

# Command of the Kami

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

## **Round 1**

*Part 4 of Shadow's Path*

**by Rob Hobart**

Reports of chaos and violence in the Unicorn territories draw you to Shiro Otaku Shojo. There, a woman who calls herself "Shinjo" commands the Unicorn Clan to war against their own daimyo. Is she truly a Kami returned, or merely a trick of dark forces from beyond?

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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 Mid-Rank adventure. This means that only Rank 2 through 4 Characters should be allowed to play. This adventure was not written with Rank 5 characters in mind and cannot anticipate all that these characters may bring to the table. Rank 1 characters can play, but are warned that the adventure may offer challenges beyond their capabilities.

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 Mid-Rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank Three.

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 Rank Two):

- There are 9 Goju in the Kofuku Village ambush. They will retreat once the PCs kill at least two-thirds of them (rather than three-quarters).
- Skill and Trait check TNs can be lowered by 5 at the GM's discretion.

### **High End Party** (most/all characters Rank Four):

- The Goju use the “high-end” stats.
- Goju Hoseki will attack the PCs if they defeat the Kofuku Village ambush within three rounds.

## Adventure Summary and Background

Shinjo, one of the original ten Kami, has returned from the Burning Sands after centuries of captivity at the hands of the Lying Darkness. But she has not returned unscathed. The Shadow has infected her, hiding within her divine essence while influencing, often directly controlling, her actions. She has returned to Rokugan as the Shadow’s cat’s-paw, and her target is the Shadow’s greatest enemy: the Kolat conspiracy.

The Kolat infiltrated the Unicorn Clan centuries ago, while they were still wandering the Burning Sands. Today, Kolat influence riddles the Unicorn from top to bottom, from the lowliest bushi to the Clan Champion himself, Shinjo Yokatsu, who serves as one of the ten Kolat Masters. The Kolat also knows about the existence of the Shadow, and fights a covert war against it, even going so far as to prepare a secret, last-ditch ritual to summon down the Sun and Moon to name and destroy the Lying Darkness.

Now, through Shinjo, the Darkness will try to strike a deadly blow against the Kolat, rooting out its infiltration of the Unicorn Clan, overthrowing Yokatsu, and exposing its existence to the whole Empire. And the Kolat will fight back, trying to discredit and destroy Shinjo before she does irreparable damage.

The PCs will be caught in the middle of this struggle between two great and terrible forces. They will have the chance to influence the outcome of the struggle, to determine who will rule the Unicorn Clan in future – and perhaps, to save one of the original Kami from the clutches of the Lying Darkness.

### Notes on Running This Adventure

This scenario is designed to confront the PCs with an unusual problem – the loss of all their equipment. Samurai are not supposed to care about material goods, of course, and their daimyo will replace any gear at the end of the adventure’s second round (when their outfits “refresh”). However, in the meantime the loss of their gear (and especially of their weapons and shugenja scrolls) can potentially be quite damaging to their capabilities. The PCs will have to be creative, and perhaps submit to a certain amount of humiliation and

Honor/Glory loss, in order to make it through the adventure successfully.

For a few select PCs, the loss of certain items may represent a much more serious blow – Kaiu blades, Kakita blades, and other such precious gifts and relics are irreplaceable, and losing them will cause massive losses of Honor and reputation, possibly even leading to seppuku. For that reason, the second round of this adventure will offer a chance – not a guarantee, but a solid chance – to retrieve some of the most valuable lost items.

## Player’s Introduction

This scenario begins in the capital, Otosan Uchi, early in the month of the Serpent (the month of Akodo, June, in the formal calendar). The capital city is bustling with the work of rebuilding from last year’s earthquake and preparing for the upcoming Chrysanthemum Festival next month – it will be an even greater one than usual, since it will host not only the Jade and Emerald Tournaments, but also the marriage of the young Emperor to his betrothed, Isawa Kaede.

Clan PCs are assumed to be here to deliver their daimyo’s latest contributions to the rebuilding of the city and the wedding preparations. Most of the Clans are sending a steady stream of such gifts to the capital, and even poverty-stricken Sparrow and the Crab, shattered by civil war, have sent a few token gestures.

After delivering their gifts, the PCs have a few days to enjoy the splendid sights of the capital and observe the fervent rebuilding work. It is during this time that they receive a summons requesting their presence at the Unicorn Embassy. For Unicorn PCs, this is a direct order which would be dishonorable to refuse; other PCs may freely decline, but will be removing themselves from the adventure thereby.

Ronin PCs are here, as usual, looking for work. They are also invited to attend the Unicorn Embassy, where (they are told) there might be a job for a worthy and honorable wave-man.

### The Unicorn Embassy

*The embassy of the Unicorn Clan is surrounded by a high stone wall. Outside of the wall, next to the northern wall of Otosan Uchi, is a large stable complex maintained by the Otaku family, and you can see several of the famous Otaku warhorses being walked through the grounds for exercise.*

***Within the walls, the embassy is a sprawling complex of several buildings, all of fine quality, perfectly maintained, and spotlessly clean. Servants accept your chops and lead you into the main building, which you cannot help noticing seems oddly empty. You pass many silent halls and dark rooms before you are led into a small audience chamber with a highly polished floor.***

The PCs are shown into the room and offered tea and snacks (including some exotic Unicorn sweets). After a short wait, a door slides open and Ide Tadaji limps in. The Unicorn ambassador to the Imperial Court is a short, slim man in his early forties, with a small goatee and sharp, piercing eyes. He has a charming smile and a deep and compelling voice. Tadaji suffers from a club foot, and walks with an obvious limp, supporting himself with a dark wooden cane whose ivory grip is embossed with the mon of the Unicorn Clan.

The Unicorn ambassador introduces himself and waits a moment for the PCs to do likewise – if they blunder and fail to do so, he will cover for their error by remarking, “I believe some of you may not know each other, though I know you all by reputation. Would you permit me to make introductions?” He will do so accurately, giving the name, station, and notable deeds of each PC.

Once these formalities are out of the way, Tadaji will indulge in a modest amount of small-talk – asking how the PCs are enjoying their visit to the capital, inquiring as to their health, and so forth. He displays no Clan prejudices and will show respect for the traditions and accomplishments of every Clan, even those with whom the Unicorn are currently enjoying poor relations. Eventually, he will get down to business:

***“Recently, some most peculiar rumors have been circulating concerning events back in the lands of my Clan. Stories of some legendary figure returning from over the desert. Stories implying that her identity might be... none other than the Lady Shinjo, our Clan founder.”***

***“As some of you may know, our ancestors never saw Lady Shinjo die. She promised to always return to us, and many in my Clan have always believed that one day she might return from the Burning Sands to lead us once more, as she did in the past. And now... now, these stories come.”***

Ide Tadaji wants the PCs to travel to Unicorn lands and learn whether the rumors are true. If any of the PCs already have any knowledge about these rumors (such

as from playing the adventure *Tao of the Naga*) he will listen avidly to their reports, which only serve to enhance his own interest and his anxiety to learn more. “You see, my duties trap me here at the Imperial court. At this critical time, with the Unicorn involved in so many military and diplomatic complexities, I cannot leave without betraying my duty to my Clan. Yet how am I to know what that duty is, if I do not know whether my Clan is ruled by Shinjo Yokatsu-sama or by our Lady returned? Therefore I beg you, samuraisans, to travel to Unicorn lands, learn the truth of what is happening, and bring back direction for my diplomatic efforts.”

If the PCs agree, Tadaji will supply them with travel papers authorizing them to go to Unicorn lands and return. (Some of the PCs may be Emerald Magistrates empowered to issue their own travel papers, but Tadaji will still urge them to carry his as well, since his name may carry more weight in the Unicorn lands.) If any of the PCs are lacking mounts, he will arrange for them to be loaned a Unicorn riding horse (fine quality, +1 Horsemanship skill) for the duration of their mission. Also, if any of the PCs are ronin, he will also offer them payment of 3 koku to carry out this mission on his behalf.

## **Refusal?**

Some PCs may decide, for personal or Clan reasons, to refuse to help Ide Tadaji. He will do his best to change their mind, using arguments which they will find persuasive (he is a highly skilled Ide Emissary, after all). If they still refuse, so be it – they are out of the adventure.

## **Special Case: Kolat PCs**

Some PCs may have acquired the cert “Owned by the Kolat” as a result of meta-game play. These PCs will be contacted at the beginning of the adventure (shortly after their meeting with Tadaji) and informed that the Kolat suspects this “Shinjo” to actually be the tool of some other power, sent to attack the Kolat’s operations in the Unicorn Clan. The Kolat orders the PC to expose her as the fraud she is.

# **Part One: The Road of Lengthy Commerce**

From Otosan Uchi, the PCs route will take them west, through northern Lion lands, to the City of the Rich Frog, a former ronin settlement. The city has changed hands twice in recent months, first seized by the Unicorn and then ceded to the Lion to avoid a war.

Currently, a sizable Lion army is posted here, under the command of Ikoma Gunjin, one of their top generals.

The Lion troops will check the PCs' travel papers carefully before sending them along. They are as rude as possible (without provoking a duel) to Crane and Scorpion PCs, and will also be more than a little unfriendly toward Dragon (with whom they are still at war) and Crab (whose Clan's "Shadowlands treachery" is now widely rumored in the Empire). They will show better manners toward Phoenix and Unicorn, although in the case of Unicorn there will be an undercurrent of irritation and suspicion. The Lion would have preferred to take the City of the Rich Frog by force, and the Unicorn retreat left them feeling disappointed. Furthermore, the Unicorn have also announced an alliance with the Dragon Clan, leaving the Lion to wonder whether the Unicorn truly intend peace or merely withdrew from the city as a ruse.

If the PCs ask about conditions ahead, the Lion will remark that "beyond this city is the responsibility of the Unicorn Clan," and suggest that the PCs ask them. They know nothing about the alleged return of Shinjo, although they have caught the same rumors as everyone else.

Beyond the City of the Rich Frog, the Road of Lengthy Commerce passes through an under-populated region of small forests and isolated villages. These lands were unclaimed for over two centuries, and have only recently come into the control of the Unicorn Clan. As yet, with war and other crises threatening, the Unicorn have little strength to spare to protect this region, and has resorted to sponsoring a small ronin band which had been guarding the area for the last three years.

PCs who have played the adventure *Arrows From the Woods* have passed through this region before, and may remember some of the locales and inhabitants. They note that the road seems much more heavily trafficked now than before (they pass several merchant caravans), and the small villages are livelier and more prosperous. There are a total of four villages on the road between the City of the Rich Frog and the Arasoizuki River, the old Unicorn border.

It is intended that the various encounters along the road should serve to lull the PCs (and their players) into a false sense that this is "routine travel and role-playing." Then, when the ambush takes place at Kofuku Village, it will be all the more unexpected and shocking.

## Wabishii, the First Village

About a day's travel up the road from the City of the Rich Frog is Wabishii, a prosperous village with perhaps 300 inhabitants. The place boasts a high-quality roadside inn (the House of the Golden Leaf) where the PCs can spend the night along with various merchants and travelers.

Also staying at the inn are a Unicorn magistrate, Otaku Kino, and her ronin assistant Oyami. These two women are very different in appearance – Kino is short and muscular, with close-cropped hair and a face roughened by hard training and travel, while Oyami is of medium height, pudgy, and shaggy-haired. However, the two share a jovial temperament and a fondness for jokes and wise-cracks. Oyami is also an outrageous cheat at dice, and given the chance will challenge any suitable PCs to wager a few zeni on Fortunes and Winds. PCs who played *Arrows From the Woods* have met these two before (although not together), and if they mention this, Kino will take the opportunity to apologize for her drunken behavior in that module. "I was younger and had fewer responsibilities than I do now, samurai-san, and I allowed the sake to go to my head."

Assuming the PCs accept her apology (or don't need one), Kino will be happy to speak with them, and can share the following information:

- Otaku Kino is the Clan magistrate responsible for the entire length of the Road of Lengthy Commerce. It is a task quite beyond her sole capabilities (as she freely admits), and she has employed the assistance of a ronin band calling themselves the "Disciples of Maeda" to help her in maintaining law and order. Oyami is one of the Disciples.
- If the PCs ask where the rest of Maeda's Disciples are located, Kino says they are based at the village of Kofuku, about four days up the road.
- Kino has heard some of the rumors about Shinjo's return, but has not allowed them to distract her from her duty. "Many in my Clan have abandoned their posts and rushed home to learn whether Lady Shinjo has truly come back to us. But I do not think Shinjo, if it is her, would wish us to forsake our duties simply to gawk at her. Besides, if it is truly her, she'll come to see all of us soon enough."
- If the PCs ask whether there has been much trouble on the road, Kino replies that there are reports of at

least two bandits groups operating in the area. “It is only to be expected, in these troubled times, with war spreading everywhere. Eventually we’ll hunt them down and eliminate them. In the meantime, we run patrols between the villages.”

Oyami does not have much to add to her employer’s words. A cheerful woman who lives life from day to day, seizing whatever opportunities she finds, Oyami is completely irreverent to everyone and everything except Maeda, the leader of her ronin band (who she respects). She gets along with Kino but has an easy, unservile attitude toward her. If any of the PCs take offense at her attitudes, she will simply laugh it off – she has no desire for a fight, and Kino will intervene to protect her from any excessively stiff-necked samurai.

## On to Boubi Village

About midway between Wabishii and the next village, Boubi, is a belt of forest which was formerly the territory of a small ratling tribe. The ratlings are now gone – the Unicorn cleaned them out soon after taking over these lands – and the PCs may see a few rat-like skulls lying between the trees.

Boubi lies about three-quarters of a day up the road. It is a much smaller village, only about 150 people, with a lower-class inn which has recently named itself “Maeda’s Rest.” The locals are proud of the fact that this Inn is where Maeda and his ronin band first began operating, over three years ago, to protect the area from bandits and rumors of Shadowlands monsters. If any of the PCs played *Arrows From the Woods*, they met Maeda and his first handful of followers here.

At present, there are no ronin in the village (they are based out of Kofuku, and the last patrol to pass through the area was Kino and Oyami two days ago). However, the locals are mostly cheerful and optimistic, confident that Maeda and the Unicorn will soon clean out the bandits and that the land’s prosperity will grow even more. PCs who speak with the innkeeper or other locals can learn the following specific details:

- The bandits in the area are said to be a raggedy, cowardly lot, lacking the nerve to attack any of the villages openly, and even staying away from large groups on the road. Their favored targets have been lone travelers or couriers, several of whom have been lost in recent weeks.
- There was a much more vicious bandit gang three years ago, a pack of ronin who pretended to be Shadowlands monsters. They even wiped out the

next village up the road, Yasui, although it is now rebuilding. (These bandits were of course the villains of *Arrows From the Woods*.)

- The villagers can confirm that the “rat-beasts” in the forest were wiped out by the Unicorn a few months ago, when their armies first passed through this area on the way to the City of the Rich Frog.

## Yasui, the Third Village

From Boubi, it is about half a day to Yasui. The wrecked village is now in the midst of rebuilding, with over 200 energetic peasants laboring to patch and repair houses, plow the fields, and so forth. The village Inn has not yet been rebuilt, but the villagers have erected a large pavilion to shelter travelers, and happily offer food, tea, and sake.

The villagers can report that it is about a day and a half to the next village, Kofuku.

While the PCs are here, a ronin patrol will arrive: Maeda and his assistant, Takuhito. They are riding Unicorn horses (gifts from their new sponsors) and are tired and dirty from heavy patrolling. Maeda, however, will not forget his courtesies, introducing himself and greeting the PCs with fine etiquette before politely asking their business.

**Maeda** is a stoic, weary-looking man in his late thirties. He speaks quietly and precisely, with excellent manners. His eyes are shadowed by the memory of a dishonor he will not discuss. Maeda is a former Lion, although he will never admit this to anyone. He regards his current duty as a chance to make amends for whatever past misdeeds haunt his memories.

**Takuhito** is a much younger man than Maeda, and much more friendly and cheerful. However, he is a former Phoenix who lost his Isawa shugenja to poison. Takuhito turns sullen and mean around Scorpions (he believes a Scorpion poisoned his charge), but will not actually provoke a fight with a Scorpion PC. (He knows that doing so would be to fail the trust which Maeda has placed in him.)

Although the PCs will not realize it, both of these unfortunate ronin have been marked by the Living Darkness, along with many others in their base village of Kofuku. As yet, their Shadow corruption is only at one Shadow point, so it cannot be detected by any outward means. The two men do not themselves know that they are being corrupted, although neither of them has been sleeping well lately.

The two ronin can share the following information with the PCs:

- The bandits have been fairly active lately, and it might be hazardous for the PCs to camp out of doors – which they will have to do, if they are traveling toward Unicorn lands. “They do not usually strike large groups, but a small band of samurai camping out of doors will be a tempting target.”
- The two ronin will offer to escort the PCs. “Our path lies in that direction anyway. Our band has become fairly well-known to these bandit scum, and they fear to strike at us.”
- If the PCs express confidence in their ability to travel safely on their own, Maeda will nod respectfully. “In that case, samurai-san, I hope you will not take it as an insult if we share your road. Our own path lies toward Kofuku Village.”
- If the PCs ask how many are now in Maeda’s Disciples, he will say (with quiet pride) that they now number over fifteen.
- The ronin do not know anything about the return of Shinjo other than the general rumors which the PCs have already heard. Maeda will express polite doubt as to whether this could truly be the Kami returned. “The other Kami, even the magnificent Hantei, aged and died as mortals. Why should Shinjo have been exempt from this?”
- If any of the PCs are fallen Akodo, Maeda will show a certain quiet sympathy toward them, although he will never openly admit his own Lion heritage.

## On to Kofuku Village

As the PCs were warned, it will take a day and a half to get from Yasui to Kofuku, and another half-day from there to the Unicorn border at Arasoizuki River. The two ronin, Maeda and Takuhito, will accompany the PCs to Kofuku, either as escorts or traveling companions.

Camping out in the wilderness may be a nerve-racking experience for the PCs. The Unicorn have not yet built road-houses along the route, so the PCs will have to pitch camp under the stars. The night is clear, with a three-quarters moon. Allow the PCs to take whatever precautions they wish.

The night will pass uneventfully except for one incident around two o’clock in the morning. If any PCs are on watch at that time, they will automatically notice it – otherwise, have all the PCs roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20 to wake up.

*There is a faint thudding of hoofbeats as a single rider gallops up the Road of Lengthy Commerce. He is mounted on a Unicorn horse and appears to be garbed and armed as a samurai, as nearly as you can tell in the moonlight. He rides past without a glance to either side and vanishes down the road.*

This strange incident will remain a mystery, although it should serve to put the PCs a little on edge (which might save them during the ambush at Kofuku). The rider was actually a Goju, although it is highly unlikely that the PCs will be able to determine this.

## **Part Two: Ambush at Kofuku Village**

Compared to the other villages in these lands, Kofuku Village is large and prosperous, with a population of almost five hundred. There are two Inns, the Golden Sun (on the east side of town, where the PCs arrive) and the Crane’s Perch (on the west side of town). Both are of good quality. There is also a geisha house (the Floating Blossom), a merchant’s shop, and an assortment of artisans’ shops.

Maeda and Takuhito will attract a large crowd of friendly villagers, who cluster around to ask about conditions on the road and at the other villages. Two other ronin, members of the Disciples, will be among the villagers. Takuhito immediately dismounts and begins sharing stories with his comrades and the villagers. Maeda will pause to bow to the PCs and wish them good fortune on their journey.

If the PCs ask anyone in the village about a rider coming through the night before, nobody will recall seeing or hearing such a thing.

## The Inns

The two Inns are very similar in their interior design, and the GM can use MAP #1 interchangeably to depict either one. Be careful not to let the PCs know there is anything special or threatening about these Inns, since this encounter depends on surprise for maximum effect.

The Golden Sun is owned and managed by a middle-aged man named Kochi, who runs the place along with his wife Yoiko, their two sons (ages 16 and 12), a young daughter (age 6), and four serving maids.

The Crane's Perch belongs to a ronin, Akuta, a slightly plump but capable man in his late thirties, who claims to be the grandson of a Crane samurai. He keeps a daisho set on the wall behind the counter where he usually works. His wife died in childbirth, and he runs the place with his two teenage daughters (whose looks do indeed suggest Crane ancestry) and three serving maids. If any of the PCs are male ronin, Akuta will try to fix them up with one of his daughters in the hope that she will not have to marry a peasant.

At either Inn, the PCs will be welcomed by the proprietor, who asks if they are visiting for a meal (in which case their weapons should be left in the cabinet by the entrance) or staying the night (in which case he has a maid assign them rooms where they can leave their weapons and gear).

In either case, the innkeeper will be delighted to have a group of samurai as guests, and offers food, drink, a bath, and all other amenities. Given that the PCs just spent a night on the road, at least some of them are likely to be quite interested in a bath.

Other guests at the Inn include several merchants, a couple of burly ronin working as escorts for some of the merchants, and an elderly monk named Tsu who on a pilgrimage to visit all the major Shrines in the Empire (he is returning from Unicorn lands, where he visited the Shrine of Daikoku, and is on his way to Dragon lands, where he will attend the Shrine of Fukurokujin).

All of these people except the old monk Tsu have either already been absorbed by the Shadow, or will be soon after the PCs arrive. Likewise, the innkeeper and most of his family and employees are on the brink of being absorbed, and will succumb soon after the PCs arrive. The only way for the PCs to discover this is for them to test these people with crystal (by shining a light through a piece of crystal – the light will seem to pass through the corrupted individuals). Unless the PCs possess crystal items and are being extraordinarily paranoid (which is unlikely, given how uneventful their trip has been to this point), they will not discover the truth until the ambush takes place.

## The Ambush

Goju Hoseki, the ninja mystic, is outside of the Inn. She fears the PCs may represent a threat to the plans of the Living Darkness... and given the rank of the PCs, it is likely that at least some of them have thwarted the plans of the Darkness before. Soon after the PCs arrive at the Inn, she will launch a vicious ambush.

Before attacking, the Goju will steal any weapons and equipment which the PCs are not actively watching or carrying. Weapons and gear left in the weapons cabinet, or in rooms, will disappear unless a PC keeps those areas in view at all times. Likewise, gear left in the front room of the bathhouse while the PCs cleanse themselves will vanish just before the ambush takes place.

The Goju's preferred plan will be to strike at the PCs while they are in the bathhouse, since this will guarantee that they are unarmed and that their gear is almost certainly left unguarded.

If any PC takes a bath alone (such as a female bathing separately), one of the "serving maids" will come into the bathhouse and, on a pretense of helping the PC bathe, attempt to grapple and drown him/her in the tub.

At the same time that this is happening, other Goju (the innkeeper and adult family, the inn servants, and the guests) will attack the rest of the PCs, using kitchen knives, improvised clubs, and other weapons which they can snatch up at a moment's notice.

- Multiple PCs who are bathing together will be suddenly attacked by the inn's "serving maids" who strike once the PCs are soaking in the large tub. They will be armed with kitchen knives (3k1 total damage).
- Any PCs who are alone or in small groups elsewhere in the Inn (such as resting in their rooms, meditating in the garden, etc) will be attacked by two members of the innkeeper's family, armed with improvised clubs (2k2) and garrotes made from laundry (2k2, and keep doing automatic damage every round until the PC breaks free with a **Contested Strength** roll).
- PCs in the inn's Common Room will be attacked by the Innkeeper and by five of the "guests." The other guests (except for the monk Tsu) vanish into the shadows. The attackers use knives (3k1) and improvised clubs (2k2).



- The monk Tsu is not corrupted. Although old and in ill health, he will do his best to help the PCs, either by fighting the Goju or using his healing Kihos, whatever seems best.
- At the same time that the attack takes place, any PC mounts left in the Inn's stable will be brutally killed, literally ripped limb from limb and left in scattered pieces. Any personal servants which any PC might possess meet the same fate.

During this entire fight, the PCs will notice that sound seems oddly deadened – Goju Hoseki is using her Shadow magic to block any noise from escaping the Inn. In order to alert the rest of the village (and especially Maeda's Disciples) that something is amiss, a PC will have to actually get outside of the Inn. There are two Goju specifically tasked with guarding the exits, who will lunge out of the shadows and attack any PC who tries to flee the Inn.

If a PC has remained in sight of the weapons closet at all times, any gear left there will still be safe and available. Likewise, gear in rooms or in the bathhouse will only survive if a PC is in its presence at all times. Naturally, any equipment which a PC still has on his/her person when the attack begins will be safe.

## Enemy Tactics

There are a total of twelve Goju in the Inn, although their ability to warp between shadows will make it seem as though there are more. Since the Goju will be attacking the PCs in small groups, and are relatively inept at actually hitting their enemies, they will try to rely on the effects of the ambush (catching their opponents unarmed and unprepared) and the protections of the Shadow (allowing them to “warp” between nearby shadows, and taking half damage from normal weapons and spells).

If any PCs have crystal weapons (and manage to hold onto them), those weapons will do double damage to the Goju. Light shone through a crystal will do 3k3 damage to a Goju.

Wounded Goju bleed only hissing black smoke. Slain Goju melt away into nothingness in a matter of moments, deflating like balloons, leaving clothing and weapons behind

Badly wounded Goju will retreat into the shadows, letting their hardier comrades take over, only to reappear somewhere else. They will continue attacking until the PCs either (a) kill three-quarters of them,

while still keeping at least half their own number in action, or (b) manage to get out into the village and sound the alarm. At that point the shadow-creatures retreat, into the darkness.

**Goju Hoseki** will stay out of the fight unless the PCs are “high end,” in which case she will attack if the PCs defeat half or more of the other Goju within three rounds. She will retreat if she loses half or more of her Wounds, or if the rest of the Goju retreat.

## Detecting the Ambush?

If the PCs are ultra-paranoid (or lucky), they may be able to realize that something is wrong before the ambush begins, or to keep control of most or all of their weapons and gear. In this case, the Goju will try to attack all of them at once, hoping to overwhelm them with sheer numbers.

## Aftermath

Once the fight is over (either due to the PCs driving off the Goju, or alerting the locals), Goju Hoseki will depart with a mocking laugh, allowing the PCs a brief glimpse as she bounds away through the shadows. Once she is gone, her Shadow-magic will cease its effects and sound will function normally once again. If the PCs have not already alerted Maeda's Disciples, the ronin will soon arrive anyway, investigating the commotion from the Inn.

Maeda, Takuhito, and the other Disciples will be quite alarmed and horrified that their town has been assaulted by “ninja” – who have apparently murdered and replaced everyone at the Inn. Maeda will question everyone very carefully. However, he has never heard of a “Living Darkness” and will be quite suspicious of any PC who starts telling wild stories about such a thing. “The dangers of assassins and Scorpion face-dancers are real enough without inventing myths and monsters,” he says stiffly. He will also be quite curious as to why the “ninja” targeted the PCs, and suggests that someone does not want them investigating the return of Shinjo.

The surviving PCs will probably be quite suspicious of Maeda, his Disciples, and everyone else in the town – with good reason! However, nobody else in the town has enough Shadow Corruption to be sensitive to crystal, and the Darkness will take no further action for the rest of the night. Whether the PCs push on immediately or wait until morning, they are safe – at least for now.

If the monk Tsu survived the fight, he will treat any injured PCs with his Kiho (Chi Protection), which allows him to make a combined Water roll (his Water of 4 plus the PC's Water) at TN 30. Success heals four ranks of Wounds. He does not inquire as to what it is they just fought, although he will listen with interest to anything the PCs tell him. The next morning, he will wish them good fortune and depart, heading east toward his next goal.

## Lost Equipment

It is quite likely that the PCs have lost some (perhaps even all) of their equipment. This will no doubt be quite distressing, not only for practical reasons (no weapons, spells can't be cast unless they are Innate Abilities) but also due to the potential loss of Honor and prestige from losing daisho sets and other Clan property and heirlooms.

For Clan PCs, the loss is not completely devastating: equipment which is part of their starting Outfit will regenerate at the end of the adventure (the conclusion of Round Two), as their daimyo issues them new gear. Ronin will be in a much more difficult situation, of course, since their Outfit does not refresh at the end of every adventure. And unique gifts and prized items will not refresh.

The PCs will have an opportunity to recover some of their missing gear in Round Two. Therefore, Honor and Glory charges for losing equipment will be deferred until the conclusion of Round Two. The GM should inform the PCs that they will not pay the price for their loss until the conclusion of the adventure – this will give them a clue that they have a chance to recover some of their losses.

## Part Three: On to Shiro Shinjo

From Kofuku village, the PCs cross the Arasoizuki River on a ferry, then follow the road another day to the City Between the Rivers, a large and prosperous settlement located at the juncture of the Drowned Merchant and Firefly Rivers. About 3,000 people live here, busily working in trade and commerce, and the city is watched over by a large fortified castle which commands the river forks.

## Replacement Gear?

Regardless of Outfit status, until the end of Round Two, the PCs will have to deal with the adventure without some or all of their normal gear. Basics such

as clothing and shoes will be readily available in Kofuku Village – Maeda will order the locals to supply such things free of charge – but other gear will be harder to replace. The following provides some guidelines to different approaches which the PCs might take:

- **Buying normal equipment.** The merchant's shop in Kofuku has an assortment of gear which could be useful to the PCs. Besides basics such as clothing and traveling packs, the store has high-quality paper (1 bu for a pouch of 5 sheets), writing kits (1 bu), medical kits (3 bu for standard quality), and lanterns, both gaijin (4 bu) and Rokugani (1 bu).
- **Buying weapons.** The local merchant at Kofuku has only a few tanto (2 koku each), a tessen (1 koku), a pair of yari (4 koku each), two foot-bows (4 koku each) and several bundles of standard arrows (1 bu per arrow). If the PCs go to merchants in larger settlements (such as the City Between the Rivers), they can also get heavier polearms and bludgeoning weapons (4 koku for Die Tsuchi, 5 for a Naginata or Ono, 6 for a tetsubo), and even swords (15 koku for a wakizashi, 20 for a katana, 30 for a no-dachi). All of this gear will be Standard quality – the PCs can get Poor quality weapons for 25% less.
- **Requisitioning weapons.** Unicorn PCs can simply force any merchant to give them weapons at no charge, although this will impose an Honor loss (1-5 points, GM's discretion) for abusing commoners. Other Clan PCs can do the same, but will suffer higher Honor losses (2-9 points, GM's discretion) for abusing commoners who are under another Clan's protection. Ronin cannot do this – they will be arrested for theft. They can try to steal weapons and gear if they wish – the GM must adjudicate any such activities.
- **Armor and spell-scrolls.** Armor and spell-scrolls cannot be purchased or requisitioned. Unless the PCs have special social advantages (see below) their only hope of getting armor will be to request some from the Unicorn. Spell-scrolls cannot be acquired at all except for Unicorn shugenja PCs, who can get ONE spell-scroll if they ask very nicely at Shiro Shinjo.
- **Asking the Unicorn for help.** If the PCs seek help from the Unicorn Clan, they will be facing a delicate situation. Openly admitting to having lost their gear will bring on a Glory loss (1-5 points,

depending on how the PCs explain themselves), and if the PCs are not themselves Unicorn, they could easily deliver insult through their request. (“You cannot keep your own gear, samurai, and you expect me to give you equipment that is needed by my own bushi?”) Skills such as Diplomacy, Etiquette, and Sincerity will be very useful in this situation. Also, PCs who are willing to “cash in” (erase) advantages such as Allies or Favors can get better results. If successful, the PCs should be able to get a bare minimum of gear (one or at most two weapons per PC, and perhaps light armor for the bushi). If the PCs insult the Unicorn or make fools of themselves, they will get little or nothing. Also, all such gear must be returned at the end of Round Two – failure to do so brands the PC as a dishonorable thief.

- **Mounts.** PCs who need mounts will most likely need to hire them – they can get standard Rokugani ponies for 2 koku each. Unicorn and Imperial PCs (only) can requisition higher-quality mounts (Unicorn riding horses).
- **Social advantages.** Some PCs may be Imperial family, Emerald Magistrates, or have powerful social advantages such as Ear of the Emperor. Such PCs can get equipment more easily and in greater quantities, both by requisitioning it directly and by asking the Unicorn for help. Imperial family shugenja (only) will also be able to demand a single spell-scroll from the Unicorn. However, they will still have to do so without insulting the Unicorn or bringing too much shame upon themselves.

## Conditions in the City Between the Rivers

The city is in an intense ferment from the rumors about Shinjo’s return. Commoners gossip about the topic on every street-corner. The PCs will find that only a handful of samurai remain in the city itself – among them, a single harried-looking guard at each gate. They will wave the PCs through with only a perfunctory glance at their travel papers.

If the PCs ask around for news and gossip, they can learn the following:

- Everyone knows about the mystery woman who came out of the Burning Sands about two months ago. Supposedly, she finally reached Shiro Shinjo within the last three weeks.
- Although reports are garbled, the general consensus is that the woman did indeed identify herself as Shinjo, the Kami, returned to her children. However, immediately after saying this, she attacked the Unicorn Clan Champion, Shinjo Yokatsu, calling him a “traitor.”
- The exact details of Shinjo’s arrival at the castle, and her attack on Yokatsu, vary from one person to the next. Some claim that Shinjo actually snatched the Unicorn ancestral blade off the wall and attacked Yokatsu with it, while others say that she attacked with her own weapon (some strange gaijin sword), and still others claim that she never attacked at all, only pointed and shouted. (A variation on the last story claims that Otaku Kamoko drew and attacked Yokatsu after Shinjo made her accusation.)
- Stories are divided as to what happened after Shinjo made her accusation. Some say that Yokatsu was slain and Shinjo now sits on his throne. Other stories claim that Yokatsu escaped and is now in the western Unicorn lands, rallying troops to retake his castle from the “false Shinjo.”
- Most of the Unicorn samurai have left the city to learn what is happening, but some remain in the castle.

## Visiting the Local Daimyo

The daimyo of the City Between the Rivers is Shinjo Yasoma, a skilled military commander who was entrusted with protecting this city when it was the westernmost stronghold of the Clan. If the PCs request an audience, he will make time for a brief meeting. Yasoma is a short, serious-looking man in his mid-thirties, balding, with sharp, perceptive eyes. At present, however, he looks somewhat harried and tired, and clearly has much on his mind.

Yasoma can share all the information which the PCs can learn from the city’s gossip, but with the following additions:

- He has received several messages from Otaku Kamoko, in which she proclaims Shinjo as the true leader of the Unicorn and calls on all other Unicorn to support her in place of the “traitor Yokatsu.” Yasoma has also received messages from Yokatsu, calling on all “true Unicorn” to rally to him and overthrow the “false Shinjo.”

- Yasoma does not know what to do about these messages. So far, he has chosen to simply uphold his duty as defender of the City Between the Rivers. Many of his bushi, however, have left the city to join one side or the other.
- Besides the problems with the alleged “return of Shinjo,” Tasoma is also concerned about his northeastern border. The Mirumoto daimyo, Yukihera, is threatening an invasion unless the Unicorn live up to their recent alliance and join the war against the Lion and Phoenix. “As if I can march to his aid when my Clan is in such chaos,” Yasoma snorts.
- Yasoma has not heard any accounts of battles between Unicorns, although he has heard stories about minor skirmishes and duels. “I pray this event will not tear us asunder. One Clan is already convulsed with civil war – a second might be more than the Empire can endure.”
- Yasoma does not know how the rest of the Unicorn Clan is reacting to these events, although he has heard that the Iuchi daimyo, Iuchi Daiyu, is in Shiro Shinjo. “If you have come from Ide Tadaji, he is probably trying to learn what is happening so he can decide the stance of the Ide family. I trust you realize the importance of your mission.”
- If the PCs describe the ambush at Kofuku Village, Yasoma will frown thoughtfully. “There are traditions in our Clan, that we once met and fought things such as you describe. I cannot imagine why they would attack you, though.” He suggests the PCs try to speak with someone from the Iuchi family, if they get the chance. “They keep our Clan’s history and wisdom, and would know more of such things.”

## On to Shiro Shinjo

From the City Between the Rivers, it is another four days to Shiro Otaku Shoji.

**Shiro Otaku Shoji**, the seat of the Otaku family, is all but abandoned – the Otaku have relocated virtually *en masse* to Shiro Shinjo at the behest of their daimyo, Otaku Kamoko. Kamoko has left her younger cousin Otaku Xieng Chi in command at the castle, with a tiny handful of Battle Maidens and male Otaku to hold the place. Xieng Chi is resentful of being left behind, and feels a deep sense of inadequacy toward her older and more formidable relative. She will not show much interest in the PCs’ story, and will simply see their

mission as a reminder that she herself is trapped here and cannot go to see Shinjo.

From the Otaku palaces it is five more days to Shiro Shinjo. While on the road, the PCs will encounter many groups of Unicorn bushi, and the occasional Ide courtier and Iuchi shugenja. Many are heading toward Shiro Shinjo to see this so-called “false Shinjo” for themselves, while others are moving northwest to join Yokatsu. From conversations, the PCs can confirm that Yokatsu is raising an army at the city of Oshindoka Toshi, in the center of the Shinjo provinces.

There will be no further open sign of the Goju, or of the PCs’ stolen gear, during this trip. However, any PCs who already have Shadow Corruption (from a previous adventure) will experience violent, terrifying nightmares of choking and drowning. They will be unable to recover Void points from resting (although Meditation will still work).

The PCs will arrive at Shiro Shinjo in mid-morning, emerging from the backwash of a rainstorm into bright sunshine.

## Special Case: Kolat PCs

If any of the PCs are Kolat, they will meet with a Kolat Unicorn the night before they arrive at Shiro Shinjo (either at an Inn if they trust them enough to use them, or while traveling the road if they are camping outdoors). The Unicorn, a Shinjo bushi, will warn the PC not to meet with Shinjo directly if s/her can possibly avoid it. “If she sees through you, she will kill you on sight,” the Unicorn warns. “A few have managed to deceive her, but not many. If you can, make some excuse and stay away from her, unless you can figure out some way to expose and destroy her.”

## **Part Four: Shiro Shinjo**

*Ahead of you, the rolling fields of the Unicorn provinces lead up to a low hill. Atop it stands a massive seven-story castle of most unusual design. The structure is triangular in layout, rather than the traditional square design seen in other Rokugani castles. Instead of a single keep, three towers rise from the three corners of the triangle, each of differing height.*

*Your road ascends a causeway to a gate in the middle of one wall of the triangle. As you approach, you are met by a large party of Otaku battle maidens, led by a long-haired, round-faced woman. Her face looks like it would prefer to smile, but for now it is set in grim*

*lines, and her hand grips the haft of her naginata tightly. “Halt, strangers! What business do you have in Shiro Shinjo?”*

The woman is Otaku Yui, a battle maiden who PCs may have met in previous adventures such as *A Foreign Legacy* and *Kuro’s Fire*. Assuming the PCs tell her they are here on behalf of Ide Tadaji, she will demand to see their travel papers – then, after reviewing them, relax and admit the PCs to the castle. If they speak with her, she can share the following information:

- She can confirm the stories of Shinjo’s assault on Yokatsu. Although she was not there herself, she has heard the story directly from Otaku Kamoko. “Shinjo-sama snatched the Ancestral Sword down from the wall with her own hands. You know,” she lowers her voice thoughtfully, “Yokatsu-san never carried the sword. Said he was unworthy of it. Kamoko-sama said he went white as a sheet when Shinjo picked up the blade, and fled out of the room without a moment’s pause.”
- Yui can also confirm that Otaku Kamoko remains in the city and has pledged her loyalty to Shinjo. If the PCs ask about the other families, Yui knows that Iuchi Daiyu, daimyo of the Iuchi, is here in the city, although she has heard that he has angered Shinjo and is no longer allowed into her presence. There is as yet no word from the Moto, and the Ide have stayed aloof until now. (She understands the significance of the PCs’ presence and mission to the status of the Ide family.)
- If the PCs describe or discuss their experience in Kofuku Village, Yui will look troubled. “I’ve heard the stories, of course, about the Darkness our ancestors met on their journey back from the Burning Sands. I never thought it could have returned here to threaten us.”

Through the gate of the castle, the PCs enter a wide ramp which circles slowly up the center of the castle, between the three towers. Servants and guards (more Otaku) will meet them and escort them to guest rooms on the third floor, in the southwest tower.

## An Audience with Shinjo

It may be presumed that the PCs will wish to meet with this alleged “Shinjo” (most of them, anyway – Kolat PCs may be wary of doing so, and with good reason). After arriving at the castle, they will have a couple of hours to rest, cleanse themselves, and so forth. No doubt at least some of the PCs will be paranoid after the

ambush at Kofuku, but for now, they are safe from further attack. Given their situation, the PCs may need to request proper clothing for an audience (unless they could afford to buy some fine quality kimonos along the way).

Eventually, servants will arrive to escort the PCs to the main audience hall, which is also on the third level, but in the castle’s north tower. The PCs will not be allowed to bring any weapons or spell-scrolls with them. As they approach the audience hall, they will pass an outer room in which many Unicorn are gathered, speaking in low voices. Among them is Iuchi Daiyu, the daimyo of the Iuchi family. Iuchi PCs and PCs who have met him before (in *A Foreign Legacy* or *Tao of the Naga*) will automatically recognize him – others can recognize him with a roll of **Lore: Unicorn** or **Lore: Shugenja (Intelligence trait)** at TN 15, or **Heraldry/Intelligence** at TN 20.

Daiyu will nod in recognition to any PCs who have met him before, but will not otherwise do or say anything at this time.

*Polished wood pillars support the ceiling of this chamber, and late-morning sunshine streams in from large windows in the far wall. Silhouetted in the light is the high-backed throne of the Unicorn Clan, carved from exotic woods and inlaid with diamonds.*

*The woman who sits in the chair is muscular and tall, taller than many men. Her lustrous black hair is bound in a long braid which hangs down her back, and her skin is tanned and roughened by travel. Eyes so dark as to be almost black look at you with a keen expression. She is dressed in armor which is strangely antique, cruder but at the same time more ornate than anything you see today. Resting across her knees is a mighty katana, gleaming with reflected sunlight: the ancestral blade of the Unicorn Clan.*

*An array of other samurai and courtiers, all Unicorns, line both sides of the audience hall. Standing at the woman’s right hand is Otaku Kamoko, the daimyo of the Otaku family, a small, athletic young woman with long unbound hair and a fierce expression.*

Shinjo is a Kami, a child of the Sun and Moon. Any PC with the ability to sense spirits or ghosts, or sensitivity to supernatural things, will feel themselves to be in the presence of an immensely powerful being. Shinjo is also Shadow Corrupted, but her divine essence masks the presence of the Shadow – normal

methods of detecting Shadow, such as shining a light through a crystal, will not work on her.

The PCs will not be allowed closer than ten paces. Shinjo will greet them and does most of the talking, Kamoko only occasionally chiming in with support.

***“You are here at the behest of others of my people, to learn the truth. Know this, then: I am Shinjo, returned to my children. I have come back to find them in thrall to a traitor. No more. The Unicorn will be pure again, and true.”***

The PCs will be allowed only a short time to ask questions. Shinjo will respond briefly.

- If the PCs ask where she has been, or why she has returned now: “I was... imprisoned, by a power we fought in the Burning Sands. Only now have I been able to escape and return to keep my promise.”
- Shinjo will not offer any further details about her imprisonment, nor will she describe the power which defeated her. “I do not yet recall all that has happened to me. But my memories grow clearer, day by day. And my power is undimmed. The traitors cannot hide from me.”
- If the PCs ask for more details about these “traitors,” Shinjo’s face will twist with anger. “It is a foul conspiracy, a filthy gaijin plot. Many in the Clan have fallen under its sway, and must be purged if the Unicorn are to regain their true freedom and honor.”
- If any PCs express doubt about Shinjo’s identity, she will look both angry and sorrowful. She gestures at the others in the room. “Is not the recognition of so many proof enough? Can you not see the truth for yourselves?” She stands, looming over the PCs. “I do not remember everything. But I remember the Burning Sands. I remember when I promised my children to always return to them. And I remember the First War, when my poor fallen brother sought to cast down all that we had made. Now his power rises again, and we must stand against it. And you doubt me?”
- If the PCs continue to doubt, ask for some kind of direct proof, or do something improper (such as casting a spell, trying to touch Shinjo with a crystal, etc), she will lift her sword and order them expelled from her court. The PCs must immediately apologize and beg forgiveness if they

wish to stay. Whether they are expelled or not, have them roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20: with a success, they catch a brief glimpse of dark shadows obscuring Shinjo’s eyes.

## Special Case: Kolat PCs

If any of the PCs are Kolat, they will be in great danger. Have them make **Simple Awareness** rolls at TN 25. If they fail, Shinjo’s face suddenly contorts in rage and fury. “Traitor!” she screams. “You, too, serve the enemies of the Empire!” She springs forward and smites the PC with the Unicorn Ancestral Sword. This attack automatically hits and does 10k4 damage.

If the PC does not immediately flee, Shinjo will continue to strike once per round, automatically winning initiative, until she slays him/her. Any PC attacks against her will almost certainly fail – Shinjo is TN 35 to be hit (TN 25 for a PC who can ignore armor), has Magic Resistance of +15, has Carapace of 10 against anything but nemuranai and awakened crystal, and takes half damage from anything that gets past her Carapace (except crystal, which does double damage). Any non-Kolat PCs who attempt to defend their comrade will likewise be struck down. The Unicorn in the hall will all support Shinjo.

If the other PCs stand aside, Shinjo will not blame them for their comrade’s evil. “There are thousands in my own Clan who never guessed the evil festering within their clanmates. You can hardly be blamed for sharing their ignorance.”

## A Messenger Arrives

After the PCs have had a chance to speak for a short time with Shinjo, and after she has dealt with any Kolat PCs who she detected, the door to the audience hall will slam open and a courier will rush in, an Otaku Battle Maiden dressed in armor and wearing a sashimono (back-banner). She prostrates herself before Shinjo and delivers the following report:

***“O-Shinjo-sama, a messenger has come from the traitor Yokatsu. He directs me to say that his army is marching on this castle, and will arrive tomorrow. He,” she pauses, wets her lips, then continues in a careful voice, “he calls on all true Unicorns to reject you, my lady, and to ask his forgiveness. He says that those who do not accept him as the true leader of the Unicorn Clan will be slain without mercy when he storms the castle.”***

Shinjo listens with a dark face, clutching her sword tightly. When the messenger finishes, however, it is

Otaku Kamoko who answers, by spitting on the floor. “That for the traitor Yokatsu and his words,” she snarls.

Shinjo nods approvingly, and rises to her feet. “Let us prepare for battle,” she commands. “We will break the traitors on the walls of Shiro Shinjo.” She turns to the PCs, as though remembering they are here. “You have come to learn the truth. So be it. Tomorrow, you will watch from this tower as the true Unicorn destroy the false.” She gestures dismissal and turns away, to consult with her followers.

PCs who roll **Battle/Awareness** at TN 15 or **Simple Awareness** at TN 20 can tell that some of the Unicorn in the room are more concerned than Shinjo about the upcoming battle. If the PCs track down the messenger afterward, they can learn from her that Yokatsu’s army is less than a day away, and considerably outnumbers the defenders of Shiro Shinjo.

## Part Five: A Plea for Help

That evening, while Mother Sun turns the sky orange and purple and the Unicorn wait uneasily for the next day’s battle, some of the PCs will receive a summons from Iuchi Daiyu. This invitation will be issued to the following PCs:

- Any Iuchi family PCs.
- Any other Unicorn PCs who have either (a) Shadow Corruption, or (b) Lore skills dealing with the Lying Darkness (such as Lore: Shadow).
- Any Unicorn PCs who have shown skepticism or suspicion of Shinjo’s true nature.
- All non-Unicorn PCs except for Scorpions.
- Any Scorpion PCs who have either (a) Shadow Corruption (Shadow Brands don’t count), or (b) Lore skills dealing with the Lying Darkness (such as Lore: Shadow).

The summons will ask these PCs to attend the daimyo of the Iuchi family in the sub-basement of Shiro Shinjo, beneath the skylight of the southwest tower. Accompanying it is a written pass, signed with Iuchi Daiyu’s own chop, authorizing the PCs to enter that part of the castle.

It is up to the PCs whether or not to answer this unusual summons. Unless they are of the Iuchi family, they will suffer no Honor loss or other effects from refusing.

Assuming the PCs answer the summons, they have the following encounter:

*The three towers of Shiro Shinjo are each pierced from top to bottom by a series of huge rectangular skylights, thin silk mesh stretched across them at each level to keep insects, smoke, or other unpleasantness from accompanying the light they bring. Now, with the sun setting, only a dull orange light makes it down the many levels to the sub-basement of the castle.*

*The sub-basement is a single massive chamber, its roof supported by innumerable heavy stone pillars, the space between them stacked with pallets of supplies, bales of rice, and other gear. Arriving via the spiral ramp in the center of the castle, you find the room silent and empty... except for a single stooped figure standing in the dim pool of light beneath the southwest skylight. Next to him, on the floor, is what appears to be a peculiar lantern made of metal. A thin beam of bright yellow lamplight shoots out of a hole in one side of the lantern.*

Iuchi Daiyu greets the PCs quietly and gravely. He is ostentatiously wearing a crystal necklace, with a lens-like medallion positioned over his chest. Daiyu will ask each of the PCs to put on the medallion while he shines light from the lantern upon them. (He will also allow them to do the same for him, if they wish.) If any of the PCs ask the reason for this strange ritual, Daiyu will wait until all have been tested before saying anything more.

Any PCs who have Rank Three or Four Shadow Corruption will appear slightly translucent under the light from the crystal, and will feel distinctly uncomfortable as the light shines through their bodies. Daiyu will look at these PCs gravely and question them, trying to determine if they know what force is inside of them (and whether they have the willpower to resist it). If he is not satisfied with their answers, he will ask them to leave.

Once Daiyu has tested all the PCs (and expelled any unreliable ones), he will explain himself, telling the story found in GM’s Aid #1. Some of the PCs may already know much of this (particularly if they played the adventure *A Foreign Legacy*), but the connection with Shinjo’s original disappearance may come as a surprise to them. Daiyu will be pleased if some of the PCs are already aware of the Lying Darkness, since this means he has less work to do convincing the PCs of the situation.

Once Daiyu has finished with this “background,” he explains the reason for this meeting: he does not believe the being calling itself Shinjo is truly the

Unicorn Kami. *“The Lying Darkness took her, and what it has taken it does not let go. It has the power to change shapes, to wear the face and voice and form of those it has consumed. What better way to spread destruction and chaos against those who once escaped it than to appear as their beloved leader... and then spread hatred and division among them? In all the centuries of our history, the Unicorn have never fought against themselves... yet now they do so, at the command of this... one, who calls herself Shinjo.”* Daiyu shakes his head. *“You may have noticed that I am no longer allowed in her presence. Three days ago, I questioned her about her time in the Burning Sands, when she fought the Darkness. She could not answer my questions.”* He sighs. *“I had thought to ask her to permit me to test her with the light of Mother Sun’s Tears, as I just tested you... but this chance never came. She cast me from her presence, calling my questions insolent. The bushi around her nearly struck me down for daring to question the Kami. And as they took me from the chamber... I saw blackness within her eyes, looking out at me and laughing. Since then, none who wear crystal have been allowed close to her.”*

Daiyu is completely sincere in everything he says, and is not being magically controlled or influenced. He is not a Kolat, but other Unicorn who are members of the conspiracy have nudged him into his suspicions of Shinjo. Daiyu fears for the fate of his Clan, and the PCs – strangers who have a chance to get close to Shinjo tomorrow – seem to him the best possible chance to save it.

If the PCs’ reactions seem favorable to Daiyu, he will reach into the sleeve of his kimono and draw out a small dagger of bluish crystal, which shines from within with a soft light. *“This is a blade of awakened crystal, one of the great treasures of our Clan. I ask you... I beg you, when Shinjo summons you to observe the battle tomorrow, strike her with this. It is a small enough weapon to get it into her presence unnoticed. Burn away the Shadow which walks among us, wearing the face of our beloved mother. Save my Clan from doom, for I cannot.”*

It is up to the PCs whether they agree with Daiyu’s proposal. He does not know much more than what he has already told them, and he cannot help them any more than he has already.

If the PCs speak with Daiyu about their encounter at Kofuku Village, he will nod to himself. “No doubt the Shadow feared the very thing I am asking of you. Perhaps it hoped to destroy you and take your faces,

allowing it to deceive Ide Tadaji into supporting Shinjo as well.”

## A Night in Shiro Shinjo

Regardless of the outcome of the PCs’ meeting with Iuchi Daiyu, they will spend the night in Shiro Shinjo. No doubt the PCs are still paranoid after the ambush in Kofuku, especially since each of them is assigned to a different room and not all of the rooms are adjacent.

The Shadow will not directly attack any of the PCs. However, it will attack all of the PCs in their dreams. Each PC will have a horrible, terrifying dream in which the person they value most in the world is tortured to death before them by unseen hands. (The GM can run this as individual one-on-one role-playing sessions if time allows.) The screams of the victim go on and on, as they meet their end in ignominy, dishonor, and unimaginable pain. The PC is somehow unable to reach them or help them, as though weighed down by unseen bonds. As the victim dies, each PC awakens, and must make a **Simple Willpower** roll at TN 20 or scream aloud in horror (losing a point of Honor).

Due to the shocking and horrible effects of the dream, none of the PCs can recover Void, heal Wounds, or regain spell-rings during this night.

## **Part Six: Battle and Climax**

The next day, the inhabitants of Shiro Shinjo are tense, waiting for the impending arrival of Yokatsu’s army. The PCs can find many troubled Unicorn praying or meditating in the castle shrines, practicing in the dojos, or simply standing on the walls and watching for the enemy. Otaku Kamoko makes the rounds of the castle several times, making brief inspirational speeches to the troops. Of Shinjo herself there is no sign, and rumor has it that she is closeted with her senior officers, planning the defense.

Non-Unicorn PCs can choose to leave the castle at any time, if they do wish to become involved in the impending battle. Of course, that will also prevent them from fulfilling Iuchi Daiyu’s request.

## Yokatsu Arrives

Around midday, Yokatsu’s army arrive, a force of some 20,000 Unicorn bushi. Riding up from the northwest, the army quickly spreads out to surround the castle, fighting several skirmishes with squadrons of Otaku Battle Maidens. Eventually the Otaku, heavily



outnumbered, have no choice but to withdraw inside the castle, and the encirclement is complete. Yokatsu is careful to keep his troops out of arrow-shot from the castle walls.

By mid-afternoon, Yokatsu's army is clearly preparing for an assault, bringing up siege ladders and dismounting troops to carry them. It is at this point that a messenger will arrive for the PCs. "Lady Shinjo-sama requests your presence, to witness this battle," he reports.

## On the Roof

Shinjo and Otaku Kamoko await the PCs on the roof of the southeast tower, which is taken up by a Rokugani rock-garden, complete with a small shrine to Shinjo herself. Low crenellated walls guard the edges of the garden, to prevent anyone from falling.

If the PCs bring the crystal knife which Daiyu gave them, they will easily be able to conceal it in the sleeve of a kimono. Of course, this sort of act is dishonorable – high-Honor PCs who participate in this will probably lose a point or two of Honor.

Shinjo and Kamoko are in full war-armor. Shinjo looks down on the army of Yokatsu, gripping the crenellations with an armored hand, while resting the blade of the Ancestral Sword on her shoulder. "See," she tells the PCs. "The traitor comes, to make a final plea for others to follow him to damnation."

Shinjo Yokatsu does indeed ride out in front of his army, rears his horse impressively, and calls out in a high, carrying voice. "Fellow Unicorn! Brothers and sisters! There is still time for you to abandon the path of destruction! Still time for you to reject the false Shinjo and regain your Honor! Otaku Kamoko-san! I call on you to remember your oaths of obedience to your daimyo!" PCs can roll **Lore: Unicorn/Intelligence** at TN 15 to recall that in the past Yokatsu has been known for stuttering and stumbling over his words when speaking in public.

Kamoko answers with a shriek which echoes down from the tower. "I see no daimyo here! Only a traitor who rejects the mother of us all!"

Yokatsu waits a few moments, then draws his sword and waves it over his head. "So be it! You have chosen betrayal and death!" He rides back toward his army.

Within a few minutes, assault parties on foot charge forward, carrying siege ladders. Unicorn horse archers gallop forward ahead of them, to barrage and suppress the defenders. They are met by a hail of arrows from the walls.

## The Purity of Crystal

The PCs can interrupt this sequence of events at any time by striking Shinjo with the crystal dagger. She must actually be stabbed with the weapon – merely touching her will have no effect, other than alerting her to what is happening.

If a PC strikes by surprise, Shinjo will be TN 15 (5+Armor) to be hit. If Shinjo realizes what is happening, she will attempt to slay the PCs. As in the "Kolot" option in Part Four, Shinjo is TN 35 to hit (TN 25 if a PC can ignore her armor). She will automatically hit once per round, doing 10k4 damage. Otaku Kamoko will also attempt to slay the PCs, while shouting for help. Guards will arrive in four rounds.

If any PC attempts to talk Shinjo into touching or handling the dagger, she will name them as traitors and immediately attack.

If a PC succeeds in striking Shinjo with the crystal dagger (or with another awakened crystal weapon, if a PC somehow managed to smuggle one in), the following scene occurs:

*Shinjo staggers back, her face slack with shock, the hilt of the crystal knife projecting from her flesh. Her face contorts in inhuman fury, and something dark slides across her eyes, staring out at you with ancient, alien malice. But then her expression changes to one of surprise. An instant later, white light bursts from around the knife, blazing out of her like a beacon of purity. Shinjo's body seems to peel away from around the light, shedding away in coiling tendrils of black smoke. Out of that smoke comes a form of pure white light, shaped like a woman, so bright you cannot bear to look directly at it. Somewhere, a cacophony of hissing, inhuman voices howls in thwarted fury.*

*"Thank you, my children," she says, and her voice is like burning fire and soothing water, a voice of truth and perfection. "I am free at last."*

*Otaku Kamoko throws herself prostrate. "Mother!" she cries. "You cannot leave us, not now! Please, I offer myself to you, if only you will stay!"*

*Shinjo sets one glowing hand on Kamoko's head. "Faithful one," she whispers. "Do you know what it is you offer?"*

*Kamoko lifts her face and looks directly into Shinjo's blinding light. Tears run down her face, but she does not flinch. "Yes," she whispers.*

*"You are your mother's daughter."*

*The glowing light merges with the physical form of the daimyo of the Battle Maidens. For a moment, the two seem to be superimposed on each other. Then the glow fades, and Kamoko slowly rises to her feet. As she turns toward you, white light shines from her eyes. She smiles, and you feel the power of the spirit within her like almost a physical blow. "Thank you," she says again.*

Shinjo has merged her soul with Kamoko's body, and Kamoko has departed for the afterlife. If any PC asks about Kamoko, Shinjo will say, "She rides now in the Heavens, where she will watch over my children for all time."

The battle below has stuttered to a halt, the soldiers on both sides awed by the holy light which shone from the tower-top. Yokatsu withdraws his troops to restore their morale and plan further actions.

The PCs will be dismissed from Shinjo's presence, as she calls for a conference with all the daimyo and senior commanders in the castle, including Iuchi Daiyu. They will receive a summons from her later that evening (see below).

## Failure?

If the PCs are unable to strike Shinjo, she will likely slay them all, with Kamoko's help.

If the PCs refuse to use the crystal at all, or cannot nerve themselves up to do so, the battle will proceed. Yokatsu's forces make several assaults on the castle, and manage to seize a small portion of the battlements, but are unable to make a serious lodgment or to open one of the two gates.

Some PCs may choose to participate in the defense of the castle. In this case, they can roll out four rounds on the Battle Table. The defenders are Even for the first three rounds and Winning on the last round. Use the "Standard Shinjo Bushi" stats for any duels.

At nightfall, Yokatsu halts the attack. The PCs will be dismissed to their quarters, but get a summons later that evening (see below).

## Summons to a New Quest

Late that evening, the PCs will be summoned back to the rooftop. There, they find Shinjo (in either her own body, or Kamoko's body) meditating alone before her shrine. If Shinjo is still in her own body, Kamoko will wait just out of earshot, pacing anxiously.

If the PCs did not use the crystal knife earlier, they will have another chance to do so now. The same scene as before will play out, although there will be fewer witnesses now.

Regardless, Shinjo will eventually explain why she has called the PCs. If she is still in her own body (still controlled by the Shadow), she will be more vague in her language, but will still make the same basic request. The dialogue below assumes that she has been freed and is in Kamoko's body:

*"The traitors who control this Clan still command the loyalty of many of my children. Too many. It will take all the strength of these, my loyal children, to hold them back."*

*"I need the rest of them. My other children, still waiting for me in the desert. I need their strength, to break the back of these traitors, and bring all the Ki-Rin together again, as they are meant to be."*

*"My horn can summon them. Its voice will be heard even to the farthest reaches of the Burning Sands. But it is not here, and I cannot leave here. My children need me, to lead them, to command them. I must... ask you, you who have proven your Honor before me, to help me. To find the horn, and sound it, and lead the rest of my children back to me."*

Shinjo does not know where the horn is, only that she left it with the Unicorn centuries ago. Presumably they brought it back with them when they returned to Rokugan.

If the PCs agree to help, they can pursue the quest in Round Two. If not, the adventure is over.

**To Be Continued**

## Rewards for Completing the Adventure

At the end of the session, 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.

Also, at the end of this session, any PCs with Shadow Corruption must roll Simple Void at TN 10 or gain another Shadow Point.

### Experience Points

Playing through the scenario:	2 XP
Good role-playing:	+1 XP
PCs free the soul of Shinjo:	+1 XP

**Total Possible Experience: 4 XP**

### Honor

Iuchi family PCs lose 1 point of Honor for refusing Iuchi Daiyu's summons.

High-Honor PCs (Honor rank 3.0 or higher) who sneak the crystal dagger into Shinjo's presence lose 1 or 2 points of Honor, GM's discretion.

PCs who scream aloud after the Shadow dream-attack lose 1 point of Honor.

Unicorn PCs who free Shinjo's soul from the Shadow gain 2 points of Honor. All other PCs get 1 point of Honor.

### Glory

None intrinsically awarded for this round, although PCs who fight on the Battle Table can earn 1 point of Glory for each successful Duel or Heroic Opportunity.

### Other Awards/Penalties

If the PCs free Shinjo's soul, they all gain **Sworn Enemy: Shadow**. If they already have that disadvantage, they gain the Shadow as a **Nemesis**.

# Appendix #1: NPCs and Enemies

## Generic Goju, faceless servants of Shadow

FIRE 2	AIR 2 Reflexes 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2

**TN to be Hit:** 15

**Attacks:** 4k2 (5k2 against High-End parties).

**Damage:** Clubs (3k1), Knives (4k1), or Garrote (2k2). Damage listed includes Strength.

**Skills:** Stealth 5 (6 against high-end parties)

**Wounds:** 24: Dead.

**Special Abilities:** Shadow Invulnerability (take double damage from crystal attacks and half damage from all other attacks). They can “Shadow-walk” and move instantaneously between any two shadows within 100 feet.

## Goju Hoseki, minion of Shadow

FIRE 5	AIR 4 Reflexes 5
EARTH 3	WATER 3 Strength 4

**TN to be Hit:** 25

**Attacks:** 7k5 (with ninja-to) or 5k5 (shuriken).

**Damage:** Ninja-to (5k2), Shuriken (4k1)

**Skills:** Defense 7, Ninjutsu (ninja-to) 7, Ninjutsu (shuriken) 5, Stealth 6

**Wounds:** 54: Dead

**Special Abilities:** Hoseki can create spell-like effects resembling the spells *By the Light of Lord Moon*, *Earth's Stagnation*, *Quiescence of Air*, and *Way of Deception*. These are each a single action to use and do not require scrolls. She also has the complete set of Shadow abilities: Shadow Invulnerability (take double damage from crystal attacks and half damage from all other attacks); Shadow-Walk (move instantaneously between any two shadows within 100 feet); Insubstantial (pass through solid matter); Mimicry (perfectly imitate any other person); Shadow Stealth (keep two extra dice on Stealth rolls).

## Tsu, traveling monk

FIRE 3	AIR 3
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EARTH 3	WATER 4
VOID 4	

**TN to be Hit:** 15

**School/Rank:** Monk 3

**Honor/Glory:** 4.5/2.0

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Bojutsu 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Herbalism 4, Jujutsu 6, Medicine 4, Meditation 6, Shintao 7, Theology 5.

**Kiho:** Chi Protection, Grasp the Earth Dragon (does not lose consciousness until dead, and wound penalties are reduced as though he had Strength of the Earth at Rank 4).

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Clear Thinker/Ascetic

**Equipment:** Bo staff (0k2), clothing, hat.

## Generic Shinjo Bushi (interchangeable)

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

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

**School/Rank:** Shinjo Bushi 1

**Honor/Glory:** 2.5/1.0

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

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

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

## Generic Otaku Battle-Maiden (Interchangeable)

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

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

**School/Rank:** Otaku Battle Maiden 1

**Honor/Glory:** 2.5/1.8

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 3, Horse Archery 4, Horsemanship 5, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Yarijutsu 3.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Brash.

**Equipment:** Daisho, light armor, Unicorn steed, yari, bow (Dai-Kyu) with 20 arrows.

### **Otaku Kino, Battle Maiden and Unicorn Magistrate**

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

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

**School/Rank:** Otaku Battle Maiden 2

**Honor/Glory:** 3.4/4.8

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Battle 1, Defense 4, Horse Archery 3, Horsemanship 6, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Law 3, Meditation 2, Shintao 2, Yarijutsu 3.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Quick, Social Position (Clan magistrate)

**Equipment:** Kimono, light armor, daisho set, magistrate's papers.

### **Otaku Yui, Cheerful Battle Maiden**

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

**TN to be Hit:** 20 (30 with heavy armor)

**School/Rank:** Otaku battle maiden 2

**Honor/Glory:** 3.6/3.8

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Heraldry 2, Kenjutsu 5, Horsemanship 6, Horse Archery 4, Hunting 3, Naginata 4, Sincerity 2, Umayarijutsu 4, Yarijutsu 3, Yomanri 2.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Daredevil, Luck (rank 2)

**Equipment:** Kimono, heavy armor, Otaku steed, daisho set, naginata, umayari.

### **Otaku Kamoko, Daimyo of the Otaku Family**

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

**TN to be Hit:** 20 (34 in excellent heavy armor)

**School/Rank:** Otaku Battle Maiden 5

**Honor/Glory:** 3.7/8.4

**Skills:** Animal Husbandry 5, Athletics 3, Battle 6, Defense 8, Etiquette 2, History 6, Horse Archery 8, Horsemanship 10, Hunting 7, Kenjutsu 9, Poetry 6, Singing 9, Tessen 5, Umayarijutsu (Lance) 6.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Ancestor (Otaku), Great Destiny, Quick, Social Position (family daimyo).

**Equipment:** Excellent heavy armor, excellent daisho set.

## **Maeda's Disciples (Ronin Band)**

The Disciples have been in existence for about three years, and have dedicated themselves to protecting the villages which lie on the Road of Lengthy Commerce between the City of the Rich Frog and the old Unicorn border at the *Arasoizuki River*. They have not yet developed a technique of their own, although Maeda has been instructing them all in kenjutsu. Due to his teaching, they are more skilled than the average ronin.

### **Maeda, fallen Akodo**

FIRE 3 Agility 4	AIR 3 Awareness 4
EARTH 3	WATER 3 Perception 4
VOID 3	

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

**School/Rank:** Akodo bushi 2

**Honor/Glory:** 3.4/0.9

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Bard 2, Battle 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, History 4, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 7, Kuenai 2, Kyujutsu 5, Law 2, Sincerity 3. Tea Ceremony 2.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Balance, Higher Purpose (Restore his Honor)/Social Disadvantage (Ronin)

**Equipment:** Daisho set (fine katana), light armor, bow and 20 arrows, steed.

### **Takuhito, fallen yojimbo**

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

**TN to be Hit:** 25 (20 without light armor)

**School/Rank:** Shiba bushi 1

**Honor/Glory:** 2.7/0.7

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 6, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 6, Kuenai 3, Kyujutsu 5, Lore (Shugenja) 2, Medicine 3, Meditation 2, Naginata 2, Shintao 3, Sincerity 2, Tea Ceremony 1.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Quick/Social Disadvantage (Ronin)

**Equipment:** Daisho, light armor, naginata, steed.

### **Oyami, cheerful ronin woman**

FIRE 2	AIR 3
Agility 3	Awareness 4
EARTH 3	WATER 3
Stamina 4	Strength 4
VOID 3	

**TN to be Hit:** 22 (27 in light armor)

**School/Rank:** Mirumoto bushi 2

**Honor/Glory:** 2.1/0.6

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Bard 4, Battle 2, Defense 4, Gambling 4, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu 4, Lore (Shugenja) 3, Meditation 5, Yarijutsu 3.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Ambidextrous, Large, Strength of the Earth/Chemical Dependency (sake), Social Disadvantage (ronin).

**Equipment:** Daisho, light armor, two sets of dice (one loaded), steed, bow with 20 arrows.

### **Typical Ronin of Maeda's Disciples**

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

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

**School/Rank:** None

**Honor/Glory:** 2.4/0.5

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Defense 3, Gambling 2, Iaijutsu 2, Jiu-jutsu (hand-to-hand) 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kuenai 3, Sincerity 2.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Ronin band/Social Disadvantage (ronin).

**Equipment:** Daisho, kimono. Half have light armor.

## GM's Aid #1: What Iuchi Daiyu Says about the Lying Darkness

*Centuries ago, while we wandered the world beyond the Empire, the call of our leader Shinjo brought our scattered people to a place where the land was dark and gray, as though all the light and color were being drained from it. There, we were attacked by terrible creatures, things of darkness which neither magic nor jade could touch. Our leader Shinjo sought to assail their stronghold, but they were too strong for us, and our forces were cut off and surrounded. Then Shinjo commanded us: "Go! Go and never look back!" We fled from that place, while she alone stood to hold back the darkness with the holy light of her soul, the soul of a Kami. We rode away from her, and only one of us, the Otaku daimyo, looked behind to see her light dwindle and fail.*

*Yet we knew that she would return to us someday. She had promised that she would always return, even from beyond death itself.*

*Many years later, when our people were on the long ride back to Rokugan, we encountered a man. He seemed a man like us, a Rokugani, and we welcomed him. He said Rokugan was very near, and our people celebrated that news. But in the morning three men were dead, and one of them was the stranger. There was no mark on the bodies, and much confusion and argument broke out on how the men could have died. In the end we burned the bodies and journeyed on.*

*A few days later, one of our men went to the girl he planned to marry, and presented her a gift: a necklace of crystal, the Tears of Mother Sun. [Iuchi Daiyu holds up his necklace.] Much like this one. When the warrior put the necklace on her throat, the light through the crystal shone right through her body. Seeing its deception revealed, the Darkness abandoned its false form, and the man watched his beloved unravel like smoke. He ran through the camp raving about what he had seen, and at first he was thought to be mad. But his family supported him, and they went all through the camp, holding up the crystal necklace to all as they passed. Three more disappeared, screaming, when confronted with the light of Mother Sun's Tears. And they found one empty one, a body that light passed through but which did not or could not disappear. It was a young girl, fifteen. The elders ordered her throat slit and her body burned.*

*After we came to Rokugan, we heard no stories about such things, and we thought perhaps that this evil had been left behind in the Burning Sands. But in time we learned that it was here as well, hiding in dark corners, concealing itself within superstition and rumor. Tales of "ninja" and "ninube," of faceless assassins and shapeshifters... these were its mark. Only light and crystal could stand against it. We even took one of its creatures prisoner, and hold it still in the cellars of my castle, Shiro Iuchi.*

## GM's Aid #2: Map of the Inn

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