

A Question of Honor

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

Shadows of an Iron Citadel, Part Two

**by Parvez Yusufji
and
Robert Hobart**

You are on a mission for the Empress of Rokugan, to survey the damage to the Phoenix lands. Many problems confront you, and more than one difficult question for a follower of bushido.

LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS is a registered trademark of Alderac Entertainment Group. Scenario detail copyright 2004 by the author and Alderac Entertainment Group. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. This scenario is intended for tournament use only and may not be reproduced without permission.

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):

- Oni no Tetsuebi is TN 10 to hit, and has only 64 total Wounds.

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

- Oni no Tetsuebi is TN 25 to hit and has Magic Resistance +5.

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, bandits are loose everywhere, 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.

A Quartet of Tales

Unlike the other two modules in the "Shadow of an Iron Citadel" series, and more generally all Heroes of Rokugan adventures, this module does not present a single coherent storyline. Rather, it offers four short stories, some of them connected and some not, all set together in the province of Enjaku in the western lands of the Phoenix Clan, near the borders with the Lion and Dragon.

The four stories which the PCs will encounter are almost all driven by role-play rather than combat, and the GM should be prepared to work at drawing out the players and involving them in these situations. Furthermore, it is quite possible that the PCs will disagree, perhaps vehemently, over the situations they encounter here. This is intended – part of the goal of this module is to stimulate discussion on bushido, duty, and honor.

A Quest for Death

The most extensive of the four stories which the PCs will encounter concerns Shiba Itachi, *karo* of Shiba Tokui, current daimyo of Shiro Hatsui, a minor castle in the Enjaku province.

Itachi has served the lords of Shiro Hatsui for almost four decades, and is well past the normal age of retirement. Thirty years ago, Lord Tokui's father, Shiba Chuzo, was called to defend the Phoenix lands from a minor raid by the Lion Clan. Lacking military experience himself, he relied on the advice of his young *karo*, who had fought in several small battles.

Unfortunately, Itachi's tactical skill was not up to the task of defeating a Lion general. The Lion commander easily saw through Itachi's gambits and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Phoenix force, killing Shiba Chuzo in the course of the action. Itachi retreated with those troops he could save and immediately sued for peace. Far more skilled as a negotiator than as a general, he was able to win generous terms from the triumphant Lion.

As soon as the peace treaty was concluded, Shiba Itachi requested permission to commit seppuku. His bad counsel had caused the death of his lord, and of many other fine samurai. His incompetence had stained the Honor of his family line, and only his death would cleanse the shame.

The new lord, Shiba Tokui, was himself only a few weeks past his gempukku. He lacked confidence in his own ability to rule, and had respected and admired Itachi throughout his youth. After agonizing for several days, he informed Itachi that his request for seppuku was deferred: he would be allowed to end his own life only after he had redeemed himself through service to his lord. Shiba Itachi was bitterly unhappy, but his sense of honor and duty allowed him no choice but to agree to his new lord's command.

For thirty years, Shiba Itachi has labored as the *karo* of Shiro Hatsui, working to strengthen the rule of his lord and to build the peace and prosperity of the land. Each year he has applied to his lord for permission to commit seppuku, and each year it is denied. Lord Tokui has come to view the whole thing as little more than a meaningless annual ritual. Itachi, however, remains haunted to this day by his failure of duty. He has never married, and still waits for the day when his lord will permit him to end his life and complete the cleansing of his honor.

The arrival of the Empress' investigators – the PCs – appears to Shiba Itachi to be the opportunity to finally achieve his goal. He has persuaded Lord Tokui to invite the PCs to see the peace and prosperity of his lands. Itachi intends to ask the PCs for a critique of his performance as *karo*, hoping this will give him the

ammunition to finally convince Lord Tokui to grant his request.

Player's Introduction

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 one of the other two modules in this series, "Corrupted Ground" or "A Last Wish," they have already begun this survey task, and ronin have already been paid.)

The PCs are expected to conduct a survey of the southern and western regions of Phoenix lands, territories controlled by the Shiba and Asako families. 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. However, they are not forbidden from helping if they feel they can do so.

Arrival in Enjaku Province

Your survey of the Phoenix lands has recently taken you to Ukabu Mura, the largest settlement in Shiba territory, a cosmopolitan city where dignitaries from outside the Phoenix lands often visit. You spent several days there, enjoying the hospitality of the Phoenix Clan and learning about the problems they face in rebuilding from last year's disaster. Thankfully, the city itself seemed to be free of any great difficulties.

Now you are traveling south into the heart of Enjaku Province, the fertile territory on the western edge of Phoenix lands. A local daimyo there, Shiba Tokui, has sent you an invitation to visit his castle and guest in his lands. It seems that he is quite proud of the condition of his territory, and wishes the Empress' investigators to see it first-hand.

Certainly, the lands which surround his territory seem safe and prosperous. Although there are few samurai to be seen in this time of war, the peasants are very much in evidence, working hard in fields gilded by

afternoon sun. You have heard rumors that these lands have been plagued by bandits, but so far, you see little evidence to support those stories.

The PCs are traveling on a secondary road in the south-center of Enjaku Province, having branched off two days before from the main north-south highway, Drowned Merchant Road. They are a little over one day away from Shiro Hatsui, the castle of Lord Tokui.

Geographically, the PCs are also less than three days away from the border with Lion lands (to the south) and Dragon lands (to the west, across the Drowned Merchant River). So far there has been no fighting over these lands, but with war raging once more between the Dragon and the Phoenix, that could easily change.

Bandit Trouble?

Some PCs may decide to question the local villagers or the occasional samurai about the rumors of bandits. They can learn the following information from any peasants or ordinary samurai in this region:

- There were some severe incidents last winter, including theft, raids on village storehouses, and several attacks on merchant caravans. The worst of the trouble was slightly north of here, on the main thoroughfare of Drowned Merchant Road.
- A bandit gang which called itself the "Iron Ghouls" was blamed for many of the attacks.
- The attacks tapered off at the end of the winter, and there has been no significant trouble since spring began.
- On the other hand, there are reports of much-increased bandit activity to the north, in the province of Yogen in Asako territory. Some suggest that the "Iron Ghouls" may have moved up that way, perhaps to prey on the heavy trade routes around the city of Michita Yasumi.
- There have been (so far) no reports of monsters, ninja, or other supernatural or Shadowlands incidents (no more than usual, anyway – peasants are a superstitious lot).

Scene 1: The Plight of the Peasants

On the way to Shiro Hatsui, the PCs will encounter a group of peasant refugees. This situation is intended to offer the PCs a potentially-difficult moral problem – do they punish the peasants for fleeing their lands without permission, or do they sympathize with commoners who are trying to escape the horrors of war?

Ahead of you, a large group of what appear to be commoner men fills the road. As they catch sight of you, they hastily crowd off the road into the ditch. Some of them almost seem prepared to flee, but then think better of it. By the time you approach, all of them have prostrated. You can hear whimpers of fear from some of the younger ones.

There are a total of about thirty peasants, all of them male. Most are adults, with a scattering of old men and young teenagers. All show the dirt, hunger, and exhaustion of long and hurried travel, and some of them carry pathetic bundles of personal belongings on their backs. They will keep their heads down and do their best to avoid drawing the PCs' closer attention – especially if any of the PCs are of the Dragon Clan.

These peasants are from the nearby Dragon lands, and have fled across the border to avoid being conscripted as ashigaru (peasant spearmen) by the Mirumoto. PCs who examine the peasants closely can roll **Heraldry/Intelligence** at TN 25, **Lore: Dragon Clan/Intelligence** at TN 20, **Kuenai/Intelligence** at TN 20, or **Commerce/Intelligence** at TN 20 to recognize their style of clothing as being typical for peasants in the southern Dragon territories.

If any of the PCs are Dragon Clan, the peasants will be terrified, and will break and run in all directions at the first sign of trouble. Barring that, they will be humbly cooperative and cringingly subservient, hoping that the PCs will simply move on and ignore them.

Talking with the Peasants

Some PCs, especially ronin or those with a strong belief in the virtue of Compassion, may choose to speak with these men.

- If there are any Dragons among the PCs, the peasants will be as uninformative as possible, “playing dumb” and hoping the PCs will lose interest and leave. They are terrified they will be punished for leaving their lands without

permission. Suspicious PCs will easily be able to read their true emotions by rolling **Simple Awareness** at TN 15.

- If there are no Dragon PCs, the peasants will be calmer and also somewhat more cagey. They know PCs from other Clans may not be sympathetic to their actions, and do not have enough knowledge to distinguish between the attitudes which prevail in the different Clans.
- Either way, the peasants will try to claim they are fleeing the “ravages of war.” They will claim their lands have been invaded and they were forced to flee with only what they had, unable to even go back and fetch their families. Since they have, in fact, fled without their families, it will not be difficult for them to express strong emotion about this.
- If the PCs ask where the fighting is, or which Clans were involved, they will say only it is “near the border, a couple of days from here” and that one of the Clans involved was the Dragon.
- If the PCs question the peasants about whether they are from Dragon lands, they will deny it, with much bowing and head-shaking. If one or more of the PCs are themselves of the Dragon, at least some of the peasants will start to edge away at this point, preparatory to fleeing.

Peasant Flight

If the peasants become alarmed about the PCs' attitudes (especially if one or more of the PCs are Dragon), they will most likely break and flee. Some of them will try to stick together as a group, but most will simply scatter to the four corners of the compass, hoping to escape.

The peasants have no weapons except for a few hoes and rakes, and lack the courage to fight (which is why they fled in the first place, instead of becoming ashigaru).

If the PCs capture any of the peasants, or cow them into not fleeing (such as with Intimidation or the Obeisaseru skill), they will throw themselves on the PCs' mercy, crawling in the mud, weeping, and begging for their miserable lives. *“We are only peasants, samuraisama! We ask for nothing more than to sow our crops in peace! We know it was wrong to flee, but at least this way we could hope to return to our village in time for the harvest – if we became ashigaru, we might never see our homes and families again!”*

Resolving the Situation

If the PCs do not simply ignore the peasants and travel on, they will have to decide what to do about them. The peasants are guilty of breaking the law – they have refused orders of conscription, and fled across Clan boundaries without permission. On the other hand, it is undeniably cruel to force peasants to leave their homes and serve in combat, often losing their lives... not to mention that the inhabitants of their village may starve without their labor to harvest the crops.

There is no inherently “right” or “wrong” answer to this scene, and it is intended as a role-playing encounter to challenge the PCs’ notions of Bushido and their views on the duties of samurai and peasants. It is possible that this situation may bring about tensions between members of the party – the peasants are from Dragon lands, and are technically the “property” of the Dragon Clan, but they are currently in Phoenix territory. Given that these two Clans are currently at war, this incident could be taken very seriously indeed.

Scene 2: A Prosperous Village

After the PCs’ encounter with the peasants, they will (presumably) travel on toward Shiro Hatsui. This will bring them, around evening, to the village of Yukaimura.

A prosperous village straddles the road, surrounded by fertile-looking grain fields. You estimate that between 300 and 400 people live here. A pleasant folksong drifts from the fields and rice paddies, where the peasants are finishing up the work for the day. Children scurry through the streets, shouting and laughing, scolded by irritable grandmothers. Shopkeepers on the main street step outside to light their lanterns for the evening, advertising tea houses and noodle shops. You can see a large two-story inn with a sign showing a plump peasant swigging from a sake bottle.

Yukaimura is a happy and harmonious place, which should evoke to the PCs a sense of a place where all is well and the Celestial Order is functioning properly. (If they disagreed bitterly over what to do about the refugees, this may help to restore harmony among them.) However, the village’s health and harmony conceals a rather unpleasant secret: its success has been bought by a local “wise-man,” Jinshii, who blesses the town with rituals of elemental *maho* – the form of illegal blood-magic which the Phoenix Clan

discovered, and abandoned, a thousand years ago. The PCs will not meet him during this initial visit, but they will have a chance to realize that something is not quite as it should be in happy Yukaimura.

Welcome to Our Village!

When the PCs arrive, the village doshin (armed peasant), Iori, will meet them on the main street and greet them in a proper and respectful manner, bowing low and asking if there is anything he can do to assist such noble visitors. He will be happy to answer their questions.

- Although he has heard stories of bandit trouble elsewhere (the standard information listen in the “Introduction” section), there has been no bandit trouble of any kind in Yukaimura, not even during the winter when other villages were getting raided.
- Yukaimura has also been spared any kind of supernatural events. Iori, like most in Phoenix lands, has heard dreadful rumors of what happened in Kyuden Isawa last autumn, but such things are distant and not very “real” in this village, where peace and prosperity is the custom.
- If the PCs remark to Iori or any other villager about the good conditions in the village, they will observe proudly that Yukiamura has enjoyed over a decade of good harvests, good health, and general prosperity. “Many in the village believe we have been specially blessed by Inari, the Fortune of Rice, and we have built a small shrine to honor him. I will be happy to show it to you, humble though it is.”

The Shrine to Inari

Located on a low mound in the middle of the village’s rice paddies, this shrine houses a small statue of the Fortune of Rice, carved with amateurish skill (but great enthusiasm) from a single block of wood. There is no monk or priest here to care for the shrine, but villagers visit it every day to offer prayers, and they make sure it is well cared-for.

There is a fairly strong Earth spirit in this shrine, which can be evoked with a simple *Commune* spell (or a Cloud tattoo). The spirit is happy and content, and will remain so until the PCs return in Scene Six. Due to the aura of harmony and happiness which surrounds this shrine, any **Meditation** attempts and any **Tea Ceremonies** performed in this area get a Free Raise.

In the unlikely event that a paranoid Taint-seeking PC asks whether anyone in the area “feels wrong,” the spirit will not remember anything unless the *Communing* shugenja made at least three Raises on the spell. In that case the spirit will mention that there is an old man who sometimes prays in the shrine. “He feels kind of funny.” The PCs will not be able to learn anything further about this man (the spirit does not provide enough information to identify Jinshii).

The Inn of the Happy Drunkard

The village inn, like everything else in Yukaimura, is a prosperous establishment, currently run by three generations of the same family – the elderly grandfather, Chonmetsuji, putters about behind the bar, serving food and sake, while his children and grandchildren run the business.

Several merchants are currently staying at the inn, along with a Phoenix courier, Asako Tsimui, who is carrying letters to elsewhere in the Empire. Tsimui is a friendly, well-mannered young man, trained in the Shiba Yojimbo school. He carries a daisho but wears no armor, since its weight would slow his travels.

- Tsimui will share the latest news from Kyuden Isawa: the Phoenix are trying to marshal all their remaining strength to resist a Dragon Clan offensive against the Shrine of Jurojin. They are hoping for support from the Lion and possibly the Crane.
- He will be especially friendly toward fellow Phoenix, as well as Crane and Imperials. He will be distant and formally polite toward Dragon and Lion Clan PCs. Ronin are normally beneath his notice (except for Gojita – see below).

Tsimui is actually a Kolat agent, and is looking for Isawa Uchizata, a Kolat defector, who he has been warned may be passing this way. Once Uchizata arrives, he will begin making plans to assassinate him. PCs who pay attention to Tsimui and roll **Simple Awareness** at TN 35 will pick up a sense of careful attention and focus from him after Uchizata arrives, although he will deny anything is amiss.

Mysterious Guests

Shortly after the PCs arrive, two other guests will enter the inn: a shugenja, Isawa Uchizata, and his ronin bodyguard, Gojita. Both men appear to have been traveling hard: their clothes are dirty, and they are

unshaven and obviously tired. After renting a room and leaving their weapons there, the two travelers will return to the common room and take a table by themselves, asking for a simple meal and tea. Uchizata carries a heavy traveling pack, obviously full, which he keeps at his side at all times.

If the PCs approach these two, Gojita will try to remain silent and let Uchizata do the talking. He will limit the conversation as much as possible to polite small-talk, and try to deflect any questions about where they are traveling, or for what purpose. If the PCs are persistent or overly inquisitive, Uchizata will eventually claim he is traveling to Dragon lands to deliver some important diplomatic documents to the Phoenix ambassadors there. This is a lie, but Uchizata is a practiced deceiver (**Contested** roll of **Investigation/Perception** against his **Acting/Awareness** of 6k4 to see through him), and will certainly never tell the truth to the PCs.

Gojita appears to be a morose, grubby, poverty-stricken ronin, and will not speak unless spoken to. However, if the PCs are persistent enough to draw out Uchizata’s cover story, any PC who rolls **Simple Awareness** at TN 25 will notice that Gojita becomes much more alert, and is actually quiveringly ready to spring into violent action – although he conceals this quite well.

This ronin bodyguard is actually much more than he seems – he is Matsu Hiroru, the legendary White Ninja, and is wearing his fearsome crystal *gi* beneath his grubby ronin clothing and armor. He keeps a pair of razor-sharp tanto concealed in his sleeves at all times. If any of the PCs have had positive encounters with him in the past (in the module *Damning Evidence* or the interactive *Kyuden Bayushi*), he will be less automatically suspicious of their intentions, but he will still refuse to reveal his own identity.

Snooping PCs?

PCs who are Meddlers (or Scorpions) may wish to pry further into Isawa Uchizata’s affairs, perhaps even trying to see what those “important documents” are in the traveling pack. Such meddling is most unwise – the pack is always guarded by either Uchizata or Gojita/Hiroru (they bathe in shifts), and at night their room is warded with an Air spirit which will shrill an alarm if anyone enters. (The spirit can be detected with *Sense (Air)* with one Raise, and dismissed with *Commune (Air)* with four Raises.)

If at any time Gojita realizes the PCs are trying anything like this, he will not hesitate to attack them, or to flee the inn with Uchizata if that seems like the better

course of action. He is expecting interference from the Kolat, and will assess any PC actions from that standpoint.

An Unpleasant Incident

Assuming the PCs avoid the temptation to meddle in the affairs of Isawa Uchizata and Gojita/Hiroru, they will pass a pleasant and uneventful evening at the Inn of the Happy Drunkard. The next morning, Asako Tsimui will depart early, saddling his pony and riding on to the south, departing while the other guests – the PCs, the merchants, Uchizata and Gojita are still eating breakfast.

Midway through the meal, Uchizata will suddenly lurch to his feet, clutching at his throat, and then fall to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. Pandemonium spreads through the common room as serving girls scream, the merchants decide to make a hasty exit, and Gojita leaps to his feet, drawing a tanto from nowhere and looking for an enemy to strike.

Any PC who rolls **Poison/Intelligence** at TN 10 or **Medicine/Intelligence** at TN 15 will realize that the Isawa has been poisoned. The following treatment options are available:

- The Dragon Clan tsangusuri (potion) “Bayushi’s Bane” will instantly neutralize the poison, if any is available.
- The spell *Hands of Jurojin* will ease the effects of the poison, allowing Uchizata to survive (although he will be weak and debilitated for days afterward). The spell *Peace of the Kami* will heal him completely. Other healing spells, such as *Path to Inner Peace* or *Regrow the Wound*, will not work since they cannot negate the poison itself.
- A PC with a medical kit can roll **Medicine/Intelligence** or **Herbalism/Intelligence** at TN 20 to deliver a diuretic, causing Uchizata to vomit out the poison and survive.
- If there is no medical kit, an **Herbalism** roll (only) can still work, but the TN is 25.

If none of these options are available, Isawa Uchizata will suffer an agonizing death, while Gojita kneels helplessly beside him, watching. Once Uchizata has kicked and sprattled his last, Gojita will silently take his traveling pack and depart the inn, without looking back. Any PCs who try to interfere will most likely be met with violence, although if they have previously earned

the White Ninja’s trust (in the adventure *Damning Evidence* or the “White Ninja” mini-mission from the *Kyuden Bayushi* Interactive, for example) he will try to avoid harming them.

If the PCs manage to save Isawa Uchizata, he and Gojita will immediately wish to travel on, exchanging significant looks as they collect their equipment and belongings. They will seem strangely uninterested in Uchizata’s near-death, and dismiss it as “probably just some bad fish.” If the PCs insist on investigating, they will shrug. “As you wish. Our journey cannot be delayed.”

If the PCs have previously done things to earn trust from Gojita/Matsu Hiroru, he will quietly turn to one of those PCs and say, “You have other tasks. This is our affair.”

Investigations?

Some PCs may wish to investigate the poisoning. The village doshin, Iori, will be quite alarmed and bewildered at such an awful crime (especially if Uchizata died), and is clearly out of his depth in dealing with such an incident.

If the PCs do investigate, they can uncover the following clues:

- The poison was in Uchizata’s miso soup. This can be determined by examining the soup (or the meal in general) and rolling **Poison/Perception** at TN 15 or **Herbalism/Perception** at TN 20.
- The inn serving girls will be terrified and hysterical if the PCs accuse them of poisoning. Smart PCs will instead ask them whether anyone unusual was in the kitchens. A **Kuenai/Awareness** roll at TN 10, or **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 15, discovers one teenaged girl who remembers the Phoenix courier, Tsimui, stopped in the kitchens for a moment to get a drink of tea before he departed. He spoke with the girl for a few minutes, flattering her (she blushes as she remembers).
- Shugenja PCs who want to investigate magically will be able to *Commune* with an Earth spirit in the kitchen with one Raise, and an Air spirit with three. There is also a weak Water spirit in the soup pot, which can be evoked with four Raises. All of these spirits can report (or show) that Asako Tsimui dropped something in one of the soup bowls while he was in the kitchen.

A Nasty Sight on the Road

After the PCs leave Yukaimura, when they are about an hour up the road, have them roll **Hunting/Perception** or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 20. With a success, they notice a small flock of crows circling over a patch of trees a hundred yards away from the road.

If the PCs investigate the patch of woods, they will catch the smell of putrefying meat as they draw closer. The crows rise up in an angry crowd, cawing and shrieking at the PCs, then flutter away.

Lying just within the trees is the mangled, rotten remains of a human male. A rusty, poor-quality sword is clutching in one half-skeletonized hand, and some fragments of cheap armor still cling to his frame. Farther into the woods, if the PCs look, is what appears to be the remains of an old camp-site: a patch of cold ashes and charred wood where a fire burned out, scraps of silk cloth from a tent, and so forth. A **Hunting/Intelligence** or **Battle/Intelligence** roll at TN 15 suggests that about a dozen people camped here, perhaps a month ago.

Anyone who nerves themselves to look closely at the ravaged body can roll **Medicine/Intelligence** at TN 15, **Investigation/Intelligence** at TN 20, or **Battle/Intelligence** at TN 25 to deduce that there is no obvious cause of death – no deep wounds, broken bones, or other damage. If a PC makes at least one Raise on the roll, however, they notice that the crows have not touched the flesh around the mouth and nose of the corpse, nor have they touched the lungs inside the torso. This may suggest something to knowledgeable PCs.

A shugenja PC can try to find spirits which might have seen what happened here. There is one Earth spirit in the area, but it will take casting *Commune* with three Raises for it to remember what happened a month ago. Finding an Air spirit which was here at that time will require casting *Commune* with five Raises. Either spirit can report that “fifteen men” were camped here, and describes them in such a way as to make clear they were bandits: dirty men, dressed in mixed clothing and bits and pieces of armor, and carrying various weapons and gear. During the night, one of the bandits suddenly coughed up blood and fell over screaming. The other bandits jumped up, ran around shouting, then grabbed their belongings and ran away.

The Earth spirit does not know what happened to make the bandit die. The Air spirit knows that the air inside the man suddenly became “foul.” A **Lore: Maho** roll

at TN 20 (TN 10 if the PC has previously suffered the same effect) identifies the spell *No Pure Breaths*.

These bandits were actually driven off by Jinshii, using his *maho* powers. It is not intended that the PCs should be able to track down Jinshii now (he covered his tracks well), but this scene should serve as a warning that not all is well at Yukaimura.

Scene 3: Samurai Also Means Servant

From the village of Yukaimura, it will take about seven hours of travel to reach Shiro Hatsui. The weather remains clear and pleasant, and the PCs pass through several smaller villages (100-300 people). If the PCs seek news of the courier Asako Tsimui, they can confirm that he traveled through the area ahead of them, but they will not be able to catch up – he is traveling light and his pony is tough and fast.

After several hours of travel, you see ahead of you a larger village, probably over a thousand inhabitants. The village is built in a semi-circle around a small, beautiful castle, five stories high. Wooded hills behind the castle supply the region with lumber and game, and a stream sparkles in the sunlight as it winds down from the hills and through the town to water the rice paddies beyond. The place seems prosperous and energetic, and you pass a bustling marketplace and a street of craftsmen’s shops as you head up toward the castle. New construction is visible in several parts of the town. The peasants and villagers pause to bow respectfully as you pass.

Bushi from Shiro Hatsui will be waiting for the PCs at the castle gates, and welcome them inside immediately. “We are honored by the visit of the Empress’ surveyors,” they say, and lead the PCs into the castle. “Anything you might require to make your stay more pleasant, you need only ask.”

The PCs are assigned quarters in the castle’s guest rooms on the third floor, and given an opportunity to bathe, rest, and change their clothing. At the end of that time, Shiba Itachi will meet them in a secondary audience room.

Meeting with Shiba Itachi

Shiba Itachi is an older man with a balding scalp and gray-tinged sideburns. He carries himself with great dignity, and always speaks slowly and seriously, considering each thought and action with care. Jokes which might draw a delighted laugh from another

samurai earn only a polite smile from him. However, he is clearly a kind-hearted man with a deep sense of compassion for those under his care. Any PC who rolls **Courtier/Awareness** or **Manipulation/Awareness** at TN 20, or **Ichi Miru/Awareness** at TN 15, gets a sense of deep sorrow and weariness from Itachi, although he is careful never to openly display such emotions.

Shiba Itachi greets the PCs in a formal and elegant tone. *“Let me extend greetings and welcome to you all, on behalf of my Lord Shiba Tokui. We welcome you here to Shiro Hatsui during these troubled times. I know that you have surely seen painful and difficult sights elsewhere in the Phoenix lands, and indeed throughout the Empire. Please, allow this brief visit to be a welcome respite from such troubles. Lord Tokui invites you to look around Shiro Hatsui and its village, to see what can be built from the ruins of war. Once you have completed your inspection, Lord Tokui will be pleased to share his table with you for an evening.”*

Finished with his statement, Itachi will attempt to hand the PCs off the Shiba Takaya, a young samurai just past his gempukku, who will serve as a tour guide. “Takaya-san will show you all there is to see of our lands, and answer any questions you might have.”

If the PCs want to ask Itachi himself any questions, he will answer them to the best of his ability:

- If the PCs ask about his reference to “the ruins of war,” Shiba Itachi gravely explains that these lands were visited by “the scourge of armed conflict” thirty years ago. “We fought a small conflict with the Lion Clan. Little more than skirmishes, for the most part, but the town suffered some heavy damage when the castle was briefly besieged.” The memory clearly fills him with sadness, but he shows no rancor toward the Lion Clan, and affirms that the war was “honorably fought.”
- If the PCs ask about trouble with bandits during the winter, Itachi confirms that the so-called “Iron Ghouls” gang was active here during the early winter, striking along the Drowned Merchant Road. “Thankfully, they have not troubled us since mid-winter, and this spring our patrols have found no sign of them.”
- If the PCs ask Itachi any personal questions, he will try to deflect them as much as possible, preferring to speak of the excellent conditions in the province. He will admit that he is unmarried, and has served Lord Shiba Tokui’s family for

almost four decades. If any PC asks why he has never married, or why he has not yet retired, his face tightens just slightly, and he says simply, “I serve the needs of my Lord, and can only do as he commands.” A PC who wins a **Contested Awareness** roll can tell there is an undercurrent of tension in Itachi’s response, although he will not say anything further.

- If the PCs ask any questions about Lord Shiba Tokui, Itachi will describe his lord as an honorable and dutiful man who does his best to fulfill his duties to the Phoenix Clan. Again, a PC who makes a **Contested Awareness** roll can tell that, while Itachi clearly respects his lord, there is more here than is being said.

The Tour Guide: Shiba Takaya

Shiba Takaya is a handsome, quick, smooth-spoken young man, recently past his gempukku, and should give the impression of a “samurai-puppy,” an eager, happy fellow who enjoys his duties. Takaya lacks much experience with women, and is easily flustered by an attractive (or aggressive) female – otherwise, his manners are excellent, although he tends to be a bit excitable. He idolizes Itachi and seeks to emulate him, but lacks the older man’s patience and experience. He knows about the annual seppuku request, but does not take it seriously – it is simply a ritual which he has grown up with.

Takaya has been instructed to show the PCs certain specific areas of the village and castle, as outlined below, and will attempt to conduct the tour as shown. If the PCs demand a change in the itinerary, he will of course do his best to accommodate them.

If the PCs ask Takaya any questions, he knows the same basic information as Itachi (the war, bandits troubles, etc) but will present it in a much more upbeat, “everything is going well” tone.

Attitude of the Villagers

It is probable that the PCs will spend part of the tour speaking with some of the commoners in the village, and perhaps with other samurai of the castle as well. Besides Lord Tokui and his family, Itachi, and Takaya, there are a total of only eight other samurai in Shiro Hatsui – the rest have been sent away to fight the war with the Dragon.

Nearly everyone in this district is aware that, while Shiba Tokui is a good and honorable lord, it is the efforts of the karo, Shiba Itachi, which have brought

prosperity and recovery from war. However, nearly everyone is also aware of Itachi's annual requests for seppuku. If PCs ask about the history of this province, they will certainly learn of Itachi's efforts at rebuilding from the war – but if they ask the right questions, they may also learn about his desire to end his life. What they make of this will be up to them.

The Tour, Part One: The Rice Fields

The rice fields of Shiro Hatsui are laid out in a precise fashion. Clearly, great care has been taken to best utilize the natural terrain and maximize the flow of water.

If the PCs talk to any of the peasants about the rice fields, they can learn that the fields were largely destroyed during the war thirty years ago. Shiba Itachi worked extensively with the headman and the senior farmers to rebuild the rice fields to make optimal use of the land. Itachi decreed it was not enough to match the old production levels – they had to exceed them, so that the farmers could produce a solid surplus. “It has stood us in good stead during the occasional lean year, samurai-sama.”

The Tour, Part Two: The Marketplace

The center of the village is a thriving market. Although not on the same level as the huge markets of the Daidoji and Yasuki cities, this is nonetheless a flourishing trade center, with merchants from half a dozen Clans bargaining and exchanging goods.

If the PCs talk to any of the local Phoenix merchants, they can learn that the current thriving prosperity dates from a little over twenty years ago, when Shiba Itachi invited four prominent and wealthy merchants to relocate to Shiro Hatsui. Acting on their advice, Itachi took a variety of steps to encourage commerce, including improvements to the roads and a more rational tax schedule.

Commerce is normally considered a dishonorable activity for a samurai, and even the hero-worshipping Shiba Takaya will be a little surprised to find that Itachi involved himself in such matters. However, there is no denying that the increase in commerce has benefited the region.

The Tour, Part Three: The Craftsmen

There are four major craftsmen's businesses in Shiro Hatsui's town: a Sake Works, a Mill and Granary, a Silk Works, and a Weapon-Smith. All four are busy and successful. About a third of what they produce is used locally, while the rest is sold as trade goods to merchants.

If the PCs speak with the workers and craftsmen in these places, they can learn that none of the previous businesses survived the war. Shiba Itachi arranged for villagers to be apprenticed to other towns, and had these buildings erected during the years they were absent for training. This allowed the town to get all of its businesses back up and running within five years, instead of slowly recovering over generations.

The Tour, Part Four: The Artisan House

After Shiba Takaya has shown the PCs these various signs of prosperous commerce, he will draw attention to a large building which is still under construction. *“Lord Shiba Tokui wishes to be known as a patron of the arts, as well as a successful administrator of his province. Shiba Itachi-san has arranged the construction of this fine building. When it is finished, it will be a place for the finest artists, sculptors, painters and poets of the Empire to gather and share their art. Itachi-sama has already arranged invitations to several of the Kakita artisans, and has sought the advice of the famed Imperial architect Kaiu Kaori in its construction.”*

The building is clearly designed to be both beautiful and functional, and any PC with an artistic background or training will clearly see that it would be a harmonious and inspirational place to work.

The Tour, Part Five: The Shrine to Ebisu

At the edge of the town, next to the rice fields, sits a modest but well-built single-story shrine. Two middle-aged monks are at work, one of them sweeping the path which leads to the door, while the other polishes the wooden pillars which hold up the door-lintel.

The two monks are friendly and helpful, and welcome all visitors to their shrine. Inside, the shrine is simple but perfectly clean and completely harmonious. At the center of the shrine stands a polished wooden statue to

Ebisu, the Fortune of Honest Work, holding a peasant's rake on one shoulder.

If the PCs speak with the monks or with Shiba Takaya, they can learn that this shrine was one of the first structures built after the war. Previously, the village shrine had venerated Inari, the Fortune of Rice, but Shiba Itachi proclaimed that the work of rebuilding would require the favor of Ebisu above all. In later years, when the town was prosperous, there was some suggestion that the shrine should be expanded, but the monks suggested to Itachi that the fortune Ebisu would prefer that they keep the shrine a humble place, befitting the simple labor which had restored their prosperity. "Itachi-sama spent some time with us in prayer and contemplation, and agreed that lavishing wealth on the shrine would be an insult to Ebisu's blessings."

Shiba Takaya will mention that every year, on the anniversary of the peace accord which ended the conflict with the Lion, all the local commoners gather around the shrine for a speech from the daimyo, followed by a celebration with dancing, music, and song. "That is their way of venerating the Fortune, and remembering that the present prosperity is a precious gift."

The Tour, Part Six: The Town Garden

Six years ago, Itachi commissioned a public garden to be made in the center of the town. Although it lacks the lush splendor of gardens in Crane lands, it is nevertheless a place of beauty and harmony.

The garden is open to the entire public, and the PCs will see peasant woman and young children passing through the place, enjoying the scenery, or holding lessons on sewing and embroidery. The PCs might also see a lone samurai from the castle, meditating in one of the garden's more tranquil corners.

The Tour, Part Seven: The Castle Dojo

Located immediately outside the main castle, the dojo is a large building constructed in a plain, utilitarian, almost Lion-like style. Takaya will explain that the dojo was rebuilt immediately after the war, since it was felt that training new bushi was vitally important to the safety of the region. In order to divert the minimum funds from restoring the town, it was built in the simplest style, with no ornamentation or needless luxury.

While the PCs are here, they will see two bushi receiving instruction from a sensei. However, they are not sparring with weapons – instead, the sensei is delivering a lecture on Rokugani law and the habits of criminals. If the PCs ask about this, or pause to watch, Shiba Takaya will explain that, with the region growing more prosperous, Shiba Itachi felt it would be a good idea for the local samurai to receive training and instruction from an experienced magistrate. The magistrate is from the provincial capital and is here at Itachi's request.

The Tour, Part Eight: The Castle Library

The castle library is located on the second floor, and is a large, well-lit room with many high windows. Scrolls are stacked and organized on many large wooden shelves. You notice that the heavy wooden beams which support the roof still have scorch marks, reminders of the battle from thirty years ago.

Three scribes are seated in the room, busily working on low writing tables. They appear to be copying scrolls, and are so engrossed in their work that they do not even notice your presence.

Takaya will tell the PCs that the library was badly damaged during the brief siege, when several fire arrows came in through a window shattered by siege weapons. Many of the scrolls here were damaged or lost. Shiba Itachi had the surviving scrolls sent away to another castle until the library could be repaired. He also insisted they keep some of the burned support beams when the library was repaired. "Itachi-sama said the purpose of a library is to teach us the lessons of the past so that we understand the path of the future. The burned beams teach just as important a lesson as any scroll, he said."

Recently, as the library has begun to approach its former excellence, Itachi has allocated funds to make copies of the scrolls here, so that a second set can be maintained elsewhere. (This is what the scribes are doing.) In this way, no future war or disaster will cost the Empire precious knowledge.

The library concludes the tour. Shiba Takaya will show the PCs anything else which might interest them, and will answer any questions he can, before leading them inside to prepare for dinner.

Scene 4: Dinner and a Request

The PCs will be introduced to Shiba Tokui, the daimyo of Shiro Hatsui, immediately prior to dinner. The daimyo is a pleasant, well-dressed, slightly plump man in early middle age, with a smooth face and ready smile. Clearly not a warrior, and a bit out of his depth in any discussion of art or philosophy, he is nevertheless an honorable and dedicated man who has done his best to be a good ruler to his people. He knows exactly how dependent he is on the advice of Shiba Itachi, and would be horrified to lose him.

The dinner is of fine quality, served with flawless etiquette. During the meal, Shiba Tokui will chat with the PCs, engaging in charming small-talk and asking what they think of conditions in his lands. He will try very hard to avoid any unpleasant conversational topics (such as the Dragon-Phoenix war, or the horrors of the Iron Citadel) and will be careful not to offend PCs from other Clans, especially the Dragon.

Shiba Itachi will mostly remain quiet, smiling and nodding along with his daimyo's words. He will occasionally insert modest remarks designed to steer conversation toward the good conditions in and around Shiro Hatsui. He will also make a point of praising the governance of Shiba Tokui. *"Lord Shiba Tokui has shown great wisdom in overseeing the rebuilding of Shiro Hatsui and the growth of our current prosperity. His skill in choosing which advice to follow, and which to reject, is one which far too many daimyo lack."*

Shiba Itachi Makes his Move

It is probably safe to say that the PCs will be quite complimentary about conditions in Shiba Tokui's lands. Assuming this is the case, the *karo* will wait until the end of the dinner before directing the conversation to his request for seppuku.

The karo's face changes demeanor as suddenly as a cloud covering the sun. His expression becomes one of sadness and solemnity, mixed with a strange undercurrent of joy, as he turns to his lord.

"Lord Shiba Tokui-sama. I have served you faithfully and steadfastly for thirty years. I have done my best to aid in the rebuilding of your lands after the battles and disasters of that dark time. However, prior to that I disgraced myself in service to your esteemed father. For that disgrace, I requested permission to restore my honor, so that my soul may be at peace and my

ancestors' memories not be stained by my misdeeds. On that day, you said I would not be allowed that honor until I redeemed myself."

"I humbly suggest that day has come. These fine samurai," Itachi waves his arm at the PCs, *"bear witness to my accomplishments under your rule. As they may testify, I have redeemed myself in all ways but one. There is one stain left for me to remove. I ask permission for seppuku."*

Shiba Tokui is clearly caught slightly by surprise – it is not yet time for Shiba Itachi's normal annual request. He heaves a sigh and looks around the room, trying to keep his face. PCs who roll **Courtier/Awareness** or **Manipulation/Awareness** at TN 15 can tell that he feels caught between the demands of Bushido, friendship, and his own needs as daimyo. Finally he answers. *"Itachi-san, I have heard your request many times over the years. I have constantly evaluated your performance. Yes, you have done well. But the time has not yet come."*

Itachi's face tightens almost imperceptibly. *"Lord Tokui-sama, if I may. I would ask each of these samurai, who have come here from all across the Empire, to testify whether or not they believe I have earned this right."*

The PCs Respond

At this point, the *karo* has directly involved the PCs and put them "on the spot." It is up to them what, if anything, to say in response. The daimyo and *karo* will both remain silent, and each PC will have a chance to offer their views on the matter. If the PCs have not yet learned the full story behind Itachi's request, they will be free to ask questions – both the *karo* and Lord Tokui will answer truthfully, although each will show their own "slant."

- Itachi will not, under any circumstances, speak ill of his lords (Tokui and his father, Shiba Chuzo). If a PC questions their decisions, or suggest Tokui has been cruel not to allow Itachi to commit seppuku, Itachi will reject their words.
- Shiba Tokui will not actually admit that his real reasons for denying the seppuku request are his friendship for his mentor and Itachi's value to the province.

There is no "right" answer to this situation – it is meant to put the PCs on the spot, to force them to examine, discuss, and justify their views on the Code of Bushido.

The *karo*'s request is entirely honorable and is well within the customs of Rokugan – as a samurai who failed his lord on the battlefield, he is quite right to seek to erase his dishonor through seppuku. On the other hand, the daimyo has every right to place the good of his lands above the needs and feelings of any one samurai. The PCs will have to each come to their own conclusions on this matter.

Resolution

How this scene ends depends on the testimony of the PCs. If a majority of the PCs favor the *karo*'s position, the daimyo will finally relent and grant his request for seppuku:

Shiba Takui's eyes glisten with unshed tears. verge to the edge of tears. "Itachi-san... no, Itachi-sama. You have been my advisor, mentor, and friend. Your wisdom has guided us from the brink of destruction to the magnificence we enjoy today. I..." He swallows hard. "I grant you the permission you have sought so long. May your soul find peace."

Takui announces that the ceremony will take place the following morning. The PCs will be invited to stay and witness the event. Shiba PCs (only) may share Shiba Itachi's overnight vigil in the Shrine to Ebisu.

If half or more of the PCs argue in favor of the daimyo's position, he will once again deny the request for seppuku:

Shiba Takui's face tightens slightly, and he hunches his shoulders like a man facing an unpleasant task. "Shiba Itachi-san, I understand you feel that only seppuku can restore your honor. However, as I have done so each year for the past thirty, I deny your request. Only when I see you have redeemed yourself enough to deserve seppuku will I grant your request."

Seppuku

If the PCs succeeded in convincing the daimyo to grant seppuku to Shiba Itachi, the ceremony takes place at dawn in front of the Shrine to Ebisu. All of the castle samurai attend, as do a great many commoners, many of whom openly weep. Shiba Takui himself serves as Itachi's second.

The aged samurai reads out his death-haiku:

***Life is fleeting
A moth dancing around a flame
Honor is eternal***

He performs the cuts, and Takui strikes true.

Scene 5: A Midnight Visitor

If the PCs helped to save Isawa Uchizata from the poisoning at Yukaimura Village, he and Gojita will pass through Shiro Hatsui's village late at night, having spent the day on back roads to shake off pursuit. Most likely, the PCs will be spending the night in the castle, possibly planning to attend a seppuku ceremony the next morning.

Gojita/Hiroru will take a moment away from his mission to speak with one of the PCs, climbing the walls of Shiro Hatsui to enter the rooms of any PCs who strike him as trustworthy. He will not visit any PCs who have the "Owned by the Kolat" cert, or who have Honor of less than Rank 1.

The PCs in question will look up, just before retiring for the evening, and see a figure in a shimmering white *gi* and hakama crouched in the window. (Remember, the PC is on the third floor of the castle.) A white mask and bandanna cover his head and face, leaving only his eyes visible. A sheathed wakizashi is thrust through his obi, and a pair of climbing claws dangle by thongs from his wrists.

If the PCs have seen the "White Ninja" before, they will recognize Hiroru now. They will also find that it is difficult to keep him in sight – if the PCs do not keep focused on him, Hiroru's crystal garment will cause him to fade into the background.

If any PC reacts with violence, or by sounding the alarm, Hiroru will simply drop backwards out of the window and vanish from sight.

Assuming this does not happen, Hiroru will speak briefly with the PCs in a low, soft voice. ***"Neither Uchizata nor I are what we seem. But we are trying to strike a blow against the Empire's worst enemies. If he had died, my task would have been far more difficult."***

Hiroru will not speak for long, but can answer a few brief questions before departing:

- He will be reluctant to identify the enemy by name, but if the PCs ask whether it is the Kolat, he will confirm it.

- He will not give his own name, but will say that he “was once of the Clan of the Lion, before I saw through the deceptions of our enemies.”
- If the PCs ask what he and Uchizata are doing, he will say only that “we have certain knowledge that our enemies would pay dearly for. We are taking it to the Dragon lands – their reach does not extend that far.”
- Matsu Hiroru also knows a great deal about the Living Darkness, and his crystal *gi* gives him an instinctive sense for those who are marked by Shadow Corruption. He will warn such PCs about the evil which festers within them. “It will try to take you slowly, so that it can devour all of your knowledge and thought, everything which makes you who you are.”

Any PC who shows an understanding of what Matsu Hiroru is fighting, and who strikes the “White Ninja” as honorable and intelligent, will gain him as a **Minor Ally**.

Scene 6: I’m No Worse Than You

Regardless of how the *karo*’s request turned out, the PCs have completed their survey of Shiro Hatsui and its lands. Indeed, if Shiba Itachi committed seppuku, the daimyo will be anxious to see the PCs leave – they have cost him his best advisor. If the *karo* is still alive, he is likewise disappointed and ready to see the last of the PCs. Neither person will openly express such impolite sentiments, but they will manage to make their views known more subtly.

The PCs will enjoy a pleasant day on the road, heading back the way they came. Toward evening, they will come once again to the village of Yukaimura:

As Lady Sun sinks under the horizon, and the blue light of twilight descends, you arrive once more at the village of Yukaimura. However, something seems to have changed in the time you were gone. The streets are deserted, and lights flicker from behind sealed shutters. A faint unpleasant odor hangs in the air. As you approach the Inn of the Happy Drunkard, you see that the exterior lamp is unlit, and no voices are audible from inside.

The innkeeper and his family have no guests tonight, and will be startled by the arrival of the PCs (although they will not turn away customers, of course).

Iori, the village doshin, will not be visible, although the PCs will notice a few shutters cracking open as peasants peek out at them. Regardless of whether the PCs enter the Inn, seek out the headman, or speak with other locals, they will quickly be able to learn what is happening:

- On the evening after the PCs departed, a strange foul odor drifted through the village. Many villagers were sickened by it.
- The next morning, a farming family – four adult villagers and three children – were found in their hut torn to pieces. The whole side of the hut was ripped open like a paper basket.
- The village *eta* family collected the bodies and took them back to the crematorium for burning. Later that morning, terrible screams were heard from the crematorium. The doshin, Iori, went to investigate, but did not return. The screaming went on for almost an hour.
- None of the other villagers dared to investigate, and they were too fearful to work in the fields. A few of the villagers went to the Shrine of Inari to pray, but they did not return either.
- Some of the villagers claim to have heard a “huge beast” thrashing around in the rice paddies and the streams which feed them. Nobody has actually seen anything, however.

What is Happening?

Jinshii’s recent use of *maho* to drive away a bandit gang attracted the attention of a powerful Oni, the Oni no Tetsuebi (Iron Lobster Demon). This creature escaped from the destruction of the Iron Citadel and has been wandering the Phoenix lands ever since. Now it has come to prey upon Yukaimura. Such a prosperous and fruitful village is fitting prey for the terrible creature.

As its name implies, this insectoid Oni is very powerful and well-protected. PCs who fight the Oni no Tetsuebi straight-up, without the advice of Jinshii, will be in for a very tough time indeed, and may well suffer several casualties. With Jinshii’s help, however, it can be defeated fairly easily.

An Extra Day?

If the PCs waited another day before coming here, things have gotten worse. The Oni has destroyed a second hut, ripping the inhabitants to shreds, and has also left the severed head of Iori sitting on the lip of the village well.

The Shrine

Some of the PCs may decide to visit the Shrine of Inari, either to investigate the peasants' reports or for their own reasons. They will find the scene there dreadfully changed:

The shrine has been torn open and great claw-marks have rent the wood, shredding the varnished surfaces and ruining the carvings. The statue of the Fortune lies smashed into pieces. A foul, stinking, greenish-white ichor is smeared on the building and the surrounding ground.

Anyone rolling **Lore: Shadowlands/Intelligence** at TN 15 will recognize this as the trail of a major Oni. Huge insect-like claw-tracks will be visible heading into the rice paddies, whose water has been fouled by the same ichor, wilting the young rice seedlings. Close examination of the scene will detect blood and shreds of flesh mixed in with the Oni's ichor.

If the PCs use *Commune* to contact the Earth spirit in the Shrine, it is very upset, groaning that a "foul thing" has polluted its home. It describes the Oni as a "huge bug, all iron and stone and blood and evil." It also complains about an "old man" who prays in the shrine. "He always felt a little strange, but today it was worse, much worse. I felt ill when he was here." The spirit is not wise enough to recognize that the "strange feeling" is the Taint of Jigoku. If the PCs bring Jinshii with them, the Earth spirit will recognize him as the "old man."

There are no other spirits in the area – the Oni's evil aura has driven them away. If the PCs remain here for more than a few minutes, the Oni will likely notice them and begin sloshing through the rice paddies to attack.

The Eta Crematorium

Some PCs may decide to visit the crematorium after hearing the stories of the peasants. It is located on the far side of the village, well away from the other huts, and close to the rice paddies.

The building has been smashed, the heavy chimney shattered into bits of stone. The eta family who resided here has been torn limb-from-limb, their remains scattered across the ruins. Foul ichor taints the ground and the ruins. It is evident from the scene (to anyone rolling **Torture/Intelligence** at TN 10, **Law/Intelligence** or **Medicine/Intelligence** at TN 15, or **Investigation/Intelligence** at TN 20) that these people were killed slowly, with deliberate cruelty. Of Iori the doshin there is no sign.

There are no spirits near this place. Again, if the PCs remain here for long, the Oni will sense their presence and approach them through the rice paddies.

Jinshii, the Honorable Maho-Tsukai

Jinshii is an older man, well into his fifties, with a balding scalp and thin, gangly limbs. He wears a long-sleeved garment to conceal the many knife-scars (some quite recent) on his arms, and keeps a small kitchen knife tucked under his belt. His face is lined with cares and worries.

Many years ago, Jinshii acquired a cache of *maho* scrolls from a Bloodspeaker who died of a fever. Jinshii had no interest in the Bloodspeaker faith or the raw power which *maho* offered... but his village was facing difficult times. He found ways to use elemental *maho* to bless and protect the village, while reserving the Taint for himself. He has continued these practices for over fifteen years, bringing his fellow villagers health, fine harvests, and good fortune. Jinshii has taken great care to keep his Taint under control, but despite his best efforts, it is now strong enough to affect his mental state – when a pack of bandits moved close to the village recently, he succumbed to his own anger and fear, and used *maho* to destroy one of them.

Jinshii does not know that his use of *maho* first attracted the Oni, nor does he realize that he is beginning to lose control of himself. He believes he has found a way to use *maho* honorably, for the benefit of all. However, since he knows that *maho* is illegal and greatly feared, he has kept his practices secret.

Jinshii Steps Forward

Since the arrival of the Oni, Jinshii has been using his *maho* powers to spy on it, trying to find some way to drive away or destroy the foul beast. The arrival of the PCs seems to offer an opportunity to put his knowledge to use. Soon after the PCs arrive, and before they go hunting for the Oni, Jinshii will approach them.

Jinshii will speak with the PCs humbly, begging them to destroy the monster. “This monster is most terrible, samurai-samas, but I have spied its weakness. There are soft spots in its iron hide, behind the armored joints of its neck. If you strike there, it will surely fall to your blades.”

Smart PCs will be more than a little suspicious of an old man offering such information. If they ask Jinshii how he knows so much, he will claim that he has been “spying” on the beast, keeping hidden while observing it. This is an improbable story, to put it mildly, and if they press Jinshii it will soon become apparent that he knows more than he should for a peasant. Likewise, anyone who forces him to bare his arms will see that he is marked with numerous knife-scars. Anyone with the ability to detect Taint (Moto bushi, Witch-Hunters, etc) will be able to sense his true nature with a **Simple Awareness** roll at TN 15.

Suspicious PCs may also decide to investigate Jinshii’s hut (he lives alone in a small building tucked into a corner near the center of the village). Although there is nothing intrinsically suspicious in the hut, a careful search (**Investigation/Perception** at TN 15) or the spell *By the Light of Lord Moon* will reveal a hidden cache of scrolls, some of them Bloodspeaker documents while others are Jinshii’s own research into using elemental maho for benign purposes.

Jinshii will try to plead that he is simply a harmless old peasant, and the other villagers will vouch for him as a kind-hearted and pious man who often prays at the shrine. If the PCs publicly prove Jinshii to be a *maho-tsukai*, the villagers will be shocked and horrified, and begin accusing him of summoning the Oni (which he will tearfully deny).

What Do We Do With a Maho-Tsukai?

Once the PCs determine Jinshii is a *maho* user, they will most likely attempt to arrest or kill him. He does know a combat spell (*No Pure Breaths*), but will refuse to use it – he will either try to convince the PCs that he is not evil, or simply flee as best he can.

Jinshii’s best defense is the simple fact that he is not evil. Despite the Taint in his soul, he has always used his powers for the benefit and protection of the village, and has no desire to do anything else. He sincerely believes that he can continue to control the side-effects from his Taint. It is quite likely that there are at least some Tainted PCs in the party, and Jinshii’s position

should make them think carefully about their own status.

Again, there is no intrinsic “right” answer to this situation. Jinshii is certainly guilty of breaking the law against using *maho* (PCs can confirm this with a **Law/Intelligence** roll at TN 10), but he has done only beneficial things for his village. Even his one loss of control was an act of defense against bandits. Some PCs may nevertheless decide that he must die, while others may feel that mercy and understanding is called for. It is their decision to make – Jinshii is too old to escape, although he will certainly try to flee if he is facing certain death.

Fighting the Oni no Tetsuebi

The Oni is lurking in the rice paddies around the villager, and will quickly move to strike if the PCs visit the Shrine or start exploring the area. If the PCs wait in the village, the Oni will come into the town late at night to attack another hut – the PCs can easily intercept it if they are laying in wait.

A bloated monstrosity surges out of the water. It resembles a huge, misshapen lobster, its body encased in a gleaming reddish-black shell which oozes foul green ichor. In place of a lobster’s crab-claws, however, it has huge grasping hands whose fingers end in massive steely talons. Its massive armored head swivels toward you, and hundreds of tiny beady-black eyes glare at you out of armored sockets.

The Oni’s armored hide is as tough as iron, giving it a tremendous Carapace. The only weak point is, as Jinshii has seen, behind the flanges of its massive head. Striking there with a weapon or spell (requires two Raises) will bypass its Carapace completely – however, if the PCs are not given this information by Jinshii, they will need to roll **Lore: Shadowlands/Perception** at TN 20 or **Battle/Perception** at TN 25 to spot the weak point.

If the PCs are not able to find the weak spot, the Oni no Tetsuebi will be an extremely dangerous foe. Thankfully, although the Oni is hugely powerful, it is also slow, moving at only (2 x Water) instead of the usual (5 x Water) – PCs who flee a losing battle can outrun it easily.

Conclusion

The resolution of the problems in Yokaimura (whether or not the PCs condemn Jinshii as a *maho-tsukai*) ends this adventure. With their work in Enjaku Province

completed, the PCs are free to continue their work of surveying the conditions in Phoenix lands. Their route now lies north, toward the Asako territories, where the “Iron Ghoul” bandits are on the rampage. Those matters will be resolved in the final chapter of Shadows of an Iron Citadel: “A Last Wish.”

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:	1 XP
Good role-playing:	1-2 XP
PCs save Yukaimura from the Oni:	1 XP

Total Possible Experience: 4 XP

Honor

None intrinsically awarded, although individual PCs may gain or lose Honor based on their actions and choices.

Glory

Again, none intrinsically awarded, but PCs might gain or lose Glory based on individual actions.

Other Awards/Penalties

PCs who earned the trust of Matsu Hiroru gain the advantage **Minor Ally: The White Ninja**.

Appendix: NPCs and Monsters

Typical Peasant (use interchangeably)

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

TN to be Hit: 10

School/Rank: None

Honor/Glory: 1.3/0

Skills: Athletics 2, Craft (farming) 4, Hunting 1, Nofujutsu (peasant weapons) 2, Stealth 2

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (heimin)

Equipment: Sandals, clothing, peasant weapon (1k1 or 0k2).

Matsu Hiroru, the “White Ninja”

FIRE 4	AIR 4 Reflexes 5
EARTH 3 Willpower 4	WATER 3 Perception 5
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 25 (30 in Light Armor, +15 when wearing White Ninja outfit)

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 4

Honor/Glory: 1.2/1.5

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 4, Etiquette 1, Forgery 3, Hunting 6, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation 4, Jiu-jutsu (Kaze-do) 7, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu 7, Locksmith 5, Lore (Kolats) 3, Lore (Ninja) 6, Manipulation 7, Mimic 6, Ninjutsu 7, Oratory 3, Poison 2, Seduction 3, Sincerity 6, Sleight of Hand 3, Stealth 5, Tantojutsu 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Blackmail (several), Crafty, Quick/Dark Secrets (many), Major Enemies (many).

Equipment: As “Gojita the ronin,” Hiroru wears a grubby kimono and carries a daisho set (the blades are of Fine quality, +1 unkept damage die each). Beneath the armor he wears his crystal “White Ninja” outfit, which grants the following benefits: +15 to TN to be hit, +10 to rolls to resist Shadow Corruption, cannot be seen by anyone with 3 or more points of Shadow Corruption unless he wishes to be, and can spend a Void point to “go chameleon” and

fade into the landscape (**Hunting/Perception** at TN 30 to spot him in this state).

Isawa Uchizata, Kolat Defector

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

TN to be Hit: 25

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Air) 3

Honor/Glory: 1.4/4.6

Skills: Acting 4, Calligraphy 5, Courtier 4, Etiquette 3, Lore (Kolats) 5, Lore (Shugenja) 4, Meditation 5, Research 7, Sincerity 4, Shintao 5, Spellcraft 5, Tantojutsu 3, Theology 5.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Air 1) *Nature’s Touch, Quiescence of Air, Wind-Born Slumbers*, (Air 2) *Benten’s Touch, Echoes of a Breeze, Mists of Illusion*, (Air 3) *Forgotten Murmurs*, (Air 4) *Symbol of Air*, (Water 1) *Path to Inner Peace, Reflections of Pan Ku, Reversal of Fortunes, Sympathetic Energies*, (Fire 1) *Extinguish*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Ally (the White Ninja)/Dark Secret (Kolats), Forbidden Lore, Sworn Enemy (Kolats).

Equipment: Kimono, tanto, scroll satchel, traveling pack.

Shiba Itachi, Guilt-Haunted Karo

FIRE 4 Intelligence 5	AIR 4
EARTH 3 Willpower 4	WATER 3 Perception 4
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 20 (27 in armor)

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 3

Honor/Glory: 4.4/5.3

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 1, Calligraphy 4, Commerce 2, Courtier 3, Defense 4, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 5, History 4, Iaijutsu 3, Jiu-jutsu (hand-to-hand) 3, Kenjutsu 4, Law 3, Manipulation 3, Meditation 5, Poetry 3, Shintao 4, Sincerity 5, Theology 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Gentry, Higher Purpose (restore his Honor), Social Position (karo), True Friend (Shiba Takui)/Dishonored.

Equipment: Fine kimono, fine light armor, fine daisho set.

Jinshii, Misguided Maho-Tsukai

FIRE 1 Intelligence 4	AIR 2 Awareness 3
EARTH 3	WATER 2 Perception 3
VOID 2	

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 1.3

TN to be Hit: 10

Honor/Glory: 2.5/0.0

Skills: Craft (Farming) 4, Etiquette 1, Knife 2, Lore (Elemental Maho) 4, Meditation 2, Sincerity 2.

Spells: Jinshii knows a variety of blessings and protective charms, all of which are powered by elemental *maho*. He also knows the *maho* attack spell *No Pure Breaths*, but will not under any circumstances use it against the PCs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Dark Secret (maho-tsukai), Old, Social Disadvantage (heimin).

Equipment: Clothing, kitchen knife (0k1).

Low-End Stats: Oni no Tetsuebi **("Iron Lobster Demon"),** **Shadowlands Horror**

FIRE 5	AIR 4
EARTH 4	WATER 4

TN to be Hit: 15

Attacks: 5k3 (two claw attacks)

Damage: 4k2

Carapace Armor: 15 (can be bypassed by striking the weak spots, requiring two Raises)

Wounds: 24: +5; 48: +10; 72: Dead.

Special Abilities: Fear 2, Improved Carapace.

Improved Carapace: The Oni's iron-hard shell is extraordinarily tough. It cannot be reduced or bypassed with tetsubo, die tsuchi, or any other ability which would normally get past Carapace.

High-End Stats: Oni no Tetsuebi **("Iron Lobster Demon"),** **Shadowlands Horror**

FIRE 6	AIR 5
EARTH 6	WATER 5

--	--

TN to be Hit: 20

Attacks: 6k4 (two claw attacks)

Damage: 5k3

Carapace Armor: 20 (can be bypassed by striking the weak spots, requiring two Raises)

Wounds: 36: +5; 72: +10; 108: Dead.

Special Abilities: Fear 3, Improved Carapace, Partial Invulnerability.

Improved Carapace: The Oni's iron-hard shell is extraordinarily tough. It cannot be reduced or bypassed with tetsubo, die tsuchi, or any other ability which would normally get past Carapace.

Partial Invulnerability: Normal weapons do half damage to the Oni.