

# **A Walk Through the Mountains**

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

**Part Three of “Shadow’s Path”**

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**Based on an original concept by Keith Weepie**

A search for a samurai’s missing fiancée sends you on a odyssey through the strange lands of the Dragon Clan, to a meeting with one of the most enigmatic figures in all of Rokugan.

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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 Low/Mid-Rank adventure. This means that only Rank 1, 2, or 3 Characters should be allowed to play. This adventure was not written with Rank 4 through 5 characters in mind and cannot anticipate all that these characters may bring to the table.

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

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

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

A note on commerce in Rokugan: Samurai are not supposed to care about worldly possessions, especially money. A samurai pays a commoner as if the money is meaningless, a concession to the commoner's silly

needs. Between samurai, the exchange of money and merchandise is an exchange of "gifts."

## 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 Low-Rank adventure, and has been optimized for a party of average Rank One (but not starting characters).

Although most of the challenges here are role-play oriented and thus not terribly dependent on party strength, a few changes can be made to adjust the adventure difficulty for low-end and high-end parties, as follows:

**Low End Party** (most/all characters have no experience):

- Lower the TN of any rolls to get into Kyuden Togashi by 5.
- There are five normal bandits.
- Togashi Morotsu is School Rank 2, has Strength of 3, and does not have the Spider tattoo.

**High End Party** (half or more characters Rank Two):

- There are eight normal bandits.
- The bandit leader has Air of 3, Kenjutsu of 5, and the Quick advantage.
- Togashi Morotsu has Earth of 4.

## Adventure Summary and Background

Doji Suito is a handsome, wealthy young nobleman of the Crane Clan. At the winter court a year ago he was betrothed to Kakita Namisu, a lovely maiden trained in the arts of courtly etiquette and artistic perfection. It was a magnificent match, and Suito was soon smitten with the grace and beauty of his bride-to-be. They planned for an autumn wedding, to be held during the Chrysanthemum Festival.

Unknown to Suito, Kakita Namisu was not so happy with her impending nuptials. Despite the wealth and privilege of her life, and the skill with which she had followed her family's path, she felt vacant and empty, without purpose, unable to find meaning in a life which seemed little more than artifice.

A few months before her scheduled marriage, Namisu accompanied her parents on a diplomatic trip to the Dragon mountains, visiting the lands of the Kitsuki family. While they were there, she went walking in the gardens of their castle... and met a strange man in armor, a man whose golden glowing eyes seemed to look straight into her soul.

That evening, Kakita Namisu left Shiro Kitsuki to become Togashi Namisu, the newest of the Ise Zumi.

Her parents were left to explain why their daughter had disappeared a few months before her scheduled wedding. In an attempt to save face, they claimed that Namisu had suffered a fatal fall on the sides of the notorious Dragon mountains, and offered the hand of their younger daughter, Ekiko, in place of Namisu.

But Suito was not satisfied with the offer. He was suspicious of the family's claims, and of the almost desperate eagerness with which they tried to forget about Namisu. Conducting his own investigation, the young Crane soon learned that Namisu was not dead – her parents had, for some unknown reason, left her behind in Dragon lands.

Suito desperately wants to know what has become of his betrothed. The PCs are his chosen means of learning the truth. In the course of investigating the “disappearance” of Kakita Namisu, the PCs will fall

victim to the strange powers of the Dragon lands, and find themselves repeating the same cycle of events over and over. They are caught in a karmic dead-end – one which they can escape only when they serve another purpose.

## The Truth

For a thousand years, Togashi, the Champion of the Dragon Clan, has held the Scorpion Thunder, Shosuro, prisoner beneath Kyuden Togashi – by her own request. Shosuro is a servant of the Shadow, almost a full-blown Goju, and only Togashi's crystal prison has kept her from losing her soul completely.

But now, the time has come for the final confrontation with the Shadow. It is time for Togashi to release Shosuro – and the PCs are destined to bear witness to this event. Only after they see this will they be permitted to meet with Togashi Namisu and complete their mission for Doji Suito.

## Introduction

*The humble tower of Shiro Kitsuki rises before you, one of the smallest castles you have ever seen, three stories of simple dark stone. The village which surrounds it is modest as well, no more than a few hundred people tucked into a narrow valley between the steep, jagged mountains of the Dragon lands. The homes of samurai dot the slopes – the castle is not nearly large enough to house the entire Kitsuki family, modest though their numbers be.*

*Your thoughts go back to the task which has brought you here, the task you undertook for a young nobleman of the Crane Clan...*

At this point, the scenario enters a flashback, which forms “Scene One: Memories of a Crane.” The GM should run this as a normal role-playing session, but with a sense of dream-like inevitability about it. The PCs already know they will end up going on this quest for Doji Suito, and the GM should remind them from time to time that the whole scene is a recollection of the past (e.g. inserting lines such as “you remember following Doji Suito into the garden...”).

## Scene One: Memories of a Crane

*Colorful pennants flutter above Shiro Sano Ken Hayai, the Castle of the Swift Sword, home to the Akodo bushi school. The representatives of the Lion and Crane Clans have gathered here, under the*

*watchful eyes of Imperial family diplomats, to discuss the possibility of ending the war between their Clans, and war which has torn the northern Empire apart for the last year. The choice of this castle, one of the seats of the disgraced Akodo family, by the Imperial emissaries is clearly a symbolic gesture, and you can see dark expressions on many Matsu bushi as they stride about the place. The Crane are hardly happy either, however – the negotiations are still being held in a Lion castle, rather than on neutral ground.*

*Representatives of many of the other Clans have attended as well, to observe the proceedings and report back to their respective daimyo, and as always there are a few ronin looking for employment. With other wars and conflicts seemingly eminent in several parts of the Empire, all are anxious to learn whether the Two Hands of the Emperor will remain in conflict.*

The PCs have come here as minor members of larger diplomatic groups, perhaps even as assistants to their daimyo. They have no direct duties or responsibilities here, other than to learn and observe.

The first day of negotiations is a formal and elaborate affair. Otomo Hiroshi, an Imperial historian and the head of their delegation, begins things by offering a formal speech, welcoming all parties to the Castle of the Swift Sword, and expressing the wishes of the Son of Heaven, Hantei the 39<sup>th</sup>, that the war may be brought to an honorable conclusion and the attentions of the Emperor's Left and Right Hands turned to "other, more important tasks." (At which point he makes a significant glance at any Mantis PCs who are present.)

After Hiroshi finishes, the chief representatives of the Lion and Crane step forward to introduce themselves. The Lion, a man in his late twenties with thick mustachios and aggressive body language, speaks first:

*"I am Matsu Agetoki, victor on many glorious battlefields and loyal servant to the Lady of Lions. The Lion have no objection to ending this war, provided that our honor is fully satisfied. After all, it was to restore our honor, sullied so many times by the Crane, that we rode to battle. If peace is to be restored, the Crane must acknowledge their blame in provoking this conflict, and recognize that the territories they usurped have now returned to their proper place with the Lion. With these concessions, and perhaps a gift to assuage the loss of so many brave bushi on the field of battle, the Lion will be content."*

The Crane Clan's chief representative glides forward with measured tread. He is a slim, elegant man with long, beautiful white-dyed hair and features so perfect they are almost feminine.

*"I have the honor to be Kakita Torikage, recently chosen to serve as Imperial Chancellor. The Son of Heaven has honorably permitted me to briefly depart the Imperial Capital so that I may represent his Left Hand at these proceedings. The Clan of the Crane likewise wishes for the blessings of peace to return to the Empire, so that the suffering of the common people may be assuaged and the useless slaughter of so many brave bushi brought to an end. But this war was started by the Lion, not we, and the Lion must end it. The Crane would indeed be willing to acknowledge the return of Toshi Ranbo to Lion hands, but what of the Kintani Valley, which has been Crane for generations uncounted? If the Lion demand that we deliver a gift to compensate them for their losses, surely they can see that the path of Honor demands they similarly repay our suffering, our dead, the misery of the peasants we have protected for so many years. At the very least, the return of the Kintani Valley, on which the Lion have no claim, would be a gesture showing their readiness to accept an honorable peace."*

There are nods around the room at the rhetorical points which Torikage has scored. Matsu Agetoki starts to respond with blustering refusal and insult, but is restrained by a fellow Lion, Ikoma Uso. A long exchange of rhetoric follows, with Otomo Hiroshi occasionally interjecting himself when things get a little too heated. Eventually, there is a break for the evening meal.

After dinner, the guests circulate and gossip. At this point the PCs can make the acquaintance of several of the other attendees, particularly the lower-ranking ones who, like the PCs, are here mainly to observe:

- **Matsu Himeko**, a fierce young bushi-ko. This woman seems, on the surface, little more than a classic Matsu – brash, angry, boasting, and blindly loyal – but underneath the façade is a shy, uncertain woman who dreams thoroughly improper dreams of friendship and romance. Anyone who rolls **Courtier/Awareness** at TN 10 after speaking with her can detect her true nature.
- **Hirotsu**, a member of the fallen Akodo family. This young man (just over 20) wears his hair in a severe samurai topknot and is always serious and self-controlled. He is determined to redeem his family's shame and restore its position in the Lion

Clan. As a result he will “tow the line” with extreme rigidity, and will not engage in casual conversation except on certain specific topics (bushido, the war, the virtues of the Lion Clan and the faults of the Crane). With a fellow fallen Akodo, he will loosen up and express his true beliefs – he thinks continuing the war is a mistake, especially with the Lion Clan seemingly about to rush into conflict with the Dragon and Scorpion Clans.

- **Ikoma Masenori**, apprentice to Ikoma Uso, the number-two member of the Lion delegation. Uso is actually a Lion Spymaster, and Masenori is training in the same secretive school (he claims, in public, to be a simple Ikoma bard). He shows some promise as a skilled diplomat, but has not yet learned to curb his natural instinct to boast – thus he will let drop that Uso, not Agetoki, is the one “really in charge” of the Lion delegation. Masenori is reasonably polite to most samurai, but cannot resist the occasional sneer or low-level insult toward Cranes or Scorpions.
- **Doji Suito**, handsome young Crane nobleman. Suito is a friendly, outgoing man of nineteen years, trained as a Doji Courtier. Although he is a loyal Crane, he does not let Clan politics get in the way of personal relationships, and enjoys meeting people from other Clans and learning about distant corners of the Empire. He does his best to cultivate friendships with as many people as possible; the PCs should get a very positive impression of him. They can also tell (**Courtier/Awareness** at TN 10, or **Simple Awareness** at TN 15) that something is weighing on him, although he does his best to conceal it.
- **Asahina Tomo**, apprentice Crane shugenja. Tomo is a quiet, attractive young woman, an apprentice of her family daimyo Asahina Tamako. She does not dye her hair, which is worn in a long maiden’s foxtail. Tomo, like most Asahina, is a pacifist, and she will quietly lecture any aggressive or militant PCs (including members of her own Clan) on the evils of conflict, especially the suffering which it inflicts on the common folk. “It is our duty to protect the commoners, just as it is their duty to farm and labor for us. When we wage war, we fail in that duty.”
- **Miya Takozawa**, Imperial herald. Takozawa is a pleasant-faced young man in his mid-twenties. He is normally a peaceful man who advocates diplomatic solutions to all problems and

disagreements. The one thing which will arouse his anger is any mention of *maho* or the Bloodspeaker Cult – his infant son was kidnapped and murdered by Bloodspeakers two years ago. PCs who have played the adventure *Occult Murders* may have met him or investigated the crime.

- **Mirumoto Geta**, Dragon diplomat. A middle-aged man with graying hair and a grave, serious mien. Geta is here because of the impending Dragon-Phoenix war, in which the Lion Clan has allied itself with the Phoenix. Peace between the Lion and Crane will mean more of the Lion Clan’s strength can be unleashed against the Dragon, a matter of considerable concern to the Mirumoto. Geta is also concerned about the status of his family’s leadership: Mirumoto Hitomi is missing, her younger brother Daini has been sent away to investigate Shinomen Forest, and the power-hungry Mirumoto Yukihera is usurping control. However, he will not discuss such matters with anyone from outside his Clan.
- **Ide Sowasora**, Unicorn emissary. A charming, remarkably friendly man in his late twenties, short and swarthy of feature – the heritage of gaijin ancestors. Sowasora’s personable manners and perfect etiquette easily compensates for this minor fault, however. He is here to observe the progress of the peace negotiations – the Unicorn have recently annexed the City of the Rich Frog, putting them on the border with the Lion, and a peace between Lion and Crane will mean the Lion can turn some of their attention in that direction. The Unicorn would prefer to avoid war, of course, and Sowasora will make that clear. PCs who have played certain other adventures (notably *Winter Court: Kyuden Asahina* and *Soul of Akodo*) may have met Sowasora before – he will react to them accordingly.

After the PCs have had a short time to role-play and gossip, Doji Suito will approach them and ask them to join him for a walk in the gardens. Once they are alone, he begins to speak, slowly and hesitantly, a sharp contrast to his earlier smooth eloquence.

*“I am... that is, I was betrothed to marry Kakita Namisu, the maiden daughter of Kakita Okubanu, one of the senior diplomats at this gathering. It was a most honorable and prestigious match, and all seemed well. However, a little while ago Namisu accompanied her parents on a diplomatic mission to the Kitsuki family castle, in Dragon lands. While*

*there... they informed me that... well, they say that Namisu suffered a fatal fall while exploring the mountains around the castle. They have offered to let me marry their younger daughter Ekiko instead."*

*"But... well, I find it hard to believe that a girl as delicate and gentle as Namisu could have been rock-climbing. They say the Dragon Mountains can do strange things to a man.. or a woman... but still, it seemed a rather far-fetched story. Further... I have consulted with certain shugenja, of the Lion Clan, and determined that Namisu's soul is not to be found in the spirit realms... which can only mean that she is alive, and her parents are lying to me for some reason."*

*"Is there something... some secret which prevents our marriage? I was well-pleased with Namisu," (a Simple Awareness roll at TN 15, or Courtier/Awareness or Seduction/Awareness at TN 10, will tell the PCs that Suito actually means, "I am in love with Namisu") "and I would far rather marry her than settle for a face-saving match with her sister."*

Doji Suito asks the PCs, as a personal favor, to visit the Dragon lands and learn what has happened to his betrothed. He will provide them with travel papers for going to Shiro Kitsuki, if they need them.

## Scene Two: Shiro Kitsuki

At the conclusion of the "flashback scene" the action returns to Shiro Kitsuki. The PCs are on the road approaching the castle of the Kitsuki family, a fairly modest three-story structure. The weather is cool and crisp, early spring, with a sharp breeze blowing from the north. Peasants are at work in the narrow, heavily terraced rice fields which surround the castle and its accompanying village.

As the PCs approach the castle, they notice an Ise Zumi squatting beside the road, drawing pictures in the dust with a fingertip. The tattooed man looks up and smiles, waving casually to the PCs. "Hello again, my friends. Still on your quest?"

This is Togashi Zunso, but none of the PCs can remember meeting him before, nor do they know his name. If they stop to speak with him, they will find the conversation quite baffling. The Ise Zumi knows all of them by name, and knows why they are here (to look for Kakita Namisu). He will express sympathy for their lack of success so far on their quest, and generally behaves as though he has spoken with the PCs several times and knows them quite well. If the PCs ask his

name, he will smile and remark, "You already know me, do you not? Surely you are not so forgetful as that, though I admit my brethren and I do have a certain similarity of looks."

Obviously, the PCs have met Zunso before (this is in fact the third time they have seen him), but each time they do not remember it. He finds this immensely amusing, and will tease and prod the PCs without ever openly telling them what is going on. He also knows a great deal about each of the PCs (having spoken with them multiple times), and will further amuse himself by asking them questions and making comments which show off this knowledge (e.g. inquiring after the families of PCs with spouses or children, asking how they are doing with personal goals or quests, etc).

Zunso will eventually break off his conversation and allow the PCs to proceed to Shiro Kitsuki, but hangs around to watch what happens next. If need be, he can point the PCs toward the next leg of their journey.

## Going to the Castle

It is usually the custom for travelers to pay a visit to the local castle, especially if they are strangers visiting to perform some task or duty. Assuming (as is likely) the PCs decide to follow this custom, they will approach the gates of Shiro Kitsuki to find a single bushi standing guard outside. The samurai bows politely. "Greetings, honored samurai. I am Kitsuki Otojiro. Where have you come from, and how may the Kitsuki assist you?"

Assuming the PCs answer honestly, the guard looks surprised. "You have only come from the Lion lands? From the signs of hard traveling I would have assumed that you had journeyed much farther than that." If the PCs answer dishonestly, he will astound them with a display of logical deduction, explaining why their story must be false, and then asking why they felt the need to deceive him. He does not take offense at the PCs for lying – Otojiro has a slightly playful approach to such things.

Regardless, Otojiro will eventually learn why the PCs are here (to look for Kakita Namisu). He summons a servant to deliver their chops to the family daimyo, Kitsuki Yasu. In the meantime, he will volunteer that he does not recognize the name "Kakita Namisu," but recalls that there was a Kakita diplomatic mission here a few months ago. If the PCs wonder whether this could be the same mission, they find that they do not remember exactly how long ago it was that Doji Suito reported his betrothed had visited the Dragon Clan.

Eventually, the servant will return, looking unhappy and bowing apologetically. ***“I must apologize, honored samurai. My master Kitsuki Yasu bids me tell you that he has no time to see you again, nor any further effort to spare on your foolish task. He suggests that you travel on to the lands of the Mirumoto, and seek their assistance.”***

Neither the servant nor Kitsuki Otojiro will be able to clarify these mysterious remarks. If the PCs inquire about traveling to Mirumoto lands, Otojiro will helpfully explain that the Daimyo’s Road leads east to Shiro Mirumoto and beyond. “I must apologize – perhaps my lord Yasu-sama is too distracted with other matters. As you may know, war looms with the Phoenix and the Lion, and this occupies much of our time and effort now.”

## Tracking Kakita Namisu

The PCs can, if they wish, ask around among the local commoners and random samurai, looking for anyone who remembers a Kakita woman. Kitsuki Otojiro does not specifically remember her, of course, but he is quite certain he would recall if such a woman had died while rock-climbing. “We are a small family, you see, and that would be a very large incident.” He encourages the PCs to question others, if they wish, although due to Kitsuki Yasu’s command they will not be allowed inside the castle unless they are of the Kitsuki family themselves.

- If the PCs question the local commoners, they can roll **Hisomu/Awareness** at TN 10, **Sincerity/Awareness** at TN 15, or **Simple Awareness** at TN 20 (or spend 2 bu on bribes) to find some commoners who remember seeing a “pretty woman in blue” walking through the foothills in the company of a “mighty Dragon warrior.” They did not see where the pair went.
- If the PCs question the local samurai (other than Otojiro), they can roll **Courtier/Awareness** at TN 10, **Sincerity/Awareness** at TN 15, or **Simple Awareness** at TN 20 to find a couple of samurai who remember seeing a “beautiful maiden of the Crane Clan” speaking with a “Dragon samurai in magnificent full armor.” Later, the two were seen traveling together to the north. The Kitsuki will speculate that they were traveling to Kyuden Togashi. “If so, I doubt you will be able to follow them, samurai-san. That road does not reveal itself to many.”

- Questioned carefully about this “Dragon samurai,” the Kitsuki will reluctantly admit that he resembled descriptions of the Clan’s seldom-seen Champion, Togashi Yokuni. If the PCs seek more details, they suggest asking an Ise Zumi: “They are Lord Yokuni’s servants, and know more of him than we.”
- Shugenja PCs may decide to question the local spirits about Kakita Namisu. There are plenty of Air, Earth, and Water spirits which can answer such questions. (There are no Fire spirits here which were present months ago when Namisu visited.) Air and Earth spirits can both describe a “woman in blue” speaking with a “great one, the Master of these lands” and then departing north with him. Water spirits can show an image of the same thing, but their vision of Togashi is strangely blurry and indistinct – they are too awed to show him clearly.

Ultimately, the PCs’ best source of information is Togashi Zunso, and if they are at a dead-end, he will step forward and volunteer his information. Otherwise, he waits for the PCs to seek him out again.

“I was not here when the young maiden and her family visited,” Zunso remarks, while standing on one foot and performing a complex jiu-jitsu kata. “But there are more than a few witnesses here who saw her leave in the company of a powerful man in Dragon armor. A man much resembling the stories told of our lord Togashi Yokuni.” He will smile and say nothing if the PCs ask him whether the man was, in fact, Togashi Yokuni. Instead he stares into the air over the PCs’ heads and remarks, “All accounts agree that the two of them went north, up the road toward Kyuden Togashi.”

If the PCs look for a road to the north, either as a result of speaking with the Kitsuki, the spirits, or Togashi Zunso, they will find no discernable trail, just rugged hills and mountains. The spirits here will not be able to help them – they seem strangely confused, and cannot answer questions about a “north road” or anyone who traveled this way.

If the PCs go back and question Togashi Zunso some more (or if they simply ask him for directions to the “north road”) he chuckles. “Ah, no, honored samurai, you cannot follow them directly. You see, there is no road to Kyuden Togashi.” If the PC objects that the tattooed man just said that Namisu took the road to Kyuden Togashi, he smiles. “There is no road to Kyuden Togashi. Each visitor must find their own way to the castle. If you wish to go, you will not be able to

go by the route that the young Crane took – her guide was for her alone.”

## Directions?

If the PCs ask anyone (Zunso or otherwise) for an alternate route to Kyuden Togashi, they will suggest (in various ways) that the PCs take the Daimyo’s Road to Shiro Mirumoto and ask for permission to go to the village of Yushosha Seido Mura. “From there, it is said, a path to Kyuden Togashi can usually be found. Those from other Clans who seek an audience with the Clan Champion take that route. But be warned, it’s a long journey, probably two weeks or more.”

The PCs have no real choice but to either give up (ending the adventure) or take this suggestion and travel to Mirumoto lands.

## A Curious Meeting

As the PCs are leaving Shiro Kitsuki (either to continue on to Shiro Mirumoto, or simply to give up and go home), they encounter a smooth-faced young man in Dragon colors, walking purposefully up the road toward them. A **Heraldry/Perception** roll at TN 5 identifies him as a Kitsuki Magistrate. He smiles politely at the PCs, greets them, and asks what brings them to the lands of his family.

This is Kitsuki Kaagi, a man who has been largely consumed by the Living Darkness, although the remnants of his soul are still battling to hold onto his identity. His features are blandly generic – they could be those of any young man. If the PCs ask his name, he gets a peculiar expression on his face, and then remarks, “Perhaps it is best if you simply call me Kitsuki-san.”

Apart from this, Kaagi will speak with the PCs in a friendly and helpful fashion. If they confide anything about their mission, Kaagi offers them some advice: “The Dragon lands can be baffling to those who are not at home in them. You should learn simply to accept what you encounter here, rather than questioning it.” At the GM’s option, if the PCs are at a dead-end in their investigation, he can suggest seeking the wisdom of the Clan Champion at Kyuden Togashi. A slightly wistful, lost expression briefly crosses his face as he says this, but it vanishes so quickly the PCs cannot be sure they saw it.

After Kaagi bows and departs, have all PCs roll **Simple Perception** at TN 15 (PCs who are tainted by Shadow Corruption roll at TN 5). With a success, the PCs notice that Kaagi glances back at them, once, just

before he rounds a corner and vanishes from sight. His face is featureless, like an egg.

If the PCs chase after Kaagi, they cannot find him. Any PC who rolls **Lore: Dragon Clan** or **Lore: Kitsuki Family** (**Intelligence** trait) at TN 20 remembers a rumor about a Kitsuki magistrate named Kaagi who disappeared a decade ago while investigating the ninja myth.

## Scene Three: Shiro Mirumoto

It takes six days of travel along the winding mountain roads to reach Shiro Mirumoto. The PCs pass through many small mountain valleys, each containing close-packed rice and barley fields and prosperous villages. Small, minor castles and individual samurai residences watch over these settlements. Several times during the trip, the PCs experience an odd sense of déjà vu – innkeepers or local samurai greeting them by name, peasants looking sidelong at them with expressions of recognitions and curiosity, and so forth.

*On the afternoon of the sixth day, you spot Shiro Mirumoto – a huge, formidable-looking castle, at least six stories, rising from the top of a low mountain. Peasants are hard at work in the prosperous-looking fields below the castle, and several villages are tucked in here and there at the bases of assorted mountains. The main road continues past the castle and on to the northeast, toward the edge of Dragon lands. A wide side-road twists and turns its way up the rocky slope to the castle. Another, narrower, side-road leads south, toward the rugged lands of the Great Climb where the Mirumoto do so much of their training.*

The peasants here are busy and have little time to help strangers. A few of them do recognize the PCs, but will be confused and frightened if questioned about it. “If you say you have never been here, samurai, I must be mistaken! I am very sorry!”

If the PCs approach the castle, they will see only a few bushi on the walls – most of the Mirumoto family’s strength is elsewhere, preparing for war with the Phoenix and Lion. A servant meets the PCs at the gates of the castle, takes their chops, then looks puzzled and mutters something as he goes back inside. PCs who roll **Simple Perception** at TN 15 catch the words: “Haven’t I seen these before?”

After a wait, the PCs are invited inside and taken to a huge, windowless audience room, two stories high,



with thick wooden pillars supporting the ceiling. The floor is polished hardwood, smooth enough to see reflections. A tired-looking older samurai waits for the PCs here – Mirumoto Sukune, uncle of the missing family daimyo, Hitomi.

## Meeting with Sukune

With Hitomi and her brother gone, and leadership of the family in the hands of Mirumoto Yukihera at Heibeisu, Sukune has been left in charge of Shiro Mirumoto. He is deeply concerned about the situation in his family and clan (especially the impending war) and has little time or patience for the PCs (unless they are all members of the Dragon Clan). Although he has not met the PCs before, he is aware that they have already visited the castle twice, and is baffled that they have returned yet again. After introducing himself, he speaks abruptly:

***“Have you still not completed your task? What more do you require?”***

The PCs will presumably answer with confusion and bewilderment. Sukune’s eyes narrow and he orders them, “Tell me again why you are here.”

Once the PCs explain themselves (and assuming they are properly respectful), Sukune looks thoughtful. Finally he says, “I suspect you can complete your task only at Kyuden Togashi... but reaching there can be a most difficult task. I myself have never been honored to visit the High House of Light.” He frowns. “I cannot personally authorize such a journey – my authority does not presently extend past this castle. You will need to meet again with Mirumoto Yukihera, the acting daimyo of our family.” He explains that Yukihera is currently at the city of Heibeisu, further up the road, preparing the Clan’s armies for the approaching clash with the Phoenix Clan. He will offer the PCs travel papers for a trip to Heibeisu, if they need them.

If the PCs ask for more information about Mirumoto Yukihera, Sukune hesitates a moment, then identifies Yukihera as an “honorable daimyo of our family” who is guiding the Mirumoto in the absence of Hitomi and her brother. Any PC who rolls **Simple Awareness** at TN 10 can tell that Sukune actually distrusts and dislikes Yukihera, but is far too honorable to speak his feelings to others.

If the PCs start to question Sukune about his strange comments, perhaps asking whether they have been here before, whether he has spoken to them previously, etc.,

he will frown and stroke his chin. “There is much happening here which I do not understand,” he says. “Perhaps it is best that I say no more.” He bids the PCs good fortune on their quest, and departs.

The only way Sukune will say more is if some of the PCs are members of the Dragon Clan. In that case, he will take those PCs aside and speak with them. “You seem to be... caught in some strange enigma,” he says quietly. “I do not know what whim of the Fortunes has afflicted you, and I think it unwise for a simple soldier such as myself to meddle in such matters. Lord Togashi Yokuni, I think, is the only one who can offer answers. You must seek to complete your quest.”

## On to Heibeisu

From Shiro Mirumoto, the road turns northeast, running along the edge of the mountains for five days before reaching Heibeisu. The PCs continue to pass villages and the occasional small castle, and continue to have strange déjà vu experiences.

## **Scene Four: The City of Heibeisu**

***The road emerges from a narrow mountain pass and winds down toward the edge of a vast, open steppe – the Dragon Heart Plain, the open, uninhabited land which lies between the Dragon territories and those of the Phoenix. To the east, on the horizon, you can see the vast bulk of Sleeping Thunder Mountain, which marks the edge of Phoenix lands.***

***Near at hand, your road leads to a fairly large town – almost a city – at the edge of the plain. This is Heibeisu, a major trade hub, where the merchants of Dragon, Phoenix, Lion, and Crane meet and exchange their wares. Now, however, it has clearly become something else. The pennants of the Mirumoto family snap and flutter above its stone walls, tents dot the plain below, and you can see squadrons of bushi drilling between them. As you approach, a pair of Mirumoto ride up to you on sturdy Rokugani ponies. One bushi keeps a bow in hand, an arrow casually laid across the string, while the other rides forward and bows politely. “Your papers, honored samurai?”***

The PCs may or may not have travel papers permitting them to come to Heibeisu, depending on what they did at Shiro Mirumoto. (If any of them are Emerald Magistrates, they can of course write their own travel papers.) Regardless, the two Mirumoto, while scrupulously polite, will also be suspicious and quite

unwilling to let the PCs proceed any further. “War is imminent, and we must look to the security of our lands,” they explain. “You must accompany us into the city, please.” If the PCs object, or try to cite other authority, the two bushi are adamant. “Our orders are strict. All travelers must be confined until after the conflict with the Phoenix is resolved. You may attempt to plead your case to our superiors if you wish.”

If the PCs refuse to be placed in confinement, they will have no choice but to fight and probably slay these two Mirumoto, which will cost them Honor (at least 1 point, and possibly as much as a full Rank, depending on their actions). Other groups of Mirumoto bushi, some of them accompanied by Ise Zumi or Agasha shugenja, will quickly arrive to avenge their fallen comrades. The PCs will most likely have to retreat ignominiously from Dragon lands, ending the adventure.

Honorable and sensible PCs will avoid this foolishness and allow themselves to be escorted into the city. Their guards (who name themselves Mirumoto Togu and Mirumoto Akura) explain that Heibeisu has become a major military center, and the Dragon armies expect battle soon. “Mirumoto Yukihera-sama” is quite busy with preparations for battle, and if the PCs wish to speak with him they will have to wait for some time. If the PCs ask whether there are any other authorities here they might meet, the soldiers mention the senior general, Mirumoto Sanbe.

## Staying in the City

As the PCs enter Heibeisu, they will be able to notice the following details:

- The city is packed with Dragon Clan troops. These are mostly Mirumoto bushi, but also include some small numbers of Ise Zumi and Agasha shugenja. The number of Agasha, however, is surprisingly low considering that a war is eminent.
- Although Heibeisu is a trade center, the markets are almost empty and only a few trade caravans are present. PCs who roll **Heraldry/Perception** or **Commerce/Perception** at TN 10 can identify these few merchants as being from the Crane and, oddly enough, the Scorpion.

The PCs will be housed at the residence of a retired Dragon samurai, Mirumoto Asatsushi. A gentle, kindly old man, attended by several loyal servants, Asatsushi will politely welcome the PCs to his house and expresses the hope that they will enjoy their stay, however involuntary it may be. “Hopefully, soon this

unfortunate war will be over and you can continue on your journey.” If the PCs seem unwilling to wait for however long that will take, Asatsushi will suggest that perhaps they should go back the way they came, departing Dragon lands. “I am sure you have other tasks and duties which await your attention. You can pursue those and return here when the war is over.”

If the PCs want to keep on now toward Kyuden Togashi, Asatsushi will be sympathetic, and is willing to send messages to the senior Dragon authorities in the city. He identifies the local military commander as Mirumoto Sanbe, and explains that Mirumoto Yukihera, the “acting daimyo” of the Mirumoto family, is also present.

## Meeting with Mirumoto Sanbe

If the PCs request a meeting with Mirumoto Sanbe, he will agree to see them in two days (one day if the PCs include Dragon, Scorpion, or Imperials).

Sanbe meets the PCs in his headquarters, one of the tents pitched on the edge of the plains. He is dressed in full armor and seated on a small wooden chair, of the sort favored by generals in the field. He keeps his swords in his belt rather than laying them politely aside.

Sanbe is a short, wiry man with a head prematurely bald. His eyes are a deep, piercing black, and he seems to be constantly alert, always on the brink of springing into violent action. PCs who have played the adventure *Soul of Akodo* may have met him before, and he will react to them according to whether they helped or hindered him in that story. Sanbe hates the Phoenix Clan (due to his personal rivalry with a Shiba daimyo) and will be automatically and irredeemably hostile to any Phoenix Clan PCs, openly insulting them and belittling their Clan. (He is Glory 4.3, so the PCs will have to endure his rude behavior.)

Aside from these prejudices, Sanbe doesn’t really care about the PCs and will be impatient with them for interrupting his preparations for the upcoming war.

If the PCs are polite and explain themselves well, and roll an appropriate social skill (**Sincerity**, **Diplomacy**, **Manipulation**, etc) with **Awareness** at TN 10, Sanbe will agree to give them permission to proceed on to Kyuden Togashi. PCs who helped him in *Soul of Akodo*, or who come up with especially skillful role-playing approaches, can gain one (or more) Free Raises to this roll at the GM’s discretion.

If the PCs fail to convince Sanbe, or if they start out on his “bad side” (Phoenix, or thwarted him in *Soul of*

*Akodo*), he will refuse to help them. “My duties are far more important than helping a few travelers, and the orders of my superior Yukihera-sama are clear.” He orders the PCs to either leave the Dragon lands or wait until the war is over before resuming their journey. The PCs can still try to appeal to Mirumoto Yukihera.

## Meeting with Mirumoto Yukihera

The PCs will have to wait at least five days to meet with Yukihera, unless they are Mirumoto family, Imperial family, or have Imperial connections (Ear of the Emperor, Imperial Spouse, etc) – in such cases he meets with them after only one day.

*The acting daimyo of the Mirumoto family meets with you on the porch of a local garrison barracks. He is seated on the polished hardwood of the porch, watching as younger bushi spar and practice on the hard-packed earth of the courtyard. Yukihera is a slim, tall, handsome man with elegant features, a dancer’s legs, and the thick wrists of a master swordsman. He sits cross-legged, watching the soldiers drill with a pleased smile on his face, and sipping a cup of sake. After your exchange of bows, a servant comes forward and places a sheet of rice paper in his lap. He looks it over and frowns slightly. “Honored samurai, I believe my underlings have already explained that you cannot go further. Only those with special permission to attend the Clan Champion may take the road to Yushosha Seido Mura.”*

The PCs may (as usual) find this confusing if they have not already met with Mirumoto Sanbe. If they deny any knowledge of previous meetings, Yukihera will frown and remark, “The report is quite specific. Do you suggest that my samurai have lied to me?” The PCs will need to talk fast to avoid a conversation-ending insult.

(In actual fact, of course, the PCs have been here before, trying – both successfully and unsuccessfully – to convince the Dragon Clan to let them travel on to Kyuden Togashi.)

Mirumoto Yukihera is a ruthless and dishonorable man who is taking advantage of the weakness and distraction of the family’s current rulers (Hitomi and Daini) to advance himself. However, he is adept at hiding behind a veneer of honor, etiquette, and politics. PCs who roll **Simple Awareness** at TN 20 (or **Ichimi Miru/Awareness** at TN 15) while speaking with him can get an accurate measure of his personality.

Regardless, in order to convince Yukihera to let them continue on with their journey, the PCs will have to be both polite and persuasive. He will be instinctively hostile to Phoenix and Lion PCs (due to the current political-military situation), but unlike Sanbe will stay carefully polite, delivering only subtle put-downs. Dragon PCs (especially Mirumoto) will also be subtle targets, as Yukihera suggests their duty to the Clan in time of war should outweigh a favor for some distant Crane.

The PCs will have to role-play an effective appeal to Yukihera. They can help their cause with an appropriate social skill roll (**Sincerity**, **Oratory**, **Manipulation**, etc., depending on their approach) at TN 15. They can also help themselves by citing bushido and the Tao – these things will go over well with the other Dragon who are sparring and practicing here, and Yukihera is still not secure enough in his leadership position to ignore their opinion.

Ultimately, if the PCs role-play effectively (and don’t commit any major gaffes or catastrophically flub their die-rolls), Yukihera will reluctantly grant them permission to continue on to Yushosha Seido Mura and, ultimately, to Kyuden Togashi. If the PCs fail to be persuasive, Yukihera refuses them permission and suggests that they leave Dragon lands immediately. “We cannot be bothered any further by this absurd quest. My samurai and I have already spent too much time dealing with you. Enough, I say.”

The PCs may still be able to proceed on their journey without Yukihera’s permission – see “On the Daimyo’s Road” below.

## The Eager Swordsman

As the PCs leave the city (either with or without permission to proceed up the road), if there is at least one non-Dragon bushi among them, they will be approached by a tall, muscular young swordsman, Mirumoto Azugiri. Although his build is impressive, his face is rather plain, and several dueling scars disfigure his tanned skin. He wears no armor, only a loose green kimono and sandals. He bows to the PCs, and politely asks if he might have a moment of their time. “I am a swordsman, one who seeks the perfection of the dueling art. It is too seldom that I have the chance to test my skills against those from outside my Clan. Would you honor me with a match? Not to the death, of course – merely a measuring of skills.”

If the PCs refuse, Azugiri will be disappointed, but remains polite, and wishes them good fortune on their journey.

If a PC agrees to a match, they can fight either an Iaijutsu duel or a straight Kenjutsu match (Azugiri is amenable to either option). He will prefer to fight until “defeated” (reduced to the Down rank, or voluntarily admitting defeat), but will limit the fight to first blood if a PC insists on it. Regardless, he will fight to the very best of his ability and expects the dueling PC to do the same.

Once the fight is over (regardless of who won), Azugiri will bow and thank the PC for the opportunity to test his skills. He is clearly happy and exhilarated by the experience, although as a true samurai he will do his best to contain his emotions. He will ask the PCs for their names, what they are doing in Dragon lands, and so forth. Finally, he asks if there is anything he can do to thank them for giving him this opportunity to test himself.

- If the PCs have been unable to get permission to travel farther into Dragon lands, Azugiri will offer to escort them to the Daimyo’s Road which leads to Yushosha Seido Mura. If the PCs suggest that this could mean trouble for Azugiri (by opposing the wishes of superiors), he replies that it is the duty of samurai to assist each other in honorable tasks and quests.

If the PCs already have permission to continue their journey, Azugiri will make no direct offer, but still asks if there is any way for him to thank the PCs. It is up to them how they answer – the GM should reward good role-playing here, perhaps with a minor Honor gain.

## On the Daimyo’s Road

If the PCs got permission to continue their journey, they will be escorted out of the city to the northwest, where the Daimyo’s Road continues toward Yushosha Seido Mura. They will be taken past a patrol which controls access to the road.

If the PCs did not get permission, but Mirumoto Azugiri agreed to help them, he will personally escort them to the Daimyo’s Road. The patrol which guards the road will stop them, but after a conversation with Azugiri (who will cite his own honor on behalf of the PCs), they will reluctantly allow the PCs to pass.

If the PCs attempt to continue the journey without permission and without the help of Azugiri, they will

have to find some way of getting past the patrol which guards the Daimyo’s Road. The patrol comprises eight bushi (use the “typical Mirumoto bushi” stats from the end of the module). They are intelligent and dutiful soldiers and cannot be easily fooled – however, clever PCs may be able to come up with tricks or stratagems to get past them. PCs with certain social advantages (Imperial Magistrates, members of the Imperial families, members of the Dragon Clan, Ear of the Emperor, etc) may also be able to come up with role-playing maneuvers which trick or intimidate the patrol into letting them pass. The GM will have to adjudicate any such efforts.

PCs who choose to fight their way past the patrol will lose Honor (at least 1 point and possibly as much as a Rank, depending on how the PCs behave and whether they fight lethally or non-lethally) and probably Glory as well.

## Scene Five: Yushosha Seido Mura

Regardless of how the PCs manage to continue their journey, they will now enter a region of much rougher terrain, the road climbing up and down the lower slopes of steep, jagged mountains. These lower slopes are forested, but higher up, bare rock is scoured by harsh, chilly winds. Snow still lurks atop the highest peaks.

Villages are few and far between in this land, and the PCs must often spend the night in roadhouses – small structures built for sheltering travelers, and containing little more than bedrolls, firepits, and stores of food and fuel.

After five days of such travel, the PCs reach the village of Yushosha Seido Mura.

*Nestled in between the towering mountains is a small village. The huts and other buildings are perched on narrow terraces and small clearings between jagged, rocky slopes dotted with pine trees. The road winds along the side of one mountain, skirting several narrow terraced rice paddies, before turning and vaulting the valley on an arched wooden bridge. As the heavy wood planks echo beneath your feet, you can look down and see a frothing river stream which runs through the bottom of the valley. A millhouse is perched precariously astride the stream, two waterwheels spinning vigorously. Steep paths – in many cases staircases – climb up and down the slopes between the many huts and structures of the village.*

Aside from its remote and somewhat scenic location, this small village seems fairly unremarkable. However, it is the home to Dragon's Flame archery dojo, which is housed in one of the buildings along the main street. (PCs will have to roll **Heraldry/Perception** at TN 15 or **Simple Perception** at TN 20 to notice the small sign outside the building which houses the dojo).

On the far side of the village, a cozy-looking Inn is tucked in behind a rocky shoulder of the mountain. Beyond, the road continues, but becomes noticeably narrower and rougher. The Inn displays a picture of an arrow in flight, trailing flames.

## The Dragon's Flame Dojo

If the PCs stop to visit the dojo, they will discover about two dozen young samurai practicing the art of Kyujutsu, shooting arrows at a set of straw targets lining the far wall of the dojo. They are observed by a middle-aged man with lean, sinewy arms and graying hair: Mirumoto Ajatori, the sensei of the Dragon's Flame.

Ajatori is a harsh, demanding sensei, and if the PCs watch for any length of time they will see him correcting one of his students: "All wrong, all wrong! You are no Crane, standing up for all to admire your pretty locks. You must crouch, slide forward, the way you would while scrambling through the rocks!" He smacks the student's legs with a wooden staff, forcing him into the correct posture.

Mirumoto Ajatori has little time to spare for strangers passing through his dojo. If any of the PCs are specialists in archery (Wasps, or simply PCs who favor archery over swordsmanship), he scowls at them. "You again. I have no more time for you now than before." If the PCs ask, he claims they were here before, "some weeks ago," and scowls even harder if the PCs deny it. "The mountains must have addled your wits, samurai."

Apart from this, Ajatori will have nothing to offer the PCs. If they mention that they are planning to travel on toward Kyuden Togashi, he snorts in derision. "The High House of Light is not some simple castle to visit when one pleases. Even your Clan Champions cannot always reach it. What makes you think you can?"

If the PCs remain polite and humble in the face of Ajatori's harshness and invective, he grumbles and mutters and finally offers a warning: "There's bandits on the road, west of here. Be on your guard."

## The Flaming Arrow Inn

The PCs have actually stayed at this inn twice before. When they enter, the innkeeper bustles forward: Koja, a plump man in his early thirties, with thinning hair and a ready smile (somewhat spoiled by the gaps in his rotting teeth). "Welcome back, my friends! I had not expected to see you again so soon! Please, leave your blades here, and enjoy a fine cup of sake while I have your baths prepared!"

Koja is a friendly, outgoing man with nothing to hide. He is a bit confused by the PCs' behavior, but does his best to answer their questions. He can share the following information:

- The PCs have stayed here once before, about three weeks ago. They spent a single night and then left the next morning, saying they were on the way west to Kyuden Togashi.
- There have been bandits on the road westward for the last few months. Koja warned the PCs about them before. "But here you are now, so clearly they didn't trouble you too much!"
- The western road is seldom traveled, and by all accounts is little more than a rough trail once it gets a few miles past Yushosha Seido Mura. Koja will "remind" the PCs that there are no roadhouses past the village, so they will need to carry food and supplies with them.
- Besides the PCs, most of the out-of-village guests staying at the Inn are samurai training in the Dragon's Flame dojo. There are also three Scorpion samurai, who keep to themselves and smile blandly at the PCs through their masks. Koja says they have just returned from a trip west toward Kyuden Togashi (they came through the other direction three weeks before). He doesn't know their names – they didn't supply any, and he felt it improper to ask.

The three Scorpions are, in fact, Bayushi Shojū, his bodyguard Bayushi Aramoro, and his chief shugenja, Yogo Junzo, returning from a (disappointing) consultation with Togashi Yokuni. They are traveling anonymously, and wear simple masks and plain kimono which display only their family mons. They will speak briefly and politely with any PCs who approach them, asking no questions beyond mundane pleasantries ("Have you eaten rice today?"). If the PCs ask them any questions, they will answer in the briefest, most noncommittal fashion possible.

If any of the PCs are Scorpions, or have allies or friendly contacts in the Scorpion Clan, the trio will be slightly more cooperative. They will confirm that the road west does eventually lead to Kyuden Togashi (although they warn that it will require “care and focus” to actually reach the castle). They will also warn that there are, indeed, bandits on the road – if asked how they avoided being attacked, Yogo Junzo smiles and remarks that “battle is not always the best way to deal with enemies.”

Although the three Scorpions will never identify themselves (and grow suspicious of PCs who try too hard to learn their names), PCs who can roll **Lore: Scorpion Clan/Intelligence** at TN 20 can make educated guesses as to their identities.

## The Bandit Ambush

The bandits are indeed lurking on the road to the west, and they will try to spring an ambush on the PCs one day past the village. This will take place when the road winds along the side of a steep slope, the road rising into thick forest on the left and dropping steeply to a mountain stream on the right. The bandits will secrete themselves in the trees above the road.

PCs who have specified that they are staying on alert, watching for ambush, etc., can roll Hunting/Perception at TN 10, Stealth/Perception at TN 10, Investigation/Perception at TN 15, or Simple Perception at TN 20 to catch a few hints of trouble – the rasp of arrows on bows, a faint whisper, etc. Shugenja PCs may also be able to detect the ambush with scrying magic – the GM will need to adjudicate such efforts.

The bandits will attempt to open the ambush with a shower of arrows. If the PCs are not on the alert, this first sleet of arrows will automatically strike by surprise, making the PCs’ TN to be Hit equal to (5+armor). If the PCs do notice the bandits, the arrows will be fired at normal TNs as soon as the bandits realize they are “blown.”

Either way, after the initial volley, two bandits and their leader will descend to the road in front of the PCs, while two more step down behind them, cutting off escape. The remaining bandits will stay in the trees, attempting to provide “overwatch” with bows. In order to reach them for melee attacks, the PCs will have to scramble up a steep, rugged slope, requiring one round of movement and an **Athletics/Agility** roll at TN 10 –

otherwise the PC loses footing and slides back down to the road.

There will usually be a total of six normal bandits. Against a low-end party there will be five (leaving one on “overwatch”) – against a high-end party there will be eight.

The bandits are pragmatic sorts who will run as soon as the fight turns against them – if their leader falls and at least half of them are down or seriously injured, or if their leader is still up but three-quarters of them are down. They will also shout out in frustration at having to fight “these same damn samurai as before!”

If the PCs manage to capture any of the bandits alive, they will talk freely (except for their leader, who goes to his death defiant). They remember fighting (and losing three of their number) against the PCs before, about a month ago. They do not remember seeing three Scorpions pass through (Yogo Junzo used Air spirits to conceal their passage).

## Scene Six: Kyuden Togashi

Several days after the encounter with the bandits (the PCs are not sure exactly how long), they follow the winding, barely-visible path through a shoulder between two mountains – and spy the awesome sight of Kyuden Togashi ahead of them.

*Ahead of you, a monastery has been built – or perhaps carved – into the steep, almost sheer upper slopes of a mighty mountain. Thick pillars of solid rock support beautiful golden pagoda roofs, level upon level rising up the side of the mountain. Hundreds of small windows – monk’s cells – look out of the cliff-side beside and below the main building. At the very top is an arched and vaulted tower, shining bright-gold in the light of the Sun. You cannot doubt that this is Kyuden Togashi, the High House of Light.*

*A wide staircase descends from the front of the monastery, passing through many grand torii arches, but at some point the stairs simply blend into the mountain – you cannot see where anyone can reach them.*

### Togashi Morotsu

A crazed Ise Zumi, Togashi Morotsu, is wandering the hills outside the castle. He is a victim of Enlightened Madness, triggered by the Wolf tattoo. As the PCs

approach the mountain which houses Kyuden Togashi, they will hear a strange, bestial howl echoing from the rocks around them. Something about the sound makes their hair stand on end – it has a note of torment and fury that is quite unlike a normal wolf's howl.

After delivering this chilling sound, Morotsu will slip stealthily through the rocks toward the PCs, hunched over and running on his hands and feet. The PCs will not be able to see him approach unless they use magic to gain an elevated view (such as by flying). Otherwise, their first warning will be when Morotsu springs out from behind a nearby boulder, snarling and slaving (roll initiative).

Morotsu can still use all of his tattoos in his maddened state. He will normally fight until reduced to the Down level or lower (or somehow rendered helpless or unconscious). Due to his animalistic state, he is afraid of being burned, and any fire spell (or being hit with a torch, a *Katana of Fire*, etc) will cause him to yowl in agony and scamper off among the rocks. The PCs can choose to pursue him or to continue on their journey.

If the PCs decide to flee, Morotsu will chase after them, bounding between the rocks with unnatural agility. They will need to defeat him with **Contested Athletics/Agility** rolls in order to get away. Some magical spells may be able to assist their spell as well (by allowing them to run faster, fly, distract their pursuer, etc).

If the PCs are losing the fight badly, or are trying to flee but cannot make it, another Ise Zumi will suddenly come bounding down from Kyuden Togashi to join the fight. This is the legendary Togashi Mitsu, who will let loose a blast of fire from his Dragon tattoo to drive Morotsu away.

## Togashi Mitsu

If Mitsu does not have to intervene to save the PCs from his maddened brother, the PCs will meet him soon thereafter. He will come to investigate if they have defeated Morotsu – otherwise, if they successfully ran away, they will find him lounging at the base of the mountain which houses Kyuden Togashi.

Mitsu is a playful fellow who enjoys puncturing the pretensions of arrogant samurai – he will especially enjoy doing this if the PCs had to flee from Morotsu. (A typical comment might be: “I have never seen a Lion flee from a Wolf before.”) If the PCs successfully defeated Morotsu, he will thank them for subduing “my troubled brother.” If the PCs actually killed the

maddened Ise Zumi, Mitsu will be saddened, remarking that “if he had lived, we could have shown him how to control his troubled spirits.”

Mitsu has seen the PCs once before, and will jokingly ask, “Are you finally going to visit the castle this time? Or will you be back next month?” Of course, he knows that the time has come for them to actually reach the castle, and Lord Togashi has ordered him to guide the PCs if they cannot find the path... but he will not reveal this until after the PCs have tried hard themselves.

If the PCs ask Mitsu how they can reach the castle (since the stairs disappear halfway down the mountain), he will smile merrily. “Each must find their own path. Some do so more easily than others. Some never do.”

## Getting to the High House of Light

There are several ways for the PCs to reach Kyuden Togashi. In general, the best way to do so is to seek enlightenment, whether through skill or through creative role-play. The worst way is to engage in a physical or magical struggle with the mountain. The following may be taken as guidelines to how the GM should handle this interlude:

- Any attempt to simply climb up the side of the mountain (such as by rolling Athletics or Mountaineering skill) will simply fail. The PC finds their route always blocked by sheer rock-faces, loose stone that slips away underfoot, and so forth. A stubborn PC who keeps trying over and over again will start to suffer painful (2k1) falls and tumbles.
- PCs who meditate, pray, or otherwise try to clear their minds and seek tranquility may roll **Meditation/Void** at TN 15 or **Shintao/Void** at TN 20 to discover a path which leads safely to the staircase.
- A PC who climbs the mountain with his/her eyes shut (trusting in the Fortunes to find a path) will make it up safely.
- Shugenja PCs who try to fly up the mountain will encounter fierce, torrential winds that force them back down to the ground. Other such magical “brute force” solutions will similarly fail. On the other hand, politely and devoutly asking the spirits to show a path up the mountain will be successful (for the shugenja only – the spirits won't help anyone else).

- A PC who creatively role-plays an attempt to seek an “enlightened” path up the mountain will succeed, if the GM judges their approach to be in-character and appropriate to the situation.

If any of the PCs give up, Togashi Mitsu will wait until the others have reached the top, then steps up and offers to guide the remaining PCs up the mountain. “Lord Togashi has commanded, the time has come for you to complete your quest.” If none of the PCs need help, Mitsu will come bounding up after them and meets them at the gates of the castle.

## Arrival at Kyuden Togashi

When the PCs finally reach the gates of the castle, accompanied by Togashi Mitsu, they will find several other monks waiting for them, both tattooed men and monks from the Brotherhood of Shinsei. They bow and welcome the PCs to the High House of Light, offering tea and rice. The PCs are invited to bathe and cleanse themselves before meeting “the great Lord Togashi.” Finally, the monks lead the PCs up several flights of stairs to the high, arched tower which they saw from below.

## **Conclusion: Fate and Destiny**

*You are led into a large, high-vaulted hall, with heavy drapes covering a series of tall, thin windows. A chill mountain breeze stirs the hangings and makes the only light – a pair of candles on either side of you – flicker ominously. The monks who led you here bow silently and depart.*

*As your eyes adjust to the dim illumination, you realize there is a large chair, almost a throne, sitting in the shadows at the far end of the hall. A few moments later, you realize a man is sitting in the chair, his outlines barely visible. He is dressed in a flowing kimono, green where the candlelight catches it. The light reflects golden in his eyes... or perhaps that golden glow comes from within them.*

This is Togashi Yokuni, the Champion of the Dragon Clan. He will observe the PCs in silence for a time, then speaks to them in a deep, echoing voice that seems to resound inside their own heads.

***“Welcome to the High House of Light. I am... the Lord of this place. I know why you have come, and I will answer your questions.”*** He pauses for just a

moment, then continues. ***“You believe you have come here seeking someone, but that is not true. That was only the path that brought you here. You are here to witness, and to remember. The Lost Brother has allied himself with another power, one which serves his jealous, hate-filled Father. Each believes they are using the other. In the end, mortal men must stand, or fall, against both.”***

If the PCs try to ask any questions of their own, Togashi’s eyes flash. “I have answered the questions which must be asked. All else is unimportant. Now listen, witness, and remember.”

## A Departure

Once Togashi has spoken, he lifts one hand in a small gesture. A door opens behind him, and two Ise Zumi come inside, dragging between them a slim, athletic form in dark clothing. As they come forward into the light, the body is revealed as a woman, dressed in close-fitting dark garments, her skin pale and smooth as porcelain. Her features are beautiful but somehow lacking in distinction – they could be the features of any beautiful woman, of any age between 15 and 30. Black chains bind her wrists and ankles, but as they shift, they chime rather than clinking. They are chains of crystal, blackened and corrupted by contact with her.

The woman is Shosuro, the first of Bayushi’s followers, the first servant of the Shadow. She has been imprisoned here for a thousand years, her crystal chains renewed as they corrupt, by her own wish.

The woman slowly lifts her slumping neck and looks around. Her eyes are pools of darkness, and her features seem to shift and flow like soft wax, shifting between several different faces. PCs who have attended performances of the Scorpion actors will be eerily reminded of their ability to shift their features to match the role they are playing. What they see here is like the true form of that deception.

Finally, the woman’s features seem to jolt and then settle into a recognizable face – impish, pug-nosed, youthful, almost cherubic. Dark eyes give way to almond-brown ones, gazing out sadly from a face which seems too young for what they know. “My lord.” Her voice is soft. “What are you doing?”

“I am releasing you,” Togashi replies. “The time of your imprisonment here is at an end.”

The woman’s face tightens with suppressed emotion. “My lord... no. You cannot. If I leave this place, what



is within me will consume all that remains of me. My failure, my betrayal, will be complete.”

“Nevertheless, I shall release you. This is the time when you leave this place. I have known this since the moment you first came here, fleeing your lover and master.”

The woman’s eyes dart at the PCs. For a moment they can see something there – is it fear? “Who are they?”

“Witnesses. They are here for the same reason you are here – because it was their destiny to be here.”

The woman’s face twists in sudden anguish, and darkness flickers in her eyes again. “Why did you keep me here, if you knew it would do no good?”

“Because this was when you would leave. Because this is when you must face your destiny... you, and your children.” Togashi gestures again, minutely. The two Ise Zumi unlatch the crystal chains and pull them aside. The woman steps forward, straightening. The Ise Zumi drop into combat stances, alert for any sudden attack.

Shosuro turns slowly, lithely, like a dancer, balancing on the balls of her bare feet. Her dark clothing seems to swirl around her like a cloud, almost as though it has grown longer and more concealing from the moment she left the chains. As she spins to a halt, there is a blade in her hand where none was before. Her eyes are dark holes in a waxen face, and she laughs, a terrible hollow sound.

“Old fool. You have sealed the doom of your precious Empire. We will devour you all, unmake the very fabric of the universe. Even the Dragons will be ours, in the end.”

Togashi says nothing, although the two Ise Zumi are quiveringly alert, and look at him for permission to attack. Shosuro turns toward the PCs.

***“Witnesses, is it? So be it. Go back to your little Clans, and tell them that death is coming, cold and silent as a Shadow. Tell them their feeble Empire will break like a reed before the power of the Ninth Kami... and when all has been crushed and lies shattered at his feet, then we will have him, and make him our own along with all else in this world.” Her eyes glitter like stars in the night. “Go and tell them, Shosuro is coming for them.”***

If any of the PCs are of the Scorpion Clan (and especially if any of them are Shosuro or Soshi family), she smiles at them. “Wait for me, my children.”

Shosuro whirls away, into the darkness. One of the wall hangings flaps and flutters violently. Then she is gone.

## Epilogue: Togashi Namisu

Once the confrontation is over, the PCs will look around and realize that the faint light of dawn is shining through the wall-hangings... and Togashi is gone. The two Ise Zumi remain, however, and one of them paces forward... revealing herself as a shaven-headed woman in a green hakama and gi. She bows politely. “I am Togashi Namisu,” she says, in a sweet and gentle voice. “I believe you have been looking for me?”

Namisu will converse with the PCs pleasantly while the other Ise Zumi draws aside the hangings and allows the pale light of dawn into the room. The Sun Goddess slowly rises from the eastern horizon, turning the mountains red and gold, as Namisu speaks.

- She will confirm that she is indeed the former Kakita Namisu, who was engaged to Doji Suito. “I have left that life, and that name, behind me. Now I serve the Fortunes, and the Dragon Clan.”
- If the PCs ask Namisu how she came to abandon her previous life, she smiles. “As well ask a caterpillar how it became a butterfly. Lord Togashi-sama spoke to me, and I saw where my true path lay. All else was merely detail.”
- If the PCs try to persuade her to return to her betrothed, she shakes her head. “I can no more do that than a man can grow backwards to be a child. This is my true path. I cannot leave it.”
- Namisu will express some sympathy for Suito’s feelings, but also a certain quiet judgment. “Doji Suito-san is a kind young man, but one who listens too closely to his passions. In time, he will forget me.”

Once Namisu has made her situation plain, she thanks the PCs for coming to Kyuden Togashi. “Although you could not fulfill the task which Suito-san asked of you, you have fulfilled a greater task, on behalf of my lord Togashi Yokuni. He has entrusted me to express his gratitude.” She leads the PCs to another part of the

castle, a small room where an old tattooed man sits quietly. This is Togashi Gaijutsu, the Dragon Clan Tattoo Master. He bows at the PCs, smiling, and picks up his bamboo needles.

“Lord Togashi-sama offers you a gift,” Namisu explains. “One of his tattoos. Few outside of our order have ever been given such an honor.”

It is up to the PCs whether to accept this gift – some may well consider it more embarrassing than rewarding. The Togashi will not be insulted if some (or all) of the PCs refuse.

Getting a tattoo is an extremely painful experience – all such PCs must roll **Simple Willpower** at TN 15 to avoid crying out in pain, losing a point of Honor.

## Return to Crane Lands

Once the PCs have accepted (or rejected) their tattoos, they will be given a guide – none other than Togashi Zunso, the Ise Zumi they met at the beginning of the adventure. He smiles and congratulates the PCs for finally completing their journey.

Zunso escorts the PCs via hidden paths to Shiro Kitsuki. From there, they will be able to depart the Dragon lands on their own. They will also discover that their journey into the Dragon lands has cost them three months of their lives!

Presumably, at least some of the PCs will want to inform Doji Suito of the outcome of their quest. The young Crane is delighted to see the PCs (he had given up hope of seeing them again), but broken-hearted when he learns of what has happened to his former love. It is up to the PCs what comfort, if any, to offer him.

## **The End**

# **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

(PCs must at least reach Yushosha Seido Mura, otherwise they get only 1 XP)

Good role-playing:	1 XP
PCs reach Kyuden Togashi without help	+1 XP
PCs capture Togashi Morotsu alive	+1 XP

**Total Possible Experience: 5 XP**

## Honor

PCs who attack Dragon samurai at any point in the adventure lose Honor, at least 1 point and potentially as much as 1 full rank, at the GM’s discretion.

Dragon PCs who successfully reach Kyuden Togashi gain +1 point of Honor (+2 if they are Ise Zumi).

A non-Dragon PC who refuses the gift of the tattoo (see below) gains +2 Honor.

A PC who cries out in pain while getting a tattoo loses 1 points of Honor.

## Glory

Non-Dragon PCs who accept the tattoo (see below) lose 2 points of Glory due to hurtful gossip.

## Other Awards/Penalties

If the PCs successfully complete their quest, the Dragon Clan will offer them the chance to get one of the legendary Ise Zumi tattoos. This will be either the Bellflower, the Cloud, or the Cat tattoo (PC’s choice, but they get only a general idea of the tattoos’ effects before choosing). Such PCs get the Honor Cert with the appropriate tattoo marked.

## GM's Aid: NPCs

### Doji Suito, Love-Struck Nobleman

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

**TN to be Hit:** 10

**School/Rank:** Doji Courtier 1

**Honor/Glory:** 3.6/3.8

**Skills:** Courtier 3, Dance 2, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 3, Kenjutsu 1, Lore (many) 1-2, Manipulation 2, Poetry 2, Political Maneuvering 2, Shintao 2, Sincerity 4, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 1.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Allies (Kakita family), Benten's Blessing, Gentry, Wealth/True Love (Kakita Namisu).

**Equipment:** Fine kimono, wakizashi, excellent fan, 20 koku.

### Typical Mirumoto Bushi

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

**TN to be Hit:** 26 (21 without Light Armor)

**School/Rank:** Mirumoto Bushi 1

**Honor/Glory:** 2.5/1.0

**Skills:** Archery 2, Defense 3, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Shugenja 1, Meditation 2, Poetry 1, Sincerity 2.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** None

**Equipment:** Light armor, daisho

### Mirumoto Azugiri, Idealistic Swordsman

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

**TN to be Hit:** 23

**School/Rank:** Mirumoto Duelist (Swordmaster) 2

**Honor/Glory:** 3.7/2.3

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 3, Jiujutsu (kaze-do) 2, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Kenjutsu) 3, Poetry 2, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Higher Purpose (perfection as a duelist), Irreproachable/Idealistic

**Equipment:** Kimono, daisho set.

### Togashi Morotsu, Maddened Ise Zumi

FIRE 3	AIR 3 Reflexes 4
EARTH 3 Stamina 4	WATER 3 Strength 4
VOID 4	

**TN to be Hit:** 23

**School/Rank:** Ise Zumi 3

**Honor/Glory:** 1.1/2.0

**Skills:** Athletics 5, Defense 3, Jiujutsu 5, Shintao 3, Wrestling 4.

**Tattoos:** Dragonfly (adds his School Rank to his TN to be Hit for a number of rounds equal to his School Rank), Lion (adds a number of unkept dice equal to his School Rank to all Bugei skill rolls), Spider (touch is poisonous, adding 3k1 to hand-to-hand damage), Wolf (free raises equal to School Rank on all Perception rolls, and can track by scent, but any effect which uses smells gains a +10 bonus against him).

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Enlightened Madness

**Equipment:** Clothing (hakama and gi).

### Standard Bandit

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

**TN to be Hit:** 15 (10 without 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.

### **Bandit Leader**

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

**TN to be Hit:** 20 (15 without light armor)

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

**Honor/Glory:** 0.4/0.3

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Battle 2, Defense 3, Hunting 4,  
Iaijutsu 2, Juijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Stealth 2.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Allies (bandit gang),  
Crafty, Strength of the Earth (rank 1)/Bad Reputation  
(bandit), Social Disadvantage (Ronin)

**Equipment:** Daisho, light armor.