and then to sway, fiercely. The house above them creaks and the lab equipment starts falling.

If your players have never lived through an earthquake and often wonder why people say the movie villain trapped in a collapsing building "could not possibly have survived" when they always do, allow us to explain the sensation. It feels as if you have suddenly stepped from a dock onto a boat wobbling in the waves, but there is no place to step off. The light sources start to fall over (creating the same panic following any other small fire), and then there's the creaking and popping of the building.

Granted, this is only a two-room, wooden Rokugani house, but to viscerally understand just how much your building weighs, visit your local hardware store. Try to pick up and move a plywood sheet or 6" x 6" beam the length of your ceiling. Now imagine layers of those, loaded with tables, bookshelves and furniture, suspended one and two stories above your head.

Are the PCs keen to get out? Good.

At the end of the first round, PCs inside the house must roll Defense, TN 15, to avoid taking 2k2 damage from falling rocks, ceiling parts, lab equipment and floorboards. The ladder up to the second floor starts to move, and if no one can steady it from above, it requires an Agility + Athletics or Agility + Engineering roll at TN 10 to hold it still enough to climb. This would be easy except that all actions taken during the earthquake are at -3 dice. (Mantis bushi ignore penalties for unsure footing.) The second round requires no further Defense rolls until the house collapses at the end of the round, doing an additional 3k3 damage to anyone who does not roll Defense, TN 15, and requiring a Strength + Athletics test, TN 40 to dig a way out. (A worker on the outside has only a TN 30, dropped to TN 25 with tools, and Working Together rules apply.)

The earthquake subsides once the house collapses. A Spellcraft or Shugenja Lore roll, TN 15, lets any shugenja know that this Earthquake was not natural. Most angry, frightened magistrates will immediately use locating spells or a Perception + Hunting test, TN 15, to search for the caster...

...whom they find, with a gang of ronin, on the beach busily destroying the magistrates' boat (or chasing away their fleeing fisherman guide).

Let the PCs do what comes naturally.

Shugenja: 2 Rank 3 Ronin

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

Skills: Kenjutsu 2, Defense 3, Stealth 4, Shugenja Lore 2, Calligraphy 3, Meditation 2, Poisons 3, Maho Lore 4, Hand-to-hand 3, History 2, Athletics 3, Sailing 4.

Honor: 0.7 **Glory:** 0.4

Advantages: Innate Abilities (starred).

Disadvantages: Driven, Mind-Controlled (they drank Togashi Akuro's potions and are under hypnosis).

TN to be Hit: 15

Weapons: Parangu (Str +2k2), Kama (Str +2k2).

SPELLS: All spells not listed in the basic book can be found in *Walking the Way*.

* **Suitengu's Embrace (Water):** TN 20, permanent, no concentration. Fills target's lungs with seawater. Target must be within caster's Water x5 feet. Target takes DR1 first round, DR 2 second, etc.. First aid allows victim to roll Willpower, TN 15, to restart wounds at 1k1, consecutive successes end the spell.

* **Earthquake (Earth):** TN 15, lasts 5 rounds, total concentration. 50 yard radius. All actions in area at -2, characters may be affected by falling rocks, mudslides, etc..

* **Calling the Elements (Earth):** TN 10, lasts 8 rounds, casual concentration. 10-square-foot area grows roots and brambles to hinder movement. Anyone in area rolls Agility, TN of casting, or be ensnared. Strength test, TN 10, to move 1 foot per action.

* **Quiescence of Air (Air):** TN 5, lasts 10 actions, casual concentration. Spell generates soundless bubble 5 feet around the caster. Spells cannot be cast inside.

* **Tempest of Air (Air):** TN 15, 2 actions to cast, lasts 6 actions, total concentration. Caster is immune to missile attacks. May roll Air vs. target's Earth every round to knock target off his feet. Raises for casting time, duration and number of targets.

The shugenja will use this to protect themselves and their bushi from PC arrow fire.

* **Wind-Borne Speed (Air):** TN 15, 4 actions to cast, lasts 12 actions, full concentration, raises for speed and additional targets. Moves caster through air at Air x 10 feet per round.

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

Ronin Bushi: 4 Rank 2 Mantis**EARTH 3, FIRE 2, Agility 3, AIR 2, Reflexes 3, WATER 2, VOID 2.****Skills:** Athletics 4, Battle 2, Bo Stick 2, Commerce 1, Defense 3, Hunting 2, Jujitsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Nofujutsu 3, Sailing 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth 1.**Honor:** 0.7 **Glory:**0.4**School Techniques:** May fight with any weapon as if they have skill of 1, and ignore all penalties for unsure footing. May spend Void to make a Full Attack without penalty.**TN To Be Hit:** 15**Weapons:** Tonfa (Str +1k2), Nunte (Str +3k2), Poor Katana (Str +2k2), Kai (Str +1k3), or Kusarigama (Str +2k2, or can attack to entangle with the chain; this attack inflicts no damage but if successful, double the target's TN to Hit until they make an attack on the chain at TN 20).

This fight, naturally, assumes the PCs traveled in a clump and left no one to guard their boat or their rear. Otherwise, the ronin may be detected earlier, as they are not very thorough, deadly, or even courageous folk. It is not terribly important that the characters reach the basement before discovering the ronin and the requisite battle, but finding the other two bodies should give them a nice sense of closure.

Once the PCs approach the beach, presumably with swords drawn and arrows whizzing, the ronin shugenja will leap into their own boat and flee, using Wind-Borne Speed to stay ahead of the magistrates and Tempest of Air to protect themselves from arrows. The bushi are essentially a gang of ruffians, and once it's clear the PCs are on the offensive, the remaining fighters will withdraw into waist-deep tide.

Wading and fighting simultaneously is tricky: the bad footing gives those who are not Mantis -2 dice to attack and defense rolls, and drops the TN To Be Hit of both attacker and defender by 5. If a combatant moves into water deep enough to swim, melee weapons that are swung (not thrust) underwater do 4 fewer Wounds of damage per hit, to a minimum of 1 for sharp weapons and 0 for blunt trauma. A combatant who dives underwater in these shifting waves raises their TN to Be Hit for arrows by 10.

It is likely that the characters will give chase. Encourage them. It takes a Shipwright or Engineering test, TN 20, to patch the boat up, or consecutive Athletics tests at TNs 10, 15, and 20 to swim the distance to reach either the ronin boat, or their own fleeing guide. (Failure means the character takes identical damage to the effects of the Suitengu's Embrace spell described in the sidebar.) Naturally, PCs can easily make up the difference with their own magical means.

The ronin will typically flee rather than surrender; the shugenja to find Akuro, the bushi to save their skins. If the shugenja are captured, they will remain loyally silent even under torture; the bushi, on the other hand, will confess to having been hired by Togashi Akuro only a few hours ago and ordered to destroy the small house on Tortoise Island and anyone present.

Why, a magistrate might ask? If intimidated, interrogated, or persuaded (TN 15), one ronin says that during one argument over getting boats, Akuro told him to shut up and follow orders "if you want to save the Empire from the fools running it and the traitors who would give it to Fu Leng." Akuro also let out that he despised the Scorpion and Crab, and refused to hire any

mercenaries who had worked for those Clans.

If your group seems inclined to split up in pursuit, feel free to have another dozen ronin come down the beach, blocking the PCs' route back to the island, and forcing them into the water. The whole point of the beachfront battle is to get them to...

THE DANK DARK COVE CAVE

At least one shugenja should survive and stay ahead of them just long enough for the PCs to see him head toward a tiny island, nearly hidden in a misty cove. It takes a Hunting test, TN 10, to follow him to a sheltered waterway, leading into a narrow channel of volcanic stone that turns into a cave. The shugenja makes his last stand here if the PCs find him.

(If the PCs wasted all of the ronin, there is an easy fix. Barely visible on the horizon is the master ship they came here on, already turned and fleeing in the direction of the cave.)

The cave's waterway, wide enough for a small boat, eventually gives way to a sandy floor. The walls are carved, and a History test, TN 20, lets the PCs know that the carvings date back about seventy years, and are done in a Crane architectural style. Further in, the decorations begin, as does the strangeness.

It becomes difficult to walk between the miniature wooden buildings filling the sandy floor. Frescoes on the wall fill out the illusion, depicting the streets of a miniature city, leading up to the walls painted in the distance. A Lore: Imperial Family test, TN 10, (or the Advantage, Way of the Land: Otosan Uchi) lets the samurai recognize the three-walled layout of Otosan Uchi. But there's something off about it.

Its architecture changes from modern to ancient as they move toward the center of the city. Where the palace should be is a painting, in frame, depicting the palace and gardens. The canvas is human skin, cut from the dead *ise zumi*, and the paints smell of something old and rotting. But despite the scent of decaying meat, the local sand crabs won't touch it.

There's a mark on its frame. Kind of like a footprint.

Any nearby ancestor spirits (e.g. a *sodan-senzo's* ancestors or a ghost haunting a character with the Disadvantage) starts to make a racket the closer the samurai gets to the painting. Ancestor spirits shy away from the painting in unusual revulsion (though few can answer why) and *sodan-senzo* approaching the painting hear the noise of a battle. With each clash of blade on armor, they feel a shiver or twinge. If they attempt to make any kind of contact with ancestor spirits, the *senzo* hears the voice of an ancient spirit, saying "*The thunder is out of the sky. It has come here. It walks among us.*"

It's in the *senzo's* own voice.

As the PCs watch, a small figure that looks remarkably like Kakita Kumpei and a hooded, barefoot man -- Togashi Akuro -- walk among the buildings in the painting. Anyone who knows Kakita artisans knows that portal paintings take the painter to the location they represent: right into the Emperor's backyard.

If a character touches the painting, her fingertips will disappear into it. She can feel a cold, oily film, and beyond that, warm sunlight. A few inches beyond that, raindrops.

What do they do?

If the samurai hesitate to enter, the borders of the painting start to blacken. From the outside in, the paint and magic start to disappear. A Shugenja Lore test, TN 10, lets them realize that whatever magic is involved will only stay active for another minute. Kumpei, in the painting, goes out of sight behind a building.

It's now or never.

Troubleshooting

The most likely bug is if some bow-happy PC takes a shot into the painting in hopes of hitting Akuro or Kumpei. Don't panic -- because the magic powering the portal is starting to lose cohesion, there is an ever-widening time lag between what they see and when objects (including people) traveling through the painting will come out on the other side. The fired arrow will disappear into the painting, but they do not see it hit home on the other side.

Also important: casting Grounding Energy, Suikinjin's Gift, or otherwise trying to erase or control the portal will cause Bad Things to Happen. Nobody wants a hole in the time-stream either a) flowing back to disperse in the cave, or b) reflected back in some direction it's not supposed to go. A nice way to handle this without telling the shugenja "no" is to have the effect leak out and hurl the entire cave back into time with them, so their dramatic entrance to the wrong century is crawling out of an enormous, shattered stone sphere. (Having the cave land on Seppun Ushimo, whose feet conveniently stick out wearing ruby-sequined *tabi*, is what we Professional Game Designers refer to as "over-the-top." In Hollywood, this is called "homage.")

If the samurai decide to split up, anyone on this side of the portal is in for a lot of twiddling their thumbs, and then sudden shocks as the time-line alters. While this could make for a cool solo session later ("Tonight, you play your half-*gaijin* alternate self in Bizarro Rokugan!") it's easier to prod the players to jump through now. A pack of ronin archers showing up at the only entrance to the cave (just as the tide starts to come in) is an unsubtle hammer, but it may work.

If, for some reason, *all* of your PC samurai don't have the guts or brains to give chase to time-traveling psychopaths, we suggest you erase their Honor stat, feed them grass, and shear them once a year to collect wool. Then you may take some time off from *L5R* and take up traditional Bronze Age loom weaving, a vastly underrated hobby.

GLORY, HONOR AND EXPERIENCE

If, despite all efforts, a Mantis character gets left behind in the present day, Yoritomo may award him a Glory point if word gets around that he trashed the local gang of ronin ruffians. Otherwise, there is little chance for any Glory to be recognized by the characters' daimyo, and the change will not be applicable in the following sessions. See the end of Part Three for overall Glory awards.

Honor awards are subjective, based on the PCs' own feelings of confidence. Crane and Dragon characters shaken by the betrayers in their clans can be may suffer an Honor loss, though tracking down the renegades may give them a greater sense of their own purpose and thus provide Honor. In general, the PCs have had little personal involvement yet, so the likelihood of any serious change of Honor is low. The exception is if one of the PCs bests his Nemesis in some way, which should net him 1-3 Honor points. Also, any playing out of personal romantic triangles or family spats among the PCs (pregenerated or home-grown), should receive appropriate Honor awards and losses.

Reward Experience for the following:

Survival	1 point
Breaking Nobue's code	1 point
Finding the bodies on Tortoise Island	1 point
Going into the painting	2 points
Failing to report to Yoritomo	-1 point

PART TWO: PAST MISTAKES

Have you ever complained about inconsistencies in time-travel stories?

Good. 'Cause now you're gonna try to create one, and we'll see how *you* do it.

The plot is presented non-linearly in this section for a reason. The PCs have just followed Akuro through the painting, into the year 400, which suddenly makes it immensely easy for them to sink into trouble just by opening their mouths. While *Hindsight* was originally designed for tournament play, and thus tries hard to keep the players on-track, feel free to draw out the second part of the adventure for as many sessions as your players find amusing -- there's just as many duels, politics and battles to be had in ancient Rokugan as present-day.

Not that the characters get much time to think about it.

RIGHT PLACE, WRONG TIME

For those characters who have traveled through Kakita paintings before, the jump through Kumpei's painting is terrifyingly different. The travelers find themselves hovering in a breathless, lightless limbo for what feels like eons. Nothing they do gives them any form of sensory input, for they are outside of time. The samurai will find themselves in the grip of an irrational fear, even those with Death Trance, but their conscious selves probably won't understand why. (The part of their brain controlling time perception from one moment to the next is freaking out: first from lack of input; then as they return to the time stream at a different point, it gives resistance, like a spacecraft re-entering the atmosphere.)

Then comes a stunning light (the sun; the samurai were just in a cave), and their vision clears into a blur of greens, browns, blues and black. The land and sea beneath them slow to a few hundred rotations of the globe per second until...

...Rokugan whips up and they arc through the streets and buildings of Otosan Uchi (Nothing is solid yet.). But the exact view the painting portrayed does not come up.

Instead, below them -- in a nicely stylized three-quarters perspective proper for a Rokugani court painting -- walks a young lord, maybe fourteen years old, in an ornate green kimono. He is accompanied by two older, armored bushi as they head through a picturesque cherry blossom orchard.

Suddenly, while the characters are still held motionless between two realities, **one bushi moves on the other and while his back is turned, strikes him down with a perfect iaijutsu.** As the victim crumples, blood fountaining from his collar, the attacker cuts him aside and goes for the terrified boy. As the boy's screams ring out, the PCs drop out of stasis and fall about seven feet into this scene.

What do they do?

Hopefully, most groups will leap to the boy's defense. They are fighting **Seppun Ushimo**, a Rank 4 Seppun Imperial guard, who immediately assumes anyone near him (especially if they've just fallen out of the sky) is hostile.

Seppun Ushimo

Rank 4 Seppun Imperial Guard

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

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Obiesaseru 3 (+10 to his TN to use on PCs)

in this illegitimate situation), Heraldry 2, History 2, Law 3, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3, Yarijutsu 3.

Honor: 4.4 (apparent; actual 1.4) **Glory:** 5.2

Advantages: Perceived Honor, Strength of the Earth (1)

Disadvantages: True Love, Dark Secret (hates Hantei).

School Techniques: May add School Rank to Willpower or Honor to avoid seduction away from duty. For the first round of combat, may add Perception (4)k1 to all rolls, including initiative. Can roll Perception vs. 5 x target's Honor to avoid ambushes. Can roll Honor to see through disguises and illusions. Two actions per round.

TN to be Hit: 20 (27)

Equipment: Excellent tachi (tachi are old-fashioned katana without much of a curve: Str + 3k3), Fine Light armor.

Ushimo is undoubtedly outnumbered and should fall, but remember the PCs still have any wounds and penalties incurred at the end of Part One. The real trick for the magistrates will be to keep Ushimo alive to interrogate him (as would be a good idea). Once Ushimo realizes his assassination attempt has failed, he tries to die, throwing himself at the characters' swords, or onto his own if necessary.

Once the players have the situation under control (or at the end of two rounds if they're struggling) four more Imperial guards (use Ushimo's stats, except *their* Honor is real) catch up, and each round after that, four more until the characters find themselves surrounded. In all likelihood, the guards will assume *the PCs* are the attackers, and demand immediate surrender.

If the PCs respond with anything but utter submission, the guards let loose with deadly force. Guilty or innocent, our heroes were just found standing over a dead Seppun bodyguard (or two) next to their terrified charge. If the PCs comply long enough to let the boy speak, he commands the guards to arrest Ushimo if he's alive and tells them that the PCs just saved his life.

The captain of the guard then turns and bows low to the characters, thanking them for saving the life of **his Imperial Majesty, Hantei Kusada**.

Hantei VI (Hantei Kusada)

Rank 1 Kakita Bushi

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

Skills: Archery 1, Athletics 1, Battle 1, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 1, Obiesaseru 3, Heraldry 2, History 2, Investigation 1, Law 3, Poetry 1, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3.

Honor: 4.1 **Glory:** "10" (about 8 in practice)

Advantages: Social Position, Benten's Blessing

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Puppet), Gullible

School Techniques: Adds 2 to Initiative roll; can use Iaijutsu in place of Kenjutsu.

TN to be Hit: 15

Equipment: Mostly some lavish outfits; in extremis, he may request access to *Akkai-uo*, the Hantei ancestral no-dachi that

delivers damage as if Strength 6 (doubled result if used on those outside the Celestial Order).

Gosh, He Looks Much Younger In Person

Every school-child in Rokugan learns the names of the entire Hantei lineage -- they may not know precisely what year Hantei Kusada ruled, but they do know it was a long, long time ago (Think about if you were just told that Millard Filmore is President -- you may not know exactly when that puts you, but it sure ain't now).

Give the players time to adjust as they slowly realize their characters have traveled not just in distance, but in time. As they look around, the reality sinks in -- the clothes are different, the swords are different, and very few people openly wear mons.

It may be helpful to let the characters make History tests, TN 10, to get "in the past." Every Raise gives more specificity (before the return of the Unicorn... before Iuchiban...) Otherwise, let them fumble trying to come up with a subtle way to ask, "Uh, what year is it?"

Hantei Kusada (that's Hantei the Sixth) doesn't look much like the withered septuagenarian Hantei from their own time, but he's not the wild ten-year-old Hantei Sotorii, either. He's an thoughtful, inquisitive teenager... but (just to be kind to the players) the soul of discretion and politeness. If the PCs don't want to answer certain questions, the Hantei gives them the benefit of the doubt -- after all, they just dropped from Heaven to save him. His courtesy has a downside, though. Conditioned from birth to be proper and stay out of trouble, Hantei Kusada is just starting to realize how much of a puppet he is for the powerful family daimyo, and he lacks the arrogance and courage to try to change his position. (see *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun* for a history of this time period.)

HEROES OF THE HOUR

The PCs mysterious arrival and rescue of the Hantei is the most exciting thing most of the bored Otosan Uchi nobles have seen in years. The Great Families are eaten up with curiosity about where this pack of unknowns came from and what favors they will beg. The characters are showered with praise and gratitude from the guards and courtiers and invited back to the Imperial Palace for a dinner in their honor.

Security Note: The gateways to the inner city, according to *Otosan Uchi*, are enchanted so that they fry Shadowlands-tainted beings, the better to prevent them from getting to the Emperor. For our purposes, these gates have yet to be built, and anything that says otherwise was a historian's back-dating. Also, as mentioned in *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, standard etiquette when visiting a daimyo is for the bodyguards to secure the visitors' weapons. The Seppun, deep in shame, will not request this of the PCs, but the Clan daimyo's guards *will* before they enter the main audience halls. This may be the PCs' first shocking realization that in this time period the Hantei doesn't dare contradict the wishes of the Clan daimyo.

As the characters are led down a scenic route through a rock video's worth of beautiful gardens and expensive rooms, they are approached by a variety of curious nobles, including the Hantei himself, who politely (but insistently) inquire about the PC's families and backgrounds.

On-the-ball, intelligent players should quickly realize that telling the truth will have nothing but negative consequences. Rolling History or Appropriate Clan Lore, TN 15, with one Raise for each additional piece of information, will help them figure out the time period (about the year 400) and help them avoid inappropriate gaffes. (We will be kind and not suggest linguistic drift will make it difficult for the PCs to talk to anybody. If you want to simulate this,

adding +5 to their social TNs is a lot quicker than starting to gamemaster in Renaissance Faire speech.)

Things unfamiliar in this time period include: Emerald Magistrates (they haven't formed yet); the **Unicorn Clan** (haven't returned yet); the **Tortoise and Wasp Clans** (don't exist); the **Asahina** family (don't exist; they'll meet Isawa Asahina later); the **Kitsuki** family (still peasants); **Otomo *seiyaku*** (they're vestigial nobles now, not power-players); the **Kaiu Wall** (smaller, and known as Hida's Wall); the **Kuni Witch Hunters** (barely heard of before Iuchiban); **Hiruma Castle** (alive and well); and the **Mantis** (who are a Clan and have the family name "Gusai" right now).

Other things which may attract attention are PC Crab and Crane working together; it is only a hundred years since the Yasuki break, and any Crab or Crane who has sympathies with the other side conceals it or ruins his chances for promotion. ("Are you now or have you ever been a sympathizer to the Hida family?")

Another History roll, TN 15, lets the characters remember the general political situation in this time. It is shortly before the Battle of the White Stag, during the era where the Hantei were married off as children to sit on the throne for a few years as puppets before being retired to make way for the next. The memory of this time has been deliberately downplayed by modern Rokugani, who believe the power of the Hantei has always and should always be inviolate. The real power in the year 400 is in the hands of the three Great Families -- the Crane, Scorpion and Phoenix -- who run the *gozoku*, or three-branch government, a clan-driven bureaucracy whose daimyo control everything from who sits on the throne, to when Clans go to war, to who gets rich off the lucrative trade with the gaijin. (See *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun* for more details.)

Even those characters whose Clans and families are unaffected by the changed time should quickly realize the problems in claiming to be a prominent member of an important Clan when no one alive in that clan has ever heard of them. Remember, lying to a daimyo is almost exactly as dishonorable as claiming to be from a samurai family when all records prove you are not.

So how can they possibly fit into this snake pit?

Smart PCs will come up with a cover story that doesn't require evidence ("Oh, Beneficent Sun! Treacherous ronin stole my clothes and I had to take this bizarre purple horse-head kimono off a wash line! All I ask is that you help me find this criminal who has dishonored me and bring him to justice!") but wilder stories about kitsune abduction or time lost in the Shadowlands ("We are unclean and beg to be purified before we may pollute your august Presence!") may be believed if the players can shovel enough supporting details. Simpler explanations, such as having taken a vow of silence about their backgrounds, may also suffice.

For characters whose family names aren't known, it may be possible to pass themselves off as members of minor families that are so insignificant as to be overlooked, but the Dojis and Akodos among your group will probably have to claim to be ronin (in which case those kimonos prominently displaying their family mon might be considered offensive) or be subject to an embarrassing and impossible-to-answer interrogation. (And that Moto, with the white robe and face paint? Obviously a Scorpion who ran away from his seppuku.) Whatever explanation the characters give, the questioning will start all over again at the first anachronistic slip of a PC tongue.

One trouble with their explanations may be their swords. The majority of samurai at this time carry tachi, swords of comparable size and quality to katana, but with straighter blades, an easier design to produce. Due to the lack of a curve, tachi have slightly less cutting area during a

stroke and do a base of 2k2 damage, though many high-Glory samurai have Fine equipment that brings the damage back up to 3k2. Katana, while rare, do exist, and are the mark of an extravagant daimyo. (Figure them at five times their normal value in koku.)

Both bushi and shugenja may also get themselves in trouble if they show off their spells or fighting styles too closely. Teaching techniques have changed in 600 years, and spell research has progressed greatly. Many things the characters take for granted (the Scorpion Feint, Path to Inner Peace) may not yet be known in this time, and can gain the PCs (un)welcome notoriety.

Had they only been carrying a history text...

But What If My Players Aren't On The Ball?

If the Mountain Dew hasn't kicked in yet, and a sleepy player suddenly lands the whole group in hot water because of an ill-considered blurt, smart gamemasters should be prepared with the consequences.

1) "Not a little thing like that! Not a butterfly!"

In Ray Bradbury's classic story "A Sound of Thunder" (available on the Web), time travelers who hunt dinosaurs accidentally kill a butterfly, and return home to find their world irrevocably changed. The same idea holds true here: if a player knocks a vase over, an entire artistic style based on that vase will never exist; if they interrupt two lovers talking, they might never consummate their relationship and have a child that becomes a great general; if a PC samurai-ko starts making out with some handsome samurai, they become doomed to the awful fates reserved for Greek tragedy and country-western songs.

Characters may try to give themselves or their Clan an advantage in coming years by deliberately telling secrets to prominent historical figures. But since you, the GM, are the ultimate arbiter of the time-stream, you can easily turn this act into an object lesson.

The most immediate way to panic the players is to have the new historical consequences radically change a PC (or two, or all the PCs in one Clan) after they have done something... *anything*...that could disrupt future events. While it's nice to have an idea of how the action and consequence are linked, it's not entirely necessary; the phenomenon will probably get the players coming up with their own theory in short order.

Changes include:

- Their family mon changes or disappears.
- Their eyes change to or from Crane blue, or their features to those of *gaijin*.
- They change sex.
- They and all the PCs in their Clan are suddenly dressed like *heimin*, carrying bales of hay on their backs. ("Gee, I guess with a few secrets, your clan got all naughty.")
- Start switching stat numbers, Advantages, and Disadvantages among the party. ("Yes, you are your own grandpa, and inbreeding made you dumber.")
- They become Shadowlands (tainted or creature), a Naga, or a Ratling (this will ruin their chances to talk to anyone, so have this change correspond to a quick and reversible action unless it's near the end of the adventure).
- Tell a player that he's starting to speak differently, and try to get him to roleplay with an accent until things are set right again. (Southern, upper-class English, Californian, New York, Bizzaro, Caveman Rokugan, and Romanian/Dracula are serious possibilities.)

2) "Surely these strange newcomers are some kind of test."

The savvier court politicians have had to deal with inbred Otomos who are "touched by the Sun" before, and can easily come to the conclusion that the PCs' implausible tales are the

results of benevolent insanity... or deliberate manipulation. Generally, the more suspicious will smile, nod, and they figure the PC is up to something. Either the PCs are testing the waters of gullibility, or are ronin, lying about being descended from samurai. ("I'm from this strange far-off people you've never heard of, see, but their ancestors were from the Ki-Rin Clan.") The practical effect means the characters quickly become persona-non-grata in court and are ignored by anyone important. If they don't know who your father was, they don't want to know who you are.

3) "What do you mean by, 'Holy &#@!' Isawa-sama?"

It is possible that the PCs may want to secure a way home by running to the Master of the Void or someone else who knows Great And Powerful Magics That Will Solve All My Problems. Well, gosh, he's not at Otsan Uchi, he's not receiving visitors at home, and he'll want to do research for a few years before he messes around with anything involving time magic anyway.

Or maybe he's ten years old and thinks this kind of thing sounds *sooooo cool* he's ready to try it *right now*. Volunteers?

4) "All Right, You Primitive Screw-Heads, Listen Up."

If...

...God forbid...

...the PCs start chopping away at the Emperor's guards and declaring themselves the new shoguns of Rokugan, you may be utterly without a thing to say other than "SHWACK! New character."

The intuitive way to slap down your over-powered munchkin rabble is to give them the logical consequences of their actions -- wave after wave of Seppuns, soon to be followed by Scorpions, Phoenixes, and any loyal citizen within the city until the troublemakers are a red smear in the rock garden. You can rule that the primordial martial arts of the kami have been better retained in this time period than their weak, watered-down descendants, and everybody from this time period gets an extra roll-and-keep die against the PCs. And a single cut on the Emperor's flesh could turn the offenders into Shadowlands creatures since a sign of weakness now could lead to an early coup and subsequent failure against Fu Leng by whomever took over Rokugan.

But frankly, if your players don't recognize that attacking the Emperor's guards, no matter where or when, is stone-cold moron material, it's too late to save the serious and dramatic game you had in mind. You may want to go the route of the cheesy American B-movie and say their future kung fu from the year 1120 is super-mighty compared to the clumsy fumbblings and inferior metal-work of the year 400. Rule that no local is higher Rank than the PCs and subtract 1k1 from all actions against our heroes. As soon as our heroes whack some "unkillable" Seppun, the shocked court bows before their bigness, and lets 'em get away with saying whatever they want. This lets the players concentrate on the real simple part -- finding Akuro -- and lets them be all Glorious when they charge the *gaijin* hordes.

I mean hey...it's a *fantasy* game, right?

SO, WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

On the way back, a combination of History rolls and gossip can give the characters the following information about the time they've landed in:

1. About four months ago, there was an Imperial edict which officially banned all *gaijin* from Rokugani soil forever.

2. Hantei had officially given the gaijin two years to adapt to Rokugani culture before the edict. Once the announcement was made, there were several purges of gaijin merchants in and around Otosan Uchi. Some might even call them massacres. The last one was a week and a half ago.

3. The three main families generally maintain their power in the following ways: the Crane are the mothers and wives of the Hantei and thus have Imperial authority on their side; the Scorpion are the richest clan and control the iron trade on which all bushi are dependent; and the Phoenix play the other two off against each other and ally with each in turn, keeping it constantly up in the air.

4. Nobody's seen an ise zumi in the castle for months.

At this time in history, the Crab have little or nothing to do with the Imperials, and have no representatives at court. The Lion are present mostly in the Imperial Guard and Emerald Legions; their daimyo stays in his own lands, and his representatives in court have little power (Glory 5 and below). There are a few resident Dragon in Otosan Uchi, but almost all are low-Glory, young-buck Mirumotos looking to make a reputation dueling Kakitas.

EVENTS OF PART TWO

Part Two of *Hindsight* is fairly non-linear, with three main plotlines the PCs can follow in whatever order they choose. We present the events of each plotline mixed up with the others, in the most likely order for the story to occur, but gamemasters should read this section carefully. Once the search for Akuro reveals where he's been most recently, the clock starts ticking.

The three plot lines are:

1. The three Great Families each try to find a way to use the player characters in their own power struggles.

2. The characters find out why Seppun Ushimo tried to kill the Hantei.

3. The characters track down Togashi Akuro, as they came to do.

But our heroes are smooth and cool, right? They can ask a few dozen questions and take political positions without screwing history up *too* badly, right?

See, that's why they call it an adventure.

THE DINNERS

Once the characters have been welcomed to Otosan Uchi, and given baths and beautiful, elaborate rooms assigned by the Hantei himself, they receive three dinner invitations, one right after another. Each is brought in a beautiful gift box with a delicate, hand-painted flower on the top, delivered by a servant dressed in fine silk kimono. Each is for the hour of the Dog (8 p.m.). There is one from **Bayushi Atsuki**, the daimyo of the Scorpion, one from **Doji Tomeko**, the daimyo of the Crane, and one from **Shiba Katsutoshi**, the daimyo of the Phoenix.

Whom to offend? Will the characters snub a daimyo, or cover all three invitations by splitting up in a strange place and time, where they know no one except each other...and trust their compatriots not to destroy history?

Have We Met?

If you need a quick bunch of characters to flesh out the following dinner scenes, remember that every person currently alive in Rokugan is the reincarnated soul of someone in the past. Feel free to draw on the important storyline characters, Ancestors or your own PCs' Kharmic Ties to provide the personality of the clan members of the past. *Sodan-senzo* characters

can even recognize specific people ("Hey, isn't that Kachiko's spirit in the little geisha tart over there? And isn't that my mother's spirit she's ordering about?")

Prop Hint: Grabbing some L5R cards with famous Rokugani personages on them and taping a new first name with only a one-or-two letter difference onto the card can provide a visual reminder of who sits where around the table.

Since characters may be splitting up, with the attendant down-time for some characters, it is also possible to assign other players to play the supporting roles at the dinners their PCs don't attend.

Below, each dinner is described with the assumption that at least one prominent PC is attending. If the characters turn down the invitation, or send the obviously lowest-ranking member of their group only, the daimyos' reactions will differ accordingly. If the characters are intimidated or suspicious and try to skip out on *all* the dinners, feel free to have representatives of the Clans "just drop by" with tea and cakes, and try to politely interrogate the characters in the comfort of their own chambers.

[**Note:** Some of the scenes below make reference to events -- such as the interrogation of Ushimo -- which are described later. Since the time-frame is flexible for this part of the adventure, this allows the characters to conduct their other investigations before accepting the dinner invitations, or to return with questions for their new daimyo allies after interrogating Ushimo the next day.]

Bayushi Atsuki

Bayushi Atsuki, the current Scorpion daimyo, is a far cry from Kachiko's seductions and Shoji's villainy. A corpulent, decadent, Roman-Emperor-style daimyo, he is content with the social order, and more inclined to bribe than blackmail his way out of trouble. Behind a simple mask that is little more than a stylized headband and a nose piece, Atsuki is bright, with a mind well-honed to intricate, old-fashioned political games. (He should be: he ran this Hantei's father before him.) Though always polite and soft-spoken, he jumps at the slightest hint of a hole in the characters' story, and never lets them drop or duck a question.

Privately, Atsuki believes they are a band of ronin, using an impressive cover-story and a possibly staged rescue of Hantei to try to get ahead. Fortunately, he doesn't mind -- the less legitimate they are, the more they will owe him if he helps them.

Atsuki thinks the PCs may have some pull with the impressionable young Hantei who's showing signs of hero-worship for the bushi who miraculously saved him. He wants the characters to use their influence to introduce the Hantei to a nice Bayushi girl, Miwako.

Is there a catch? Of course not, Atsuki assures them. It's just that the young emperor is hanging out with Cranes a lot lately, and his responsibilities to the Empire should be balanced among the clans. Atsuki isn't asking for the two of them to do anything indecent (the Emperor is married and has a six-month-old son, after all) but he wants Miwako to have, um...access.

In return, he'll set them up with "what befits their station," which includes a nice house as long as they're staying in town...maybe some spending cash...

...invitations to the Kakita artisan concertos...

...appointments with Imperial swordsmiths...

...whatever they want.

Will this change history? *Yes.*

An Intelligence + Manipulation, Scorpion Clan Lore or History roll, TN 15, will let anyone interested in the Emperor's political safety realize that access to a teenage Hantei is all a

Scorpion seductress needs.

In the accepted Rokugani timeline, Kusada has a son who is raised by the Phoenix, and a daughter, **Yugozohime**, raised by Togashi Yokuni and the Lion. After Kusada's death, there is a contest for the throne between the two, and the daughter wins, breaking the *gozoku's* hold and becoming the first Empress in Rokugan's history. If the characters introduce Kusada and Miwako and the two have an illegitimate son, he will have the right to enter these duels and make it a three-way contest. If they have a daughter, she will be eligible to marry Doji Usan, the future husband of Hantei VII, thus changing history another way.

With one Raise, the samurai will realize that even if the union produces no children, Hantei "dishonoring" Miwako will give her Scorpion father significant leverage in demanding compensation for his shame. That means land. Or it might mean something as cheap as a few hundred laborer peasants, whom Atsuki has requested.

With two Raises, they remember that Atsuki, late in life, attempted to dig a secret tunnel beneath the Spine of the World mountains to create a second Beiden Pass. The only reason the Lion discovered it in time was because the tunnel project was significantly delayed due to a lack of manpower. (This is a different secret pass than the one hinted at in *City of Lies*, and oh, *yes* it could change history. See how complex this time travel stuff can be?)

If the PCs realize the ramifications and balk at Atsuki's requests, Atsuki starts asking questions he knows they can't answer -- about their families, backgrounds, and where they come from (his staff already checked the Imperial birth registries and records of all minor family names). If the characters outright defy Atsuki, he threatens, politely, to expose them as peasants impersonating samurai of the great families. He may even have picked up on their Flaws during conversation.

This is tricky stepping. Making an enemy of the Scorpion daimyo is never a good idea, but being his friend could be even worse. And if the team has split up, can they feel comfortable offering *anything*, not knowing what their teammates are saying to the other daimyo?

It is possible to slip the noose by offering a lesser favor, such as to introduce the Hantei to the girl but ensure there are chaperones from other Clans, such as setting a date at a public event. ("I certainly see the wisdom of your proposal, Bayushi-sama, but it would bring great misfortune to guess at the schedule of the Son of Heaven.")

Of more interest to devoted magistrates, Atsuki controls much of Otsan Uchi's silk trade and knows most of the Mantis merchants and diplomats. If they ask him about **Gusai Tadahiyo** (a name they may learn, see later in the text) he immediately senses the depth of their interest and tries to get a promise from them about Miwako before saying anything. Tadahiyo is the current Champion, Admiral and mouthpiece for the aged and isolationist Mantis daimyo, **Gusai Narimoto**. He has made a lot of money off the foreign trade and is widely known as an aggressive gaijin apologist. Shortly before the last purge, he was told in no uncertain terms by Shiba Katsutoshi that he is not welcome in Otsan Uchi. As far as Atsuki's spies know, Tadahiyo left then with most of his goods and was last seen headed south.

Troubleshooting: You should be able to spot this brewing already; a Scorpion daimyo threatening a brash PC, overtly or not, may end up with the PC going for the daimyo right then and there. If possible, it may be wise to encourage the least violent characters to meet with the Scorpion. Atsuki will also protect himself by ensuring that many witnesses are present, and having his bushi enforce sword etiquette.

Bayushi Atsuki**Rank 4 Bayushi Courtier****EARTH 2, Willpower 4, FIRE 3, AIR 4, WATER 3, VOID 3****Skills:** Commerce 5, Courtier 5, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 4, History 2, Iaijutsu 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 2, Law 4, Lore: Scorpion 4, Lore: Imperial Family 4, Lore: Crane and Phoenix 3, Lore: Other Clans 2, Lore: Gaijin 3, Poison 4, Seduction 4 (well, he thinks so, and no one has the Glory to tell him otherwise), Sincerity 5, most other High Skills at 2.**Honor:** 1.8 **Glory:** 9.1**Advantages:** Gentry, Social Position, Blackmail, Allies**Disadvantages:** Spoiled.**School Techniques:** Gets a Free Raise in social rolls for every 2 points of Disadvantages the other person has; can make a contested Awareness roll to learn someone's lowest Trait and can spend Void to find the next lowest; can make a Contested Awareness roll to learn someone's disadvantages; can roll Awareness + SR and spend an hour with someone, and can get 1 point of Blackmail on them.**Meeting Doji Tomeko**

The daimyo of the Crane is the daughter of the former daimyo Doji Raigu, a young, not-yet-married woman who relies heavily on the aid of her **Champion Seikidera**. Lest players jump to any samurai-tragedy conclusions, Seikidera is married and old enough to be her father, and his son is one of Tomeko's suitors.

Tomeko is very curious about the visitors, particularly those not of Scorpion or Crane backgrounds. Uncertain in her power, having only inherited the position a few months ago, she is looking for allies among the other clans, hoping that bringing the Lion, Crab (cautiously) or Dragon into politics on her side would give her an edge against the other families.

She would particularly like the characters to use any influence they have with their clans to help turn opinion on the gaijin issue. Though the Crane initially supported the sanctions against the gaijin, they do not approve of the brutality the other clans have used to accomplish it. Tomeko would actually prefer the edict to allow limited trade; since the Crane are currently allied with the Mantis and have access to the coasts, a thriving sea trade would give them a chance to gain economic power over the Scorpion.

Seikidera is present at the dinner, and a Perception + Sincerity test, TN 20, lets the characters tell that while Tomeko disapproves of the purges, she does little because she is sheltered from their brutality. Seikidera, on the other hand, lets slip that he has had to follow the Emperor's orders and drive the gaijin out himself, and he is politely appalled by the treatment they are receiving.

A History test, TN 10, lets the PCs recognize the name Seikidera as the Crane Champion who was the pivotal figure in the Battle of the White Stag/Raging Seas. They are now sitting across the table from the man whom history recognizes as the main reason Rokugan is not a gaijin colony. Seikidera has that "star quality" you expect from a Crane champion. You know, he's chivalrous, bold, righteous, has dreamy eyes that look right out of his portrait in the history text and straight into the hearts of young maidens centuries later... that kind of thing. He's Sir Lancelot with *anime* hair.

None of the dinner guests seems to realize how close they are to war, and any mention of the possibility reveals that the clans have not had a major war for a generation. Few people think that anyone would be so barbaric as to start one now. Seikidera is particularly committed to the idea of reform among the Ootosan Uchi police, and becomes very quiet and brooding at any mention of possible gaijin attack.

Doji Tomeko

Rank 2 Doji Courtier

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

Skills: Commerce 4, Courtier 4, Etiquette 5, Heraldry 3, History 2, Iaijutsu 2, Law 3, Lore: Crane 4, Lore: Imperial Family 4, Lore: Scorpion and Phoenix 3, Sincerity 3, most other High Skills at 2.

Honor: 3.8 **Glory:** 8.8

Advantages: Gentry, Social Position, Allies, Clear Thinker

Disadvantages: Small

School Techniques: Can call upon eight favors from the court per adventure; can influence people by talking to them for five minutes.

Doji Seikidera

Rank 5 Kakita Duelist

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

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 3, Bard 2, Battle 4, Courtier 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 4, History 2, Iaijutsu 5, Jujitsu 3, Lore: Bushido 3, Lore: Crane Clan 5, Lore: Imperials 4, Lore: Gaijin 2, Sincerity 3, Yarijutsu 4.

Honor: 4.2 **Glory:** 8.1

Advantages: Quick, Voice, Gentry, Inheritance (*Shukujo*: Crane Ancestral Sword. Announces true wielder with joyful ringing, can only be held by Doji or Kakita, makes Seikidera effectively a Doji Courtier at Rank 5, and can always strike first in an iaijutsu duel.)

Techniques: Can use Iaijutsu in place of Kenjutsu, can add Iaijutsu to Initiative; can Raise by any amount in an Iaijutsu duel, not just 5; can spend up to maximum Void in one shot in Iaijutsu duel; two attacks a round; before Initiative is rolled, can make Void vs. Void roll to make 1 attack before combat begins.

Equipment: *Shukujo* (Str+4k3), Excellent wakizashi (Str +3k3), Excellent heavy armor (no TN penalty to wear).

Meeting Shiba Katsutoshi

Among Katsutoshi's entourage is a young, gifted, pre-gempukku shugenja named Isawa Sanro, who greets the characters when they arrive and explains that his lord will be a few moments late. This gives them plenty of time to get to know Sanro. The boy is an avid student of air magic, and asks plenty of questions to any shugenja PC. He's trying to figure out how to use it

so that anyone can get a little "wind" to blow and awaken the spirits in objects for a short time.

A Shugenja Lore test, TN 20, will reveal this is the theory that Isawa Asahina used to invent *tsangusuri* at about this time period. A Crane Lore test, TN 5, lets a character recall the story of Isawa Asahina, the Phoenix shugenja who made war on the Crane before surrendering to the beauty of a Crane maiden and founding the Asahina family. "Sanro," as every Rokugani knows, is the name given to the third child in a family before his *gempukku* allows him to choose his own. This boy will one day sire the entire fourth Crane family.

Isawa Sanro (Isawa Asahina)

Rank 1 Isawa Shugenja

EARTH 1, Willpower 3, FIRE 3, AIR 4, WATER 2, VOID 4.

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Courtier 1, Etiquette 1, Investigation 1, Lore: Shugenja 3, Meditation 2, Shintao 3, Spellcraft 3, Stealth 2, Theology 3.

Honor: 2.9 **Glory:** 1.3

Advantages: Great Destiny (found Asahina family), Benten's Blessing, Daredevil

Disadvantages: Small

TN to be Hit: 20

School Techniques: May spend up to maximum Void on spells; Free Raise for rituals.

Spells: Sanro's spells should be able to help the PCs with whatever they lack. He has most Air spells, Path to Inner Peace (or the ancient equivalent), and whatever else will get them out of a tight spot. He has not learned offensive combat spells -- that's later in life.

And what of Katsutoshi himself?

Well, therein lies a story. Rokugani lords are supposed to maintain composure. Rokugani samurai are supposed to never criticize their lords. Shiba Katsutoshi's etiquette instructor was one of his samurai.

This is why you can hear Shiba Katsutoshi coming down the hall.

A gruff, aging man, Katsutoshi is not the Phoenix champion, who resides at Kyuden Isawa, but serves as the voice of the Phoenix in the Imperial Court. He was told by the Isawa four months ago that a grave crisis is at hand for Rokugan, and is avidly watching for any such signs. (Mysterious strangers appearing from the air to save a Hantei qualifies.) But he never cries "apocalypse" before he's got a solution well in hand.

Shiba Katsutoshi is the boss you have always hated. He curses people under him, blames others for his mistakes, and is a constant irritation in every room he's in. Insinuating that there are always plenty of other people willing to work for him, he bamboozles people into doing so. Worst of all, he can back it up with just enough moderate talent to convince higher-ups he's one of those hardasses who are brutally honest, not just brutal.

Katsutoshi's net effect is to raise an impenetrable social shield around him that no logic can penetrate. One gets the impression that if one were to sit in a room with him and watch for an hour, absolutely anything could pop out of his mouth, none of which could be distinguished between a joke, a pathological lie, or an actual life-and-death order. However, ignoring his orders

is the one thing guaranteed to bring his ire. This is why the court vastly prefers the company of the Scorpion daimyo.

This is not to say that he's crazy, or even that he's always shouting. It's his conversational style that throws people off. This "Logic-Proof" advantage adds 10 to the TN of any social rolls made on Katsutoshi, including lying with Sincerity or trying to figure out his motivations. This penalty can be circumvented if the speaker substitutes Void + *nazodo* for their social skill rolls.

History rolls, no matter how high, tell the characters that Katsutoshi was a noble and wise man who subscribed to all Phoenix virtues. A roll of 20 or higher on Scorpion Clan Lore test indicates that the PC read the Scorpion histories which revealed Katsutoshi to be a thug who used shugenja spies to eliminate all negative reports about himself. Katsutoshi ordered the purges of the gaijin, using Phoenix and Crane troops, and when fighting broke out, he ordered in the Emerald Legions. A bloodbath ensued, but Katsutoshi counts it as a victory -- the gaijin have largely withdrawn down the coast.

The Quotable Katsutoshi:

"What do you mean the Scorpion don't know who they are? They paid good money to have spies in our Clan."

"Don't tell me you're sorry. If you were really sorry, you'd disembowel yourself and hack off your own head like a normal person."

"You're new, huh? So, the Bayushi -- fat ugly moron or what?"

"Spare me heroes who save the Emperor and then think they're in the big time."

"Rule? The Emperor doesn't rule. Haven't you ever ruled? It'd dishonor him!"

"Sanro? Yeah, he's super. He's turning twelve next week. So are his kids."

"The gaijin? What's to say about them? They're impotent cowards who will steal our women, and ignorant savages with strange magic we know nothing about."

"The Mantis! Of course they'd be behind it. They're gaijin tools, behind every scheme to assassinate the Emperor except for mine. Sanro! Go stop my assassination plot, it's over budget anyway."

"Of course that was a joke. What are you, stupid? I don't mean what I say, and someone should have told you that."

"When I said I never mean what I say, I didn't mean this, and you should have known it. What, you're not ready to forgive me? I thought compassion was supposed to be one of your virtues."

"Did I say you could speak? No, go ahead, interrupt us at any time. Yes, I mean that, otherwise it wouldn't be interrupting, now would it?"

"Wait, I changed my mind. Only interrupt me at specified times, okay? I want you to send a letter every time you're going to interrupt us, warning us of the time and place. And it should have good calligraphy appropriate to your station."

"Are you ignoring me? Was I speaking here? Sanro, follow this monkey home and put a poison dart in his bed."

"You know what will happen if you do that? You will SINK this Empire. Are you ready to sink the Empire? He's ready to sink the Empire, get him out!"

Chances are, when the PCs first get within earshot, Katsutoshi will be yelling to an aide about the Crane and Scorpion. ("Monkeys could make a decision on those gaijin faster than the Crane could. Sanro! Get two monkeys and send them to the Emerald Champion. Wait! That's

stupid, teach them to bow.")

Once he's gotten the PCs to dinner, Katsutoshi's main concern is to feel out whether the other families have already gained the characters as allies, because he knows there are no neutral parties in a pinch. If he sees a Crane shugenja in the party, Katsutoshi takes a special, suspicious interest in him -- the Crane Clan's lack of magic is the primary reason they still have to strike deals with the Phoenix and Scorpion instead of ruling outright.

If the characters don't bring up the assassination attempt they inadvertently foiled, Katsutoshi asks them about it, for he is concerned the Crane or Scorpion might grow bold enough to try to control the dynasty with murder. ("And then they will have no respect for the rule of law, and they will SINK this Empire.") Depending on how the characters play it, Katsutoshi can be either an ally or complication. He can easily be convinced to the PCs' side...as long as they are willing to kill and die to keep the gaijin out, do nothing that could give any of the other Clans leverage, and don't seem like nancy boys.

At dinner, he makes no attempts to hide his hatred of the gaijin, whom he believes are sullyng the purity of Rokugan. If the characters mention anything negative about Gusai Tadahiyo or Mantis connections to the gaijin Katsutoshi is more than happy to agree that all Mantis are mongrels and tools of the barbarians. If they give any definite connection between the Mantis and any actions against the empire or emperor, Katsutoshi is ready to send a legion of troops to the Islands of Silk immediately. (Will this change history? You bet your *geta*.)

Shiba Katsutoshi

Rank 3 Shiba Bushi

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

Skills: Archery 2, Commerce 3, Courtier 4, Defense 2, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 3, History 2, Kenjutsu 2, Law 3, Lore: Phoenix 4, Lore: Imperial Family 4, Lore: Crane and Scorpion 3, Manipulation 5, Meditation 3, Naginata 2, Shintao 3, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 3.

Honor: 2.8 **Glory:** 9.4

Advantages: Gentry, Heartless, Logic-Proof

Disadvantages: Insensitive

School Techniques: May add Void Rank to hit or damage roll.

May spend up to maximum Void in one action. May spend Void point to increase or decrease TN of spell targeting him by 5. May spend Void to gain extra action.

INTERROGATING SEPPUN USHIMO

If they managed to keep him alive, the characters will probably want to interrogate Seppun Ushimo; after all behind any bodyguard-turned-traitorous-assassin, there's usually someone who did the turning.

If the PCs take the attitude of "let the ancient people handle their own problems" and don't want to get involved, you can prompt them during the dinners that night by showing that the three Great Families resent the Seppun (who hate them for usurping the Hantei's proper authority). If the characters don't do something, the families will take advantage of Ushimo's assassination attempt to argue that soldiers of their own Schools should comprise the Imperial guard, while the Seppun should be made into a minor clan somewhere outside of Otosan Uchi where they can't cause trouble.

It shouldn't take a roll to show how much this would *screw* Rokugan's history. If you want to have them roll Imperial Lore or History, TN 10, you can begin listing the number of times a Seppun guard has saved the life of a Hantei. The first duty of any samurai, including the PCs, is to protect the Emperor, and protecting their modern Emperor means protecting his ancestor.

Getting permission to conduct the interrogation is easy -- Hantei has given the characters blanket permission to conduct their own investigation of the assassination. On the other hand, the three noble families will each want to send someone to chaperone. If the characters object to the presence of other samurai, let them come up with a convincing argument (or counter-offer) for the daimyo. Otherwise...

Getting to see Ushimo Without Permission

Most PCs should realize that cooperation is the best bet, because once they start asking where Ushimo is, they learn that the other Seppun guards have confined him in a cage within a cage within a cage in a very clean, well-lit, very secure Imperial chamber. He's surrounded by a layer of three Kakita bushi, overseen from a higher window by three Shiba bushi with bows. There's no cover from the bows in the room, and none of the bowmen, unless pre-warned by their daimyo, will listen to excuses from a bunch of stranger who want to chat with the prisoner.

(But just in case you're running a B&E-heavy campaign, the three locks are TN 20 to pick, the bars are TN 35 to bend out of place enough to get in a hand, and using a fire-based spell to melt through metal is at least 45 Wounds per bar and will create a heck of a smell).

Subtler ways to sneak past the guards, such as forged orders, have a greater chance of success. The guards are bushi drafted from noble entourages, not security specialists the way the Seppun are: figure they are Rank 2 bushi with 3s in all Rings, 3s in relevant combat skills, and an Investigation of 1, for a total of 4k3 to be matched against the Stealth or Forgery of the PCs. Unfortunately, PC Forgery rolls may use no more dice than the forger's History if the characters haven't seen what family crest Seikidera uses to seal his orders.

The Questioning

Once inside (legitimately or not), the characters find Ushimo confused, hopeless, and uncooperative. He claims not to know why he attacked the Emperor, and figures it doesn't matter anymore, anyway, since his execution is inevitable at this point. Getting him out of his morose depression and willing to talk requires a Sincerity, Intimidation, or Torture test, TN 20.

Once convinced that confessing might at least set his soul on the path to redemption, even if he has no hope of Imperial mercy, Ushimo tells the characters that he felt an irresistible compulsion, as if day had turned into night, and all his life were a lie, twisting the truth to keep back the inherent evil impulses he kept harbored for so long. He says it must have been unknown Phoenix magic that twisted him to treason, and begs for a chance to commit seppuku so the Son of Heaven might forgive him.

Casting Accounts of Shorihotsu, or a Spellcraft test, TN 20, will let shugenja characters tell there is no scent of shugenja magic on him. A Sense Earth spell detects no Taint. A Contested Sincerity test, with one Raise to overcome the effects of *obiesaseru*, confirms that Ushimo is lying.

Further questioning by skeptical PCs, especially if they appeal to Ushimo's guilt and talk about the consequences to his family, will break his spirit. He admits he was trying to kill the Hantei to start the families feuding (the Hantei's heir is six months old and has no arranged

bride). If this were to occur, it would be likely no one clan would have enough troops in the capital to enforce the edict against the gaijin while they were busy fighting among themselves.

The Full Story

What drives a Seppun guard to break his oath and attack the Emperor? The answer is, a lot of bottled-up emotions and one determined *ise zumi*.

Ushimo has a lot of guilt. He was born into a prestigious family, and then told he was no good by Seppun sensei after Seppun sensei until his spirit broke and he had nothing in his life except following orders. He gets watched for disloyalty every day by dozens of other Seppun, most of whom he doesn't like, and the one bright spot in his life was a marriage that worked out pretty well for the first few years. He liked his wife **Tsuhime's** family better than his own.

But you give a moment's happiness to a couple in Rokugan and Fate intervenes. Tsuhime became sick; faint, pale, shivering, and coughing, sometimes so much that blood came forth. Ushimo is fairly certain she caught the strange illness from the gaijin, but to add insult to injury, the only medicines that can keep the pain at bay as she lies dying, are available exclusively (and at great price) from gaijin merchants.

It's a certainty that she will die. Besides Path to Inner Peace spells only helping her a little, her death is listed in some obscure history books: Imperial Lore, TN 25.

Togashi Akuro scoped those books. He does that, you see.

And the evil thing about Akuro is his "Chameleon" tattoo.

Akuro showed up, looking like Tsuhime's doctor, about two weeks ago. He told Ushimo that Tsuhime was doomed, and, with a little *mitsugusuri* slipped into his sake, implanted a suggestion. The suggestion was, "you're at the end of your rope, buddy." Ushimo took it from there.

How this comes across in Ushimo's statements depends how specific the characters get in their questions. Ushimo is a Seppun bodyguard and trained witness. Once he snaps out of his depression, he begins to remember that conversation with the doctor -- the man seemed younger and healthier than he usually was, and Ushimo remembers his encouraging him to "act on his feelings," and hinting that Tsuhime would die in agony as a direct result of the edict banning gaijin from the city. In fact, he seems to recall, it was during that conversation that he first thought that killing the emperor might be the best way to sow such dissent. It's strange, Ushimo remembers, he's not usually that susceptible to suggestion...

When the doctor left him, Ushimo remembers, he went to talk to someone on the other side of the bar -- **Gusai Tadakiyo**, the Mantis second-in-command, who had been ordered out of Otosan Uchi weeks ago. *Kanimoto, the pregenerated Mantis PC, will feel a strange shudder the first time he hears Tadakiyo's name mentioned, as if someone just put a shovel into the earth of his grave.* Though he will not know this until they meet face-to-face, Tadakiyo is the previous incarnation of his Nemesis, the present-day Storm Legionnaire Tadayasu.

Troubleshooting

If Ushimo is killed in the first scene, the characters can get some of this information from his wife. She knows her husband reasonably well, and he has mentioned his anger that the Great Families' politics are depriving her of important medicines. She does mention that he started acting strangely after the last time her doctor visited. Oddly, the two of them went out drinking after her exam -- her doctor doesn't usually drink sake, she said, he thought it was bad for his liver.

The doctor, if the characters seek him out, says he never visited Tsumime and Ushimo, and that he only spoke to Tadakiyo once, nearly a year ago. All magical or psychological tests say he's telling the truth.

Given All That, What Else Do We Know?

The characters learned in Part One that Togashi Akuro had the Chameleon tattoo, which gives him the ability to take on other people's appearances. It is a good educated guess that he took the part of the doctor in Ushimo's story. While their meeting took place almost two weeks ago, an Intelligence test, TN 10, will let the PCs realize that Akuro wasn't in sight in the painting when they came through it. Given the changes that were happening to the scene as they stepped inside, it is reasonable to think that he might have arrived in this time period a few weeks before them.

It is important that the characters learn the name Gusai Tadakiyo in the course of their time in Otsan Uchi. The Mantis second-in-command is not well-liked in the city. It is widely known that he disapproved of the ban on gaijin trade, and several people express surprise that he's been seen back in time. A History test, TN 15, lets the characters know that he is mentioned a few times in the texts from this period, but all mention of his name disappears after the Battle of the White Stag.

LOOKING FOR TOGASHI AKURO

As the characters get caught up in the hoppin' court life of the year 400, this third goal may take the back burner for a while, but smart groups will never fully lose sight of it. After all, they're the only ones here who know that there is an insane, maho-using, face-changing monk on the loose, fully prepared to destroy historical integrity, and unless they find him, they have no chance to go home.

Crazy Tattooed Guy, About This High, Poison Skin...

You'd think it would be easy...

If the characters take the direct route of asking around for someone who looks like Akuro's natural appearance, they learn little. No one has seen an ise zumi around Otsan Uchi in years ("Togashi Tosen-sama does not allow them to leave the mountain any longer. All their time is spent in drills with the Mirumoto troops, preparing for some future disaster."). And all local Kakita artisans are also present and accounted for.

On the other hand, if the characters spend any time exploring the Imperial palace, they can roll Perception, TN 15, to recognize an *exact duplicate* of the painting they stepped through, hung on the wall by the south entrance.

This painting, however, to all tests is not magical, just extremely well-crafted.

Kamigyo (the chief of staff among the palace servants) or a wandering art fan among the previous incarnations of the PCs' friends can tell the magistrates that the painting was completed recently, by **Kakita Miyoshi**, and only hung up here a few days before. Kamigyo is a dignified heimin man, with a strong sense of responsibility, and he seems accustomed to somewhat more respect and trust than most servants from the characters' time.

If the characters treat him well, Kamigyo can also serve as a useful source of information about the Clan daimyos' motives, or the whereabouts of Gusai Tadakiyo. (Anyone who's seen *Gosford Park* knows there is little worth knowing about in a large palace that the head of the servants doesn't know).

Get Me An Art Expert, Stat!

It is simple for the PCs to track down the painter, Kakita Miyoshi, a nervous, elderly woman and long-time permanent resident of the Imperial palace. Though scrupulously polite, Miyoshi is an introvert who's uncomfortable around bushi player characters, particularly ones of other Clans. She'll stumble over words and explanations, and claim to know less than she does if the characters intimidate her into cutting the conversation short.

If they treat her gently (Sincerity, TN 15), she relaxes and tells the PCs that the painting was commissioned a few weeks before by **Shosuro Matsuo**, a well-known Scorpion courtier, who gave her lavish, exotic gifts and begged her to finish the picture as quickly as possible. He said he intended to present it as an anonymous gift to the Emperor, and was very specific as to what the painting should show, even giving her sketches and instructions on precisely what parts of the palace and gardens to include.

The gifts Matsuo gave, if the characters ask to see them, are a set of modern combs and mirrors made of glass backed with silver. A History or Unicorn Clan Lore test, TN 10, lets the characters know that neither the glass (a gaijin invention, and not these gaijin) nor the mirror's style are appropriate to this century.

Matsuo, Miyoshi tells them, is a scholar, and often found in the palace libraries.

Shosuro Matsuo

The characters find Matsuo copying scrolls in the Imperial Histories section of the library. He is a youngish man -- short, rude and suspicious -- with a shaved head and bear-shaped mask that covers almost his entire face. On a History roll, TN 25, characters can remember seeing his image in many portraits from this time, usually at the right hand of Bayushi Atsuki (those who attended the dinner with Atsuki remember that Matsuo was present).

If questioned, Matsuo admits to having seen the painting before, but says he didn't commission it. He is genuinely surprised at the idea: he has no interest in art, and barely remembers what the picture looks like. He certainly seems unlikely to have given as elaborate a set of instructions as Miyoshi claimed. If the characters actually brought the written orders from Miyoshi, Matsuo proclaims them forgeries with a single look.

Hopefully, the players will get it. Akuro has been impersonating Matsuo to ensure that this painting would exist, and provide a model for Kumpei eight hundred years later. The face-concealing mask made Matsuo easy to impersonate. (Some of the people they ask also recall seeing Matsuo with Gusai Tadakiyo, an unusual match-up, especially since Atsuki did not order it.)

Though Matsuo claims to have been at home with his wife the night the painting was commissioned, the characters may talk to others around the palace who remember seeing him that night (actually Akuro is his guise).

Doji Seikidera in particular, remembers having a strange conversation with him. "Matsuo" asked him for directions to **Izumida, a summer palace south of Otosan Uchi**, which Seikidera found odd, since they rode there together just a few months ago. (If your players fail to ask around about the activities of the false "Matsuo," the real Matsuo certainly will, trying to find out who's been imitating him. Use him to nudge, or even hire the PCs to conduct the search for him, to help keep the plot on track.)

SHIRO IZUMIDA

As anyone in Ootosan Uchi can tell the characters, Shiro Izumida is a small winter palace on a ridge perhaps ten miles south of the city. It's just a few rooms larger than a hunting lodge, and is used by lesser Imperial sons and daughters who want to play at hosting their first Winter Court. At this time of year, it is almost always empty except for the four or five groundskeepers and their families who live there year-round.

Properly curious samurai should take a ride over there to investigate just what Akuro might want with the place.

Izumida is about a forty-minute ride from Ootosan Uchi, along a fairly well-traveled road. When the characters arrive there, they find all is not well.

No one comes out to greet them.

There are muddy tracks everywhere, mostly made by boots, not geta.

There are drag marks on the ground.

And there are flies around the door to the hunting lodge.

The groundskeeping peasants, all twenty two, have been slaughtered, down to a year-old child. Inside the hunting lodge proper, there is a fire pit, and the bottom of the fire pit is a lot of freshly thrown dirt on old, charred wood. A hand sticks up, and the shapes of the dirt mounds are unmistakable.

That's where the skeletons start, charred by a fire not hot enough to burn all the way through their flesh. It is also clear that the food stores were pillaged. A Perception + Investigation test, TN 15, reveals that a lot of people camped here, slaughtered the peasants, then threw dirt on the bodies so as not to have to look at them. With a Raise or with a Perception + Explosives test, TN 15, the characters can also find traces of a strange black powder and the presence of small iron balls (musket balls) in the bodies of the slaughtered peasants or nearby walls.

Remember, directly handling dead bodies may drop PCs an Honor point.

A Raise on the Investigation test also lets the characters find a piece of green and brown fabric, still caught in one of the skeletal hands. Closer examination reveals that it is Rokugani silk, of a quality for a minor noble's kimono, and it is in Mantis colors. An Intelligence + Hand-to-Hand test, TN 10, reveals that this was almost certainly ripped off as part of a struggle. Any Mantis who was here was working *with* the gaijin to slaughter these peasants.

A Void + Shugenja Lore or Spellcraft test, TN 10, lets any shugenja know that the spirits here are in great pain. **If a shugenja Communes** with Air, Earth or Fire, they will discover that the spirits are nauseous and frightened, moaning softly into the ether. Once calmed down, the spirits describe the arrival of a large group of people with yellow hair and strange clothes, as well as a man with tattoos and a man wearing green and brown. Depending on the questions, they can also tell the characters that the tattooed man gave one of the strangers a book.

At the mention of the book, the spirits moan in pain. "It wrote! It wrote US! Words that change! Paper that became, popped like bubble! Make it back! Take it forward! Make it un-be!" [Note: The spirits' uneasiness/insanity is a result of being a direct part of Akuro's changes to time. Bringing the book here, as will be revealed in a moment, has made some instant, catastrophic changes to Rokugan's history, and the spirits are still reeling from the backlash.]

Searching for physical evidence turns up some burned paper fragments in the fireplace; the spirits will flee from anyone holding them. Piecing the scraps together, and rolling History, TN 20, or Lion Clan Lore, TN 15, lets the characters recognize the writings as a battle plan for the Battle of the White Stag, taken straight out of the Ikoma history books.

There is fresh ink on a few pieces -- markings for new places to put gaijin troops. Alert

players (especially those whose characters have already suffered at the hands of the distorted time-stream), may be able to guess what this means: **if the gaijin know how Rokugan defeated them in the Battle of the White Stag, they can plan around it, and this time win the war.**

If your players seem confused, let them make Intelligence + Battle tests, TN 15, to realize that a manual revealing your enemy's entire strategy for defense is basically guaranteed to put a victory in your hands. [For very slow players, or characters with no Battle skill, feel free to have the spirits tell them exactly what happened: Akuro gave the yellow-haired men a book about a war. The yellow-haired men started to plan a new way to fight the war. The time-stream started to twist as soon as their plans changed.]

If the characters use a Commune spell with three or more Raises, the spirits can actually draw out a detailed map of the changes: the wind starts to gust through the lodge so hard it tears the paper from the shoji screens. Sparks fly from the ashes in the pit. Fire lights on the tatami mats shoved into one corner, burning twists of reeds and casting them into the whirlwind growing in the center of the room. The dirt flies into the air, landing, making contours on the floor, which by now is catching fire.

It burns hot and fast, more than is natural, and the screams of the fire spirits cease when their pain is fully vented into the floorboards of the cottage around the fire pit. Scarred into the wood is an exact copy of the map. The scattered scorch marks form the Mantis islands; crumpled paper from the shoji form shapes that look like ships. Dirt blows down into contour lines -- many, many troops on land and sea. The stone rim of the fire pit, full of dirt and charred bodies, forms the border of Otosan Uchi.

There are a lot of troops.

There are a lot of ships.

They have Otosan Uchi surrounded.

ONE IF BY LAND...

Wise samurai will recognize that they have to get back to Otosan Uchi and warn the Emperor of the coming attack. If they haven't figured out yet that the battle is imminent, they will as soon as they step outside.

See, Shiro Izumida is nice, high, ridge-front property with a great view of the northern valley toward Otosan Uchi and the southern valley, which would be gorgeous rolling hills except that the gaijin battalion are starting to block the PCs' view.

Coming out of some light trees, about a half hour's march south of Izumida, are a few advance infantry battalions, marching north up the coast.

A Perception + Battle test, TN 20, tells the PCs that they're looking at a few thousand troops. A lot of them look to be swordsmen. Others are carrying strangely-shaped spears -- gaijin spears, short metal poles with one fat wooden paddle-like end and one skinny end that has a jutting blade.

Not to worry. Those spears look pretty short.

Gaijin Soldiers

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

Skills: Archery 1, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Commerce 4, Craft (Shipwright) 2, Guns 3, Intimidation 3, Hand-to-Hand 2, Sailing 3, Rokugani 1, Stealth 2, Sword 3.

Advantages: Strength of the Earth 1, Large

TN to be Hit: 15 Armor: 0

Weapons: Gaijin saber (Str + 2k2), bayonet (Str +4k2), or firearm (4k4, 3k3 at long range, +5 to the TN for medium and long range, Fear effect TN 10) or cannon (7k7 or 3k3 for canister, +10 TN to hit individuals with ball ammo, Fear effect TN 15).

If your players want to go Rambo on the armies, remind them that there are *thousands* of troops and they're a good half-hour march or fifteen-minute run away (Earth + Athletics, TN 20, or Horsemanship, TN 10, or suffer -2 dice due to fatigue).

If the PCs want to sit in the woods and play bow-hunter, they may, but the gaijin don't find this too unexpected. They will react in blocks of 10 troops, who dive to the ground after the first shot. Some wave a signal and others crawl into the tall grass (+10 TN to Be Hit) to try and get toward the sniper's position, while the remaining ones bring up a wagon and begin shooting their muskets from behind it. **See Appendix I for firearm rules**, and remember that any Fear effects include the PCs' horses, who will spook at the sound of musket-fire. Using the wagon as cover adds +10 to the gaijin soldiers' TN to Be Hit. If they can get a lock on any bowman's location (roll their 6k3 Perception + Battle, TN 5x the sniper's Perception + Hunting), they bring up a cannon with a canister round, which has a comparable range to a Wasp PC with a bow. Again, roll for Fear.

There is no way the PCs can stop a gaijin column, nor is it particularly important at this stage how far the invaders get. If at least half the heroes dash off to warn the Emperor and get help, great. If not, you can always give them the hint by having their samurai clothes start to fade off of them the longer they stay.

Warning Otosan Uchi

Running back to the city at top speed is an Athletics or Horsemanship test, TN 25 or 15 respectively, and will hit the PCs with another -2 die penalty until they take at least ten minutes to rest. The first authority figure they find inside the Otosan Uchi gates is **Seppun Seiyuri**, a high-ranking samurai-ko among the Imperial Guards. She insists the characters state their business before entering the Imperial Palace, especially if they look sweaty, frightened, or like they've been in a fight. Any mention of an army, or even a request to speak alone with the Emerald Legions, and she immediately does as she's been instructed: she reports every word to the Captain of the Imperial Guard, and to the daimyo of each of the Great Families.

Bayushi Atsuki calls an immediate war council. Shiba Katsutoshi and Doji Tomeko arrive as soon as possible, as do the Imperial Legion commanders and the Hantei.

Doji Seikidera, Crane Champion, does not show.

It doesn't take much to convince Bayushi Atsuki and Shiba Katsutoshi that war is the only solution. Both already despise the gaijin and they quickly order the city gates closed and Imperial Troops readied. Doji Tomeko, though, seems terrified and out of her league. She asks hesitantly if it might be possible to send an Imperial Herald to ask the gaijin for their terms and stall them while the daimyo assemble troops and get together the Phoenix shugenja scattered throughout the city. Then more and more Seppun start coming in, asking the characters precisely what they saw, and Tomeko's voice gets lost. As do the characters' if they're not careful.

That danger should be obvious here: all of the high-Glory daimyo will react to this news in whatever way suits *them*. They won't know, or care, what their actions will do to change history, nor will they listen to any such ridiculous reasoning. They also don't know, unless the

PCs tell them (and have a damn good reason they should believe it), that the gaijin already know exactly what their defense strategy will be.

Any courtier or diplomat PCs are in their element here, and it will take their most convincing feather-smoothing to get the angry daimyo working on a new, constructive plan.

A Missing Champion

If none of the PCs notice that the Crane Champion... you know, the one the history books say is destined to save Rokugan... is nowhere to be found, Tomeko asks the most reliable PC to do her a favor and go get him. When they look, Seikidera is not in his rooms, nor in Tomeko's rooms, nor in any of the halls where preparations are being made. It is strange beyond thinking that the courageous and dedicated Seikidera would abandon his lady at this crucial time.

It is not hard for the characters to find **Shoen**, Seikidera's personal maid, dusting a small shrine. A very old woman with a raspy voice and bad palsy, Shoen says that last she knew, Seikidera was heading for the stables, and that was some hours ago. Talking with the stableboy (who's about fifteen, low-voiced and surly) quickly establishes that Seikidera was headed out of the city.

If the PCs tell Tomeko he's missing, she immediately guesses that he heard about the characters' news, and has gone in secret to try to talk peace with the gaijin. Whether she confesses this to the characters is another story, but if they have seemed sympathetic to Crane interests, Tomeko promises them all her position allows if they will track Seikidera down and convince him to come back.

If that doesn't get them going, start turning PC kimonos into wool jerseys and trousers. Make their ancestor spirits scream, and their hair slowly fade to blonde.

Still uninspired? Grab their character sheet and write down "Disadvantage: Syphilis."

TWO IF BY SEA...

The pressure is on as the characters race to follow Seikidera. With an Investigation or Hunting test, TN 15, they quickly find that his trail does not lead toward the massing armies, but rather toward the ports, some several miles east.

The trail ends at a run-down Mantis shipyard. When the characters arrive, they can just see the white sail of a boat, about to disappear into the fog as it sails dangerously out into the night sea. A few peasant shipwrights are still working, tying down a late-docking Phoenix silk-barge. If asked, they tell the characters that the other ship, a Crane vessel, left about half an hour ago. The sailors had been preparing the ship when the silk barge arrived, as if the journey had been planned. A man in an ornate blue kimono had boarded right before it set sail, along with a stableboy. *If the players ask*, the stableboy looked just like the one they spoke to only moments ago (yep, Akuro at work again).

The Phoenix sailors are willing to let the higher-Glory (or at least higher-Glory-looking) samurai commandeer their boat for a chase, especially if those samurai invoke the name of the Emperor or Empire. In any case, don't let a drawn-out negotiation interrupt the pacing of the climax -- the PCs arrive, they hop in the boat, *presto*, they're off to save our historical hero.

Well, At Least We Found Him

With Seikidera's ship and their own both relying on the same winds, the PCs need another way to catch up. The spell Wind-Borne Speed will do the trick, as will a Commune spell with three Raises to convince either Water or Air spirits to speed the boat along. It takes a

Sailing test, TN 20, to control the boat when under magical influence.

As long as they have found *some* way to speed their boat along, the characters get into sight of the ship just in time to see it meet with a Mantis craft. If not, they're just a little too late.

Seikidera's ship pulls alongside the Mantis craft, both waving flags of peace. They throw ropes to lash themselves together, and Seikidera seems to be saying something to the captain of the other ship. The characters can also see several bearded gaijin soldiers aboard the Mantis vessel. (This would be a nice point for the players to realize that if Seikidera *does* negotiate an emergency peace treaty with the gaijin, he's going to screw history just as much as letting them win. The war must go on.)

Just as our heroes get within hailing distance, both of the ships take notice of the PCs. The Crane are curious; the gaijin and Mantis, angry.

The cannon ports on the Mantis ship fall open. The Mantis on deck and their gaijin allies whip out an astonishing variety of hidden weapons. When they see that they have been betrayed, the Crane samurai go for their own swords, and the stableboy from the palace comes up from the Crane ship's hold.

Doji Seikidera valiantly tries to keep the peace. Before any shots are fired, he cries out for everyone to put away their weapons. (He can do this with the Rank 5 Kakita technique.) The Crane and many Mantis start to obey, and Seikidera grabs a flag to signal for the PC boat to identify itself.

It is about this time that the PCs can realize the stableboy on the Crane ship cannot be the same stableboy they saw back at Otsan Uchi.

Preferably when the "stableboy" steps behind Seikidera (where the PCs cannot hit him) and fires a pistol point-blank into the back of the Crane Champion's head.

Choreography

Akuro knows as well as the PCs that Seikidera is the key to winning the Battle of the White Stag. Half of his elaborate preparations have been to ensure that Seikidera distrusted the other daimyo enough that he felt he had to risk a personal mission to make peace. Using his Chameleon tattoo to disguise himself as the stableboy, Akuro led Seikidera straight into a gaijin assassination squad.

Given the swiftness of the action, the size of the gaijin force, and the distance between the boats, the PCs should have no opportunity to save Seikidera's life -- this is an important plot point, and gamemasters should feel free to fudge to accomplish it. If some Kakita technique lets the PCs kill Akuro before he shoots, a stray cannonball hits Seikidera during the battle. If a Scorpion shugenja goes invisible and flies ahead to exterminate the gaijin before the battle even begins, Seikidera can die in the blast of the powder magazine, make the mistake of touching Akuro's poisonous corpse, or get shoved off the boat to drown in his heavy armor. You get the idea.

But this doesn't mean the PCs can't have a satisfying fight. As muskets and cannon resound on the ships, the Cranes try to fight back with bow and sword. Akuro takes cover from the PCs' wrath and goes after Seikidera's companions one by one, as the player characters' ship crosses the choppy water maddeningly slowly for samurai who are itching to get a blade into someone.

The PCs' ship will get within ramming or boarding distance at the end of round 5. Characters can get there faster if they dive over the side, take two rounds of swimming from the PC ship to the gaijin, and spend a third round climbing up onto the ship of their choice. If they

use supernatural means, it takes only one full round of travel before the characters can reach the enemy.

Swimming is a Strength + Athletics roll, TN 10, each round, +10 or +15 for light or heavy armor. Failure means the character starts to drown (1k1 cumulative damage per round).

Fighting while climbing out of the water requires two Raises for the climber to strike, and gives her attacker two Free Raises against her. If a character is willing to take an action climbing into the rigging, he may find himself with a height advantage over other melee combatants (providing an extra die of damage against those below him, and subtracting one damage roll die from their attacks against him), but their TN to be Hit is then determined by their Athletics x 5 rather than their Reflexes.

If a climbing character is struck, she must make a Willpower + Athletics test, TN equal to the damage scored, or fall, taking damage of 1k1 per 10' of falling onto the deck, or no damage if the fall is into the water.

(Note that the Mantis sailors also take advantage of climbing in the rigging, and are quite well-trained to fight with anything that is not nailed down, including anchors, boat hooks, belaying pins, and rope.)

Lastly, there's the powder room. If the gaijin ship is at any point blasted by an intense fire spell that reaches below its decks, roll 4k4. If the result is less than the damage of the fire, its gunpowder stores will detonate. This is not good: it will sink the gaijin ship and send flaming shrapnel raining as far as the PC's ship. Those at the epicenter of the blast take 10k10 damage; the gaijin deck, 6k6, the Crane deck, 4k4, and the PCs' deck, 2k2. Making a raft to get home before the ship burns is a Fire + Craft: Shipwright skill roll, TN 15.

Togashi Akuro

Rank 5 Ise Zumi

EARTH 4, Willpower 6, FIRE 4, AIR 3, Reflexes 4, WATER 3, Perception 4, VOID 5.

Skills: Courtier 2, Craft: Shipwright 4, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand: Kaze-do 5, Heraldry 3, History 5, Knife 4, Lore: Gaijin 4, Lore: Imperial 4, Meditation 3, Mitsugusuri 5, Nazodo 4, Shintao 5, Sincerity 4.

Honor: 0.3 **Glory:** 0.8

Advantages: Carrying blood of Togashi (see text)

Disadvantages: Enlightened Madness, Nightmares.

Tattoos:

Chameleon: roll Willpower + School Rank to look like someone else (TN based on familiarity with person). Lasts up to SR days. Can't use more Void than SR in other form.

Crab: Absorbs a number of wounds per hit equal to SR x 2. -1 Reflexes for duration; does not affect TN to Be Hit.

Wasp: Additional action per round, a number of times per day equal to SR. Cannot spend Void while using it.

Pine: Ignore all Wound Penalties, including Down and Out. Strength can never exceed 5.

Spider: Poisonous touch, does 5k1 damage. Must spend Void to shut it off. **If plot Option D is used in Part One, replace with**

"Baku," a tattoo allowing the bearer to steal one School Technique and the Skill to use it from a sleeping victim. Roll Void + Meditation, TN of (5x the Rank of the technique +5x the Rank of the skill). The Technique disappears when the victim wakes. During this time, jade, crystal and obsidian do double normal Wounds to the owner.
TN to be Hit: 20

Mantis Captain

Rank 3 Mantis Bushi

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

Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 3, Battle 4, Commerce 4, Courtier 1, Craft: Shipwright 3, Defense 3, Iaijutsu 1, Jujitsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Nofujutsu 4, Sailing 3, Sincerity 2.

Honor: 1.1 Glory: 2.3

Advantages: Quick

Techniques: May fight with any weapon with a skill of 1; Ignores penalties for unsure footing or imbalance; may spend a Void point can make Full Attack without penalty. May attack with each hand, separate Initiative for each.

TN to be Hit: 15 (25 in armor)

Weapons: Tachi (Str+2k2), Kama (Str+2k2)

Mixed Gaijin and Mantis (12, plus 6 more below decks)

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

Skills: Archery 1, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Commerce 4, Craft: Shipwright 2, Guns 3, Hand-to-Hand 2, Intimidation 2, Nofujutsu 3, Rokugani 1 (gaijin), Sailing 3, Stealth 2, Sword 3.

Advantages: Large (gaijin)

School Techniques: May use any weapon with a skill of 1, takes no penalties for unsure footing (Mantis).

TN to be Hit: 15 Armor: 0

Weapons: Gaijin saber (Str + 2k2), sai or belaying pin (Str + 1k2), fishing gaff (polearm initiative, Str + 2k2), thrown anchor (Str + 1k3), chain (Str +1k2), bayonet (Str +4k2), pistol or musket (4k4, 3k3 at long range, penalties to the TN for medium and higher range, Fear effect TN 10) or cannon (7k7 or 4k4 in 10' radius for canister, 2-Raise penalty to hit individuals with ball ammo, Fear effect TN 15).

Crane Soldiers (6)

Rank 1 Daidoji Bushi

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

Skills: Archery 1, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 2, Navigation 2, Sailing 3, Sincerity 1.

Honor: 3.5 Glory: 2.5

School Techniques: May use Honor in place of Earth rank for determining wounds.

Equipment: Fine tachi (Str +3k2), bows with Fine arrows (Str +3k2).

It's Only Part Two! Can My Players Really Kill Akuro Now?

Shh. It's okay. We know it's breaking many Hollywood and video game rules to allow the PCs to kill the big time-traveling boss-monster two thirds of the way through the adventure, but it'll make your players awfully happy. (It works even better if you feign shocked disbelief when it happens).

Seriously, though, as far as Akuro is concerned, his plan is already in motion. History, he believes, has by now been permanently altered, and since his only motivation is to save Rokugan from itself, he is satisfied to die now that his work is complete. So don't feel bad if a PC spell smokes him before he can give a villainous monologue.

On the other hand, PCs may be anxious to know just what Akuro has to say for himself, and take pains to keep him alive for capture and questioning. Remember to keep his poisonous skin in mind for those who would restrain him.

If caught, it takes Akuro a moment to register that the people chasing him are from his own time. He didn't know it would be possible, but it doesn't bother him. There's nothing the magistrates can do. He's already won.

Without Seikidera, and with the Imperial battle plans given to the gaijin, the Empire stands little chance of winning the war. Even worse, Akuro has played on Gusai Tadakiyo's greed and paranoia to convince the Mantis to take the gaijin side. Without their help, the Rokugani will slowly but surely be driven back until they are forced to be conquered by or make peace with the gaijin.

And why on earth did he think this was a good idea?

Akuro will talk freely about his plan. After all, in his own mind, he has done no evil. He's Rokugan's greatest hero.

"Our little emerald needs poison," he says. "That was what I was shown. A little poison, each day, it makes you strong.

"The son will become the dark brother, the shadow, the throne. The jade clan will go black, and plague leaves no graves fully filled. The dead will rule, and out of all hope, seven mortals will rise. One of them will be HER. Is there more? No, no, the outcome is too dark to see.

"What could you do when your emerald is lost? Why not lose more, and by losing win? Let the sons of the storm make thunder. Let the Wall roar, let peasant hands work steel. Let Lady Sun see lovers and let her sweet new tears be lead."

Hey, we said he'd talk. We didn't say he'd *explain*.

If the characters can get through Akuro's Enlightened-Madness way of speaking, they learn that the day he became an *ise zumi*, he saw a vision of Rokugan's future. Those of you who know the card game and RPG storyline knows that means *nothing good for Rokugan*. Akuro *saw* the Crab and Scorpion betray the Emerald Throne. He *saw* the rise of the Shadowlands, the destruction of the Akodo, Shinsei returning and Fu Leng sitting on the Emerald Throne with Kachiko as the Empire's last hope.

But he doesn't know they *win*.

What's a few lives and the cost of Akuro's soul compared to *that*?

For years, Akuro tried to figure out a solution, and finally hit upon one when he began looking to the past rather than the future. The gaijin are his wild card. If they win -- or negotiate terms to stay in Rokugan -- their magic, culture and gunpowder would influence Rokugani society, meaning that any peasant with little or no training could put a musket ball in a samurai. Wouldn't that be just what Rokugan needs to fight a new Shadowlands army? Maybe the Crab wouldn't need their Wall if they had cannons... maybe a few gaijin would marry Scorpions and Kachiko would never be born... (For what actually happens if Akuro succeeds, see **Appendix II.**)

Akuro cannot be convinced of the folly of his plan. PCs are welcome to deliver him to justice in Otsosan Uchi if they prefer, but since he's still the murderer of three *ise zumi* and they're magistrates, they may feel perfectly justified in beheading him.

I Think This Is Our Ticket Home

In a tight-fitting pocket inside Akuro's kimono is a metal jar containing a strange, multicolored liquid. It resembles the rainbow sheen of oil on water, but it is deeper and richer in its variety of colors than the human eye can absorb. This is the extract of the blood of the *kami* Togashi, and its properties depend on your view of Rokugani magic.

Option A: If you have ruled that the initial painting magic was not *maho*, the PC shugenja will be able only to detect something deeply powerful in the liquid, but also something puzzling, as if it only exists when it is not thought about too hard. The local spirits are confused by it, and can give no helpful answers.

Options B, C, or D: If you have ruled that Akuro and Kumpei's magic is *maho*, then the blood is Corrupted. Spirits refuse to *touch* Akuro, adding +10 to any TNs of casting spells on him. To a Rokugani, and especially a shugenja, the sight of this blood is deeply shocking, as if you had lived a long and happy religious life, hoping each day that you might see God, and then when the creator of the universe finally sits you down to deliver eternal wisdom, He says "I get turned on by eating feces."

Anyone who views this fundamentally wrong substance must make a Willpower test with a TN of 30 or be unable to spend Void for the next hour, incapable of thinking about anything but the horrid properties of that strange, wriggly substance. The spiritual resonance surrounding the painting and the pages that altered time were weak and dry compared to this.

It's as if it could get into *anything*.

In either case, the reason Akuro is holding on to the vial varies. **If Akuro struck a deal with Kumpei**, his motivation is that neither of them trusted one another, and they kept the blood and painting talent separate so that neither could get home on their own. They plan to meet again once the Mantis ships reach Otsosan Uchi. **If Kumpei is an unwitting dupe**, Akuro will have the blood because the timing on his nightly visits to Kumpei and his murders of the *ise zumi* got awkward; Akuro made as much as he could and never let it leave his sight.

There's only enough time-ichor left for one full-size painting. (It is, however, the *maya* that allows for actual travel -- drinking the stuff is merely poisonous.) Akuro cannot help the characters use it -- to get home, they still need to find Kumpei (or another skilled Crane artisan who is willing to work with a poisonous blood that will corrupt his soul).

Troubleshooting

If everyone ends up beaten, drowned, or stuck on flaming timbers trying to float to shore, it may be time for some judicious bailing out by the Cranes on board the ship, who may turn out

to be Seikidera's personal bodyguards. Crank up their Ranks and have only a few, bloody and battered, survive the knock-down fight with the gaijin. But they know how to lash a raft together, and send flaming arrows into the air to signal for a rescue ship.

If your characters are more social than combat-oriented, they can also try making a stirring speech to convince the Mantis sailors that it is immoral to side with barbarians against their own kind, and create some new allies for themselves.

GLORY, HONOR AND EXPERIENCE

As ought to be obvious, there are no Glory awards for Parts Two and Three of the adventure that are relative to the characters' permanent daimyo, whose great-grandparents will probably be born in a few centuries. So let's talk about perceived, temporary Glory.

Saving the Hantei means the characters are treated as if they had a Glory of 5 for this time period among the nobles of the court. If they play it correctly and seem like the Hantei's mysterious trump card, they may even be treated as if they had Glory 7. Of course, it is easy for them to open their mouths and step right in, knocking themselves down to about a 3.

The characters can also add to their temporary status in all the usual ways such as giving and receiving gifts, acting honorably, and performing High Skills at court. Those who warn Otsan Uchi about the approaching army receive 3 Glory Points each.

For some characters, the unbalanced feeling of living in their own pasts will prevent any Honor gains, while others may see it as a chance to see and preserve all that is good about Rokugan's history. As a rule of thumb, actions taken to save the regular timeline will probably be worth an Honor point or two, while time-changing mistakes or deliberate alterations for personal gain will be a loss of between 2 and 5 points.

Award Experience Points as follows:

Saving Hantei	2 points
Letting Ushimo die	-1 point
Successful alliance with ancient daimyo	1 point per daimyo
Losing favor of ancient daimyo	-1 point per insult
Failure to warn of gaijin attack	-1 point
Defeating Akuro	2 points

PART THREE: THE BATTLE OF THE WHITE STAG

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Part Three of *Hindsight* is fairly free-form. Gamemasters should read over the section to become familiar with the events and goals, but the specific timing will depend on the players' exact battle plans. There are three major, growing problems during this section; the player characters may split up or work together to solve them, but splitting up may allow them to get through it more quickly.

- 1. The Imperial troops in Ootosan Uchi need a new strategy to win the war.**
- 2. Seikidera's role in the battle and history must be maintained.**
- 3. The Mantis must not betray the Empire, or all is lost.**

It is also useful to protect Akuro's vial of time-ichor during this process if the PCs want to get home afterward, and to protect Isawa Sanro so he can survive to engender the Asahina family a few years down the line.

All of the time-altering effects which began in Part Two continue at an accelerated rate as the time-stream reacts to the catastrophic events that just took place. With the likelihood right now that the gaijin will win the war, with the Mantis as their allies, any Mantis PCs suddenly find that the equipment and kimonos they brought with them from the future have become Fine quality, while Lion and Crane PCs find their clothing fading to peasant brown, even as their ancestral daisho vanish. (These changes can be reversed when a Heroic Opportunity presents itself during the battle.)

If they haven't figured it out by now, the players should realize that straightening the course of history is entirely on their shoulders, and winning the Battle of the White Stag is the key. They should begin Part Three knowing that they are well and truly screwed. If they take Akuro's little vial and paint a picture of the year 1120 right now, they will return to a world much changed. **See Appendix II** for a glimpse of the nightmare. A few History rolls or conversations with panicking NPCs should get the players to take stock of the situation.

In a bit more detail, their problems are:

1) The gaijin got an intelligence report from Akuro, so the present Rokugani battle plan will be useless.

The PCs don't need to roll to know this is not the way it should be, but they should make an Intelligence + History test, TN 15, to remember all the details of what was supposed to happen.

Historically: In a few hours, the gaijin will launch a long line of 120 ships, holding about 5,000 men total, from the northern Mantis isles, the only place that offered them any safe harbor once the edict was given. This fleet is bent on attacking the Bay of the Golden Sun, Ootosan Uchi's harbor. Knowing that the *gaijin* cannons will tear their ships and men to pieces at long range, Rokugani shugenja lower a shield of mist over the harbor and their sailors pull their ships back inside the bay itself. When the ships enter the area with low visibility, the Rokugani have the time to fight a pitched battle, boarding the gaijin ships and fighting hand-to-hand. Additional support from shugenja and archers in the lighthouses on the White Stag peninsulas (also known as the Peninsula of Dawn and Peninsula of Sunset) choke up the ships as they are entering and prevent the gaijin from getting a foothold on the land.

As the battle lengthens, the gaijin ships need that foothold more desperately, and start expanding down the southern coast, into the Crane lands. But among the Rokugani, only the

Mantis have anything resembling a navy. A major turning point comes when dozens of merchant ships recruited by the Crane transport Crane samurai into the battle, and they keep the gaijin off the coast. While the gaijin ships pile up in the water, the Mantis fleet (about 80 ships) arrives, and by attacking the gaijin rear, breaks the line and saves the day, in the part of the fighting they call the Battle of the Raging Seas, one of Rokugan's few naval battles.

Meanwhile, a small force of gaijin on land lay siege to the city. The samurai hold them off until the Dragon and Centipede clans show up (with mysterious prescience) and cut off their supply train. Stranded without their wagons of gunpowder, the gaijin soon fall back on hand-to-hand fighting, and are no match for the Mirumoto.

With one Raise on this History roll, a PC can recall that Doji Seikidera was the key instrument in appealing to the Crane merchants. By riding down and debasing himself before them, asking for their help in warrior matters, he showed great compassion and healed a long-standing grudge between Crane merchants and samurai.

After Akuro's change: The gaijin now have no intention of sailing into the trap waiting for them in the Bay of the Golden Sun. Instead, they have dumped a large portion of their forces on land and are marching them north to the city. This means more cannons aimed at Otosan Uchi, and if the barbarian armies reach a convenient ridge, they can rain fire down on the palace and harbor without risking a single ship. Meanwhile, the ships will concentrate on taking the lighthouses and peninsulas, which will draw out the Rokugani fleet to face them nearly toe-to-toe. Unimpeded by the Mantis, who are now their allies, the gaijin will put more and more troops and cannons on the ground and in the lighthouses until they can envelop the south and east and rain artillery into the city at will. By the time the Dragon arrive, the gaijin will already have taken the city walls, and can shut them out, raining down death whenever they like.

2) The Crane Champion, whom all the history books say was integral to winning the Battle of the White Stag, is dead.

An Intelligence + Courtier roll, TN 15 (in addition to or instead of the above Raise), lets the PCs know that the Crane forces will be devastated without Seikidera. In addition to recruiting the merchant ships to protect the shoreline, Seikidera moderated between the peasant recruits and Crane samurai, and served as General for his whole portion of the battle. There are no Crane soldiers in Otosan Uchi with the skills, connections and personal magnetism to take his place. All the high-Glory Cranes currently at the palace are Kakitas; their primary tactic will be to find and duel the gaijin generals, which is not a wise strategy to try on dishonorable foreigners. Telling a Kakita his battle plan is flawed is a quick way for the PCs to get into a duel, which is fabulously unproductive.

With one Raise, the PCs can guess that the likely default commander for Imperial defense will be Bayushi Atsuki.

With two Raises, they may be able to guess that Atsuki is likely to go with Doji Seikidera's old battle plan because *neither of the high-Glory daimyos, Bayushi Atsuki or Shiba Katsutoshi, have the Battle skill* (i.e. neither of them are ever mentioned as taking a military role in any historical conflict). If the PCs get back to Otosan Uchi or do an Intelligence + History roll at TN 15, they can remember the names of one prominent battle commander for each Raise: **Seppun Koboru**, **Shiba Dorataki**, and Seikidera's son, **Doji Bayatsu**, each have passable command training (7k3) and historically were division commanders that fought well, though Dorataki died. If none of the PCs have a decent Battle skill, our heroes' best hope lies in getting these folks to make decisions rather than the daimyo. Unfortunately, *none* of the three have the

requisite Glory to stand up to Atsuki or Katsutoshi.

3) The Mantis, who supposedly fought alongside the Crane in the Battle of the White Stag, are now on the side of the gaijin.

As the PCs should have learned in Part Two (or can roll Intelligence + History, TN 15, to remember now), the current Mantis daimyo is **Gusai Narimoto**, and his fleet admiral is **Gusai Tadakiyo**, the cruel but clever gaijin apologist who had been seen around Otosan Uchi with several of Akuro's alternate personas.

With a Raise, characters can guess at the rationale for the change -- Narimoto was known to be a peaceable man during the glory days of his rule, and had great respect for the Emerald Throne. However, he suffered a minor stroke a few years ago, and withdrew into his palace, relying on Tadakiyo to screen visitors, handle trade and lead any visits to the mainland. As the PCs may have learned in Part Two, Tadakiyo has many investments among the gaijin merchants, and was recently driven out of Otosan Uchi by Shiba Katsutoshi. Tadakiyo is currently running the Mantis Clan, he probably wouldn't turn down an offer to loot the *gozoku's* corpses while the gaijin invade. (If the characters kept Akuro alive, he can reveal during his interrogation that he struck a deal between Tadakiyo and the gaijin -- in return for Mantis support in the battle, the gaijin will leave the Mantis in charge when they colonize Rokugan, essentially transforming the minor clan into the new colony's only remaining nobility).

With two Raises, the PCs know that Narimoto's son, **Gusai Ochimi**, dislikes Tadakiyo, and recently tried to convince his father to send him away. Tadakiyo turned Narimoto against his son with rumors of a coup, and Ochimi is now said to be living as a peasant somewhere on the Mantis isles.

The PCs can try to solve these problems in any order or combination they choose. For ease of reference, they are presented separately, below.

A NEW CRANE CHAMPION

Their most immediate problem is staring up at them from the ship with glazed, blue eyes. Seikidera is dead. Real dead. But the PCs desperately need him to be alive.

Of course, that armor he's wearing conceals most features, doesn't it?

While impersonating a high-ranking samurai may rankle characters of Honor 3 and above, hopefully most groups will realize that having someone take Seikidera's place, in his armor and using his name, is the only way to ensure that his role still makes it into the history books. And what's the loss of five Honor points compared to historical integrity?

The pregenerated characters, particularly Shosuro Yakawa, have a variety of impersonation skills, including Acting and Mimic, and Asahina Jikoji has the spell Way of Deception. Of course, it's also important that whoever plays Seikidera also have a reliable Battle skill, or at least keep around a very close advisor who can help him win this war.

(For home groups who hit upon this idea but don't have any members with the acting, disguise or battle skills to pull it off, Bayushi Atsuki also has a retinue with at least one loyal Scorpion with stats similar to Yakawa's. The price? No need for the PCs to worry about that. The Crane will be paying *plenty*, for a very long time. Will this change history? Yes, but it's better than **Appendix II**.)

If a PC does choose to impersonate Seikidera himself, please note that the Champion's sword, the ancestral blade of the Crane Clan, can only be wielded by one of Doji, Daidoji or Kakita descent. It takes an Intelligence + Lore: Crane Clan test, TN 20, for the characters to

remember this. Otherwise, the sword cries out at the impostor the first time he draws the blade.

For home groups where a Doji, Daidoji or Kakita PC takes on the impersonation, it is possible for them to use and get the benefits of the blade, but knowledgeable Cranes will still spot them for fakes when it does not ring joyously at being drawn by the true, destined wielder.

Provided, of course, the PC bearer doesn't have dubious parentage and an undetermined Great Destiny advantage just *lying* around...

Where To, Captain?

Once their decisions are made (or possibly before, if the ships are sinking or on fire), the characters are going to want to get off these boats and out of the water. As they decide on where to go next, however, all the characters should roll Perception, TN 15, to hear someone moving around in the hold of their ship. (If the characters' ship was destroyed in Part Two, they see someone splashing and drowning among the wreckage).

If they investigate, they find Isawa Sanro (the young shugenja from Part Two who will one day grow up to found the Asahina family) stowed away in the hold.

He had been listening invisibly (future Adepts of Air, aren't they just *precious*) when the characters announced the coming gaijin armies. Excited at the thought of rescuing Seikidera, he followed the characters and stowed away in their boat.

Sanro serves two purposes in the adventure. He is someone the characters must protect during the battle, giving a chance for personal roleplaying even in the midst of life-threatening combat. His genuine bravery will get him into constant trouble throughout the battle in Part Three, no matter where the characters try to drop him off. On the bright side, he is also a talented shugenja with most any Air spell the PCs need. He will happily assist home groups with the Way of Deception spell if they need help impersonating Seikidera, provide a stiff wind to get their ship where it needs to go, or use Tempest of Air or Osano-Wo's Breath to deflect musket balls.

Isawa Sanro

Rank 1 Isawa Shugenja

EARTH 1, Willpower 3, FIRE 3, AIR 4, WATER 2, VOID 4.

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Courtier 1, Etiquette 1, Investigation 1, Lore: Shugenja 3, Meditation 2, Shintao 3, Spellcraft 3, Stealth 2, Theology 3.

Honor: 2.9 **Glory:** 1.3

Advantages: Great Destiny (found Asahina family), Benten's Blessing, Daredevil

Disadvantages: Small

TN to be Hit: 20

School Techniques: May spend up to maximum Void on spells; Free Raise for rituals.

Spells: Sanro's spells should be able to help the PCs with whatever they lack. He has most Air spells, Path to Inner Peace (or the ancient equivalent), and whatever else will get them out of a tight spot. He has not learned offensive combat spells -- that's later in life.

The Merchants

For the PC impersonating or replacing Seikidera, the first order of business is gathering the merchant fleets which made up Rokugan's improvised navy. However, this is not quite as simple as just showing up in port and announcing the draft. Seikidera left for his midnight negotiations without any papers, any official seal of the daimyo, and certainly no Imperial-signed orders authorizing him to gather troops for war.

In the first harbor town the PCs stop in, the merchants are hardly the servile, agreeable *heimin* the PCs might expect. It has been less than a hundred years since the Yasuki defected, and the Crane had had a policy of pampering their merchants ever since to prevent them from following in the Yasuki's sandals. Recently, as the gaijin purges have threatened Crane profits, Doji Tomeko has attempted some "reforms," which the merchants saw as little more than a betrayal, enforced at the points of samurai swords.

There are about 120 Crane samurai in each of the three towns along the shoreline, a force enough to make the gaijin think twice about establishing a beachhead. But an Intelligence + Battle roll, TN 20, will inform the PCs that it's a bad idea to simply tell them to run north and fight. While the samurai would do so, it's a long uphill trek, and they'd find themselves exhausted just as they get to the gaps in the beachside cliff. Without ponies enough to get troops there, the only real method is ships.

The merchants of the towns can be easily gathered for a public pronouncement, but when the characters ask them to sail into battle, they stare blankly. One of the most prominent merchants, **Kentosen**, respectfully points out that their place in the Celestial Order is to provide samurai with goods in return for protection. They don't fight. That's the bushi's job.

Kentosen is an angry and conflicted young man. The loudest and most respected voice among the local sailors and traders, he was a bastard child of a Daidoji samurai and merchant-caste girl. Raised *heimin*, but given extravagant gifts by his guilty father, Kentosen now controls his father's fleet of ten *kobune*. He resents his status as a *heimin* and feels that samurai are running a racket, demanding servility from the rest of the population in return for "protection" from a war that hasn't happened in generations. Underneath his anger, however, he longs to believe. He loves and respects his father, who taught him battle arts on the sly, and if the characters can seem like worthy, noble samurai willing to make up for past injuries, Kentosen will prove a valuable ally, able to rally the rest of the merchants into cooperating.

At least six other merchants will join in if Kentosen is convinced, providing 40 ships that can take a dozen samurai archers each. (The more ships, the better; it is possible to load each ship with up to 50-100 warriors in some cases, but this is not wise considering what a cannon's canister round can do to such a mob packed shoulder-to-shoulder.)

Kentosen

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

Skills: Athletics 3, Commerce 4, Courtier 2, Craft: Shipwright 3, Craft: Fishing 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Jujitsu 2, Kenjutsu 2, Law 1, Sailing 3, Sincerity 3, Yarijutsu 1.

Honor: 3.8 **Glory:** 0

Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (peasant), Driven (prove self to father), Uppity (like "Brash," for peasants)

TN to be Hit: 15

Weapons: Oar (Str +2k2), Harpoon (Str +3k2)

Crane Bushi**Rank 1 Kakita Duelists****EARTH 2, FIRE 3, AIR 3, WATER 2, VOID 2.****Skills:** Archery 1, Athletics 2, Battle 1, Courtier 1, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 3, Jujitsu 1, Kenjutsu 1, Sincerity 3, Yarijutsu 3**Honor:** 3.5 **Glory:** 1**TN to be Hit:** 15 (20 in armor)**School Techniques:** Replace Kenjutsu with Iaijutsu: add Iaijutsu skill to initiative roll.**Weapons:** Fine Tachi (Str +3k2), Yumi with Fine arrows (Str +3k2), Fine Yari (Str +5k2)**THE MANTIS BETRAYERS**

At some point, the characters will want to go after Gusai Tadakiyo (if using the pregenerated PCs, Kanimoto should be among the characters who do this). Any Mantis sailors captured at the end of Part Two can tell them that Tadakiyo is currently gathering a fleet at the northern-most port on the Island of Silk. He has roughly 80 ships and over 3,000 men, and the Mantis sailors don't think he'll be in the mood for negotiating. PCs who don't want to waste their time fighting their way toward him (and who realize that, say, using the Crane fleet to fight the Mantis fleet would decimate Rokugan's protectors and *still* change history), may want to contact the Mantis daimyo, **Gusai Narimoto**, directly.

Narimoto is on the Island of Silk, in the splendid castle of Kyuden Gusai. Where the PCs only saw ancient ruins in Part One, here they see the castle mound flowing with green, manicured grass, white stones cut so finely you could not fit a razor blade between the cracks, a torii arch of ivory and hawkbill tortoise shell, a little bridge of cedar and pine over a crystalline river, and inside the gates, wide spaces and chignon curtains in an Ivory Kingdoms style.

If the PCs request to see Gusai Narimoto, they will be disarmed and escorted to Tadakiyo first, since the fleet admiral has to approve any visitors to the daimyo. If your PCs guess that this is a quick way to land in Mantis dungeons for the rest of their short lives, or at least until the end of the war, they're right.

Some fast talking (Awareness + Sincerity, TN 25, or 20 for characters more familiar with Mantis culture and mannerisms) can prevent the guards from dragging them to Tadakiyo immediately. If they show off an Imperial seal, or symbol of the Crane champion, or other high-status symbol, the guards may be convinced to let them see Narimoto directly... escorted by a squad of twenty armed samurai.

Breaking into the palace is, to all extents and purposes, impossible, but if your players insist on trying it that way, let them get caught and dragged before Narimoto in chains. This will make their bargaining position much more difficult, of course, but will still give them the opportunity to tell the Mantis daimyo that the future of Rokugan depends upon him.

An easier way into the palace, PCs may realize, could be to find **Gusai Ochimi**. The Mantis heir is estranged from, but still not disowned by, his father, and is widely known around the islands as fair, shy, intelligent, fiercely anti-Tadakiyo, and often to be found at the library in the Temple of Inari. Any of the palace groundsmen can cheerfully direct the characters to the temple, where they say Ochimi usually spends his afternoons studying.

Ochimi deeply resents Tadakiyo, and has long felt that the admiral is one of the Mantis's biggest barriers against earning the Great Families' respect. If the characters tell him their suspicions that Tadakiyo has secretly allied his clan to the gaijin, Ochimi requires little proof (a Mantis prisoner from the Part Two battle, or even a returned sword will do), before agreeing to take the characters to his father.

Talking to Narimoto

The daimyo's room is the topmost room in the castle, and as the shoji open, the man the characters see is dwarfed by the image on the rear wall. It is a spectacular mural of the Dragon of Storms, Osano-Wo's mother, sheltering her young child from the spider beneath the sea, a legend so old it is hardly ever told in modern Rokugan. The ocean and storm together are countless shades of lapis lazuli, malachite, sapphires, and the bolt of lightning the dragon holds in her hand is a streak of pure gold.

Is this important to the adventure?

Sure. It's a sight no other modern Rokugani will ever see.

Gusai Narimoto is a once-savvy daimyo, now partly paralyzed from his stroke, and heavily dependent on Tadakiyo and the rest of the bureaucracy he has built up. If the characters have gotten in alone, Narimoto is extremely suspicious of them. He has spent his life having to be on the lookout for Cranes trying to screw his merchant fleets, Phoenixes who bully him with force, and Scorpions just on principle (+5 for anyone from those clans to convince him of anything). He has the Clear Thinker advantage, making it a TN 30 to lie to him, but that same advantage makes it easier for him to believe there is something wrong with his admiral -- Tadakiyo's messages have become sparse and erratic lately.

If the characters are accompanied by Ochimi, Narimoto lets them in immediately. He loves his son, and has begun to have doubts about the coup-rumor and regret their falling out. PCs who work with Ochimi receive no penalties due to their clan, and may receive one Free Raise on Sincerity tests if Ochimi backs them up.

Gusai Narimoto

Rank 4 Mantis Bushi

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

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 4, Battle 4, Commerce 4, Courtier 4, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, History 4, Iaijutsu 4, Jujitsu 4, Kenjutsu 4, Heraldry 2, Investigation 3, Intimidation 5, Nofujutsu 5, Poison 2, Sailing 4, Sincerity 5, Wrestling 3.

Honor: 2.0 **Glory:** 8.0

Advantages: Clear Thinker

Disadvantages: None -- he likes to annoy Scorpions.

TN to be Hit: 20 (25, 45 in armor)

School Techniques: Fight on uneven ground without penalty; use any weapon as if with a skill of at least 1; spend Void and gain benefits of a Full Attack without changing TN to Be Hit; may make two separate Initiative rolls, one for each hand, and attack once on each. *The Lost Rank 4 Technique:* Adds his School Rank to his Battle skill when generaling or fighting in Mass Naval Combat. (This skill was lost after hundreds of years with no naval

battles).

Weapons: An entire army surrounding the PCs.

Gusai Ochimi

Rank 4 Mantis Bushi

EARTH 3, FIRE 3, Intelligence 4, AIR 3, Awareness 4, WATER 4, VOID 3

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 2, Battle 4, Commerce 4, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, History 4, Iaijutsu 2, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Heraldry 2, Nofujutsu 3, Sailing 4, Sincerity 2

Honor: 3.6 **Glory:** 6.8 (4.0 while on the outs with Dad)

Advantages: Social Position (heir to the Mantis)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (estranged from father)

TN to be Hit: 15 (25 in armor)

School Techniques: Fight on uneven ground without penalty; use any weapon as if with a skill of at least 1; spend Void and gain benefits of a Full Attack without changing TN to Be Hit; may make two separate Initiative rolls, one for each hand, and attack once on each. *The Lost Rank 4 Technique:* Adds his School Rank to his Battle skill when generaling or fighting in Mass Naval Combat.

Norimoto becomes very concerned if the PCs convince him that Tadakiyo is committing Mantis troops to battle without his approval. When he sends a bushi to investigate, the word comes back that the Mantis fleet is indeed assembling on the docks at Tadakiyo's orders. This concerns the aged daimyo enough to get him out of the palace and down to the docks to see for himself.

With his soldiers, Ochimi and the PCs in tow, Narimoto confronts Tadakiyo, giving him a chance to explain his actions. Narimoto storms down to the docks and calls a meeting with Tadakiyo. Tadakiyo lies smoothly -- he heard the Crane were massing troops, and he's assembling this fleet for self-defense if the mainlanders try to attack the islands because of their trade with gaijin. The PCs, he says, are obviously here to try and get the Mantis to swing first, to provide some excuse for a war, deceitful slubberdegullions that they are. What better excuse for the Great Clans to beat on the Mantis than a mixed bag of magistrates, injured or killed in battle?

Tadakiyo is still hedging his bets -- he has made a deal with Akuro to support the gaijin, but if the best way to save his own skin is to go back on his word, he's fine with that. With Narimoto here, and clearly in no mood to discuss allying against the Emperor, Tadakiyo tries to convince him that the best course is complete neutrality. After all, he says, the gaijin are only reacting to the Great Families' unfair trade policies. There is no reason for the Mantis to support the other Clans in enforcing a policy that would only hurt them economically. (PCs can roll Intelligence + History, TN 10, to remember that Mantis neutrality would still change history, and probably ensure that the gaijin win).

Narimoto would like to believe that his most trusted officer is telling the truth, and neutrality sounds like a good course to him, so the PCs will have to try something a little more drastic to bring him completely to their side. If they don't suggest a duel to determine who is telling the truth, Ochimi will.

Note that once a champion for the PCs is chosen, a Mantis duel is not a formal iaijutsu duel. If a PC suggests standing somewhere where there's space, great, but if not, the duel starts once the Initiative roll hits the table, it involves any hard objects that can be swung or hurled, and it ends when the bystanders get the courage to come back. (If using the pregenerated PCs, this is the chance for Kanimoto to fight his kharmonic Nemesis in a battle for the fate of Rokugan. Remember, he can't use Void against him).

Gusai Tadakiyo**Rank 3 Mantis Bushi**

EARTH 4, Willpower 5, FIRE 3, Agility 4, AIR 2, Reflexes 4, WATER 3, VOID 3

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 3, Battle 4, Bojutsu 3, Commerce 4, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Forgery 4, Jujitsu 4, Kenjutsu 4, Heraldry 2, Investigation 3, Medicine 3, Nofujutsu 4, Poison 2, Sailing 4, Sincerity 4, Stealth 3.

Honor: 0.5 **Glory:** 6.2

Advantages: Heartless, Quick

Disadvantages: Vain

TN to be Hit: 20 (25 in armor)

School Techniques: Fight on uneven ground without penalty; use any weapon as if with a skill of at least 1; spend Void and gain benefits of a Full Attack without changing TN to Be Hit; may make two separate Initiative rolls, one for each hand, and attack once on each.

Weapons: Kama (Str+2k2), Tachi (Str+2k2), gaijin long sword (Str+2k3), steel-rimmed boot (Str +0k2), and if you're feeling particularly nasty, pistol (4k4 at short range, 3k3 at medium or more, Fear effect TN 10.)

Troubleshooting

In theory, no one else can interfere with the duel, but due to the mouthing-off that comes first, it's always possible the PCs might gang up on Tadakiyo. Ochimi will put a restraining hand on whoever attempts to interfere; you may be able to discourage another by altering them with history-effecting changes; but if they start a dog-pile on Tadakiyo in the hopes of saving the day, the Mantis soldiers will have no qualms about jumping in.

Start with about a dozen of these guys on each side of the dock, and add in another dozen if the PCs start trying to get away or try something funny on Narimoto.

Mantis Bushi (Rank 1)

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

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 2, Battle 2, Commerce 2, Defense 3, Iaijutsu 2, Jujitsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Sailing 2, Yarijutsu 3.

Honor: 1.0 **Glory:** 1

TN to be Hit: 15 (20)

School Techniques: Fight on uneven ground without penalty; use

any weapon as if with a skill of at least 1.

Weapons: Tachi (Str+2k2), Yumi (Str+2k2), occasional nunchaku (Str +2k2), yari (Str +4k2).

Once Tadakiyo gets fairly cut up, he'll beg for mercy and then shoot, stab, hit or throw the PC who pauses to give him any quarter. This, too, is generally accepted among the Mantis.

Assuming the PCs win, Narimoto accepts their story, realizes that Ochimi was never plotting a coup, and puts Ochimi in charge of the fleets, ready to sail to the defense of Rokugan. Even if the PCs try something dishonorable in the duel and alienate Narimoto, Tadakiyo's actions still convince him to imprison the admiral and send Ochimi into the battle in his stead, though without the PCs to help him coordinate with the Crane forces, he may arrive too late to prevent a great deal of carnage.

GO, BID THE CANNONS SHOOT

As the actual Battle of the White Stag begins, how and when you go to the Battle Table depends on PC placement since encountering the gaijin land forces in Part Two. The gaijin general is considered to have 8k3 for the Tides of Battle roll.

The Rokugani, on the other hand, need a new battle strategy and some kind of unity of command before they can even *make* their roll. If the PCs do nothing, Bayushi Atsuki or Shiba Katsutoshi take charge, using Seikidera's old plan, and rolling 3k3 without the benefit of the Battle skill, adding the unskilled penalty of 10 to the Target Number -- in this case of a contested roll, it means these bozos would have to exceed the gaijin's result by 10 in order for them to get a "winning" result. To win the battle on their own, they would need this three times in a row.

To make matters worse, the gaijin general will spend Void whenever possible on the Tides of Battle roll; note that when the cannons go off, the Rokugani commanders must also make a Fear test or lose the ability to spend Void.

If, however, the PCs can get the Emperor to act like an Emperor and take charge, or persuade the commander of the Emerald Legions that this plan was ordered by some rear-echelon idiots who won't be watching anyway, the battle decisions will end up getting made by someone who knows what they're doing; a handy Lion or Seppun commander will have a Perception + Battle rating of about 7k4. (Unknowns like the PCs won't be able to finagle commandship of the whole army, no matter what their skill, but Battle-heavy PCs can take charge of particular areas of assault, and make the Generaling roll for their particular segment of the battle.)

Note: We aren't getting specific about the changed battle plan. Hopefully, your players will take an active role in helping the Imperial commanders design a new strategy. Since this can be almost anything, we are leaving it up to your judgement how well the new plan works. As long as it makes basic tactical sense, gives time for the merchants, Mantis, Dragon and Centipede to arrive, and is not identical to the old strategy, anything the PCs come up with will do.

Now it's time for the Battle Table.

Can We Use the Pretty Map From *Otosan Uchi* as is?

You could, but historically, it's likely to have been a smaller city. The city as described in the year 1120 has an inner wall around the Forbidden City, a second wall (the Miwaku Kabe) around the Ekohikei, or inner districts, and a third, crumbling wall around the Toshisoto, or outer districts. In the year 400, it's likely that only the first two walls exist, and there will only be a few

outlying buildings and docks near the harbor, not the bustling town on the map.

The waterfall depicted on the full-color map is the upper limit of the gaijin's sailing ability. Once a few ships have docked near its base, they will shoot at the Miwaku Kabe and try to storm the gate closest to the river. The Rokugani commanders will, of course, pile in the population and close the gates if they know an army is coming.

When the Spells Come Out

Rokugan possesses a unique advantage over the gaijin that experienced gamers are certain to exploit: the shugenja. Be prepared for the PCs to request Isawa upon Isawa to defend the city, since the capital city of the Empire will certainly have its share of Rank 3 and 4 spell-chuckers. The Phoenix have motive to help and specialize in working together in rituals, contributing Free Raises and dropping Void Points left and right. Even assuming there are as few as five to ten Rank 1 shugenja in the city makes for a fearsome weapon to give the gaijin army grief.

Tempest of Air or The Breath of Osano-Wo can repulse cannon or musket fire from key positions. Fist and Fury of Osano-Wo can summon a storm that can blow the gaijin off course, as well as hitting ships with lightning that sets fire to ships and has even longer range than a cannon. Fist of Earth or Earthquake, depending on interpretation, Raises, and strength, can create a tsunami that can capsize countless ships, to say nothing of a five-shugenja conga line throwing Master of the Rolling River with 15 Void Points hucked in. Even seemingly minor-league spells such as Inflammation, Summon, or Transform can put a spark in a gaijin powder magazine at nearly any distance, blowing an entire ship sky-high.

There are a couple ways to keep the fighting lively:

1) Cinematic Destruction of Hordes of Extras

I'm sorry, did we say there's 5,000 gaijin and 120 ships? Nope. Get out a pencil. Now there's 10,000 gaijin and 250 ships. The Phoenix will run out of gas after a few dozen, then get together to throw up a huge Benevolent Protection of Shinsei over the Imperial Palace. It won't stop cannon fire, but at least no gaijin is going to get in to drag the Emperor's body through the streets.

2) "They Couldn't Hit an Elephant at this Dist--"

The gaijin got to see what Phoenix magic could do during the purges, and they aren't keen on learning a second lesson. The Rokugani have no idea how long cannon range is, nor do they know what spotters for indirect fire are. Tempest of Air needs to be directed for it to repulse a cannon shell, so one canister round from a hidden cannon snuck into the city is all you need to wipe out a group of shugenja. Keep in mind that the Fear effects from cannon on land or sea (whichever they aren't paying attention to) can shut down Void.

3) Countless Important People Need Path to Inner Peace

There go all your Water spells, buddy. Every shugenja who is busy saving lives can't be used to smash ships from afar.

4) Sir Ian McKellen's In Everything These Days

Hidden among the gaijin troops are a handful of gaijin wizards know how to use what the Unicorn call *meishodo*, or "name magic." While not as talented as the Phoenix, nor capable of Raises, their Grounding Energy and Counterspells can be done at the drop of a hat.

Gaijin Wizards (0 - 3 per ship)**Rank 2 Shugenja equivalent****EARTH 3, FIRE 3, AIR 3, WATER 3, VOID 3.****Skills:** Athletics 2, Battle 2, Bojutsu 2, Courtier 1, Defense 2, Guns 2, Hand-to-Hand 2, Shugenja Lore 3, Sailing 2, Stealth 2.**Honor:** 0 **Glory:** 0**Advantages:** Magic Resistance 2 (+10 TN to be affected)**Disadvantages:** Gaijin Name**TN to be Hit:** 15**School Techniques:** One Free Raise for a favored element, which varies with the individual; uses *meishodo* (see *Way of the Unicorn*), preventing them from using Raises but allowing them to cast any spell in 1 round.**Weapons:** Fancy-looking walking stick (Str + 2k2), Musket or pistol (4k4, 3k3 at short range, 1 Raise per distance category, Fear effect TN 10, 4 rounds to reload).**Spells:*** **Counterspell** (TN 10, adds 10 to TN of opposing spells)* **The Fires From Within** (TN 15, 5k3 damage, line of sight)* **Tempest of Air** (TN 15, creates a gust of wind, contested roll of caster's Air vs. target's Earth, if successful, knocks target off feet and moves them 10' back, stops projectiles, dur. 6 rounds)* **Bo of Water** (TN 15, creates a bo of water with 5k3 damage, duration 10 rounds)* **Grounding Energy** (TN 15, duration Earth x5 rounds, allows for the caster to make a contested roll against enemy spellcasting at a designated location; contested roll is the caster's Earth Ring versus the opponent's casting Element.)**The Battle On Land**

If the gaijin make it to Ootosan Uchi, they will secure a position outside of the south wall (the left of the map), well outside of arrow range, with three columns of musketeers armed with bayonets and swords. The cannons (of which there are about 75) will bombard the wall in an attempt to draw the defenders into emerging from the inner city.

This gives the gaijin a serious advantage. The samurai can hide behind stone battlements at first, but once the cannons get the range, they will simply lob their shots directly onto the wall or through gatehouse windows, killing dozens of samurai who thought they were safe.

If the Rokugani try to take them out with a charge, they've stepped into the trap. The musketeers will wait until the majority of troops are outside the wall, at which time the columns will open up with musket volleys to stop any charge and fix bayonets in extremes; when the charge is broken on one column, the other two columns will swing towards the center of the fighting, creating an envelopment (or, if the Rokugani were foolish enough to attack the middle column, this maneuver creates a double envelopment). During this time, the cannons will lob canister rounds onto the ramparts, at the gate, and into the city beyond to ensure no archers or shugenja get involved. The gunners will *not* fire into troops without a new order from their commander -- they have to conserve ammo for later bombardment, and they were told that

shooting charging troops is the musketeers' job.

The south wall of Otosan Uchi, therefore, is considered at least **Engaged** at all times. Going out onto the field is **Heavily Engaged**. The gaijin block all access to Otosan Uchi from the outside, so characters who have been with the Seikidera impersonator and the merchants, or off in the Mantis isles, cannot reach the ground battles. Only samurai whose first action in Part Three was to return to warn the residents of Otosan Uchi, will take part in the battle from inside the walls.

Mass Combat rules are described in the *Legend of the Five Rings* basic rules.

If the Rokugani begin to lose:

Using covered wagons reinforced with wood as shields from arrow fire, the gaijin will advance up to the walls with muskets to hit the enemy and saws to destroy the bar on the gate. (This allows them to capture the gate and replace the bar for their own use rather than destroying it with cannon-fire.) Fortifying themselves on the gate wall becomes the gaijin's major priority; from there they can hit the palace with canister rounds to kill anything standing there, and their troops will advance to set fire to as many buildings as they can to cause confusion.

If the Rokugani begin to win:

How the player characters accomplish this is up to them, but a typical way to do so is to rain shugenja magic on the cannons (again, we remind you that the constant thunder of guns may erase the use of Void, the Phoenix's ace in the hole), saturating the gunpowder with either fire or water. The gaijin have prepared for this and have brought tarpaulin to try and keep the cannons dry, but rain is one thing and Master of the Rolling River another.

If the battle goes back and forth:

The battle is won or lost once either side wins three times in a row in the Tides of Battle. After six rounds, you may judge that night has fallen, creating a lull in the fighting. If this occurs, the PCs can try a commando raid under cover of darkness, a time in which muskets and cannons are remarkably inaccurate.

Duel results on the Battle Chart do not actually reflect a formal Rokugani battlefield duel when fighting gaijin. Instead, they mean a moment in which the samurai must face an opponent alone, giving the gamemaster a chance to "zoom in" to a skirmish level of detail. It should be noted that it takes one "attack" for a gaijin soldier to draw his pistol and one to fire it, and while the gaijin have range on their side, they have no "quickdraw" or equivalent for the Iaijutsu skill. Dueling gaijin wizards use the regular Dueling Shugenja rules in *Way of the Phoenix*.

Heroic Opportunities in the land battle include:

- The PC is in an attack on the gaijin column. Charging into massed musket fire and surviving is worth at least **2 Glory Points**.
- The PC shears a cannon in half with a supernaturally-aided kenjutsu swipe or captures a cannon and turns it on the enemy ranks. **3 Glory Points**.
- Kicking out the locks on the war-cart wheels and sending it rolling back down into the ranks of the gaijin is worth **2 Glory Points**.
- Dousing a fire and dueling the gaijin responsible for setting the blaze is worth **2 Glory Points**.
- The shugenja and troops are getting battered when a PC shields or rescues Isawa Sanro, someone with a Kharmic Tie to the PCs, or another prominent historical figure, abruptly changing history. As the PC shimmers and change between Clans like a chameleon, he intimidates the enemy and inspires allies for **4 Glory Points**.

- When the outer gates crash down, the battle is at its bloodiest, but one to three warriors can stop the column if they can just hold the inner gate. Repulsing the gaijin bayonet charge at the gates of Ootosan Uchi is worth **5 Glory Points**.
- A PC who charges the enemy line and gets them to waste all their ammo on him will get at least **3 Glory Points** if he lives. Note that any bushi who absorbs a cannonball to the chest with a spectacular use of Mountain Does Not Move or pure dumb luck will inspire the whole Rokugani army, gain a **Glory Rank**, and let all Rokugani who witnessed it ignore subsequent Fear effects for the duration of the battle.

Gaijin Infantry

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

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Commerce 2, Defense 2, Gambling 2, Guns 3, Hand-to-Hand 2, Sailing 2, Stealth 2.

Honor: 0 **Glory:** 0

Advantages: Large

Disadvantages: Gaijin Name

TN to be Hit: 10 (15 in armor)

Weapons: Musket or pistol (4k4, 3k3 at short range, 1 Raise per distance category, Fear effect TN 10, 4 rounds to reload), musket bayonet (Str +3k2), gaijin cutlass (Str+2k3), cannon (7k7 with 2 Raises to hit an individual or base TN 10 to deliver 4k4 in 10' radius, Fear effect TN 15, 5 rounds to reload, -1 per extra crew member, min 3).

The Battle In the Harbor and the Sea

Player characters who spent the early part of the round with the Crane merchants or the Mantis fleets, meet up with each other and the gaijin forces in the middle of the Bay of the Golden Sun. Mass Naval Combat is run identically to regular Mass Combat, except that the General cannot roll any more Battle skill than he has Sailing. This could be a problem for a non-sailor PC trying to impersonate Seikidera, but sticking close together with Kentosen or another seaworthy character and using the Working Together rules will alleviate this problem.

If the other PCs have managed to recruit the Mantis back to the Rokugani side... and can communicate that to the Crane fleets in the middle of combat... command is transferred to Gusai Ochimi, who takes over the generaling rolls. Mantis daimyo have been training for an opportunity like this for almost 400 years!

The battles here range from **Reserves** (the docks of Ootosan Uchi and the Crane shoreline to the south) through **Engaged** in the harbor to **Heavily Engaged** out on the water or in the lighthouses, which are key objectives for bombarding the city. **Duel** results on the Battle Chart usually mean that a PC is the first to board an enemy vessel, or the last left on a sinking ship as gaijin climb the rigging for him.

If the Rokugani begin to lose:

Even the Rokugani's fastest boats are too slow when they're rowing into gaijin guns. The gaijin artillery have countless opportunities to hit all ships at normal sailing speed, and once the Crane defenders are out of the way, the gaijin sailors will sweep onto the shores, taking over lighthouses, or joining up with the ground troops around the city. Once the gaijin have the high points, they start to entrench and prepare artillery. Putting cannons on the lighthouses is bad

enough; putting some behind buildings in the lower town means they can send spotters to crouch on nearby rooftops and direct fire at the city gates without exposing the gunners to shugenja counterattack.

If those gates open and samurai come pouring out, the naval reinforcements *will* fire canisters into the masses in order to stop a charge. If those defenders are taken out, it's just a matter of time before the gaijin reach and discover the tunnels beneath the city. If they make it in, the Emperor's palace itself has an enchantment laid on it to confuse and misdirect those not of the Hantei blood. However, the gaijin don't need to know where they're going in order to hit the palace with a cannon. It's traumatic enough seeing bleeding Cranes dying in the story gardens -- take a *guess* what happens to history if a canister round hits the Emperor's bedroom.

Note: This section of the adventure will entail a great deal of cinematic jumping back and forth between groups of player characters. If those in the naval battle begin to fail, the gaijin troops surge up against the city walls, giving the PC defenders within the city a chance to drive them back with a daring charge. If the city defenders start trouncing the barbarians, they get a clear line of sight to the devastating naval battles, giving them a chance to jump onto an abandoned ship and save their friends from gaijin cannon fire. You get the idea.

If the Rokugani begin to win:

As the fleets meet up under Ochimi's command, they get the opportunity to drive a wedge between the gaijin ships and reach the harbor. If the Rokugani ships can control the harbor, and maintain arrow fire from ships in the open sea, the gaijin ships are seriously harried. It's hard to reload a cannon with arrows raining down on your back.

Daring Mantis or PC samurai may even start boarding and taking over gaijin vessels -- that Mantis Rank 1 technique lets them handle any weapon with a Skill of 1, including captured artillery.

If the battle goes back and forth:

Nightfall is on the Rokugani's side here as well. The gaijin want to be in the bay, anchors weighed, and sailors off looting the docks when the sun goes down -- not floating outside the peninsula, in the dark, looking for a place to land among the rocky sea cliffs. Thus, a stalemate at dusk is a win for the Rokugani. The gaijin will fall back and give up the harbor, landing further south down the Crane coast to reinforce their brethren, or, if they are losing there, go north to try and create a second front on the land.

Heroic Opportunities for the sea battle include:

- The PC's boat gets sunk by cannon fire and the crew wounded. The character has only a few rounds to heroically lash together a raft, and pile on the wounded bodies. **Saving the remaining crew is worth 2 Glory Points.**
- A Rokugani crew is butchered by gunfire and their ship left adrift. With no one at the helm, a PC can re-capture it and send it crashing into a gaijin ship. **Taking out a ship is worth 3 Glory Points.**
- The PC's mast or sails are shredded and her ship is a sitting duck. As a cannon round lands, it's clear that the only way they can get to an enemy ship is to swim, then board, then take it over...without any armor. **Capturing a ship this way is worth 4 Glory Points.**
- There is a narrow path up the cliff-side to the Crane beaches, which the gaijin desperately need. Holding the line by cutting down gaijin among the rocks and hurling them off the cliff is worth **3 Glory Points.**

- Finding the gaijin squads who have sailed into the harbor and disembarked into the tunnels beneath the city is worth **2 Glory Points**. Note that firing muskets in underground tunnels is a very good way to go deaf.
- Diving into the water to rescue a drowning commander or kinsman is always a good way to get **2 Glory Points**. Keep in mind that the bodies and blood in the water will attract sharks, whose feeding frenzies will make for a frothing sea. Use the following stats if you want to drop back into Skirmish level.

Sharks

EARTH 3, FIRE 3, AIR 4, WATER 4

Rolls When Attacking: 4k3

Rolls For Damage: 3k2

TN to Be Hit: 15 (5 on a ship deck or in a net)

Wounds: 10: -1; 15: -2; 20: Dead

Notes: These are mostly blue sharks, which are not very big, but appear in large schools, following gaijin ships and eating the garbage they throw overboard. Once enough bodies hit the water, they go into a feeding frenzy. The TN to hit a swimming human is half what it is on land.

- Running alongside the ships sailing up Ootosan Uchi's main river and fighting them from the shores and from the bridges is worth **2 Glory Points, 3** if a spectacular leap from the bridge into a ship's rigging to hurl a gaijin out of the crow's nest is involved.
- When the fighting is thickest by the lighthouse peninsulas, the derelict ships will add up, clogging the entrance to the harbor. It is here the gaijin will have to attack the Rokugani in hand-to-hand if they want to take control of the ships and open the strait again. **Fighting the gaijin hordes to a standstill right at the mouth of the harbor is considered Heavily Engaged; let the Battle Table award the Glory as appropriate.**
- A PC sees the gaijin land and attack the lighthouse, with the intention of bringing a cannon to the top. The character defends the stairs from the swarms of gaijin trying to climb up. Note that a spectacular Siege, Engineering, or Explosives roll, TN 25+, and a wagon full of captured gunpowder will let a crafty PC collapse the lighthouse, sending massive tons of stone down on any ship at the base of the peninsula. **Preventing the gaijin from getting the lighthouse and/or sending it tumbling down on gaijin ships is worth a Glory Rank.**

Gaijin Sailors

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

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Commerce 2, Craft: Shipwright 3, Defense 3, Gambling 2, Guns 3, Hand-to-Hand 2, Sailing 4, Stealth 2.

Honor: 0 **Glory:** 0

Advantages: Large

Disadvantages: Gaijin Name

TN to be Hit: 15

Weapons: Musket or pistol (4k4, 3k3 at short range, 1 Raise per distance category, Fear effect TN 10, 4 rounds to reload), gaijin cutlass (Str+1k3), cannon (7k7 with 2 Raises to hit an individual or base TN 10 to deliver 4k4 in 10' radius for canister, Fear effect TN 15, 5 rounds to reload, -1 per extra crew member, min 3).

Hey! That Guy Looks Familiar!

Somewhere, hiding out among the reserves, either on land or sea, is Kakita Kumpei, traitor to Rokugan and the characters' last ticket home. Finding Kumpei can be used as a **Heroic Opportunity** for either the land or sea battle.

Kumpei is, at heart, a coward. While Akuro was busy setting his plans in motion, he parked Kumpei with a couple of guards, somewhere on the Crane coast. When the fighting started, Kumpei slipped the guards and fled... but without knowing Akuro's plans, he quickly realizes that every direction he runs only takes him further into the fighting.

If he sees the PCs, he recognizes them and tries to run, but he's not very fast, and if they start to catch up, he throws himself on their mercy. While he initially believed that what he and Akuro were doing was justified, seeing the horrors of war and the barbarism of the gaijin up close have made him regret ever getting involved (as has the fact that Akuro abandoned him). Kumpei is pretty damn sure that the characters will want to kill him at this point, but he also knows he's got an ace in the hole -- a Kakita Artisan can only travel through a painting of an area he's familiar with, and Kumpei is the only Artisan in the year 400 who knows what 1120 looks like.

If the PCs want to go home, he says, they have to promise him complete amnesty when they reach the future. He wants them to promise to give him a day's head start, unopposed passage off the Mantis islands, and to never tell Yoritomo or anyone about his role in the crimes. If they won't agree, he'd rather take them down with him.

AND THE FALLOUT

If the PCs lose, well...

...history changes. Rokugan's screwed.

The gaijin bust up the palace, kill the *gozoku*, and make the Hantei swear allegiance to them. The Lion obey the Hantei's orders for about a week. Then they get in position and storm the city through sheer force of numbers. They win, but at a price described in **Appendix 2**.

It's not a good price.

If, on the other hand, the PCs help the Rokugani fight at least to a stalemate, time is on their side once more. The sea battle ends first as the gaijin fleets flee, searching for a safe harbor. If they can't go south because of Crane troops, they go north into what they think is unoccupied territory.

Unfortunately for them, they never found out that the Dragon and Centipede clans were sending reinforcements south to Ootosan Uchi, just in case something happened. A legion of fresh troops and sun-worshipping shugenja who specialize in Air and Fire magic are just the thing to clean up the dregs the following morning. (Yes, we did the "Dragon's mysterious prescience conveniently saves the Empire" trope before in one of our other adventures. But the Dragon do it four times throughout Rokugan's history to save the Empire, and this was one of those times. Plus, if they don't capture a little black powder from this incident, how are the Agasha going to invent fireworks?)

The gaijin, as a rule, expect no mercy when surrendering, nor do the Dragon give any to non-samurai who attacked the Emperor. The gaijin will try to escape by sailing across the seas, wounded, starving, and without ammunition, never to return.

GLORY, HONOR, AND... UH, I WAS NEVER HERE

If the PCs chipped in to save the Empire and maybe even helped the Emperor stand up to the *gozoku* for once in his life, he'll want to reward them lavishly. Unfortunately, if he does so, their names will be remembered for centuries as they get written into the Ikoma histories as heroes of the Battle of the White Stag.

So now the PCs have a choice.

They can try to go home, or they can live a pampered existence in the year 400.

This can be a pretty sweet deal. The characters will get to hang out at the Emperor's side with his name glorified and a chance to take credit for any future inventions he can remember and introduce to his time. He can get a place in the Emperor's army, be granted his own minor Clan and a Glory Rank of 7 or more, he could get trained by the Seppun, he could advise the Emperor on future threats to preserve the Empire, and recruit a legion of underlings to cover up his mistakes. There will, of course, be jealous enemies, such as the Scorpion and the Phoenix, and a vague, nagging feeling... almost like a memory... that maybe his eyes were once a different color... or his name...

That feeling will grow.

Bring Me My Ruby Geta

On the other hand, if Kumpei lives and the characters cut their deal, Kumpei must make an Intelligence + School Rank Test, TN 30, and use the remaining vial of kami-ichor. Once opened, this one-way portal to the future will last for about five minutes -- as long as the ichor is wet. Akuro, who is most likely dead, was the only one who knew how to isolate the ichor, so this is truly the characters' one and only chance to get home.

If Kumpei is dead but the heroes have the vial, they are, most likely, still stranded in the past. PCs may attempt to employ another Kakita Artisan. To do so, they must thoroughly describe their homeland and home time to such an extent that the artisan feels as if she had been there herself. (A Kakita Artisan Story-Teller PC would be ideal for such a situation.) This is a fun way to make players roleplay how much they want to see their families and daimyo again, and a good way to make them sweat; one inaccuracy can send them who-knows-where. The Artisan will have to make an Intelligence + School Rank Test, TN 30.

During this process, the player characters may get an inevitable sinking feeling -- the artisan will have to be told what she is painting, and springing the big secret on her will change the future. Ordering the artist's seppuku will change the future as well. As a matter of fact, staying here and living out a life in the past would be changing the future terribly, too.

But the *heroes* committing seppuku... to have the lot of them die, erased from the histories and the memory of all that were here except perhaps the Son of Heaven and the mysterious Togashi... that would solve a lot, wouldn't it?

The World Upon Return

If the PCs have fudged it beyond a reasonable doubt or you're feeling like a tragic ending is the way to go, feel free to warp the future history of the Empire. The changes can be sweeping. It's entirely possible the Asahina family may not exist, for example, or PCs may come home only

to find out that everything is as it should be except one small, poetic detail. This would be the time to hit the PCs' buttons. Was it all worth it if they come home only to find their betrothed coming to greet them wearing the outfit of a different Clan?

But hopefully, your players will have done a good job. If they return home for a happy ending, having prevented the death of any major historical figures; won the Battle of the White Stag, put a stop to Kumpei and Akuro and somehow managed to leave no lasting footprint on history, then they are due for their rewards.

Award Experience Points as follows:

Getting the merchants	2 points
Dueling Tadakiyo	1 point
Winning the sea battle (getting the Mantis)	1 point
Winning the land battle	1 point
No prominent historical changes	3 points
Letting Sanro die	-1 point

Once they emerge into the modern day (in whatever location they or Kumpei knew well enough to paint), they can find their way back to their lord (Kitsuki Yasu, in this case) and report that they found the murderer of the Togashi monks. If they present their case, Yasu will congratulate them on apprehending the evil-doer. If they try adding any strange and unbelievable tales about time-traveling and barbarians, Yasu, like a good Kitsuki, will remain skeptical, and certainly will not recognize any heroic actions taken at the Battle of the White Stag. If they persist, he suggests employment as a jester.

In sum, the samurai will receive 3 Glory Points for nailing a crafty murderer.

That's right. In the ideal situation, if the players have busted ass across time in order to nail this maddened jerk, been scrupulously careful not to alter the time-stream in any way despite the fact that only they would know, and then once they have been shredded by cannon fire, told the Emperor himself, "No, no, this isn't the way things were supposed to work. I humbly and gracefully refuse all acknowledgement and all mention of my presence in the Ikoma histories. I need to return home to my family and friends and my menial task catching bandits for my own flawed and arbitrary lord, and serve ingloriously just as I have done for the past few years of my life. You are offering me the Empire with the sanction of the Son of Heaven and therefore the Celestial Order and I am refusing it, because *it would be wrong*," they receive 3 temporary Glory points, a brusque thanks, and their next job.

It has been our experience that playtesters don't do this.

If a player does it willingly, ask to see his character sheet. Get out an eraser. Give him back his character without any time-related changes.

At the bottom, under "Honor," put down "5."

APPENDIX I: GUNPOWDER

The gaijin invading Ootosan Uchi have three kinds of gunpowder weapons: flint-lock pistols, muskets, and cannons. For purposes of this adventure, all three use the Low skill "Guns" to hit, which is combined with Agility when shooting.

As with Horse Archery (see *Way of the Unicorn*) it is possible to take an action solely to aim the gun and gain a Free Raise to hit. The gunner must hold still (TN to Be Hit 5) for one action per Raise they want, must be able to track the target, and may gain a maximum of Free Raises equal to their Perception.

Sidearms

Both pistols and muskets deliver 4k4 damage at point-blank range and 3k3 at Short range (2 yards). Raises may, as usual, increase this damage. The guns are reasonably inaccurate at longer ranges -- for every range increment, the marksman must make 1 additional Raise in order to hit, thus providing the following difficulty:

Weapon	PB	Short	Medium (+5TN)	Long (+10)	Extreme (+15)
Pistol	0-2	2-10	11-20	21-30	31-40 yards
Musket	0-2	2-10	11-25	25-40	41-50 yards

However, the psychological value of a gunshot has a different effect than that of comparable medieval weaponry. When a pistol or musket goes off, the bang creates a Fear effect with a TN of 10 for those who are not on the marksman's side or were unprepared for the noise, preventing those that fail the Willpower test from being able to spend Void during the combat. It takes 4 rounds and the use of both hands to reload a musket or pistol -- on the fifth round, the musketeer will be able to fire again. For this reason, many gaijin sailors carry two or more pistols tucked in their belt, and the land forces often alternate fire to keep the pressure on the enemy.

Firearms of this period are notoriously unstable; if a firearm user ever rolls below 5 on an attack roll or the loaded weapon comes into contact with a significant flame, it will misfire and explode, doing a DR of 2 to the one holding it.

Cannon

The gaijin have brought only two kinds of loads for their cannon -- ball ammunition for destroying fortifications and ships, and canister rounds, for anti-personnel attacks.

Ammunition	Short	Medium (+5TN)	Long (+10)	Extreme (+15)
Canister	0-200	200-400	400-600	800-1000 yards
Cannonball	0-200	200-500	500-1000	1000-1600 yards

Canister rounds consist of shot, shavings, nails and so forth tucked into a canister that explodes on impact, delivering a DR of 4 in a 10' radius. Armor reduces this damage by 5 Wounds for Light Armor and 10 Wounds for Heavy Armor (and as appropriate for magical, high-quality, or ancestral armor). The TN for a cannoneer to hit an intended area with a canister round is a base of 10 at Short range; this will be modified by visibility conditions. Raises may be made as above for range or for extra roll dice on damage.

Cannon balls have a DR of 7 and ignore the armor a human target is wearing. However,

while a cannonball will bounce through ranks of men, maiming as it goes, or destroy structures with ease, it is not easy to deliberately hit an individual with a cannonball, and thus the cannoner must Raise twice to hit an individual.

Like firearms, cannons have a Fear effect, with a TN of 15 for those not on the cannoner's side or unprepared for the noise. Those who fail the roll cannot spend Void for the duration of the combat. Also like firearms, if the cannoner rolls under a 5 in the attack roll or the cannon is introduced to a significant flame, the cannon will misfire or explode, doing a DR of 3 to its crew.

A cannon requires a crew of one, but 5 rounds to reload. This time can be reduced by 1 round per extra crew member, up to a maximum crew of 3 and a minimum reload time of 3 rounds.

APPENDIX II: THE WORLD THAT SHOULD NOT BE

Togashi Akuro thinks an improved technology curve could help Rokugan defeat Fu Leng. Unfortunately, while he may be a whiz at Go, Akuro has never played *Civilization*.

If the PCs just sit back and watch after Seikidera's death, or handle their roles in the battle so badly that you cannot in good conscience justify them winning, the gaijin resoundingly humiliate the Rokugani forces and take the Hantei hostage. The Lion, of course, cannot stand for this, and engage in a prolonged battle and siege of Otsan Uchi, in which they eventually destroy the gaijin through some good generaling and a lot of honorable sacrifices.

Regrettably, these honorable sacrifices mean certain people will never be born.

If the PCs stay in the past (and survive), they will witness this battle...and the second one ten years later, when a new wave of gaijin invade, determined to conquer the Emerald Empire. Refusing to adopt the gun, Phoenix shugenja work hand in hand with the Akodo, becoming the Empire's artillery at the terrible cost of stripping bare nearly every spirit north of the Spine of the World. Togashi Yokuni warns them against this action, and when the harried Phoenix ignore him, he holds the Dragon back from the fight, causing the Emperor to declare that the Dragon are no longer a Clan.

That's about all the characters will personally witness in their natural lives.

Their descendants, on the other hand, will take part in the war a generation later, when the Crane, nearly as chewed up as the Lion after the two great wars, take their revenge upon the Mantis. Though they win the battle, destroying the Mantis clan, they didn't count on the floods. With their crops flooded out, the Crane daimyo has little choice but to toss aside the Clan's vaunted honor, and try to conquer Scorpion land for something to eat. This is unfortunate for the Crane because the Scorpion have already become experts in the use of cannons and, in the space of twenty years, factories. This makes the Scorpion into Rokugan's great military power, right up until the last Akodo falls in the mid-500s. Unfortunately for all concerned, the rift between Lion and Scorpion is too great. One fateful night in the year 510, Soshi Takasho is looking for help involving the origins of some cursed swords, and there is no one there to help him, because Akodo Minobe was never born.

Soshi Takasho and Akodo Minobe were the two samurai who stopped Iuchiban from becoming Emperor.

The Crab try to stop the immortal, Tainted Emperor for the first century; then, when they commit too far, the Shadowlands, under the command of the Oni known as the Maw, attack and break through, taking Hiruma Castle and the other lands all the way up to the Shinomen Forest.

The Naga awaken and try to stop them, but when they see Iuchiban fighting the Shadowlands, even they decide that it is best that the two evils exhaust each other for a time before the killing blow can be struck.

That killing blow never comes.

The factories and the muskets give way, as history necessitates, to smokeless powder and the machine gun. Iuchiban's armies number in the millions of animated corpses with firearms. Countless zombies die with pierced porcelain masks; armored wagons with internal combustion engines roll down the streets of Otosan Uchi, sheltering shugenja and firing artillery shells loaded with jade powder. But it is to no avail. Iuchiban starts to forge souls into his machines of war, providing himself with eternal guardians neither alive nor dead.

Around the year 800, the Unicorn return, but not through the Shadowlands. Enough ripples went through the Ivory Kingdoms to change the news given to their advance scouts, and they came riding in from the north, which is fortunate, since everything south of the Spine of the World, including the Shinomen Forest, is Shadowlands. Kuni Osaku's sacrifice to create the Wall occurred at the Spine of the World Mountains, stretching from where Iuchi Castle is on the present map down to Kyuden Ikoma, and then it branches through the Lion castles up to the Castle of the Swift Sword and then the Dragon.

When the Unicorn elders present the fan of Lady Doji to what's left of the Crane, their horses are a far cry from the tanks and cars cruising down the asphalt roads. They are accepted as poor cousins until they prove their adaptability in the next few generations by figuring out the principles of flight. By 1120, something akin to the Dragon, Crab, Scorpion and Unicorn are the dominant powers in the Western Empire, a tiny hold-out of fertile fields where the Dragon and Unicorn might have been in a different life.

To the east are the puppets of Iuchiban, who controls Otosan Uchi, Fu Leng's goal. Iuchiban also controls Beiden Pass, which is the only reason the Dark Brother's army hasn't won yet. The minions of evil only have their numbers held in check by constant wars upon one another and a good deal of internal chaos. But for the average Rokugani, life is toil in the fields, toil in the factories, and a grim glance to the Three Clans' Wall, knowing that in the long run, there is no hope.

Unless there was something new.

Something small. Maybe a handful of people, who suddenly show up, apparently unnoticed for all these years. Maybe their memories are of a different time, a different place.

Maybe.

Still got that map of Otosan Uchi?