

A Hidden Blade

**A One-Round Low/Mid-Rank Adventure for Living
Rokugan**

The Lion and the Crane, Second Prologue

by Robert Hobart

The peace of the ronin city of the Rich Frog is broken by a violent murder. Two great Clans threaten to go to war, and you may be all that stands between them.

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This is a RPGA Network adventure game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing the game (or this round of the game), but the actual playing time will be about three hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

Scoring the game for RPGA points: The RPGA has three ways to score this game. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use:

1. *No-vote scoring:* The players write their names and numbers on the scoring packet grid, you fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
2. *Partial scoring:* The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the convention coordinator wants information as to how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
3. *Voting:* Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the best amongst them, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes. Multi-round adventures usually required advancing a smaller number of players than played the first round, so voting is required for multi-round adventures.

When using Voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in ***bold italics***. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

GM's Information

THIS TOURNAMENT SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

This adventure is a Low/Mid-Rank adventure. This means that only Rank 1 through 3 Characters should be allowed to play. This adventure was not written with Rank 4 and 5 characters in mind and cannot anticipate all that these characters may bring to the table.

All bulleted information is just that, pure information. Feed it to the players through an NPC when appropriate. Sometimes, reading it straight just doesn't sound right.

The world of Rokugan is a cross between feudal Japan and China. It is set in an age of honorable samurai, serving their Lords (Daimyos) and Empire. Remember that family names come before personal names. Akodo Toturi is from the Akodo family and his personal name is Toturi.

A note on female designations: If a samurai has the designation of -ko, then the samurai is a female. For example, if you see Samurai-ko, then this denotes a female samurai.

A note on commerce in Rokugan: Samurai are not supposed to care about worldly possessions, especially money. A samurai pays a commoner as if the money is meaningless, a concession to the commoner's silly needs. Between samurai, the exchange of money and merchandise is an exchange of "gifts."

Adventure Background

This is the second of two sequential adventures (the first is *Smoke and Mirrors*) set in the City of the Rich Frog, a ronin settlement which lies between the territories of the Lion and the Unicorn. Together, these adventures mark the first faint rumblings of the Clan Wars which will soon spread bloodshed and chaos all across the Empire. Here, too, begins the slide toward open war between the Lion and the Crane, the two greatest Clans of the Empire.

The Clan of the Crane are desperately aware of the growing warlike sentiments in the Lion Clan. The Crane's Daidoji family, who will bear the brunt of any war, are particularly alarmed, since they know that in any large-scale conflict they cannot hope to prevail for long against the superior numbers and tactical skill of

the Lion armies. One ruthless young Crane, Daidoji Hitokiri, has decided to take his own steps toward averting the threat. He hopes to drive the Lion instead into a war with the Unicorn Clan, whose mighty cavalry will be a match for the Lion's numbers.

Hitokiri has chosen the City of the Rich Frog as the site of his plot. The city is a wealthy trade hub which lies in neutral territory between the two clans, and in recent days both Lion and Unicorn have entertained thoughts of annexing it. Both have hesitated to do so, however, for fear of a response from the other. The local ronin who rule the city, of course, want both Clans to stay out. Tensions are therefore high, and both clans maintain patrols in the area. An incident here could easily spin out of control... and Daidoji Hitokiri has decided to supply that incident.

Introduction

The City of the Rich Frog lies still under the sweltering heat of midsummer. It is the 3rd day of the month of Shiba (the month of the Monkey, August), and even the flies which buzz through the dusty streets seem dazed and sluggish under the beating light of Mother Sun. Samurai and commoners alike hide their heads beneath straw hats. Tempers are short, and more than one grumpy ronin is seen to strike down a commoner in a burst of senseless anger.

Your business here is finished, at last, and you are packing your traveling bag to leave the inn where you have been staying. Your preparations are interrupted, however, by a polite rap at your door. Outside is a ronin, carrying the heavy iron smoking pipe that marks him as one of the Machi-Kanshisha, the brotherhood that maintains what law there is in the City of the Rich Frog. "Your pardon, samurai," he says, bowing. "Magistrate Ichiko would be pleased by your company this afternoon."

Any PCs who have already played "Smoke and Mirrors" (the previous adventure in the "Lion and the Crane" sequence) will recognize Ichiko's name, since they met with her in that adventure. The PCs do not, strictly speaking, have to go – Ichiko is a magistrate without any Clan behind her, and her authority is limited. The ronin will not try to force the PCs to accompany them if they do not wish to go. Of course, then there will be no adventure!

A Meeting with Ichiko

The magistrate's residence is a modest private home located near the center of the city. A pair of the

Machi-Kanshisha ronin squat outside, puffing on their huge iron pipes, and wave you inside casually. A shy, petite servant maid leads you back through the house to a room whose wall opens onto a small garden, barely four paces on a side. The magistrate waits for you here, sitting cross-legged, her swords politely laid on the floor to her right. She is a sturdy, muscular woman in her thirties, dressed in a businesslike hakama and gi. Her face is serious and roughened by weather, and her hair is cropped almost painfully short.

Ichiko introduces herself and greets by name any PCs who have dealt with her before. She makes some brief polite small-talk while the maid serves tea, then launches into the business at hand.

Ichiko explains that the Lion ambassador to the city, Matsu Hokare, has been murdered. Lion troops are here demanding the arrest of a Unicorn, Shinjo Taneka, claiming they have proof of his guilt in the crime. The Unicorn have refused and have sent for troops of their own. Ichiko and her superiors, the ronin family called "Kaeru" which rules the City of the Rich Frog, are deeply concerned about where this may lead.

Ichiko wants the PCs to serve as emissaries and investigators, in the hope that such an independent group can defuse the crisis and resolve the situation. She doesn't care how they soothe the two factions, so long as the peace of the city is preserved and no locals suffer. "We cannot refuse the Lion if they press the matter – we do not have the military strength to withstand a Lion army – but if the Lion march, the Unicorn will answer, and our city may well become a battlefield. This cannot be allowed. I ask you to find another path. Perhaps the crime can be solved in a way which will defuse the crisis, or perhaps you can convince the Lion not to intervene. Either way, they are far more likely to listen to you than to a mere nameless ronin like myself."

If the PCs are composed entirely of members of the Lion or Unicorn Clans, Ichiko will urge them to press moderation on their side and to act as ambassadors to the opposing Clan. "Since you are not directly involved in this matter to the same degree as your kinsmen, perhaps you can offer a compromise which they cannot."

If some of the PCs are themselves ronin, Ichiko privately asks them to be her personal representatives and keep watch on the Clan PCs, ensuring that the needs of the city are not forgotten. She explains there must be ronin investigators along to make sure that the

Clan samurai don't simply frame an innocent ronin or city resident as a "solution" to the crime. She offers to get them training in the Machi-Kanshisha ronin technique in return for their help.

In the unlikely event that the PCs are entirely ronin, Ichiko seeks instead to use them as an expendable "intervention unit" which can step into the problem without placing her own forces at risk. Again, she promises to recommend them to the Kaeru for training in the Machi-Kanshisha ronin technique.

Details on the Murder

Once the PCs agree to help Ichiko, she will share all her information on the murder. The crime took place in the evening two days ago. Matsu Hokare was at his home (the Lion ambassadorial residence), and received a visitor in the evening hours, after dinner. Hokare was alone for the meeting – he had earlier told his assistant, Ikoma Mujin, that this was a delicate private matter. Mujin departed for a teahouse to spend the evening.

The visitor was described by the servants as a thin man in Unicorn colors. The description matches Shinjo Taneka, a Unicorn magistrate currently visiting the city. A letter in Hokare's room showed that the visitor he was expecting was, in fact, Taneka.

Shortly after the meeting began, the servants heard a loud shouting and commotion, and then saw the Unicorn rush out the back door. They found Matsu Hokare slain in his room.

The servants sent messages to Ichiko and Ikoma Mujin. Ichiko read the letter and interviewed the servants, whose description of the strange Unicorn seemed to match Shinjo Taneka. Based on this information, she went to speak with Shinjo Taneka. He was outraged by her suggestions, and refused to speak with her further. He insisted he had been elsewhere that night and had certainly not visited Matsu Hokare, let alone killed him. Ichiko was able to confirm (from independent witnesses) that Shinjo Taneka had indeed gone out that evening, but not where he had gone. Taneka nevertheless refused to submit to arrest or further questioning by a "nameless ronin" and departed for the residence of the Unicorn ambassador, where he has remained since.

Ikoma Mujin came forward later that evening with two ronin, Genji and Taberu, who claimed to have seen a Unicorn fleeing the neighborhood with a strange bloody weapon. The weapon was retrieved from a drainage ditch where the murderer apparently threw it.

Mujin regarded this as conclusive evidence, and demanded that Ichiko arrest Taneka at all costs. The magistrate, however, refused to order an assault on the Unicorn ambassador's residence, fearing that such might bring retaliation from the Unicorn Clan.

Unfortunately, Ikoma Mujin responded by sending word to the Lion Clan, and a large Lion detachment is now camped outside the city. The Unicorn have sent messengers to their own border guards, who are believed to be en route to the city. So far the Kaeru have refused to let the Lion troops into the city, but if the Lion attack they will be hard-pressed to withstand them.

Ichiko can give the PCs directions to the Unicorn ambassador's residence (where Shinjo Taneka is currently staying), to the inn (the Golden Sparrow) where he resided before the crime, to Matsu Hokare's residence, and to the inn (the Kappa's Shell) where the two ronin witnesses are staying. She also urges them to meet with the Lion army soon, to try and talk them out of an immediate attack.

Meeting with the Unicorn

The Unicorn suspect, Shinjo Taneka, is staying at the residence of his Clan's ambassador, a fine-quality house located in the city's posh northwestern district.

The wall surrounding the Unicorn ambassador's house is easy to recognize – it's the one with the strange carvings and fluted spires adorning it. Two very alert and serious Unicorn bushi stand guard at the gate, holding naginata, and regard you with narrowed eyes as you approach. Still, their voices are polite: "Greetings, samurai. What is your business with the Unicorn Clan?"

A polite explanation will gain the PCs swift admittance to the residence. A rude or combative approach will require some skilled diplomatic feather-soothing (and possibly an Etiquette, Courtier, or Sincerity roll). Once inside, the PCs will be greeted by the Unicorn ambassador:

A young woman in a Unicorn kimono glides into the room and bows. Her skin has an exotic glossy light brown tone, and her heart-shaped face does not match the normal Rokugani bone structure. She smiles pleasantly and introduces herself as Ide Sufiya. "I have the honor to be the Unicorn representative in this city. I understand you are looking into the regrettable matter surrounding my cousin Shinjo Taneka?"

As a point of culture, remind the players that it is customary in Rokugan to refer to all members of one's Clan as "cousin." Sufiya is a charming and talented young courtier burdened by her gaijin bloodline. She will try to flirt rather overtly with any male PC who does not seem repelled by her exotic appearance and foreign name.

Once the PCs explain their business, Sufiya will try to determine whether the balance of their intentions are pro-Unicorn, pro-Lion, or genuinely neutral. (Note that this judgment is based on the PCs' words and behavior, not their Clan affiliations.) She will allow neutral or pro-Unicorn parties to meet with Taneka, but will politely and regretfully inform pro-Lion groups that she cannot allow them to see her cousin.

Whether or not the PCs do manage to convince Ide Sufiya to let them meet with Shinjo Taneka, she can share the following information with them:

- Shinjo Taneka came here to investigate the problem of opium smuggling, much of which runs through this region. He had no enmity with Matsu Hokare and, in fact, claims that he was hoping to secure Hokare's assistance in his investigations.
- The Unicorn have no intention of handing Taneka over based on the flimsy evidence discovered so far. They are confident of his honor and suspect he is being framed by someone, probably the very opium smugglers he was investigating.
- Taneka has not told Sufiya where he was on the night of the murder (he says it was a private matter), but she accepts his word that he was nowhere near Hokare's residence. PCs who make a **Contested Awareness** roll against her Awareness of 4 can tell that Sufiya is absolutely sincere in her trust of Taneka.
- If the PCs mention the possible threat of a Lion attack on the city, Sufiya flutters her fan and remarks, "I do hope it won't come to such a tragedy." Nevertheless, she will not alter her position based on such a threat. If any of the PCs are Unicorn, she privately tells them that her own Clan has troops rushing to the city, more than enough to repel a Lion attack.

Speaking with Shinjo Taneka

If the PCs do convince Ide Sufiya to let them speak with Taneka, the Unicorn magistrate will arrive in the room within a few minutes.

Shinjo Taneka is a slim, spare man in his middle years, his hair tied back in the traditional samurai topknot. He is dressed in a plain purple kimono and does not seem to be carrying any weapons. He bows carefully. "Greetings, samurai. I trust you will be able to help relieve me of this false charge."

Taneka is a quiet, restrained man with a hidden romantic streak. (An Awareness roll at TN 15 can pick up an accurate picture of his personality.) He is confused and alarmed by the whole situation, but does his best to answer the PCs' questions honestly. However, he is reluctant to admit where he was on the night of the murder – partly because he is ashamed of his love for a geisha, and partly because he is courting (someone) and believes exposure of his geisha activities would stand against him.

He can share the following information:

- He came to this city to investigate opium smuggling. As part of his investigation, he also began looking into yakuza activities and corruption among the various Clan-sponsored merchants in the city. He suspects his current predicament was arranged by one of the people he was investigating.
- Taneka can name a variety of suspects in his investigations, including a half-dozen different merchants and two yakuza gangs (the Fugu-Gumi and the Juku). He was also investigating the Scorpion Clan ambassador, who he suspects of involvement in the opium trade.
- If the PCs ask about the "exotic weapon" which killed Matsu Hokare, Taneka confesses that he did in fact own such a weapon, an heirloom from his father. The weapon was stolen, along with one of his kimonos, a week ago. (It was taken by Daidoji Hitokiri.)
- If the PCs have the murder weapon, or describe it, Taneka confesses it is the same as his missing weapon. He insists it was stolen, and argues that someone (probably opium smugglers) is framing him.

Taneka's Alibi

If the PCs ask Shinjo Taneka where he was on the night of the murder, he will repeat his claim that it was a private matter which he does not wish to share. He insists he was nowhere near the Lion ambassador's residence, and says the PCs should accept his word as an honorable samurai (especially if they are Unicorn).

In fact, Taneka was visiting the Lovely Peach geisha house, but he is desperate to keep this information secret – he is betrothed to a young woman from the Otaku, whose family despises geisha as a male weakness. The discovery of his activities at the Lovely Peach would compromise his marriage and his family's future.

To break down Taneka and get him to tell the truth, the PCs must take one of the two following approaches:

- (A) If the PCs have any evidence of where he actually might have been (such as by talking to other ambassadors, or word on the street), he will break down and reluctantly confess.
- (B) If the PCs express themselves strongly about the need to have an alibi, and role-play a convincing appeal, they can make a **Contested Awareness Roll** with the **Sincerity, Courtier, Intimidation, or Manipulation** skill (depending on the approach they took) against Taneka's Awareness of 3. With a success, he breaks down and confesses.

Either way, Taneka will be obviously embarrassed, (especially if he is in the presence of Ide Sufiya) and asks the PCs to keep his information in the strictest confidence. He speaks haltingly, with many pauses and pained looks.

"I was... visiting the city's licensed district, you see. A geisha house, the Lovely Peach. There is a young lady there... named Miyu, who I have been seeing regularly since I came to the city last month. I was in her company on the night in question. I'm sure the madam there can, ah, confirm that."

If the PCs ask why he was so unwilling to admit this, Taneka will reluctantly explain the situation with his betrothal, while again asking the PCs (and Sufiya, if they spoke in her presence) to try to keep this information secret.

If the PCs ask whether anyone of samurai caste can confirm his presence at the Lovely Peach, Taneka frowns, thinking back. "Guests at a geisha house do not make a habit of noticing each other, you understand. It would be, ah, impolite to draw attention to their presence." He thinks some more and finally mentions a Crab samurai. "I didn't catch his name, but he was a large fellow and wore a patch over his left eye. The, ah, the girls made quite a fuss over him. They don't meet Crab often, you see."

Some PCs may know (or remember, with a **Courtier/Intelligence** roll at TN 10) that samurai cannot normally attend a geisha house without either an invitation from the madam, or an introduction from a samurai who already frequents the establishment. If they think to ask Shinjo Taneka who introduced him at the Lovely Peach, he remembers a pleasant young Crane samurai who he met at a teahouse. "Daidoji Hitokiri, I think his name was. An honorable and generous man." He has not spent time with Daidoji Hitokiri again since, although he has passed the man on the street once or twice.

Meeting with Ikoma Mujin

The surviving member of the Lion ambassadorial household still resides in the house where his superior perished. He will receive the PCs with a minimum of delay (only about a half-hour).

The servants lead you into a small, sparsely-decorated room. A young man waits there for you, dressed in a fine kimono of Lion gold and brown. His face is set in stern lines, and you notice he has not removed his swords from his belt.

Traditionally, samurai pull out their swords and rest them on the floor beside them as a sign of politeness and non-hostility. Ikoma Mujin is far too angry and suspicious to do this at present, however, unless his visitors are all Lion. If the PCs have Unicorn in their ranks, he will be fiercely hostile and non-cooperative, regarding their investigation as nothing more than an attempt to deflect blame from where it belongs. Regardless, the PCs will have to be polite and soft-spoken to earn his cooperation.

Mujin can provide the following information to PCs who win his cooperation:

- On the evening of the murder, his master Matsu Hokare received a letter. After reading it he announced that he was expecting an important visitor that evening. He explained it was a delicate private matter, and Mujin promptly excused himself and departed for the evening.
- Mujin went to a teahouse, the Red Door, which is frequented by Clan samurai visiting the city. He was there less than an hour when the messenger from the servants, informing him of his master's death, arrived. He returned home immediately.
- After the "worthless ronin so-called magistrate" departed, Mujin questioned

everyone in the neighborhood. He quickly found two ronin who had seen a Unicorn fleeing the scene with a bloody foreign weapon. Their descriptions perfectly matched Shinjo Taneka, who Mujin had met before.

- Mujin and the ambassadorial guards searched the street where the ronin reported seeing the murderer, and discovered a strange exotic blade, covered in fresh blood, in a drainage ditch. The weapon matches the wounds which killed Matsu Hokare.

Ikoma Mujin will allow the PCs to see the murder weapon and the letter (they are described later, under “Investigating the Crime”). If the PCs wish to take the weapon, to interview the servants about the incident, or to see the murder scene, they will have to convince Ikoma Mujin of the need to do so (this will require good role-play and possibly a **Sincerity** or **Courtier** roll, at the GM’s option). If the PCs are successful, he grudgingly grants them permission. Again, see the various sections under “Investigating the Crime” for details on what they can learn.

Meeting the Lion Army

If and when the PCs go to meet with the Lion army, they find a sizable force – about 500 samurai, plus supporting elements – camped outside the eastern city gates. The Lion troops are clearly on full alert, ready for action at a moment’s notice. They will be extremely suspicious of the PCs (especially if there are any Unicorn or Crane among them), and the PCs will have to speak carefully and perhaps roll **Sincerity** before they are allowed to meet with the senior officers.

A stern-looking Lion sergeant escorts you to the large tent which houses his commander. Inside, a scowling man in elaborate heavy armor sits on a small chair. He holds an open war fan in one hand, while the other rests on the hilt of his katana. Several other Lion, apparently lower-ranking officers, sit in rows to either side. The commander looks you over with a scowl and booms, “I am Matsu Tagemuchi! What business do you have interfering in our Clan’s affairs?”

Unless the PCs are composed entirely of Lion, Matsu Tagemuchi’s attitude will be unrelentingly hostile. The Lion know the “Unicorn dog” committed the crime, and clearly the PCs are being sent to prevent “justice from being done.” If the PCs include Unicorn in their ranks, Tagemuchi will accuse them of seeking to delay matters until their own troops can arrive in the city and “spirit away the criminal.”

In order to dissuade the Lion from attacking the city (assuming they want to), the PCs must invoke appearances: how will it look if the Lion storm the city while the Kaeru are trying to solve the crime? They should also point out that most of the evidence indicting the Unicorn comes from the testimony of servants and ronin – hardly the most reliable of witnesses.

See “Resolving the Situation” for details of what happens if the PCs do not succeed in dissuading the Lion from attacking.

Investigating the Crime

It is likely that the PCs will want to investigate the crime themselves, perhaps in hope of finding (or framing) a different murderer and thereby defusing the crisis.

Other Ambassadors and Representatives

The PCs may decide to seek help or information from other high-ranking sources. The following provide a guideline to what sort of information the PCs may be able to find.

Crab: The Crab Clan ambassador to the city is a thick-bodied man in his late forties, Kaiu Chigutsu. His assignment here is basically a retirement from his duties on the Wall. Chigutsu talks incessantly about his experiences on the Wall, and will only confide in PCs who react sympathetically or who express understanding and respect for the Crab Clan’s duty against the Shadowlands.

Chigutsu informs the PCs that the Crab have no official interest in what is happening, regarding it as “another stupid quarrel.” He may remark that Shinjo Taneka has a fondness for geisha, and often visits the city’s Licensed District. If the PCs ask about opium smuggling, he shrugs. “Not our concern. The Unicorn and the Lion both get exercised about that. We have more important evils to worry about.”

If the PCs ask about a Crab with an eyepatch, Chigutsu directs them to Hida Takita, one of the embassy guards. See “Hida Takita” later for details on him.

Some PCs may decide to look for Yasuki contacts (such as Yasuki Kappako from the previous adventure, “Smoke and Mirrors”). Any Yasuki merchant can tell them that there are certainly opium shipments to the

northeastern empire (the Lion, Phoenix, possibly the Dragon, and the Imperial capital) running through the city, that both Matsu Hokare and Shinjo Taneka were concerned about them, and that Taneka was actively investigating several local merchants (not Yasuki) for involvement in opium. The Yasuki do not know who is running the opium trade, although they do know it is supported by the local yakuza gangs. They urgently hope a war will not happen here, since it will disrupt their own commerce.

Crane: The Crane ambassador is an elegant courtier named Kakita Suzuhara. He is clearly angry at being stuck in an “uncivilized ronin camp” and will expect other samurai to sympathize with his plight.

Suzuhara has had secret meetings with Daidoji Hitokiri and has at least some idea of Hitokiri’s role in the current Lion-Unicorn crisis. He will therefore be quite uninformative to anyone looking into the matter. To fellow Cranes (only) he will suggest that they allow things to play out – “if the Lion fight the Unicorn, all the better for us.”

The PCs can perhaps tell (with a **Courtier/Awareness** roll at TN 15, or **Simple Awareness** at TN 20) that Suzuhara is hiding something, but he will not confess the truth to anyone save (perhaps) a fellow Crane who seems properly ruthless.

Dragon: The Dragon ambassador, Mirumoto Koitsu, is a quiet man in his thirties who spends most of his time composing poetry. He is concerned by the possibility of war but does not think such a problem justifies any intervention by the Dragon Clan.

He may, however, be able to share some information. His assistant, Kitsuki Akitaji, met once with Matsu Hokare about the problem of the opium trade. Hokare regarded the city as a “cesspit of vice” which was conveying opium into the Lion lands. Akitaji knows that Hokare wanted to speak with Shinjo Taneka about the problem.

Phoenix: The Phoenix ambassador to the City of the Rich Frog is a grumpy, scruffy-haired man in his forties, Isawa Usoi, who suspects (correctly) that he was sent here as a punishment for his refusal to retire at the customary age. Now that he may be caught between two warring armies, Usoi is in a panic, frantically packing his belongings and preparing to flee the city.

Usoi’s yojimbo, a polite young bushi named Shiba Gambate, also suggests that the PCs should flee. “This

place will be like a piece of metal upon a blacksmith’s anvil, beaten until flat.” If the PCs refuse, and if they strike him as brave and honorable samurai trying to do their duty, he will prevail upon Usoi to give them a brief interview.

Usoi knows nothing about the crime itself. If the PCs ask him about the two people involved in the case, he knows nothing about Matsu Hokare (“warmongering Lion brutes, I try not to speak with them”), but confesses he has met Shinjo Taneka once or twice while in the Licensed District. “Pleasant fellow. Hard to believe he’s a murderer.” He knows Taneka was there to visit a geisha house, the Lovely Peach, although Usoi doesn’t know whether those visits were personal or part of Taneka’s investigations.

Scorpion: The Scorpion ambassador is a pleasant fellow named Bayushi Ujiwari who wears a full-face wooden mempo (mask). He will not share any information of meaning unless he is speaking with fellow Scorpions or with PCs who have Allies or Favors with the Scorpion Clan.

To those he trusts, Ujiwari will suggest that it would be best to let the two Clans fight. “Neither of them is exactly a friend to us.” If despite this the PCs seem determined to solve the crime (or at least to avoid a war), he will speculate a little as to who would gain from such a war. “Ourselves, of course, but we are not the first enemy of the Lion, and our methods are subtler than this.” He may also remark that “we are not the only Clan who can use ruthless and deceptive methods. We are simply the only Clan to be honest about it.”

If any PC mentions opium smuggling, Ujiwari looks at them askance and then smiles. “Opium smuggling is illegal, of course. I am sure both Matsu Hokare-san and Shinjo Taneka-san were right to be concerned about it. Still, I very much doubt Hokare-san was killed over that. Those who deal in such things have better methods of covering their tracks than such crude spectacles. Besides, a war would disrupt the trade on which opium smuggling depends.”

If a Scorpion PC (only) asks Ujiwari whether Hokare or Taneka have any secrets, he will mention Taneka’s visits to the Lovely Peach geisha house. “I understand he is betrothed to a woman whose family despise geisha, so it would be most unfortunate if his activities became known at home.” Hokare, on the other hand, had no secrets – “these Lion are so dreadfully honorable.”

Ujiwari knows nothing about Daidoji Hitokiri, and will be as surprised as anyone else if the Crane spy's activities are exposed.

Minor Clans: The only Minor Clan to maintain a representative in the City of the Rich Frog is the Mantis Clan. Their representative, a squat muscular fellow named Konbei, is perfectly indifferent to what is happening. However, he is aware that Shinjo Taneka was investigating opium smuggling through the city, and suggests that a Scorpion opium cartel may have murdered Hokare and pinned the blame on the anti-opium Unicorn in order to cover its tracks.

Imperial Families: The Emperor has no direct representative here, although Emerald Magistrates come through the city every autumn to levy Imperial taxes. A PC who searches the city for Imperial family representatives can roll **Courtier/Intelligence** at TN 10, or **Simple Intelligence** at TN 20, to track down a retired Miya, Okumitsu, who lives in the city. He is an old man who finds it fascinating to watch how a city governs itself without a Clan to run it, and is “tied in” to a lot of what happens here. He can share the following information with anyone who speaks with him politely and respectfully:

- He knows the Scorpion run opium through the city via the local yakuza gangs, and that the yakuza were concerned about Shinjo Taneka's investigations.
- They were much more concerned with him than with Matsu Hokare, since Taneka is an actual magistrate.
- He knows that Shinjo Taneka was visiting the Licensed District regularly, favoring a place called the Lovely Peach. Okumitsu is too old to be interested in such things himself, of course.
- The two ronin, Genji and Taberu, who claim to have witnessed the fleeing murderer are dishonorable types who will do anything for a few koku. They frequently work as arm-breakers for the more unscrupulous local merchants, like Yasuki Kappako.
- The Lion have been itching for years for a chance to intervene in this city and perhaps annex it permanently. “They probably couldn't be happier for this situation,” Okumitsu grumbles.

The Kaeru: It will not be possible to meet directly with the Kaeru, who make a practice of keeping themselves secret and avoiding all contact with outsiders. Everything they wish the PCs to know is

provided by Ichiko the magistrate. They will not share any further information under any circumstances.

Word on the Street

Ronin PCs, or PCs who are willing to dirty themselves by speaking with ronin and commoners, can ask around the city to see what rumors and gossip have attached to this incident. At the GM's option, such PCs might need to make a **Simple Awareness** roll (TN 15), a **Commerce/Awareness** roll (TN 10), or spend a few bu on bribes to unearth the following information:

- It is generally known that Shinjo Taneka had come to the city to investigate opium smuggling. Several merchants were being targeted by his investigations, including some backed by the Crane, Scorpion, and Crab.
- Taneka was also looking into the local yakuza gangs, such as the Fugu-Gumi and the Juku, and the word is that all those groups are pleased by his current distraction with the murder investigation.
- Matsu Hokare was known to be concerned with opium-smuggling as well, although he did not investigate actively as Taneka did. The news that Taneka apparently killed him strikes most people as bizarre and incomprehensible.
- Some rumor-mongers have suggested that perhaps Hokare was secretly dealing opium himself, and Taneka killed him when he learned the truth. Others suggest that perhaps Taneka was secretly an opium-dealer himself, looking to wipe out his competition, and that Hokare had learned this.

The Yakuza

PCs with criminal contacts and knowledge, or PCs who have played through the previous adventure (“Smoke and Mirrors”), may decide to seek information from the various local yakuza gangs. This will require careful role-play (yakuza don't readily speak with samurai) and possibly a **Simple Awareness** roll at TN 15. PCs who actively opposed the Fugu-Gumi yakuza in “Smoke and Mirrors” will never be able to get information from them now.

The PCs can easily learn that Shinjo Taneka was investigating both the yakuza and their allies among the local merchants in an effort to disrupt the opium trade through the city. Getting more information than that will depend on taking a delicate approach and respecting the yakuza's position and authority. A

confrontational attitude will yield nothing. A polite approach (one which emphasizes that the PCs are only interested in preventing war, not in arresting yakuza) will be more fruitful.

The yakuza can potentially share the following information:

- The opium trade is run by the Scorpion Clan, but they use the yakuza for smuggling and local distribution.
- The yakuza had nothing to do with the crime – they know better than to openly provoke the Lion Clan. And they had no need to carry out such an elaborate frame-up against Shinjo Taneka, since they were planning to deal with him in a more “subtle” fashion.
- If the PCs somehow manage to convince the yakuza to explain what their “subtle” method was, they explain that Taneka was frequenting a geisha house (the Lovely Peach) and was trying to keep it secret. They planned to blackmail him with this information.

The Servants at the Lion Ambassadorial Residence

Matsu Hokare’s servants will cooperate with any PC questions (they are mere commoners, after all), but will be more willing to volunteer information if the PCs are Lion Clan. They explain the evening’s events as follows:

- Their master received a letter early in the evening. After reading it, he told Ikoma Mujin to leave, and directed the servants to expect a Unicorn named Shinjo Taneka to visit him.
- A Unicorn arrived soon thereafter and gave the name Shinjo Taneka. The servants describe him as a thin middle-aged man with a large traveling pack. They led him to Hokare-sama’s room, but did not follow him in, since Hokare-sama had requested complete privacy.
- Soon after, they heard a loud commotion in the room, shouting and violent activity. Then they glimpsed the Unicorn rushing out the back of the house. When they checked on Matsu Hokare-sama, they found him stabbed to death. They immediately dispatched messengers to Ikoma Mujin and the city magistrate.

The servants are being completely honest (as anyone can determine easily with an **Awareness** roll at TN 5).

If the PCs question them in detail, they can share the following additional information:

- They saw that the Unicorn was carrying some kind of bloody weapon when he fled, but they did not see clearly what it was. It was smaller than a katana, and did not have the right shape for a wakizashi.
- The Unicorn left a few drops of blood behind, but the trail vanished after it reached the street.
- The Unicorn took his traveling pack with him.
- Matsu Hokare did not have his swords on his person – they were on the sword-stand in his room. Before the meeting he did not say or do anything to suggest that he regarded this “Shinjo Taneka” person as threatening.
- Although the servants’ general description of the visitor matches Shinjo Taneka, they have not seen him in person since the crime. If they ever see Taneka, they will be uncertain whether he is the same person they saw that night. (“The hair and build, it is the same, samurai-san, but I confess I did not look closely at his face. It would be improper for one such as I to do so.”) If pressed, they reluctantly confess that Taneka seems older than the man they saw that night.

Physical Investigations at the Lion Ambassadorial Residence

The body of Matsu Hokare has already been cremated, and the blood has been cleansed from the room where he died. If the PCs search the room, they find nothing of note. The servants can point out the location of Hokare’s sword-stand, remarking that he died with his hand outstretched toward it.

If the PCs have shugenja, they can interrogate the spirits in the room. There are Earth and Air spirits in plenty, and a few Fire spirits in the lamps. All the spirits will describe a “thin man in purple” coming in to the room and killing the “man in gold” with an odd “empty metal weapon,” then fleeing out the back.

A clever shugenja will seek Water spirits, since they show images rather than answering with words. There are none in the house, but the street behind the house has a few Water spirits in the drainage ditch. These spirits will show a thin man in Unicorn colors fleeing the house with a strange bloody blade. A PC who examines the man in the image closely can roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15 to realize that the man is too young and smooth of face to be Shinjo Taneka.

The Letter

Ikoma Mujin has the letter which Matsu Hokare received on the night of the murder. If the PCs ask for it, he will allow them to read it.

The letter is written on crisp, high-quality paper tinted a light purple. “Honored Matsu Hokare-sama,” it says, “I wish to meet with you tonight concerning my investigations into the illegal opium trade. I have heard that you are concerned about this problem as well, and I believe that with your help, we may be able to strike a great blow against this scourge. I will call upon you this evening. If you are unable to receive me, please have your servants inform me of when you will be available, but I must impress upon you that the sooner we act, the sooner this poison will cease to burden our Clans. Shinjo Taneka, Magistrate for the Unicorn Clan.”

If the PCs have Shinjo Taneka provide samples of his writing, they can roll **Forgery/Intelligence** at TN 10, **Investigation/Intelligence** at TN 20, or **Nazodo/Intelligence** at TN 15 to realize that the style of writing on the letter (the thickness and length of the brush-strokes, for example) is slightly different from his.

The paper used for the letter matches the paper in Taneka’s room at the Golden Swallow inn (Hitokiri stole it along with the weapon and kimono). However, an exceptionally clever PC may think of comparing the ink on the letter to that produced by Taneka’s ink-stone. This will require a **Calligraphy/Intelligence** roll at TN 15 or an **Herbalism/Intelligence** roll at TN 10. The inks do not match – Taneka’s is slightly darker.

If a shugenja PC consults with the spirits in the letter, there are plenty of Earth spirits. Evoking any Water spirits from the paper or ink will require three Raises. Information which might be gained from these spirits includes:

- The man who wrote the letter was a “thin man dressed in purple.” If the PCs get Water spirits to show an image of the man, they see him sitting in a small, dingy room and composing the letter by candlelight. The man is dressed as a Unicorn, but is clearly too young to be Shinjo Taneka.
- If the PCs think of asking the Spirits in the paper where it originally came from, or how it got into the hands of the man who wrote the

letter, they can learn that the paper was stolen from Taneka’s room at the Golden Swallow.

- The Water spirits in the paper can show Daidoji Hitokiri, dressed in dark clothing, slipping into Taneka’s room through the window and stealing the paper along with a kimono and the gaijin weapon.

The Murder Weapon

The weapon which killed Matsu Hokare is a short-bladed falchion, a gaijin exoticism which has been handed down within his family since the days of the Burning Sands. The weapon is currently in the possession of Ikoma Mujin, who will show it to the PCs with obvious distaste.

The weapon has been cleaned of blood, and has no identifying markings other than a Shinjo mon worked into its hilt. It is clearly an old weapon, but has not held up to the years as well as a samurai’s sword: there are faint pits and wear markings on the blade.

Because this is a gaijin weapon, it does not carry the perfect balance of all four elements which are found in a katana. In fact, it does not carry any elemental spirits at all, a fact which PC shugenja may find rather disconcerting. This is why other spirits refer to the weapon as “empty” or “strange.”

If the PCs search the drainage ditch where the weapon was found, they will discover nothing of interest. However, the elemental spirits in the ditch (Earth, Air, and Water) can be informative. Earth and Air spirits can describe how the “strange metal weapon” was thrown into the ditch by a “thin man in purple.” The Water spirits can show an image of the man. A PC who examines the man in the image closely can roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15 to realize that the man is too young and smooth of face to be Shinjo Taneka.

Taneka’s Room at the Inn of the Golden Swallow

If the PCs search Shinjo Taneka’s room at the Inn of the Golden Swallow, they find a typical inn room with the normal clothing and other belongings of a traveling samurai, including a couple of spare kimonos, a walking stick, a sheaf of blank paper (tinted light purple), an ink-stone and brush, several fans, and so forth. Taneka has taken his weapons and the notes on his opium investigations with him to the ambassadorial residence.

Shinjo Taneka claims that his gaijin weapon and one of his kimonos were stolen a week ago. If the PCs search the room for evidence of this theft, they will need to roll **Investigation/Perception** roll at TN 15 to discover the only clues: a few small nicks and gouges in the windowsill. These can be tentatively identified as the marks of metal climbing claws with a **Stealth/Intelligence** or **Lore (Ninja)/Intelligence** roll at TN 10.

Shugenja PCs, however, can learn more. There are Earth and Air spirits in this room in abundance, as well as a few weak, grumpy fire spirits in the lantern and candle-wicks. A shugenja will need one Raise to get these spirits to remember something from a week ago. They can describe a “quick, skinny man” who wore dark clothing (“no colors, just dark”) and had “sharp teeth” on his hands. The man climbed in through the window (coming down from the roof) and took the “strange empty weapon,” along with clothing and a piece of paper, while Taneka (“the skinny old man”) was away.

The Ronin Witnesses

The two ronin, Genji and Taberu, are staying at the Kappa’s Shell, a cheap disreputable inn on the east side of the city.

The Kappa’s Shell is the sort of inn frequented by thugs, commoners, and ronin down on their luck. The innkeeper, a skinny little man with sunken cheeks, blinks as you enter, then bows and asks what he can do for you. The clientele glower at you from their seats around the grubby tables, and you notice that several of them are armed ronin – this inn has no closet for storing the swords of its guests.

The PCs can easily find the two ronin, who are sitting in a back corner tossing dice.

The two men calling themselves Genji and Taberu are both dirty and unshaven, and their stained kimono have been patched many times. Genji, the taller and heavier of the two men, grins at you, showing gaps in his crooked teeth. “You got a job for us, samurai?” He taps the well-worn hilt of the sword tucked into his obi. “We’re the men for you. Anything you need, no questions asked.”

The ronin will get much quieter once the PCs explain why they are here. Genji and Taberu will repeat the story they told Ikoma Mujin:

“We were comin’ back here, see, we’d been lookin’ for work but no luck. We pass that neighborhood, and all of a sudden here comes this Unicorn samurai, skinny fellow he was, holding this bloody blade. Weren’t no proper samurai blade, it was short and thick and odd-shaped. He ran right past us. Unicorns, who can explain ‘em? Then a little later, word gets around that this Lion samurai has been murdered by a Unicorn, so we reckoned we should tell ‘em what we seen.”

The ronin claim that the man they saw was older, in his thirties, and that his kimono had the Shinjo mon. If they are taken to confront Shinjo Taneka, they will insist that he is the man they saw.

The ronin are lying, of course. Daidoji Hitokiri has paid them to tell this tale – they were actually nowhere near the scene of the murder. Anyone who hears their story and decides to test their veracity can roll Contested Awareness against them to see through their tale.

Genji and Taberu will not readily admit they are lying, and will try to deter such accusations with threat, bluff, and insult. In order to break them down, the PCs will need to deliver convincing threats of their own, or a bribe large enough to subvert the loyalty which Daidoji Hitokiri purchased.

A threat must be role-played convincingly, and delivered with a **Contested Intimidation/Willpower** roll that overcomes the ronin’s Willpower. A bribe must total at least three koku in order to tempt the ronin into betraying their employer.

If the ronin do tell the truth, they confess the following story:

“A few days ago, this samurai comes up to us. Quiet, skinny young fellow, but really intense around the eyes, you know? We’d seen him around a few times. He dressed like a ronin, didn’t wear any Clan colors, but when we talked I could tell he was Clan samurai. He told us he wanted to testify about something, to pretend we’d seen a Unicorn with a weird bloody weapon. He told us exactly what to say, samurai, and he showed us the strange weapon to make sure we’d get it right. Paid us four koku each for the job, in advance, so we figure, why not?”

- If the PCs ask for proof of the story, the two ronin will reveal that they still have some of the coins which the strange man paid them. The coins are of Crane mint. A shugenja can

Commune with the Earth spirits in the coins and learn that they came from a “thin man” who carried them here from far away.

- If the PCs ask whether the ronin remember anything distinctive about the “skinny young fellow” who hired them, Genji will hesitantly remark, “Well, when we was talkin’, I noticed he had little circles, like mon symbols, tattooed on his wrists. That mean anything?” PCs can roll **Heraldry/Intelligence** at TN 10, **Lore** (Crane or Daidoji)/**Intelligence** at TN 5, or **History/Intelligence** at TN 20 to remember that the Daidoji tattoo their mon onto their wrists at their gempukku.
- If the PCs ask how they can find this mysterious stranger, the ronin will offer to point him out the next time they see him... in exchange for some consideration. They will try to hold out for at least one koku (or the promise of a job with the PC’s Clan). Thuggish PCs can force the ronin to do this task for free, although this will require another Intimidation check.

See “Daidoji Hitokiri” for details on what the PCs can do once the ronin point him out in the street.

The Lovely Peach Geisha House

The licensed district is a very different place from the rest of the city – it sleeps during the day, but comes alive at night, filling with lights, music, and laughter. Now, with the possibility of a Lion attack, the district has an aura of almost desperate gaiety, as the geisha, jesters, and musicians strive to shut out the knowledge of what may be coming tomorrow.

The Lovely Peach is one of the more prominent and respectable geisha houses in the district, and the PCs can easily find it simply by walking up and down the streets and asking a few passerby. The bouncer at the door, a hulking ronin named Kabe (Wall), will imitate his name and silently reject the PCs until they state their business (or come with an invitation from someone who is already a customer). He will then grudgingly admit them to an audience with the house okaasan (madam), Toki.

Toki is a plump middle-aged woman who still wears the thick makeup of a geisha and tries to flirt with any handsome man who crosses her path. She will be reluctant to discuss her customers. “You understand, samurai, that our guests value their privacy here. It is

only here that they can let down their faces and be simply men.” The PCs will need to frighten, awe, or flatter her in order to gain her attention (no skill roll is required – this is a pure role-playing challenge).

Toki can share the following information:

- Shinjo Taneka has been a customer of her since shortly after he arrived in the city. He has been seeing Yumi, one of her prettiest girls, and has been a fine customer.
- Taneka has always been careful about his privacy and seldom speaks with other guests. Toki has respected his wishes, of course.
- Taneka was introduced to the house by Daidoji Hitokiri, an occasional customer. Toki describes Hitokiri as a “quiet, polite young man,” and remembers him as thin and athletic. “Not a courtier, oh no, he has a swordsman’s hands, samurai-sama.”
- If the PCs ask, Toki claims not to have seen Hitokiri in some time. (A lie.)
- If the PCs want to speak with Hitokiri, Toki suggests they ask the Crane ambassador. If that answer is insufficient, she will reluctantly send a serving-boy out with the PCs to point out Hitokiri on the street.
- If the PCs ask about a “one-eyed Crab bushi,” Toki will identify him as Hida Takita, a guard at the Crab ambassador’s residence. “A fine customer, if a bit boisterous.”

If the PCs ask to speak with Yumi, the madam will reluctantly call her in (“you understand, samurai-sama, she has many clients, and I cannot keep her from them long”). Yumi is a lovely young girl, graceful and mannered, the perfect geisha. She always keeps her eyes properly downcast and speaks in a soft, musical voice. She can share the following information:

- Shinjo Taneka is a kind, honorable woman who has shown her much affection. Yumi will never say it openly, but is obvious she believes that Taneka loves her.
- He spoke to her often about his investigations of the opium trade, and seemed very dedicated to the problem.
- He never mentioned Matsu Hokare.

If the PCs ask specifically about the night of the murder, Toki and Yumi will at first deny that Taneka was there that night. This is a lie, and can be detected as such with a **Contested Awareness** (or **Ichimi Awareness**) roll against their Awareness of 2.

Yumi in particular will have difficulty maintaining the deception.

If the PCs press either woman, they will eventually break down, weeping (sincerely in Yumi's case, falsely in Toki's), and confess that Daidoji Hitokiri bribed them to deny that Taneka was there that evening. "He told us it was for Taneka's sake, that he would be open to blackmail if anyone knew he was here!"

If the PCs ask whether anyone else can confirm Taneka's presence at the geisha house, Toki (only) will remember that a Crab, Hida Takita, saw him come in. None of her other customers were in the common room at the time Taneka arrived – he liked it better that way.

If the PCs think to check, the coins which Hitokiri used for the bribe are the same Crane mint that he used to pay Genji and Taberu.

See "Daidoji Hitokiri" for details on what the PCs can learn if they have Toki point out Daidoji Hitokiri on the street.

Hida Takita

If the PCs track down Hida Takita (either as a result of speaking to Shinjo Taneka, or by speaking with the madam at the Lovely Peach), they find him residing in the guard barracks at the Crab ambassadorial residence, and can speak to him at any time he is not on duty.

Hida Takita is a huge man in his late thirties, almost as broad as he is tall, with a face seamed with deep scars. A black eyepatch conceals where the scars cross his right eye-socket. His right arm is slightly crooked, probably the result of a fracture that healed wrong. He regards you doubtfully with his one good eye and grunts: "Anything I can help you with, samurai?"

Takita has been retired from the Kaiu Wall due to his injuries, and resents being stuck in this pointless guard duty far from the Shadowlands and the enemy. He has a low opinion of just about anyone who is not a Crab, although he feels a grudging respect for Daidoji and Matsu. He will offer the PCs the minimum cooperation needed to get them to leave him alone.

If the PCs ask about geisha houses, Takita will readily admit to visiting the Lovely Peach, and takes a belligerent tone. "Something wrong with that, samurai?" If the PCs ask him about the night of the murder, they will have to specifically mention Unicorn before he recalls, "Oh yes, there was some skinny

Unicorn samurai skulking about. Seemed ashamed at being there, wouldn't make eye contact or anything. Barbarian fool."

Takita can identify Shinjo Taneka with certainty if he sees him in person. "I may have only one eye left, but there's nothing wrong with it. They taught us on the Wall to remember everything we see, even if it doesn't seem important at the time."

Daidoji Hitokiri

The PCs may decide to seek out Hitokiri as a result of speaking with Shinjo Taneka (since he was the one who introduced Taneka to the Lovely Peach). They may also seek him out based on confessions from Genji and Taberu, or by tracking down the mysterious slim man they learned about from interrogating spirits.

Speaking with Hitokiri

Daidoji Hitokiri proves a difficult man to find. The Crane ambassador, Kakita Suzuhara, cannot say where he lives – "I believe he resides here in the city, but I have never visited him." Nor is it clear what Hitokiri does here, although Suzuhara believes he has merchant interests. If the PCs ask to meet with Hitokiri, the ambassador will promise to contact him. He will try to delay such a meeting as long as possible, hoping the Lion and Unicorn will clash first – the PCs will have to be aggressive and persistent in order to browbeat Suzuhara into arranging a prompt meeting.

If a meeting does take place, it will be at the ambassador's residence:

Daidoji Hitokiri is a slim, athletic man with a half-shaven scalp, the long hair in the back held in a carefully-braided ponytail. He moves with the grace of a dancer or a master swordsman, and his unremarkable face is set in a bland polite smile.

Daidoji Hitokiri has the Bland advantage. If the PCs have seen Water-spirit visions of him, they will need to roll **Simple Intelligence** at TN 15 to be sure this is the same man. Genji and Taberu, who have seen him several times, can identify him as the man who bribed them to tell their story.

Hitokiri is a quiet, polite conversationalist. He will do his best to deflect the PCs' suspicions and to lead them down false trails. However, any PC who rolls **Simple Awareness** at TN 15 after speaking with him will detect a carefully-veiled sense of menace about him.

- He claims to be here looking into Crane Clan “mercantile interests” and pretends a certain disdain at such duties. “A samurai has better things to do than supervise some merchant. Still, we must each serve our Clan as we are required, not as we wish.”
- If the PCs ask where he lives, he claims to be staying with a Crane-backed merchant, Iyashi. “This much, at least, he offers to those who protect him.”
- If the PCs ask where he was on the night of the murder, Hitokiri acts offended (and may even challenge the PCs to a duel, if they are Crab or Lion). He claims he was at Iyashi’s house all night.

Hitokiri’s False Residence

PCs who played “Smoke and Mirrors” may remember Iyashi, a commoner merchant who serves the Crane Clan. He resides in a large, splendid house on the Street of Sparkling Waters.

Iyashi was instructed long ago to pretend that Daidoji Hitokiri lives with him. He can even show the PCs a guest room with some Crane clothing and traveling gear. It is all a lie, of course.

The PCs can break down Iyashi with threats, or by confronting him with contradictory evidence. Any PC who examines the guest room closely (and rolls **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15) can find small tell-tale clues that no-one has actually been staying there. Likewise, interrogating the spirits in the room will show that it is unoccupied.

If the PCs break Iyashi’s story, he will confess that Hitokiri instructed him several months ago to pretend he was staying here. He has no idea where Hitokiri actually lives, nor does he know what the man’s real duties are for the Crane Clan.

Finding Hitokiri’s Real Residence

In order to find Hitokiri’s real residence, the PCs will probably need to follow him secretly. This will require finding him first – if they don’t manage to arrange a meeting through the Crane ambassador, the PCs can have the two ronin (Genji and Taberu) or the geisha madam Toki point out Hitokiri on the street. He normally dresses as a ronin, albeit a clean and sober one.

To trail Hitokiri back to his residence, the PCs will have to make Contested rolls of **Stealth/Intelligence** or **Hunting/Intelligence** against his **Perception**. If they

fail the Contested roll, Hitokiri will notice them; he will either flee, lead them on a wild goose chase, or confront them, depending on who they are and how threatening they seem. (If they are all Crane, he will certainly try to talk them into halting their investigation.)

There is another way to find Hitokiri: the spell *The Tie That Binds*. A clever PC who has watched the image of the “thin man in purple” summoned up by the various Water spirits can make an Intelligence roll (TN 10) to memorize his features well enough to find him with the *Tie That Binds* spell.

Hitokiri’s Real Residence

Hitokiri in fact lives in a small room in the back of a seedy inn, the Smiling Fox, on the dockside. The innkeeper is well-paid to ask no questions.

If the PCs manage to search the room while Hitokiri is away (or after he has died or fled), they can find the following equipment and evidence:

- Several changes of nondescript ronin-type clothing, a suit of dark “ninja pajama” garments for stealth operations, and two spare formal Crane kimono.
- A set of climbing gear – hand-and-foot claws, silk rope, and grapple hooks.
- A writing kit (whose ink will match that on the letter sent to Matsu Hokare).
- A large traveling pack. Concealed within the side of this pack is a small incendiary charge (made from Dragon fireworks) which can be triggered by pulling a cord. This is designed to let Hitokiri burn the pack and its contents if he is caught. The charge can be detected with an **Investigation/Perception** roll at TN 20 or a **Traps/Perception** roll at TN 10.
- There is also a hidden compartment inside the pack (which can be detected with an **Investigation/Perception** roll at TN 20, or with the spell *By the Light of Lord Moon*). Inside are thirty-six koku (Crane mint), a sheaf of blank white paper, a chop with the name “Daidoji Hitokiri,” and another hand-carved chop with the name “Shinjo Taneka.”

Hitokiri’s Fate

If he thinks the PCs are on to him, Daidoji Hitokiri will try to collect his incriminating gear (packing it into the incendiary traveling pack) and flee the city, hoping that what he has set in motion will carry on without him.

If the PCs manage to confront or trap him, Hitokiri will set off his incendiary traveling pack to try to destroy the evidence, then draws his sword and attacks. He will try to escape if possible, and dies (fighting or by falling on his sword or biting his tongue) if he cannot get away. He will never confess, and if captured will continue to attempt suicide until he succeeds. Given the chance, he will also attempt to scrape off or otherwise deface the tattoos on his wrists.

Other than eyewitness testimony, the only ways for the PCs to prove that Hitokiri is a Crane are those tattoos or capturing his equipment intact.

Resolving the Situation

There are basically two ways this scenario can resolve: either the PCs prove Taneka's innocence (whether or not they manage to pin the blame on the real villain, Daidoji Hitokiri), or they fail to do so in time and the Lion attack the city.

Proving Taneka Innocent

If the PCs wish to prove that Taneka has been framed, they will need evidence which the Lion will respect. The testimony of spirits invoked by shugenja will not be sufficient – the Lion are well aware of the Emperor's proclamation that spirits, which can be easily manipulated by shugenja, cannot testify in criminal matters.

To convince the Lion that Shinjo Taneka was at the Lovely Peach at the time of the murder (whether or not they show who framed him), the PCs will need the testimony of Hida Takita – without at least one samurai to corroborate the story, the Lion will not believe the geisha and madam (who are, after all, merely Hinin, "non-people").

To prove that Taneka was framed by someone else, the PCs will need to present sizable evidence, such as the testimony of the two ronin combined with proof that Shinjo Taneka did not write the letter. The items in Daidoji Hitokiri's room will be conclusive, of course. If the Lion are convinced, they react with fury. "This fool thought he could manipulate *us*?" They will be especially angry if the PCs can prove that Hitokiri was a Crane (such as by matching the identifications of him as "Daidoji Hitokiri" with the testimony of the two ronin, or by pointing out the tattoos on his wrists).

Regardless, the PCs will still have to present their story in a convincing and eloquent manner, and may need to make a **Sincerity/Awareness** roll (TN determined by

the GM, depending on how much evidence they have) to finally persuade the Lion to call off their demands for the arrest of Shinjo Taneka.

Note that the PCs do not have to prove that Hitokiri was a Crane in order to prevent the Lion from attacking. In fact, both the Lion and the Unicorn are likely to blame the Scorpion Clan in the absence of evidence implicating the Crane.

The Lion Attack!

If the PCs are unable (or unwilling) to convince the Lion that Shinjo Taneka has been framed, the Lion troops will eventually launch an attack on the Unicorn embassy. When this happens will depend on whether the PCs managed to convince the Lion to hold off from attacking immediately. If they failed to do so (or never tried), they will have only a single day to investigate before the Lion attack the next morning. If they succeeded in urging restraint, the Lion will wait three days before attacking.

Regardless, once the Lion attack, the Kaeru will reluctantly defend the city (using the Machi-Kanshisha and whatever ronin they can recruit) rather than allow the Lion to ride rough-shod on their authority. The Unicorn will fortify themselves in the ambassadorial residence as best they can and try to hold out until their troops arrive.

It is up to the PCs whether to participate in this battle, and if so, on which side (in the ranks of the Lion, Unicorn, or defending the city). Obviously, PCs from the Lion or Unicorn Clans will be expected to fight on the side of their Clan (or at least not fight against it).

If none of the PCs fight, the Lion will succeed in breaching the ambassadorial residence. Shinjo Taneka will die fighting rather than be taken prisoner. The Unicorn reinforcements will arrive in time to drive the Lion out of the city in a fierce counterattack. Both sides retreat from the city, muttering about war.

If the PCs do join the fighting, the GM should resolve the action on the Battle Table (page 239 of the *L5R Game Master's Guide*). The battle will last a total of five rounds. On the first three rounds it is Lion versus Kaeru; the last two rounds are Lion versus Unicorn.

PCs who fight for the Lion participate in the entire battle. PCs who fight for the Unicorn are considered to be part of the Kaeru army for the first three rounds, and the Unicorn army for the last two (unless they deliberately stay out of the fight until the Unicorn

reinforcements arrive). PCs who fight on behalf of the Kaeru are considered to be out of the fight after the third round of battle (the Kaeru are too practical to try to fight both the Lion and the Unicorn).

Each round, roll to see who is winning. The Lion commander rolls 6k3, the Kaeru commander 3k2 (unless a PC volunteers to take his place), and the Unicorn commander (once he arrives) rolls 4k3+10 (bonus for having mounted troops). Each Heroic Opportunity or Duel which a PC completes successfully earns +1 point of Glory and adds +5 to their general's next roll.

Heroic Opportunities can be selected from those listed in the *Game Master's Guide*, or the GM can improvise appropriate ones for this confused street-fighting. Use the Generic Bushi and Generic Machi-Kanshisha in the "NPCs" section for any duels which occur.

If the Lion win all three rounds against the Kaeru, they reach the Unicorn residence and kill Shinjo Taneka. Otherwise, they are still embroiled in street fighting when the Unicorn arrive.

Unless the Lion manage to win all five rounds of battle, they will be forced to withdraw from the city after the Unicorn reinforcements arrive.

Conclusion

If the PCs succeeded in averting a battle in the city, they have earned the gratitude of the Kaeru. Ronin PCs will earn the chance to train with the Machi-Kanshisha (and get the cert for their Technique). Clan PCs will earn +2 Glory for averting a war.

If a battle did occur, much of the City of the Rich Frog is devastated in the fighting. Although both forces withdraw afterward, it is clear that the days of the city's independence are numbered... and that full-scale war brews on the horizon.

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

At the end of the scenario, any PCs with Shadowlands Taint must make a Simple Earth roll with a TN of 5 + (5 x Taint Rank). If the roll is failed, the PC acquires one additional point of Taint.

Experience Points

Playing through the Adventure: 2 XP

Good role-playing:	2 XP
PCs prevented a battle	+1 XP
OR	
Ensured Lion/Unicorn war (if PC is Crane)	+1 XP
OR	
Saved Shinjo Taneka (if PC is Unicorn)	+1 XP
OR	
Lion killed Shinjo Taneka (if PC is Lion)	+1 XP
Total Possible Experience:	5 XP

Honor

Lion PCs gain +1 point of Honor if Matsu Hokare's death was avenged (unless they know the real murderer got away).

Lion PCs each lose 2 points of Honor if Matsu Hokare's death is neither solved nor avenged.

Crane PCs lose 1 point of Honor if Daidoji Hitokiri is exposed as a Crane.

Glory

If the PCs succeeded in averting a war, all Clan PCs who helped in the effort gain +2 Glory.

If any of the PCs wind up fighting on the side of the Unicorn, Lion, or Machi-Kanshisha in the battle, they receive half (rounded down) of the normal Glory awards from the Battle Table. They also earn +1 Glory for each successful Duel or Heroic Opportunity.

If the Lion succeed in killing Shinjo Taneka, all Lion PCs get +1 Glory (unless they actively opposed the Lion attack).

If the Unicorn arrive in time to save Shinjo Taneka, all Unicorn PCs get +1 Glory (again, unless they actively opposed their own Clan).

If Daidoji Hitokiri is publicly exposed, all Crane PCs lose 1 Glory through association (2 Glory if they are Daidoji family).

Other Awards/Penalties

If the PCs succeeded in averting a large-scale military clash or invasion in the City of the Rich Frog, they have the gratitude of the Kaeru, the ronin "family" who rule the place. The Kaeru will reward any ronin PCs with training in the Machi-Kanshisha Technique (award a copy of the Machi-Kanshisha Technique cert to these characters).

NPCs

Ichiko, the Kaeru Magistrate

FIRE 3	AIR 3
EARTH 2 Willpower 3	WATER 2 Perception 3
VOID 2	

TN to be Hit: 15 (20 with light armor)

School/Rank: Doji Courtier 1 (clan ronin)

Honor/Glory: 2.3/1.6

Skills: Athletics 4, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 3, Jiujutsu (hand-to-hand) 2, Kenjutsu 4, Law 3, Lore (City of the Rich Frog) 4, Manipulation 2, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Machi-Kanshisha, Kaeru family), Cadence, Perfect Balance, Social Position (Kaeu magistrate)/Lost Love, Social Disadvantage (ronin).

Equipment: Light armor, daisho (2k2 katana and 1k2 wakizashi), clothing, magistrate's chop.

Shinjo Taneka, Unicorn Magistrate

FIRE 3	AIR 2 Reflexes 3
EARTH 2 Stamina 3	WATER 3
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 15 (27 with Heavy Armor)

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 2

Honor/Glory: 2.8/3.7

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Calligraphy 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Horse Archery 4, Horsemanship 6, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu (Archery) 3, Law 5, Lore (Opium) 3, Research 3, Sincerity 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Higher Purpose (destroy opium trade), Social Position (Clan magistrate)/Bitter Betrothal (Otaku), True Love (Yumi the geisha).

Equipment: Fine daisho set, fine heavy armor, kimono, Unicorn steed, bow (dai-kyu) and 20 arrows, badge of a Unicorn Clan magistrate.

Ikoma Mujin, angry Lion ambassador

FIRE 3	AIR 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2 Strength 3

VOID 2

TN to be Hit: 15 (20 with light armor)

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 3.5/2.3

Skills: Athletics 2, Bard 2, Battle 2, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 3, Jiujutsu (hand-to-hand) 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu (Archery) 3, Law 2, Lore (Lion Clan) 3, Sincerity 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: None.

Equipment: Daisho, light armor, kimono.

Daidoji Hitokiri, ruthless Crane spy

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Daidoji Bodyguard 2

Honor/Glory: 1.3/1.6

Skills: Acting 4, Athletics 5, Battle 3, Climbing 4, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Explosives 2, Forgery 4, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 4, Jiujutsu (hand-to-hand) 4, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu (Archery) 3, Law 2, Sincerity 3, Stealth 5, Traps 3, Yarijutsu 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Bland, Crafty, Heartless, Quick/Driven (to protect the Crane Clan), Small.

Equipment: Daisho, kimono. Other gear kept at his secret residence.

Generic Machi-Kanshisha (interchangeable)

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: None, but gain a Free Raise when using their pipes as weapons (Machi-Kanshisha technique)

Honor/Glory: 1.4/0.9

Skills: Athletics 3, Bojutsu 4, Defense 3, Gambling 2, Iaijutsu 2, Jiujutsu (hand-to-hand) 3, Kenjutsu 3, Law 2, Lore (City of the Rich Frog) 3, Sincerity 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Machi-Kanshisha, Kaeru family)/Social Disadvantage (ronin).

Equipment: Daisho (2k2 katana, 1k2 wakizashi), heavy iron pipe (2k2 weapon, uses bojutsu skill).

Generic Lion Bushi (interchangeable)

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

TN to be Hit: 15 (20 with light armor)

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 3.5/1.0

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu (Archery) 3, Lore (Lion Clan) 2, Sincerity 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Death Trance/Brash

Equipment: Daisho (fine katana, +1 skill die), light armor, bow with 20 arrows, kimono.

Generic Unicorn Bushi (interchangeable)

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

TN to be Hit: 15 (20 with light armor)

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 2.5/1.0

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 3, Horse Archery 3, Horsemanship 4, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Sincerity 2, Yarijutsu 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Way of the Land (Unicorn lands).

Equipment: Fine daisho set (+1 skill die), light armor, Unicorn steed, yari, bow (Dai-Kyu) with 20 arrows.