

# **A Last Wish**

**A One-Round Multi-Rank Adventure for Heroes of  
Rokugan (Champions of the Emerald Empire)**

**Shadows of an Iron Citadel, Part Three (Final)**

**by Rob Hobart**

**While touring the Phoenix lands on behalf of the Empress, you encounter a woman seeking redemption. If she achieves her goal, the Phoenix Clan may yet be reborn.**

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A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing this game. The actual playing time should be about three and a half 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.

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 SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD! Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

This adventure is a Multi-Rank adventure. This means that it has two sets of statistics for NPCs, one for low-end parties (Ranks 1, 2, and 3) and one for mid/high-end parties (Ranks 2 through 5).

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."

## Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

This adventure contains suggested Glory and Honor awards (and penalties) for dealing with the challenges presented herein. However, at times the players may take extra actions which the GM judges worthy of additional reward – or punishment. The following may be considered as guidelines:

- Performing an act of selfless, sacrificial loyalty to one's daimyo or clan: +1 point of Honor.
- Abiding by the tenets of bushido when one could gain an obvious advantage from breaking them: +1 point of Honor.
- Betraying or disobeying your duty, Clan, or family: lose 1-10 points of Honor and Glory, depending on the severity of the failure.
- Crying out in pain when injured: lose one point each of Honor and Glory.
- Using sneaky, underhanded, or treacherous methods when at an Honor rank higher than zero: lose 1-5 points of Honor.
- Using poison: lose 1-10 points of Honor, depending on the circumstances (there is always an Honor loss for using poison).
- Performing a socially acceptable public act of extreme courage and skill: +1 point of Glory.
- Drunk, insulting, or otherwise ill-mannered in public: lose 1-5 points of Glory.
- Made ronin: Glory drops to zero.

## Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a Multi-Rank adventure, and contains two sets of statistics for the villains: one for Low-End parties (School ranks 1-3, average 2) and one for High-End parties (School ranks 2-5, average 3.5).

The Skill and Trait roll TNs listed in the module are for high-end parties. For a low-end party, reduce the TNs by 5.

The GM may need to make additional "tweaks" for parties which lie at an extreme end of the power curve. Suggested tweaks are listed below:

### Low End Party (most/all characters Rank One):

- Lower by one the number of Raises required for spells (in situations where the adventure lists requirements for Raises).
- All the bandits are Normal (no Elites) and their weapon skill rank is only 2, not 3.
- Bozu is not Large.
- Isawa Samasu has Fire of 3 and Reflexes of 3.

**High End Party** (average party Insight Rank is Four or higher):

- Isawa Samasu has Earth of 5 and Water of 3.
- Bozu has Agility of 4 and Earth of 5.
- There are an additional 4 Elite bandits.

## Adventure Summary and Background

The lands of the Phoenix Clan have been ravaged and devastated by the corruption of the Elemental Council and the rise of the Iron Citadel in Kyuden Isawa. Although the brave actions of many samurai have destroyed the Fallen members of the Council and brought down the Iron Citadel, the scars of that battle lie heavy on the Phoenix Clan. Patches of their territory remain Tainted, and monsters of the Shadowlands roam the dark corners of the Clan's territory. The Phoenix may take generations to recover from this blow, and while they are crippled all the Empire will suffer from the lack of their wisdom and power.

The PCs are one of several survey groups which have been sent to the Phoenix lands this spring by the Empress, Otomo Kaede (a former Phoenix herself). They are tasked with reviewing the conditions in the Clan's territory, determining just how bad things are and what sort of help is needed, and then reporting back with the results.

### The Fate of Tsukune

When Isawa Tadaka, the Master of Earth, fell to his Taint and formed the Iron Citadel, one of his first acts was to seek out his yojimbo and true love, Shiba Tsukune. She struggled to resist his grotesque, corrupted passions, and in a fit of rage and lust, Tadaka killed her. Furious and unable to give up his true love, Tadaka used the arts of *maho* to force her soul back into her body, transforming her into an undead revenant. Overwhelmed by the Taint which filled her now-undead flesh, Tsukune submitted to Tadaka's desires, becoming his lover and the captain of the Citadel's new Iron Guard.

But when brave samurai brought the Citadel down, they slew Tadaka and broke his power. Tsukune suddenly found herself possessed of free will once more, but with her soul trapped in an undead, and apparently immortal, body. Broken with shame, horror, and loss, she has wandered the Phoenix lands all winter, struggling to make some sort of amends for her own deeds and those of her lover.

Now, Tsukune believes she may have found a way to redeem herself, help restore the Phoenix lands, and perhaps even save her beloved Tadaka's soul. She has heard rumors of a mysterious "last gift" which was guarded by the Shiba family, and she has found clues to its location. All she needs are some helpers to get her there.

### The Iron Ghouls

Shiba Tsukune is not the only one who has heard rumors of the Last Wish. A large bandit gang called the "Iron Ghouls" has been terrorizing this part of the Empire since last autumn. Recently, a corrupted Phoenix fire shugenja, Isawa Samasu, took over leadership of the gang. Samasu, who became irredeemably Tainted when the Iron Citadel arose, has learned about the Last Wish from a Shiba scholar he tortured to death, and is determined to find it and claim its vast power.

### Player's Situation

The Empress of Rokugan, Otomo Kaede (formerly Isawa Kaede) has dispatched several groups of samurai to survey the situation in Phoenix lands and to see where the Emperor's aid will be most needed. The PCs are one of these groups. Clan PCs have been sent at the orders of their daimyos, who are eager to prove their worth to the Empress. Ronin PCs have been hired, for 4 koku, to carry out this mission.

- If the PCs have previously played the adventures "Corrupted Ground" or "A Question of Honor," they have already begun their survey mission, and ronin have already been paid.

The PCs are conducting a survey of the southern and western regions of Phoenix lands. Other teams have already been sent to the eastern and northern territories, to survey the damage to Shiro Shiba and Kyuden Isawa.

The PCs are not necessarily expected to intervene and solve every problem they encounter – the Empress wants information, and knows that some problems may be beyond the PCs' resources.

## Scene One: Michita Yasumi

After exploring the Shiba provinces (as recounted in the adventures "Corrupted Ground" and "A Question of Honor"), the PCs have traveled north into Asako

territory. Their path has taken them to Yogen Province, said to be plagued by bandits and Shadowlands monsters. From there, they expect to continue north and conclude their survey in the provinces of Enju and Kyuukai.

*After several days' travel, you are approaching the city of Michita Yasumi (Hopeful Rest), the only large city in the Asako territories. The city, which lies near the center of Yogen province, is one of the major trade hubs in Phoenix lands, and you can see that it remains prosperous even in these dark and difficult times. The walls around the settlement are well-maintained, and the roads leading toward it from north and south are crowded with merchant caravans.*

*However, as you approach along the Strone's Shadow Road, you notice that the caravans are all heavily escorted by well-armed, surly-looking ronin. The city gates are also guarded, by a mixture of Phoenix bushi and ronin, who seem alert and carefully check the papers of every visitor, from caravans down to humble farmers with carts of produce.*

As the PCs draw closer to the city, they will pass a merchant caravan which has clearly been attacked: some of the ronin escorts are wearing bloody bandages, and stubs of arrows stick out of several wagons. On the back of one of the wagons are two badly burned men, swathed in bandages and moaning in pain. They are merchants.

The acting head of the caravan is a thick-bodied, practical woman named Chio, who always chews on a twig or a piece of straw. She is a hard-headed woman, proud in her own quiet way – although she always shows samurai the proper respect, she never cringes or fawns, and does not beg for assistance. Her philosophy is that “no one ever helped us before, so why start asking now?” Always level-headed and serious, she is now quite grim: her husband is one of the burn victims, and their caravan has suffered heavy losses both personal and financial.

Chio will not turn away help if the PCs offer it, and thanks them politely, but does not change her basic attitude of self-reliance. Her husband Kagura and the other burn victim can be assisted with magic such as *Path to Inner Peace* (eases their pain) or *Regrow the Wound* (heals the burns). The **Medicine** or **Herbalism** skills cannot help – they have already been treated as well as can be done, given the limitations of Rokugani medical knowledge.

If the PCs ask what happened, Chio and her battered ronin guards can share the following information:

- They were attacked yesterday by a large bandit gang, the so-called “Iron Ghouls.” Although the bandits were driven off, the caravan suffered heavy losses – one of the bandits was a Fire shugenja, and burned three of their ten wagons. The two burn victims were the only survivors.
- The ronin guards managed to kill five of the bandits (for a loss of three of their own number). One of the ronin, Zabuzo, claims to have put an arrow in the shoulder of the shugenja. “He was blasting us from a hilltop fifty yards away. Not the best shot I’ve ever made... but pretty close.” He believes he is telling the truth.
- Chio and the ronin both identify the bandits as the “Iron Ghouls” a gang which began operating in the Phoenix lands last autumn, after the fall of Kyuden isawa. They carry distinctive banners of black and rust-red, embroidered with an image of fanged teeth biting into a human femur. The gang was just becoming active when Chio made her last trip out of Phoenix lands, in the autumn. “We knew they were supposed to have gotten a lot bolder over the winter, but we hadn’t heard about a shugenja.”
- Due to the heavy financial loss from the three burned wagons, the merchants will be lucky to break even on this trip.
- Some PCs may be interested in which Clan sponsors Chio and her husband. They are actually Lion-backed, supported by an Ikoma family. Their main trade route takes them from Kyuden Ikoma, across the northern Lion territories to Toshi Ranbo and Shiro Kyotei, then north through Phoenix territories to Michita Yasumi, the northern end of their route.

## Inside the City

Michita Yasumi is a city of about 2,500 people. The guards at the gates check the PCs’ papers carefully, but quickly grow respectful when they see the mark of the Empress. “Welcome to Michita Yasumi,” they say. They will offer the PCs an escort to the Governor’s palace.

If the PCs speak with the samurai and ask about local conditions, the samurai will answer briefly and without details (they do not wish to overstep their bounds):

- They will confirm that there has been a great deal of bandit activity in the area, especially since spring. If the PCs ask specifically about the “Iron Ghouls,” they will confirm that it is one of the largest and worst gangs in the area.
- They will mention that most of their fellow bushi are absent due to the war. “Most of them returned for the winter, but the Clan Champion summoned them forth as soon as the spring rains ended. The Dragon are attacking in the mountains, near Jurojin Seido.” They will give narrow-eyed looks at any Dragon PCs, especially Mirumoto.
- Due to the absence of so many troops, the governor has been forced to hire ronin to help with local security.

The center of the city is the Yasumi market, a huge open-air trading ground. Merchant caravans constantly roll in and out of the square, and the air is raucous with the clamor of men and women bargaining, making deals, insulting each other, and generally pursuing the business of commerce with great energy and enthusiasm. The Phoenix samurai here simply ignore them, marching past the marketplace as though nothing is there. If any PCs stop to speak with the merchants, the Phoenix will seem baffled and impatient.

- Many of the merchants here can confirm that the “Iron Ghouls” have been striking widely in this region since spring. In the last two months, several caravans have been lost. All the merchants are now hiring ronin, and paying through the nose to do it – with war encompassing half the Empire, ronin are enjoying a seller’s market.
- Some merchants have found burned wagons and other remains of the destroyed caravans.
- Chio’s caravan is the first one to survive an encounter with the “Iron Ghouls,” and will gain a fair degree of interest and notoriety as a result.
- If the PCs ask about other rumors or problems besides the “Iron Ghouls,” the merchants will report two stories:
- 1) Rumors of a “dark beast” stalking the lands north of here. “It is said to be a great demon that tears people limb from limb. We saw no sign of such a thing, but there were certainly many funerals in the villages between here and Pale Oak Castle.”

- 2) Rumors of a “ghost woman” stalking the lands. These stories come not only from the north but also from the east, in Isawa lands. “They say she is a samurai, and carries a sword. Some say she slays all she encounters, while others claim she kills only those impure of heart. Of course, there are all sorts of stories like this now, samurai-sama, and I certainly didn’t see any sign of such a ghost myself.”

## The Governor’s Palace

The palace for the Governor of Michita Yasumi is located in the northeast part of the city, on the edge of the so-called Kanjiro District. The district is named after Asako Kanjiro, a governor three centuries ago who founded the city’s large library, as well as its associated temples and shugenja dojos – PCs can recall this with a roll of **History/Intelligence** at TN 10 or **Lore: Phoenix/Intelligence** at TN 15.

The PCs are allowed time to wash and change into court clothing before they are escorted into the palace gardens to meet with the governor:

*The gardens are beautifully laid out, a place of serenity and contemplation. A scholarly-looking middle-aged man is seated in the shade of a carefully trimmed tree, reading a scroll. Several other men and women are seated around him, some of them reading or sipping tea, others speaking softly. A single Shiba yojimbo stands to one side, his eyes watching you alertly.*

The governor, Asako Setsubashi, looks up with a pleasant smile as the PCs approach. “Ah, the servants of our beloved Empress,” he says in a smooth, cultured voice, rolling up the scroll with careful motions. “Welcome.”

**Asako Setsubashi** is, outwardly, a charming and honorable man. In truth, he is superficial and lazy, and gained his position through the influence of his family rather than any worth of his own. He finds the current difficult time (war, the Iron Citadel, etc) a great trial, since he lacks the energy and dedication to deal with it effectively. Most of his troops have been withdrawn to fight the war with the Dragon, and he has effectively “thrown up his hands” at the situation, making little to no effort to deal with the bandits and other problems in his territory. “It is barely within our power to keep this city secure,” he remarks. “We can hardly be expected to protect the countryside as well.” Toward the PCs he will be polite and proper at all times, but delivers many

subtle-but-biting insults and put-downs to Dragon PCs.

If the PCs ask whether the region needs help from the Emperor, Setsubashi will eagerly begin listing a great variety of ways in which such help could be given, beginning with Imperial troops to crush the bandits in the area, and ending with an Imperial decree to end the war with the Dragon.

**Asako Hayashi** is the governor's chief magistrate, a mousy, furtive little man with a receding chin hidden behind a goatee. He serves mainly as a "yes man" for the governor, confirming whatever his superior says. He is, in fact, rather woefully uninformed about happenings in his territory, and other than the vague information that "there are a lot of bandits" he cannot really tell the PCs anything useful. At some point when he is stumped for information, Shiba Osagi (see below) will quietly give the answer. After that, Hayashi will wilt into the background, allowing Osagi to handle the conversation.

**Agasha Tottare** is the governor's new court shugenja, a recent arrival from the Dragon Clan. Setsubashi has wanted a court shugenja for some time, and the arrival of the Agasha in Phoenix lands provided him with the opportunity to find one. However, he has begun the regret the choice: Tottare is a distant, dreamy young man who often seems slightly disconnected from reality. His magical gifts are powerful but uncertain, and he seems to listen more to the spirits than to the people around him.

Tottare will spend most of the conversation in quiet meditation, speaking only when spoken to. However, he will join the conversation if the PCs mention the possibility of going north to Pale Oak Castle. "Norikazu-sama is there," he says suddenly, turning and focusing his dark, slightly vacant eyes on the PCs. "You should speak with Norikazu-sama. Everyone should speak with him." He will retreat back into his meditation after this, and the governor (clearly somewhat embarrassed by his shugenja's odd behavior) will quickly change the subject.

Any PC who rolls **Lore: Shugenja/Intelligence** at TN 20 or **Lore: Phoenix Clan/Intelligence** at TN 15 will recognize the name "Norikazu" as Isawa Norikazu, said to be one of the strongest and most promising students of the School of Fire. It is rumored that he survived the rise and fall of the Iron Citadel, but nothing has been heard from him since then.

**Asako Tamanara** is a deceptively calm and centered man, almost monk-like on first appearance, and serves as the governor's chief scribe and court historian. Despite his serene exterior, Tamanara actually guards a terrible temper, which may erupt if he is offended or frustrated. He dislikes Cranes, who he sees as frivolous and materialistic, and Crab, whose violent crudity repels him. The recent war with the Dragon has also inculcated a hatred of the Mirumoto in his soul. If any Dragon or especially Mirumoto PCs behave in a belligerent or aggressive fashion, Tamanara will have to make a **Willpower** roll at TN 20 to avoid challenging them to a duel.

Tamanara is actually a *henshin* (elemental mystic riddler), although he will be careful to conceal his abilities from anyone outside of his family (especially members of the Isawa family). PCs may have briefly encountered him in the adventure *Kuro's Fire*.

**Shiba Osagi** is an Emerald Magistrate, and is resting at the palace after touring the northern Phoenix lands. (Due to a head injury sustained at the Iron Citadel last autumn, she tires more easily than in the past.) She is a bushi, a small, delicate young woman with piercing eyes and hair trimmed short. Normally gentle and refined in her behavior, she has become sterner and more forthright since surviving the nightmare of the Iron Citadel, and she wears a sculpted wooden mask to cover the ugly scars on the left side of her face. PCs may have met her previously in the adventures *Spiritual Presence*, *Fate of a Hantei*, and *Time to Pay the Price*.

Osagi is an honorable and dedicated woman, and knows a great deal about what is happening north of here. (She cannot actively help the PCs, however – her own path now lies to the south, to report to the Emerald Champion.)

Besides these five individuals, there are a number of lesser courtiers here, mostly sycophants and pretentious artists. The GM should feel free to improvise any courtier character types that seem appropriate.

## Speaking with the Phoenix

All of the Phoenix can confirm that there has been a great deal of bandit trouble in the area, especially since the spring. Asako Setsubashi and his magistrate Hayashi have heard the name "Iron Ghouls" attached to the bandits but know no details, and are not aware that there is now a fire shugenja among them. They are not even aware of where the bandits are operating, other than "on the roads."

- Shiba Osagi has more information on this. She knows that since springtime the “Iron Ghouls” have been striking mostly to the north and west, with only occasional forays to the south. She suspects they may have a base near the foot of the Phoenix mountains. (She can also describe their distinctive fangs-biting-femur banners, if the PCs have not yet heard about them.)
- There are other bandits in the area besides the “Iron Ghouls,” who are merely the strongest and most organized gang. Both Asako Hayashi and his governor will go on at some length on how they cannot hunt down these bandits while their troops are busy defending their lands from “Dragon aggression.”

If the PCs ask about Shadowlands monsters, or about things which might be agents of the Living Darkness, they will get little information from the governor’s court. Asako Hayashi will mutter about “peasant rumors” and Asako Tamanara will remark that there are so many stories circulating it is impossible to know which are false and which have a kernel of truth.

Shiba Osagi, however, will report on a story she has heard while in Pale Oak Castle. *“Apparently, last month the castle was attacked by some kind of dark beast, a thing of darkness and Taint. It actually managed to get inside the castle and damage the Pale Oak itself before it was driven off. This is only the worst depredation committed by this monstrosity – several villages in the area have lost peasants to its attacks.”*

PCs who roll **History/Intelligence** at TN 15 (or a suitable **Lore** skill) will know that the Pale Oak for which the castle is named grows on the grave-site of Hantei the Seventeenth. Damage to it would be a foul desecration of the Emperor’s memory.

- Information on the “dark beast” is incomplete. Apparently it has essentially human form, but large claws and glowing green eyes. It is described as being surrounded by darkness, making it very hard to spot at night (when it makes its worst attacks).
- PCs will probably draw a connection between this “dark beast” and the Shadow-corrupted monsters which appeared around the Iron Citadel. Osagi knows nothing about the Shadow (unless the PCs tell her), but she saw and heard enough during the time of the Iron Citadel to draw a similar connection. “This sounds to me like a more powerful version of the dark demons which are

said to have besieged Shiro Shiba for three weeks during the dark times.”

- During her travels Osagi has also heard rumors of a deadly “ghost woman” samurai-ko stalking the lands. “In fact, I was mistaken for her once or twice. They say she kills those of impure heart.” The other Phoenix will snort at this story.

## A Night of Rest

After a relatively short time conversing, the governor will grow bored with the PCs and their questions, and dismisses them. Shiba Osagi will accompany them out of the garden if they have any further questions for her. The PCs will be given guest quarters in the palace and will spend a restful night there.

Presumably, the PCs will wish to conclude their survey of Phoenix lands by traveling north to visit Pale Oak Castle, which lies at the juncture of the northernmost Asako provinces, Enju and Kyuukai. Osagi will certainly encourage them to do so, remarking that those lands are in far greater need of aid than the wealthy territory around Michita Yasumi.

## Scene Two: Hunting for Darkness

As the PCs head north toward Pale Oak Castle, their road will take them close by the western edge of the Isawa Mori, the great forest of Phoenix lands. The thick, forbidding forest turns the horizon dark and ominous for the four days it takes the PCs to reach their destination. These lands are sparsely populated, and the PCs only pass through one or two villages each day.

These villages, while reasonably large, have only modest protection – typically one or two samurai families in private dwellings, and a few doshin (armed peasants). In the past, these lands have been quite safe, but since the rise of the Iron Citadel they have become much more hazardous, and the PCs (a group of strange traveling samurai) will inspire much more unease and alarm among the peasants than usual. Women will scoop up children and hurry inside, for example.

Most of the samurai residents are away fighting in the war, but their families and servants remain behind. They will apologize for the fearful behavior of the commoners, and offer the PCs what hospitality they can. They will also share whatever information the PCs might wish. (The peasants will, for the most part, be

too scared to offer more than brief and incomplete information.)

- All of these villages have heard rumors of both bandits and monsters in the area.
- Several villages have been attacked by the “Dark Beast,” losing residents to its nighttime raids. They all describe it in the same manner, as a shadowy human-like being with claws and glowing green eyes.
- The Iron Ghouls have struck at two caravans in this region in the last month. There were no survivors. Burned wagons and corpses were left behind.
- Stories of the “ghost woman” are prevalent all through this region. The PCs will find only one actual personal witness, however: a samurai boy, a couple of years short of his gempukku, who saw her walking down the road at twilight.
- He describes her as a “very beautiful woman with long hair, dressed like a Phoenix samurai. Her face was very pale and didn’t move, like a doll’s face.”

Presumably, the PCs will be keeping a close eye out for these enemies, both natural and unnatural, during this journey. On the third evening of their journey, they will get their chance.

## The Dark Beast Strikes

*Ahead of you, you spot the welcome shapes of another village, just when it seemed you might be facing a night of camping out-of-doors. As you draw closer, however, you see lights bobbing across the twilight fields, and hear voices raised in panic and fear.*

Investigation will quickly reveal that the dreaded Dark Beast has struck again. A peasant hut has been smashed open, and blood and torn flesh is spattered everywhere, garishly bright in the glow of lanterns. The villagers gather around the site, poking at the wreckage, and then a commotion occurs as they discover a survivor: an old woman, who they haul out from under a pile of wreckage. The woman immediately falls to her knees and begins shrieking in horror and grief, pulling out handfuls of her own hair. Other peasants gather around her, trying to calm her and to shield the PCs from her outburst.

PCs can calm down the woman with either compassion (role-playing and a **Sincerity/Awareness** or **Kuenai/Awareness** roll at TN 15) or force (**Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 15). Either approach will get her quiet enough to speak of what happened. She describes a “demon” resembling the various accounts of the Dark Beast (“like a man he was, but all black, nothing clear except the eyes, and they glowed like green fire”). The creature tore open their hut and murdered her entire family – she was saved when the roof collapsed and buried her.

The clawed, four-toed tracks of the Dark Beast are clearly visible, leading toward the Isawa Mori less than a mile away. None of the villagers dare take action – even the single doshin (armed peasant) stands pale and sweaty, gripping his jitte.

It is likely that at least some of the PCs will attempt to track down the Dark Beast. In the unlikely event that none of them do, Shiba Tsukune will do the job for them and confront them the next day (see “No Hunt?” below).

## Hunting the Beast

The PCs will need a lantern or other light source (the twilight is beginning to fade), but the peasants will readily hand one over if it is demanded. Following the tracks into the forest will require a single roll of **Hunting/Perception** at TN 15, **Investigation/Perception** at TN 20, or **Simple Perception** at TN 25.

Shortly after the PCs pass the treeline, they will hear a bellowing roar of pain ahead of them – Shiba Tsukune has attacked the Dark Beast:

*Rushing through the trees, you come upon a startling sight. A dark, shadowy creature, seven feet high, slashes with clawed hands at a small, lithe woman in the armor of the Phoenix Clan. Glowing green ichor leaks from several wounds in the beast’s dark flesh, and even as you watch, the woman strikes again, whip-swift, opening another wound. The dark creature staggers back, snarling and bellowing, its movements clearly growing weaker by the moment.*

If the PCs did not manage to track the Beast successfully, they can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20 to hear the bellows of the Beast as Tsukune strikes it down.

The PCs can assist in the fight if they wish – Tsukune will defeat the creature within three rounds, but this



will be shortened to one round if the PCs pitch in and help.

The Dark Beast is, in fact, a minor Oni which has been partially corrupted by the Shadow. It is vulnerable to both crystal and jade, and light shone through a crystal will make it burn and howl in pain. Once slain, the Dark Beast collapses into a heap, foul-smelling green ichor bubbling out of its Tainted flesh. Tsukune hacks off its head just to be sure.

## Speaking with Tsukune

Shiba Tsukune appears, outwardly, to be a fit, strong young woman with a beautiful face framed by long hair (worn unbound). She wears light armor with the colors of the Phoenix, but with no mons – she has scraped all of them off. (She feels unworthy to wear them.) She is also an undead being – her flesh is pallid and waxy, perfectly still except when she moves, and her unblinking eyes are dark and slightly glazed. Her skin is cold and clammy to the touch. Nevertheless, she moves with the same speed, grace, and power which she possessed in life, and can still use her old school techniques.

Tsukune speaks only in a whisper – she never raises her voice, because it has a horrible, hollow timbre which she cannot bear to hear. She still feels emotions – feels them even more intensely than when she lived, in fact – and struggles to control them. When they do break through, the sight of them twisting her perfect undead face is terrible indeed.

Tsukune's blood and tears are an oily black. She does not sweat.

She will speak to the PCs in a very respectful manner, trying to show, through her actions and words, that she is still an honorable samurai. She will give her name, and identifies herself as “a yojimbo to one of those who fell in the Iron Citadel.” (PCs can roll **Lore: Phoenix Clan/Intelligence** or **Lore: Shugenja/Intelligence** at TN 20 to remember that she was yojimbo to Isawa Tadaka.)

Tsukune will explain her situation as best she can: *“I am condemned. My former master fell to the power of the Taint, and bound my soul into my body after I was slain. I did things... that cannot be forgiven. And now that he is gone, I find I cannot leave the realm of Ningen-do, even though my only wish is to die and cleanse my dishonor. I have already tried to end my life... many times.”* She lifts her chin, showing the PCs a lacework of scars on her throat.

Tsukune will not wish to tell the PCs more, but if they speak with her in a sympathetic manner, they can tease the following additional information out of her:

- If the PCs specifically ask whether she was yojimbo to Isawa Tadaka, she will confirm it, and a single black tear runs down her cheek. Otherwise, she will only admit that she served a shugenja “of great rank and power within the Clan.”
- Tsukune will reluctantly admit that she was part of the Iron Guard, the force of Tainted bushi who did the bidding of the corrupted masters in the Iron Citadel. She lowers her head in shame as she recounts expeditions to cut down honorable members of the Phoenix and to seize peasants for ritual sacrifices.
- PCs who know about Tadaka may ask for more details about the Iron Citadel. Tsukune is extremely reluctant to speak of such matters (among other things, she and Tadaka indulged in cannibalism), and will beg the PCs not to remind her of her dishonor.
- Tsukune will admit that she is Tainted (“the mark of Fu Leng lies upon me”) but claims to retain free will. “When the Citadel fell and my master perished, my own mind returned to me. I would rather have died.”
- If the PCs ask about the rumors of a “ghost woman,” Tsukune will explain that she has been wandering through the Phoenix lands in search of redemption, striking down bandits and other enemies when she finds them. “I was a part of the evil which came upon this land. I try to do what little I can to repair it.”
- If the PCs ask how she came to fight the Dark Beast, she explains that she was near Pale Oak Castle for other reasons (see “Tsukune’s Request” below) and picked up its trail after it raided the castle
- If the PCs seem skeptical about her claim that she cannot die, she will offer to let them try to take her head. In fact, if any PC has a nemuranai or other mystical weapon, she may ask them to do so on her own, hoping that they can release her from her un-life. Such efforts will fail – no matter how hard the PC strikes, the blade stops halfway through, and once it is removed the wound seals up with

terrifying speed. Tsukune feels all the pain of the wound, and softly moans in agony while she heals.

Some PCs may try to test Tsukune's truthfulness with **Contested Awareness** rolls or other such methods. None of these efforts can succeed. Because Tsukune is undead, she does not have any of the "tells" which would show whether a living person is lying or telling the truth. The PCs will have to make their decision solely on her words.

## Tsukune's Request

If the PCs seem willing to accept that Tsukune is an honorable woman who seeks redemption, she will explain herself further:

*"Since the day I regained my own mind, I have been trying to find a way to undo the damage to the Phoenix Clan, damage which I helped create. I believe I may have found one... or at least, hints of one."*

If the PCs express interest, she continues: *"There were tales, among the Shiba, of something called the Last Wish. A powerful magical artifact, created by Isawa himself, placed into the care of our family a thousand years ago. It is said that the Last Wish is more powerful than any other spell or artifact in the Empire, if it can be used."*

The problem is that Tsukune does not know where the Wish is located. The Shiba family which was charged with its care died during the rise of the Iron Citadel – she believes they committed suicide to keep their secret from the forces of darkness.

- She does know the Wish was supposed to be kept somewhere in the Phoenix Mountains. So far, her search efforts have been unsuccessful.
- More recently, she has heard that the Shiba guardians may have visited the libraries at Pale Oak Castle in the years before their deaths. She would very much like to investigate that, but her unfortunate "condition" makes this impossible.
- She has also heard rumors that the "Iron Ghouls" bandit gang is searching the foothills of the Phoenix Mountains. She suspects they may be seeking the Last Wish as well.

PCs who roll **Lore: Phoenix/Intelligence** at TN 20, or **Lore: Shugenja/Intelligence** at TN 25, have heard rumors of the Last Wish. (Other Lore skills, such as

**Lore: Nemuranai**, might work as well.) Supposedly, it was an immensely powerful construct of magical energy, created by Isawa as a gift for the marriage of his daughter into the Asako family. When the marriage agreement was broken, the gift was left unfinished, and neither family could agree on who would guard it. In the end, the Emperor decreed that the task would fall to the Shiba, as the only "neutral" family in the matter.

Tsukune would like the PCs to assist her in locating the Last Wish. This will mean investigating in the libraries of Pale Oak Castle, and then possibly journeying on to the Phoenix Mountains. If they agree, Tsukune will thank them gravely. If they refuse, she nods in understanding and departs (which will effectively end the adventure, unless the PCs go looking for the Last Wish on their own).

## No Hunt?

If none of the PCs dared to seek out the Dark Beast, or if they were unable to track it down, it is likely that they will spend the night in the village inn. The town is tense and anxious throughout the night, fearing a return attack by the Dark Beast, but nothing happens.

The next morning, as the PCs are preparing to leave, a commotion will ripple through the town. Shiba Tsukune walks through the streets, carrying the Beast's severed head over her shoulder on the end of her sheathed katana. She drops it in the middle of the main street, and calls out to the villagers, "You are now safe!" The villagers cower away, too frightened to respond.

That task completed, Tsukune will approach the PCs, making essentially the same request as in the scene above. However, if the PCs did not act honorably by seeking out the Beast themselves, she will be more cautious and hesitant in her approach (unless the PCs are all obviously courtiers and other non-combatant types).

## Scene Three: Pale Oak Castle

*In mid-afternoon, your road curves away from the Isawa Mori and crosses the Pale Oak Plains, a wide swath of fertile farming lands, dotted with numerous small villages. Things seem more peaceful here, and you are gratified to spot an occasional mounted samurai patrolling the roads.*

Shiba Tsukune will suggest that perhaps she should await the PCs away from the castle, since her unnatural appearance is likely to cause problems. It is up to the PCs how they respond to this – if they argue strongly for Tsukune to accompany them, she will reluctantly agree.

If the PCs stop to talk with the patrolling samurai, they learn that the *karo* (chancellor) of Pale Oak Castle, Isawa Masahiro, has been trying to control the problems with banditry by having the castle's limited number of samurai ride patrols on the roads within a half-day's travel. This seems to have worked, except for the recent ghastly attack by the "Dark Beast."

None of the samurai were in the castle when the attack happened.

If the PCs are still traveling in the company of Shiba Tsukune, the patrolling samurai will regard her with uneasy curiosity, but refrain from saying anything.

## Arrival at the Castle

*Finally, as evening approaches, you reach the castle itself. Resting atop a hill which juts out from the Phoenix mountains, it is a splendid sight, colorful banners fluttering from the corners of every tower. You can even see the huge outline of the Pale Oak itself rising above the top of the walls, its white branches shrouded in pale young leaves.*

Aojiroi Oku Shiro, Pale Oak Castle, is justly famous as the grave-site of Hantei the Seventeenth, who disregarded tradition and demanded to be buried – not cremated – in a field near where the woman he loved was born. The daimyo of the castle, Asako Shizu, was murdered a few months before the start of the Dragon-Phoenix war (an event depicted in the adventure *Proposal of Peace*), and since then the castle has been in the hands of his *karo*, Isawa Masahiro.

Since the PCs are still officially on the business of the Empress, they will (as usual) be welcomed to the castle, given high-quality guest rooms, and offered a chance to bathe and change their clothing. If the PCs convinced Tsukune to accompany them, the bushi and servants at the castle will be visibly uneasy around her, and question her and the PCs at some length. The PCs will have to be insistent if they want to get her admitted to the castle.

## Meeting the Karo

After the PCs have had a chance to clean up, Isawa Masahiro will meet them in the castle's main courtyard,

where the mighty Pale Oak climbs into the evening sky. Servants will offer tea, rice cakes, sashimi and other delicacies.

PCs who examine the Pale Oak can easily see several gouges and slashes in the trunk, weeping clear sap.

**Isawa Masahiro** is in his late twenties, good-looking but a bit plump, and wears his hair long and tied back into a loose ponytail, Crane-style. (He is trained as a Doji courtier, rather than a shugenja.) His wife Isawa Sukimi (a pretty but small and mousy woman) is shugenja-trained, and sits obediently behind and to one side of him, quietly reinforcing whatever he is trying to say or do.

Masahiro is a loyal and true servant of the Isawa family and the Phoenix Clan. A dedicated pacifist, he believes strongly in the Isawa ideals of peace, reconciliation, and honor, and will make a point of speaking especially politely to any Dragon PCs, expressing his disappointment that peace did not come out of the Winter Court, and offering the hope that "this pointless conflict" can soon end. If any of the PCs played the adventures *Proposal of Peace* or *Narrow Ground*, he will remember them by name and makes a deliberate point of recalling their best moments from those adventures, while ignoring any fumbles or problems they suffered.

Masahiro can share the same general information that the PCs learned elsewhere (bandit trouble, caravans destroyed, the Iron Ghouls, the Dark Beast, etc) but can add the following additional details:

- He knows, and can confirm, that the "Iron Ghouls" seem to be based out the Phoenix mountains, to the northwest. He also knows they moved there recently, in the last couple of months, after a shugenja took over leadership of their group.
- He has heard rumors of the mysterious "ghost samurai woman" in the area, but does not know anything about her. If the PCs brought Tsukune in with them, he will be both fascinated and horrified, and struggles against the urge to stare at her.
- If the PCs ask Masahiro about the attack by the Dark Beast, his face will tighten. "It was a foul thing, a creature of darkness and Taint," he says. "Fortunately one of the servants spotted it when it slipped into the courtyard. The guards were able to drive it away, assisted by my wife's magic." He will be quite pleased if the PCs tell him the Dark Beast is dead.

If the PCs ask about the Last Wish, Masahiro knows the same things as the PCs might know (if they made their **Lore** rolls). However, he can also confirm that members of the Shiba family regularly visited the library here, most recently last autumn, around the time of the Iron Citadel. “They were scholars, most honorable men, and spent several hours in the castle library.”

## Visiting the Library

If the PCs wish to visit the library of Pale Oak Castle, they will have to convince Isawa Masahiro to let them inside. If they are members of the Phoenix Clan, this will be easy enough – all they have to do is present a plausible reason.

PCs from outside the Phoenix, however, will have a more difficult time. They will have to present a well role-played appeal which could move a man like Masahiro. Thus, appealing to the needs of scholarship, the cause of peace, or the mission of restoring the damage to the Phoenix lands will all work well. If the GM judges the appeal to be effective, the PC may make a **Sincerity/Awareness** or other suitable social skill roll (such as **Courtier**, **Manipulation**, or **Diplomacy**) at TN 15. If the PC makes a poor impression, or is from the Dragon Clan, the TN is 25.

It is quite possible that Masahiro may only allow some of the PCs to visit the library. He will offer heartfelt apologies to those PCs who are refused, explaining sorrowfully that he has a duty to protect his Clan’s secrets. He will not, under any circumstances, allow Shiba Tsukune to visit the library, and in fact will quietly arrange for her to be under guard at all times.

Assuming Masahiro agrees to let some of the PCs in the library, he will have servants escort them there with instructions to see to any needs they might have.

In order to find information on the Last Wish, the PCs will have to roll **Research/Intelligence** at TN 15, **Calligraphy/Intelligence** at TN 20, or **Simple Intelligence** at TN 30. Two PCs (but not more than two) can cooperate and combine their efforts on this roll.

A successful roll will uncover several scrolls which do not seem to belong on their shelf. (They were placed here by the Shiba guardians, who feared that something terrible might soon befall their family.) The scrolls are confusing documents, mingling riddles, poems, and abstruse philosophical discussions. Reading these will

allow PCs to deduce (with a **Simple Intelligence** roll at TN 20 or **Nazado/Intelligence** at TN 10) an approximate location for the hidden shrine of the Last Wish. It is in a hidden shrine to the northwest, off a secondary road, one day into the Phoenix Mountains.

If the PCs made at least two successful rolls in their research, they will also find two specific poems which are clues to bypassing the locks and traps at the entrance of the Shrine. (These are HANDOUT #1.)

## Meeting the Visionary

PCs may remember the words of Agasha Tottare and request a meeting with Isawa Norikazu. Masahiro will acknowledge that the famous young shugenja is staying here, but will be reluctant to let the PCs see him – Norikazu is “unwell,” and Masahiro does not wish to aggravate his condition. The PCs will have to be both polite and insistent (perhaps citing threats to the Empire, the pressing need for Norikazu’s wisdom, etc) in order for him to permit a visit.

He will not, under any circumstances, allow Shiba Tsukune to visit Norikazu. She will understand this perfectly and will not make any protest.

*The servants lead you into a small interior room of the castle, lit by candles. Lying on the futon, tossing and turning beneath a silk coverlet, is a pale young man, his hair a disarranged tangle. As you enter, he sits up abruptly, running his fingers down his sweat-streaked face. “Who?” he whispers. “You are not here yet. It is not time.”*

Speaking with Norikazu is a difficult experience – his visions have driven him mad, and he drifts in and out of lucidity in an unpredictable fashion. The GM should try to make the conversation as surreal and frustrating as possible. Norikazu will, however, eventually convey the following information:

- The Last Wish is powerful, but incomplete. If it is to do anything, it must be completed. (Norikazu does not know how this can be done.)
- If the PCs did not find the clues to the Wish’s location in the library, Norikazu will tell them where it is. He will express this as a prophecy: “You will take the northwest road, and one day into the mountains, turn aside from the path to Jurojin Seido. There you will meet your destiny.” He will also recite the two poems from HANDOUT #1.

- Fu Leng has been freed from his imprisonment, and is currently possessing someone in the Empire. Soon his power will become supreme, unless he can be stopped. “Twelve there were. Two now remain. Soon there will be one, and doom will come upon us!”
- The Living Darkness has weakened the Void itself, and is going to unmake the world. Norikazu does not know how it can be stopped. “Nothing will save us, and nothing will destroy us!”

## A Gift from the Pale Oak

If the PCs come across to Isawa Masahiro as honorable and dedicated samurai, and express their intention of seeking out the Last Wish despite any dangers, he will present them with a gift as they depart: one of the famous healing draughts brewed from the Pale Oak’s sap (certed item).

The draught is held in a sealed clay bottle, and looks and tastes like a thin syrup. It must be completely drunk to take effect. Once drunk, the draught immediately heals 40 Wounds, although it will not regenerate broken bones or lost limbs or organs.

## Scene Four: Into the Phoenix Mountains

From here forward, it is assumed that the PCs intend to seek out the Last Wish in the Phoenix Mountains. If not, the adventure is over – Pale Oak Castle is the last territory they were expected to cover in their survey of Phoenix lands.

From Pale Oak Castle, it will take the PCs two days to reach the base of the Phoenix Mountains, traveling across the Pale Oak Plain. During the first day, they are within the range of the patrols from Pale Oak Castle. They are also on the main north road, heading toward the mountain pass that leads to the Shrine of Jurojin (where the Dragon, Phoenix, and Lion armies are gathering for battle). Occasional military couriers and supply convoys will pass them on the road.

At the end of the first day, the PCs will turn onto a secondary road leading northwest, directly toward the Phoenix Mountains. They are now past the range of the patrols, and the village inhabitants grow more cautious and anxious, fearing that approaching samurai may be bandits.

If the PCs agreed to leave Shiba Tsukune outside the castle, she will meet with them at the end of their first day’s travel, quietly emerging from a patch of trees near the road.

At the end of two days, the PCs reach a small village built into the lower slopes of the Phoenix Mountains, watering its rice fields off icy mountain streams. The secondary road passes through the village and climbs into the mountains. Although it is largely unused now, the road shows signs of having endured heavy traffic within the last year – PCs who have played the adventure *Narrow Ground* passed through here on their way to the failed bridge project in that story.

The village here is called Mura-Zenzan (Foothill Village) and is a pleasant, if parochial, little town. The villagers, however, are fearful and anxious. Although they have not been troubled by any Shadowlands creatures, the villagers were raided by bandits last autumn, and have seen more bandits in the area recently. If the PCs ask about the distinctive banners of the “Iron Ghouls,” the villagers will confirm seeing those.

The bandits have been seen most recently four days ago. Since then, there has been no sign of them, and the villagers desperately hope they are gone.

Some PCs may decide to check the area for the presence of bandits. A **Hunting/Perception** roll at TN 20, or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 25, will find prints (both pony hoofs and sandaled human feet) in the area. They can be followed far enough to confirm that the bandits are probably based in the mountains. The PCs can also confirm that no bandits have been in the area within the last four days.

## Following the Path

From the village, the road leads into the mountains, winding between jagged peaks and through narrow valleys as it climbs ever higher. According to the information the PCs have, they will need to turn aside from the road after one day’s travel.

If they watch closely at the end of their first day, they can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 10 to spot a narrow, single-file path which turns aside, ducking under a huge boulder, and snakes up and away between high cliffs. Alternatively, a shugenja who *Senses* for local Earth spirits will be able to detect a powerful Earth spirit in the boulder which shields the path.

- Suspicious PCs might Commune with the Earth spirit. If so, they can learn that a large group of men and horses (the Iron Ghouls) passed through here one day before.

A half-hour before the path, there is a roadhouse for the PCs to spend the night. If they turn onto the path that evening, they will have to camp out on the path itself (if they search, they can find a small clearing with an overhanging ledge).

## The Path to the Last Wish

The path is narrow and winding, sometimes climbing steeply and other times plunging down into gorges so narrow they are almost tunnels. The PCs will have to travel in single file. If they are bringing mounts, they will need to roll **Horsemanship/Awareness** at TN 15 to avoid a painful fall (which will inflict 2k1 damage on the PC and cripples the mount with a broken leg).

A half-day of travel on the path will bring the PCs to the Shrine of the Last Wish... and to the Iron Ghouls.

## The Iron Ghouls

*As you emerge from another narrow gorge, you see ahead of you a small grassy clearing, no more than sixty yards across. On the far side of the clearing, carved into the sheer slope of a cliff, is a high stone archway surmounting a large door, also apparently of stone.*

*In the clearing are about two dozen men, some of them talking quietly, others tending to mounts or boiling rice over a small fire. Black and red banners with white images of fangs and bones lean against a boulder in one corner of the clearing. Several of the men are gathered around the stone archway, speaking deferentially to a tall, thin man in a dirty orange kimono.*

If the PCs are using magic to check their route, or scouting ahead, they can learn about the presence of the “Iron Ghouls” without being discovered. In this case, it will be up to them how to approach the situation.

Once the PCs appear, assuming they do not immediately attack, the bandits will quickly snatch up weapons but will remain in a defensive attitude while they wait to see what their leader does. Isawa Samasu will step forward, accompanied by a large, heavy-set bandit with a swollen, misshapen jaw.

## Isawa Samasu

The Fire shugenja who leads the “Iron Ghouls” is a power-mad lunatic, but he is not without cunning and charisma. He is tall and thin, but with wiry muscle and quick reflexes. His eyes are dark and have a piercing, hypnotic quality, and his voice is powerful and compelling. His teeth are an ugly yellow-gray, and his nails are long and thick, almost like claws.

Given the chance, Samasu will try to convince the PCs that he is a potential ally, someone who seeks to redeem the Phoenix lands just as Tsukune does. He will even admit that he is Tainted (if he thinks the PCs suspect it), claiming that he hopes to be purified with the power of the Last Wish. Unfortunately, his Taint makes him temperamental and emotionally unstable – if the PCs are suspicious or uncooperative, he will quickly become frustrated and angry, and eventually loses his temper and attacks.

Samasu is, of course, completely untrustworthy – if the PCs do agree to cooperate with him, he will betray them as soon as they get him inside the Shrine. In such circumstances he will try to make his attack as devastating and unexpected as possible.

His flunky/bodyguard, Bozu, is a half-mindless thug who speaks in a thick, blubbery voice. He will do nothing without Samasu’s word.

## Battling the Iron Ghouls

If a fight begins, regardless of which side starts it, Isawa Samasu will immediately use his magic to maximum effect, blasting as many PCs as possible with a Fire spell (most likely *Fires From Within*) and then using *Call Upon the Wind* to lift himself out of range of melee attacks. If he is reduced to the +20 Wound rank he will try to flee, otherwise he will continue to fight, using Fire spells to blast the PCs as efficiently as possible.

The number and composition of the bandit gang will depend on the strength of the party:

- Against a low-end party, there are 12 normal bandits, 5 elite bandits, and Bozu.
- Against a high-end party, there are 18 normal bandits, 9 elite bandits, and Bozu.
- In either case, the bandits have fifteen ponies, but lack any skill at mounted combat, and will only use their mounts to escape.

The bandits will fight ferociously at first, but once Samasu and Bozu are down (or fled, in Samasu's case), they will quickly lose heart – once more than half of their number are down or dead, they will try to flee, either running down the path or climbing through the mountains as the situation demands. Individual bandits can also be demoralized by creative use of magic, **Intimidation** and **Obeisaseru** skills, etc.

Bandits who cannot escape will fight to the death – they know full well they cannot expect mercy from samurai.

If the PCs search the area afterwards, they can recover a large amount of stolen property from the various merchant caravans the bandits have attacked – mostly small, valuable items such as jewelry and spices. Samasu's pony has a bundle of writings and scrolls in its saddle-bags, including handwritten notes from what appears to be an extended torture/interrogation session with a member of the Shiba family. It will be obvious that he was hoping to seize the Last Wish for himself. (His spell-scrolls are the property of the Phoenix Clan, and should be returned to them.)

## Scene Five: Shrine of the Last Wish

In order to get into the Shrine and reach the Last Wish, the PCs will have to open the doors and get past a trap.

The poems which the PCs could find in Pale Oak Castle (HANDOUT #1) will provide clues to passing these obstacles.

### The Doors

The massive stone doors which guard the entrance to the Shrine stand almost twelve feet high. They open inward, but refuse to budge if the PCs press against them. Carved into their faces, one in the center of each door, are two large circles, each containing five bas-relief mons: the Phoenix, Isawa, Shiba, Asako, and the Hantei Chrysanthemum.

Careful examination of these (**Siege/Perception** at TN 10, **Engineering/Perception** at TN 10, **Nazado/Perception** at TN 15, **Investigation/Perception** at TN 20, or **Simple Perception** at TN 25) will reveal that the mons can be shifted within the circles, rotating them around in a clockwise manner. Each rotation places a different mon at the top of the circle, and is accompanied by a soft click.

To unlock the doors, the doors must be set to have the Hantei at the top on the right door, the Shiba on the left door (reflecting that it was the Hantei who appointed the Shiba guardians of the Last Wish). If the PCs did not remember the story of the Last Wish before, they can try to remember it now by rolling **Lore: Phoenix/Intelligence** at TN 20 or **Lore: Shugenja/Intelligence** at TN 25. (Tsukune can also roll, if the PCs ask for her help.)

If the mons are rotated to the correct configuration, there will be a much louder “click” and the doors will tremble slightly. The PCs will now be able to open them, although the huge doors do not swing easily – it requires an **Athletics/Strength** roll at TN 20. (Two PCs can combine their efforts on this.)

Dullard PCs can eventually open the doors by “brute force” through the simple expedient of trying every configuration of the mons until they find the correct one. This will take an hour of concerted effort, and will require a **Simple Intelligence** roll at TN 20.

Simply breaking down the doors is not an option – they are of solid stone, and over a foot thick.

Alternatively, PCs may be able to find clever ways of using magic to open the doors. However, due to the many enchantments placed upon the Shrine over the years, any magic used against these doors requires three extra Raises.

### The Antechamber and Trap

Inside the doors is a large antechamber carved from the rock of the mountains. Thick pillars support a vaulted ceiling, and statues of the founders of the Phoenix – Isawa, Shiba, and Asako – rest in alcoves on either wall. A smaller archway across the chamber leads to a long hallway which extends into darkness. (The PCs will need a light-source if they don't want to proceed by feel.)

The floor of the chamber, and of the hallway beyond, is laid out in a grid of square stone panels, each about two feet square. Each of these is etched with a stylized image of one of the eight Kamis – Hantei and his seven brothers and sisters, the founders of the Empire.

The beginning of the hallway beyond this chamber is trapped. The floor panels will release counterweights and discharge barbed, weighted darts through small holes in the wall. (The holes can be spotted, by a PC checking the walls for danger, with a **Traps/Perception** roll at TN 15 or

**Engineering/Perception** at TN 20. **Investigation/Perception** can be used as a Related skill to Engineering.)

Each pace down the hallway will trigger a dart, which attacks with a 6k4 roll and inflicts 4k2 damage. The dart will be lodged in the flesh and will inflict an additional 1k1 Wounds when it is pulled out. (A Medicine/Intelligence roll at TN 15 can remove a dart without inflicting further damage.)

It will take a total of ten walking paces (six paces running) to get past the trapped area. Each pace triggers the traps. There are an infinite number of darts.

It is possible to get past the trapped area safely by walking on the floor in a specific pattern. The correct pattern is to step on the panels of the various kami in the order they entered the Great Tournament to choose the First Emperor: Hida, Shinjo, Bayushi, Shiba, Doji, Akodo, and Hantei. (Togashi stayed out of the tournament, so his panel should be skipped.) PCs who do not know this order already can remember it with a **History/Intelligence** or **Theology/Intelligence** roll at TN 15.

If the PCs did not get the poem which hints how to solve this trap, they can try other approaches:

- A **Cipher/Intelligence** roll at TN 15, or **Nazado/Intelligence** at TN 15, will suggest that the order of the panels is the key to passing safely.
- Tapping the floor and similar testing methods can find a safe path with an **Investigation/Agility** roll at TN 20 (or **Nazado/Agility** at TN 15). Failure, however, triggers the trap while the PC is halfway down the hallway.
- Crawling low can make the PC hard for the darts to hit (making the PC's TN to be Hit 15 higher).
- PCs might improvise wooden barriers or other protections and carry them down the hallway. This might require Strength rolls to keep them in place as the darts slam into them.
- Shugenja PCs can probably come up with effective ways to use magic to disable the trap or to get through the hallway without triggering it.

## The Chamber of the Last Wish

At the end of the last hallway is a small, spherical chamber. The floor, walls, and ceiling are all eerily

smooth, almost too perfect. In the center of the room is a stone pillar, five feet high, and atop it floats the Last Wish.

The Last Wish appears to be a glowing ball of colored light, as large as a man's head. It hovers in mid-air and changes color based on its feelings – it is normally a soft off-white.

The Wish speaks directly into the minds of the PCs (and Tsukune) in a gentle voice that sounds like a young child. It is an innocent and kindly being, but also deeply lonely, and painfully aware of its own incomplete nature. Nobody has been here since the rise of the Iron Citadel, and it is feeling even more abandoned than usual. “The Shiba used to visit me,” it says, slightly plaintively. “I miss them. Do you know where they went?”

PCs may decide to ask the Wish some questions. If they ask what it is, or why it is here, it will explain that its father was Isawa himself. *“He made me. To be a present, the finest present of all. But he never finished me. I was not born complete, as humans are. The other Isawa have promised I will be complete one day.”* It turns a pleasant red color.

The Wish is not aware of what has happened outside its underground home, and will be distressed to learn of what has befallen the Phoenix Clan. “Then maybe I will never be complete,” it mourns, and its color shifts toward blue.

At some point, as soon as there is an opening in the conversation, Shiba Tsukune drops to her knees and begs the Last Wish to restore the Phoenix lands. The Wish turns an even more unhappy shade of blue. “I cannot,” it says sadly. “I am incomplete. Without the final part of me, I can do very little.”

Undoubtedly someone will ask what the Wish needs to be complete. (Tsukune will ask if no PC does.) The Wish turns an uneasy shade of green. *“I am not sure. Perhaps... yes, perhaps I could complete myself with the soul of the proper human. Humans are born completed – the right one of them could make me whole.”*

## Completing the Wish

Shiba Tsukune will immediately offer her own soul to the Last Wish. The Wish will be silent for a moment, then turns a sad shade of blue-green. “I am sorry, Tsukune. Your soul is not the one I need.” Tsukune lowers her head, struggling to hide her black tears.



At this point, there are several options which the PCs can potentially take:

- **Offering the soul of a living NPC.** The Wish will explain that it cannot take someone's soul without their permission. It is disappointed in the PCs for suggesting it, and turns yellow.
- **Offering the soul of a fallen NPC.** Some of the PCs may think of suggesting the soul of a dead NPC, such as Isawa Tadaka. Unfortunately, those who died in the grip of the Taint or the Shadow will not be acceptable to the Wish... and those who died more than a few months ago will be gone beyond its reach. It is possible that the PCs will be able to make a workable suggestion, but the GM will have to adjudicate such cases individually. Only honorable persons free of dark emotions or evil corruption will be acceptable.
- **Offering the soul of a fallen PC.** A player may think of offering the soul of a PC who died in a previous adventure. Such an offer is subject to the same requirements (in terms of Insight, Honor, etc) as those for a living PC (see "Ultimate Sacrifice?" below). Also, the PC must have died within the last six months of real time.
- **Offering a living PC.** A PC can offer his/her own soul to the Last Wish. See "Ultimate Sacrifice?" below for details on whether the PC's soul is found suitable.

## Ultimate Sacrifice?

A PC who offers him/herself to complete the Last Wish must meet the following requirements:

- Minimum of 151 Insight.
- Minimum of 3.0 Honor.
- The PC cannot have any of the following Disadvantages: Brash, Cruel, Heartless, Insensitive, Jealousy, or Proud.

If the PC meets these requirements, the Last Wish accepts the offering. The PC falls to the ground, instantly dead. Award the player the "Sacrificed to the Last Wish" cert.

## The Wish Incomplete?

If the PCs are unable to suggest a suitable soul to complete the Last Wish, the ball of energy turns a forlorn greenish-white color. "I am very sorry," its mind-voice says softly. "I wish there was something more I could do." It pauses for a moment, then turns a gentle reddish-pink. "There is one thing. Look at me, Tsukune."

Shiba Tsukune raises her tear-streaked face to look into the light of the Last Wish. Her eyes go wide, and then suddenly roll back into her head. She topples forward and lies still.

"I have given her death," the Wish whispers. "It is all I can do. Please, go now."

The Wish will not speak further with the PCs, and will turn an angry yellow-green if they persist in trying to speak with it.

## The Wish Completed

If the PCs succeed in completing the Wish (either by finding a soul it can use, or successfully offering one of their own), the room blazes with a kaleidoscope of lights. Out of the blaze emerges a humanoid form, resembling the person whose soul the Wish has claimed, but wreathed in light and with eyes blazing with pure white energy.

*"I am complete," the Wish says, now speaking physically. "Thank you. There is much I must put right... beginning with this." It sets one glowing finger on the chin of Shiba Tsukune, who remains kneeling with head bowed. "Look at me, Tsukune."*

*Shiba Tsukune raises her tear-streaked face to look into the eyes of the Wish. Her own eyes widen, and then slide shut as an expression of peace and joy crosses her face. She sags into the arms of the Wish, which lowers her body gently to the floor.*

*"I have given her release from this accursed body," the Wish says softly. "She goes now to Emma-O, to face her soul's destiny." It rises and turns to you. "And now I offer you my thanks."*

The Wish will touch each of the PCs once, on their forehead, with the tip of its finger. The effects of its touch will vary depending on the PC:

- If the PC's combined total of Void Ring and Honor Rank is 3 or less, the touch has no effect except to remove any one Curse which the PC might have

(such as the Yogo Curse or the Curse of the Dark Oracle of Air).

- If the PC's combined Void and Honor is 4, 5, 6, or 7, the PC loses any one Curse and gains the Cert for the Minor Touch of the Last Wish.
- If the PC's combined Void and Honor is 8 or higher, the PC loses any one Curse and gains the Cert for the Major Touch of the Last Wish.

Its blessings distributed, the Last Wish fades from sight, leaving a lingering after-image in the PCs' sight.

## Conclusion

With their quest completed (for good or ill), the PCs are free to return to Pale Oak Castle and from there, back to the capital to deliver their report to the Empress. The adventure is over. However, as the PCs descend from the Phoenix Mountains, they will witness an alarming sight:

*As you emerge from the narrow path which led to the Shrine of the Last Wish, you find the road momentarily blocked. Marching on the road is an army, but one unlike any other you have seen. Dirty, unshaven men in mismatched sets of armor, their weapons casually slung over their shoulders, slouch alongside rattling wagons and brash peasant women. Yet, despite a complete lack of anything resembling samurai discipline, the column moves forward at a steady pace.*

*In the midst of these unsavory soldiers rides a tall man on a sturdy, shaggy-haired pony. His battered armor still shows flakes of Lion gold. A sword in a gleaming gold-and-black sheath rests easily on his hip. Riding behind him, her arms wrapped tightly around his muscular frame, is a beautiful young woman in the garb of a geisha.*

*The man carries a banner in his free hand. It is dyed dead black, and stark white kanji stand out against it like stars on a clear night: Toturi.*

The army of Toturi the Black marches on, up into the mountains, to join the battle against the Dragon Clan.

## 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:	+1 XP
PCs defeat the Iron Ghouls:	+1 XP
PCs successfully complete the Last Wish:	+1 XP

**Total Possible Experience: 5 XP**

### Honor

If a PC successfully offers themselves to the Last Wish, all other PCs can choose to make an Honor Test at TN 20 (they do not have to make the Test if they don't wish to). Failure, as usual, costs a Rank of Honor as the PC is shaken by the death of a comrade. Success means the PC is inspired by this act of selfless sacrifice, and gains +3 points of Honor.

### Glory

Phoenix and Emerald/Jade Magistrate PCs gain +1 Glory for defeating the "Iron Ghouls" bandit gang.

### Other Awards/Penalties

PCs who impressed Isawa Masahiro as honorable and dedicated are given one cert for Pale Oak Healing Draught.

PCs who completed the Last Wish lose any one Curse they have. These can include Benten's Curse, the Yogo Curse, the Curse of the Dark Oracle of Air, etc.

PCs who completed the Last Wish and have a combined Void and Honor of 4, 5, 6, or 7 gain the Cert for the Minor Touch of the Last Wish; PCs whose combined Void and Honor is 8 or higher gain the Cert for the Major Touch of the Last Wish.

## Appendix: NPCs

### Shiba Osagi, Phoenix samurai-ko, Emerald Magistrate

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

**Shadowlands Taint Rank:** 0.3

**TN to be Hit:** 20

**School/Rank:** Shiba Bushi 2

**Honor/Glory:** 3.5/3.6

**Skills:** Archery 4, Courtier 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 3, Law 4, Meditation 4, Naginata 2, Shintao 3, Sincerity 5, Tea Ceremony 3.

**Equipment:** Daisho set, kimono.

### Asako Tamanara, Temperamental Henshin

FIRE 3	AIR 3
EARTH 3	WATER 3
VOID 3	

**TN to be Hit:** 15

**School/Rank:** Asako *henshin* 2 (see *Secrets of the Phoenix* for details of *henshin* abilities)

**Honor/Glory:** 1.7/3.6

**Skills:** Courtier 2, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 2, Lore (Elements) 6, Lore (Asako family) 4, Meditation 5, Research 4, Shintao 3, Sincerity 3, Theology 3

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Antisocial (rank one), Brash

**Equipment:** Kimono, wakizashi.

### Shiba Tsukune, Undead Immortal Phoenix Bushi

FIRE 3	AIR 3
	Reflexes 4
EARTH 5	WATER 3
VOID 7	

**Shadowlands Taint Rank:** 6.2

**TN to be Hit:** 15 (20 in light armor)

**Wounds:** Irrelevant – she heals injuries as swiftly as she takes them.

**School Rank:** Akodo bushi 2/Shiba bushi 3

**Honor:** 4.3

**Skills:** Archery 4, Athletics 3, Defense 7, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 6, Lore (Shadowlands) 2, Lore (Shugenja) 8, Meditation 4, Naginata 6, Shintao 2, Yarijutsu 4.

**Equipment:** Daisho set, light armor.

### Generic Phoenix Bushi

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

**TN to be Hit:** 15 (20 with Light Armor)

**School/Rank:** Shiba Bushi 1

**Honor/Glory:** 2.5/1.3

**Skills:** Archery 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 1, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Meditation 2, Naginata 3, Shintao 2, Sincerity 1, Tea Ceremony 1.

**Equipment:** Daisho set, light armor, bow with 20 arrows, naginata.

## The “Iron Ghouls,” Low-End Stats

### Isawa Samasu, Corrupted Fire Shugenja

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

**Shadowlands Taint Rank:** 2.4

**TN to be Hit:** 20

**School/Rank:** Isawa Shugenja (fire) 2

**Honor/Glory:** 0.3/1.5

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Calligraphy 3, Cipher 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Kenjutsu 3, Lore (Shugenja) 4, Lore (Phoenix) 5, Meditation 3, Research 5, Sincerity 3, Spellcraft 5.

**Spells:** *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Fire 1)

*Extinguish, Fires of Purity, Fury of Osano-Wo, Katana of Fire*, (Fire 2) *Fires From Within, Inferno's Tooth*, (Air 1) *By the Light of Lord Moon, Tempest of Air*, (Air 2) *Call Upon the Wind*, (Earth 1) *Earth's Stagnation, Know the Ground*.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Innate Abilities (all his Fire spells)/Cruel, Driven (to gain power), Tainted.

**Shadowlands Gift:** Minor Blessing of the Dark One (+1 Wounds per rank).

**Equipment:** Kimono, wakizashi, scroll satchel.

### “Bozu,” Bandit Thug

FIRE 1	AIR 2
Agility 3	Reflexes 3
EARTH 3	WATER 2
	Strength 4
VOID 1	

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

**School/Rank:** None (true ronin)

**Honor/Glory:** 0.7/0.5

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Defense 2, Intimidation 4, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Wrestling 3.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Large, Strength of the Earth (rank one)/Bad Reputation (bandit), Social Disadvantage (ronin).

**Equipment:** Light armor, daisho set.

### Normal Bandit (use interchangeably)

FIRE 1	AIR 1
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Agility 2	Reflexes 2
EARTH 2	WATER 2
VOID 1	

**TN to be Hit:** 10 (15 with light armor)

**School/Rank:** None

**Honor/Glory:** 0/0

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu (archery) 3, Nofujutsu 2, Stealth 3, Tanto 2.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Bad Reputation (bandit), Social Disadvantage (heimin)

**Equipment:** Poor-quality Katana (1k2), average quality bow and arrows (1k2), light armor.

### Elite Bandit (use interchangeably)

FIRE 2	AIR 2
	Reflexes 3
EARTH 3	WATER 2
VOID 1	

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

**School/Rank:** None

**Honor/Glory:** 0/0

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu (archery) 4, Nofujutsu 3, Stealth 3, Tanto 3.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Bad Reputation (bandit), Social Disadvantage (heimin)

**Equipment:** Poor-quality Katana (1k2), average quality bow and arrows (1k2), light armor.

## The “Iron Ghouls,” High-End Stats

### Isawa Samasu, Corrupted Fire Shugenja

FIRE 5	AIR 4
	Reflexes 5
EARTH 4	WATER 2
VOID 3	

**Shadowlands Taint Rank:** 2.4

**TN to be Hit:** 25

**School/Rank:** Isawa Shugenja (fire) 3

**Honor/Glory:** 0.3/1.5

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Calligraphy 3, Cipher 4, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Shugenja) 4, Lore (Phoenix) 5, Meditation 3, Research 5, Sincerity 3, Spellcraft 5.

**Spells:** *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Fire 1) *Extinguish, The Fires That Cleanse, Fires of Purity, Fury of Osano-Wo, Katana of Fire*, (Fire 2) *Fires From Within, Inferno's Tooth*, (Fire 3) *Breath of the Fire Dragon*, (Air 1) *By the Light of Lord Moon, Tempest of Air*, (Air 2) *Call Upon the Wind*, (Earth 1) *Earth's Stagnation, Know the Ground*.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Innate Abilities (all his Fire spells), Magic Resistance (one rank)/Cruel, Driven (to gain power), Tainted.

**Shadowlands Gift:** Minor Blessing of the Dark One (+1 Wounds per rank).

**Equipment:** Kimono, wakizashi, scroll satchel.

### “Bozu,” Bandit Thug

FIRE 1	AIR 2
Agility 4	Reflexes 3
EARTH 4	WATER 2
	Strength 4
VOID 1	

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

**School/Rank:** None (true ronin)

**Honor/Glory:** 0.7/0.5

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Defense 2, Intimidation 4, Jiu-jutsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Wrestling 4.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Hands of Stone, Large, Strength of the Earth (rank one)/Bad Reputation (bandit), Social Disadvantage (ronin).

**Equipment:** Light armor, daisho set.

### Normal Bandit (use interchangeably)

FIRE 1	AIR 1
Agility 2	Reflexes 2
EARTH 2	WATER 2
VOID 1	

**TN to be Hit:** 10 (15 with light armor)

**School/Rank:** None

**Honor/Glory:** 0/0

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu (archery) 3, Nofujutsu 2, Stealth 3, Tanto 2.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Bad Reputation (bandit), Social Disadvantage (heimin)

**Equipment:** Poor-quality Katana (1k2), average quality bow and arrows (1k2), light armor.

### Elite Bandit (use interchangeably)

FIRE 2	AIR 2
Agility 3	Reflexes 3
EARTH 3	WATER 2
VOID 1	

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

**School/Rank:** None

**Honor/Glory:** 0/0

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu (archery) 4, Nofujutsu 3, Stealth 3, Tanto 3.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Bad Reputation (bandit), Social Disadvantage (heimin)

**Equipment:** Poor-quality Katana (1k2), average quality bow and arrows (1k2), light armor.

## Player Handout #1: Poems on the Shrine of the Last Wish

*Isawa and Asako*  
*Bitterness eternally unresolved*  
*Heaven's son blesses the Shiba*

*Eight Kamis descend*  
*Choose to make an Emperor*  
*The victor's path*