

Fires of Retribution

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

Part Two of *The Hidden Temple*

by Rob Hobart

Shinjo Shono seeks the help of brave samurai for a quest to hunt down one of the Empire's most hated criminals... his father.

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

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

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

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

GM's Information

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

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

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

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

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

- Reduce by one the number of Raises needed to get useful information with the Commune spell.
- There are only two Kolat geisha and four Kolat thugs in the Elegant Golden Mantis.

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

- There are four Kolat geisha in the Elegant Golden Mantis.

Adventure Summary and Background

The Unicorn civil war has ended – the superior forces following the Shinjo Returned, supplied by the wealth of the Crane Clan, have crushed those loyal to Shinjo Yokatsu. Now, with the fighting at an end, the Ide family has stepped forward to negotiate the peaceful ascension of the new Unicorn Clan Champion, Moto Gaheris, and to bind the Unicorn together as a single Clan once more.

There are some matters, however, which remain unresolved. Most notably, the fate of Shinjo Yokatsu, the former leader of the Unicorn Clan (and one of the ten Kolat Masters). Some weeks ago, sensing defeat, Yokatsu replaced himself with a look-alike and set out to flee the Unicorn lands. Unfortunately, the occupation of the eastern Unicorn territories has forced Yokatsu to take a long detour south, to the City of the Rich Frog... and there he has gone to ground. His path has been picked up by the White Ninja, Matsu Hiroru, bitter enemy of Shadow and Kolat alike. Yokatsu has been forced to hole up in a Kolat safe-house concealed within a geisha house, the Elegant Golden Mantis. Outside, Hiroru watches and waits, hoping for a chance to either kill Yokatsu or follow him to the Kolat's hidden headquarters.

Yokatsu's eldest son, Shinjo Shono, is an honorable young man. Shocked and horrified by the discovery of the truth behind his father's deeds, he has sworn to hunt down and slay the man who sold the Unicorn Clan into the hands of the Kolat. It will be a difficult and dangerous quest, but it is the only way that Shono can restore his family's honor. The PCs will have the opportunity to assist Shono, and in the process, to take action against the Kolat alongside the White Ninja.

Player's Introduction

The splendid castle of Shiro Ide gleams in the afternoon sunlight, its image reflected below in the blue expanse of Chrysanthemum Petal Lake. The magnificent castle blends seamlessly into the mountains behind it.

On the fields below the castle, dotting the shores of the mighty lake, are hundreds of purple-white tents. The samurai of the Unicorn Clan have gathered here, to acknowledge their new Clan Champion and to begin

the task of healing the wounds from the just-completed civil war. The banners of other Clans flutter on the parapets of the castle, for all of Rokugan has sent representatives to witness these momentous events.

If the PCs are Unicorn, they are here for the obvious reason – to acknowledge their new Clan Champion. PCs from other Clans are here as guests, to witness these events and report back to their homes. The Crane and Scorpion Clans are especially prominent among the guests, and both have sent representatives of note: Asahina Tamako, the aging daimyo of the Crane's Asahina family, and Shosuro Hametsu, the daimyo of the Shosuro family. The other Clans have sent less impressive representatives, and neither faction of the Crab Clan is represented at all (except for any PCs who might be present).

Imperial Family PCs are here as part of the entourage for Otomo Hiroshi, an Imperial Historian, who has come to record these events for posterity.

Ronin PCs are here on their own. Most likely they were employed by one or the other side in the civil war until recently, and are now seeking fresh employment.

The Unicorn spend the afternoon offering displays of mounted combat techniques, horse archery, trick riding, and other impressive feats. In between riding, they feast, talk, drink sake and fermented mare's milk, and begin the difficult task of binding themselves back together as a Clan – all helped along by the Ide diplomats who circulate around the place, smiling and talking, gently defusing any problems. Although it has been less than two months since the forces of Shinjo Yokatsu were defeated at the Battle of Heigin Yuki, the efforts of the Ide seem to have already gone some distance toward mending the bitter feelings within the Clan. Even most of the Shinjo bushi here manage to keep polite smiles on their faces, no matter how tense their body language.

The other Clan samurai who are here will be bemused by this display of the Unicorn Clan's "barbaric ways," although most of them know better than to openly insult their hosts. The guests will circulate and gossip, sharing the latest news about the rest of the Empire:

- With the Unicorn civil war over, many are drawing attention to the continued fighting among the Crab, expecting it to end soon as well. The Crab "loyalists" are said to hold a strong edge against Hida Sukune's "rebels." Although many rumors have been spread that Hida Kisada's "loyalists" are

Tainted, nothing has been proven, and most high-ranking samurai expect the Crab to fall back into their usual ways after the war ends.

- The Lion army led by Matsu Agetoki has been largely destroyed by Scorpion forces, although it is rumored that Agetoki himself and a small group of elite cavalry may have escaped.
- The Scorpion have also besieged the city of Kenson Gakka (Humility's Lesson), which was taken from them by the Lion centuries ago.

Meeting the Shinjo Heir

During this initial period of gossip and relaxation, the PCs should have the opportunity to meet with Shinjo Shono, eldest son of the defeated and missing Shinjo Yokatsu. As the ranking representative of his family, Shono is here to erase his father's treachery by pledging loyalty to the new Clan Champion.

Shono is a handsome young man with a clear tenor voice, but there is a haggard and uncertain look in his eyes. He feels a deep sense of isolation and shame over the past actions of his family (and father), and finds it difficult to speak with other members of his Clan, most of whom show a veiled contempt for the fallen Shinjo line. If any PCs (and especially any Unicorns) speak with him in a friendly or sympathetic way, he will clearly be grateful. Anyone who rolls **Simple Awareness** at TN 20 can tell that Shono has a great deal on his mind, and is trying to mentally prepare himself for some difficult task. He will not reveal what that task will be, however, until it becomes time for him to speak with Moto Gaheris (see below).

Eventually a roar of taiko drums signals the presentation of Moto Gaheris. The crowd quickly gathers in a semicircle, facing the gates of the castle.

Moto Gaheris is a tall and powerful man, his wide shoulders swathed in a heavy purple cloak lined with white fur. The ancestral blades of the Unicorn are sheathed at his waist, but across his back is strapped an exotic-looking curved sword unlike anything in Rokugan. A thick, curling beard spills down his chest.

Walking behind him is a slim young woman whose eyes gleam with the pale light of Tengoku: the legendary Returned Shinjo, inhabiting the body which once belonged to Otaku Kamoko. Even from a distance, the spiritual power which radiates from her small frame strikes you like a blow. Yet she stands

behind and to the side, in a position of respect. "Unicorns," she calls, in a voice that can be heard all across the field, though she does not shout, "Behold your Champion. With his leadership, you will rediscover what it truly means to be Unicorn."

One by one, the senior daimyo and family leaders of the Unicorn step forward to pledge their fealty to Moto Gaheris. Otaku Xieng-Chi, young cousin of Kamoko, bows low, her face locked in stony stillness. Ide Tadaji limps forward to offer the loyalty of his family, and Iuchi Daiyu has a pleased smile as he, too, pledges his allegiance. Even young Horiuchi Shoan, sole member of her family, is here to make her obeisance.

Last of all comes Shinjo Shono, son of the former Clan Champion. There is a tense silence as he strides forward and drops to one knee. ***"My lord Moto-sama. The Kami O-Shinjo-sama spoke to us of deception and treason within our rank, rightly condemning my father Shinjo Yokatsu as the leader of this foul conspiracy. A man wearing his armor died at the head of his armies at the Battle of Heigin Yuki. But it was a kagemusha, a look-alike. The man called Shinjo Yokatsu must still be alive, in hiding, still plotting against the true Shinjo Returned, and against you, my lord. I have sworn before her, and before our ancestors, that I will find him and bring him to justice. I ask your permission now, as my new Clan Champion, to undertake this quest to restore my family's Honor, so that we may take our place once more among the loyal families of the Unicorn Clan."***

"This is well," Gaheris rumbles, his words distorted by an outlandish accent from the Burning Sands. "But this is a formidable task you set yourself, and one which cannot be done alone. Who will join Shinjo Shono in his quest?"

This is the player's cue for their characters to step forward. If they do not, the adventure is over.

If at least some of the PCs step forward to support Shono, he will be deeply grateful, and bows low. Gaheris is also pleased, and asks the PCs for their names and stations. If any of the PCs are Unicorns, he praises them for their dedication to restoring their Clan's honor and purity, and for their willingness to support the Shinjo family. Speeches completed, Gaheris will ask one more time if any other samurai wish to accompany Shono on his quest (offering a final chance to any PCs who have hesitated up to this point).

Where is Shinjo?

Some PCs may wish to speak with the Returned Shinjo, either to seek her help with Shono's quest, or for reasons of their own. However, this will not be possible. Shinjo will drop into the background after the daimyos begin presenting themselves, and by the time Shono makes his speech, she is gone. PCs who go looking for her will be unable to find her. The Unicorn do not seem troubled by this. "She comes and goes like the wind, and it is not our place to stop her. She will always return, as she promised."

Scene One: The Hunt Begins

Once the PCs have accepted their quest, they will presumably wish to speak with Shinjo Shono and learn all they can about the fate of his father. Now that he has made his pledge, Shono will be somewhat more relaxed, and downright sociable with PCs who have aligned themselves as his allies. The topic of his father, however, will quickly make him turn serious, even grim – he is still torn between love for his father and his sense of betrayal at Yokatsu's true nature. He always refers to his father as "Yokatsu," trying to emotionally distance himself by refusing to name him as his father.

During the investigation, Shono will prove reluctant to rely on his supposed social stature (as Yokatsu's son, and the presumptive next daimyo of the Shinjo family). He feels that his position is not something of which to be proud, at least not until the Shinjo family can shed the dishonor of his father's actions, and will be very reluctant to "pull rank." (Of course, this will not prevent PCs from doing it for him.)

Shono does not actually know any details about the "gaijin conspiracy" which his father supposedly led. He has heard the name "Kolot" associated with it, but does not know the significance of the name. However, he does not doubt his father's guilt – having met the Returned Shinjo face-to-face, he knows her power and purity are indisputable.

Given the chance, Shono will discuss his participation in the civil war. "I spent much of the war serving as Yokatsu's voice in the courts," he explains. "At the time, I flattered myself by assuming it was because, with the Ide standing neutral, I was the best choice available. Looking back on it now, though, I wonder if it was because he knew I could not be trusted with his dark secrets."

Where is Yokatsu?

Shono last spoke with his father at the end of winter, just before the spring battles which ended the civil war. *"We met in the city of Oshindoka Toshi, which he had made his headquarters for the winter. Yokatsu spoke bravely, but we both knew our forces were outclassed, and would be defeated once battle was joined. He ordered me to carry certain family relics to the Shrine of Daikoku, so that they would be safe from the perils of war. Looking back on it... I think his real goal was simply to save my life, so that the Shinjo line might be able to continue."* He sighs heavily.

Shono is confident that the man he spoke to at Oshindoka Toshi was the "real" Yokatsu. *"I have known him since childhood. The man I spoke to was the real man. And I have seen the body of the kagemusha who perished at the Battle of Heigin Yuki – it was different, although only one who had known Yokatsu for many years, as I did, could have told the difference."*

Shono is not sure how to start his search, other than going to Oshindoka Toshi and looking around there. However, smart PCs may realize that there are other Shinjo samurai here who remained with Yokatsu after Shono departed on his mission. Asking around and rolling **Courtier/Awareness** at TN 15, **Manipulation/Awareness** at TN 20, or **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 25 will locate several of these samurai.

If the PCs speak with any of these Shinjo samurai, they will find them to be quiet, unhappy men (and women), painfully aware that their status within the Unicorn Clan has dropped from first to last. Although ashamed of the disgrace of their own family, they are also uneasy with the ascension of the Moto family.

Most of these samurai were surprised by Shinjo Shono's public proclamation and oath – they thought Yokatsu perished at the Battle of Heigin Yuki. None of them know anything about a *kagemusha*. However, if the PCs specifically ask whether Yokatsu did anything odd or unusual prior to the battle, or whether he ever left Oshindoka Toshi, they will recall that he left the city a few weeks before the battle for a visit to the castle of Bugaisha ("Outsider Keep"), a minor outpost on the western edge of Unicorn territory. He returned twelve days later.

If the PCs do not learn this information here, Shinjo Shono will decide to go to Oshindoka Toshi and try to learn more there. If the PCs do share the information on Bugaisha, Shono will find it significant. ***“That fortress has long been a dumping ground for samurai who were dishonored or shamed. A suitable place to hide a kagemusha until he was needed. Let us go there directly.”***

A Note on Travel

Moto Gaheris will issue Shinjo Shono a set of travel papers authorizing him to travel anywhere in the Unicorn lands in order to locate and punish his father. The papers will include any “traveling companions, advisors, servants, historians, or guards” who might accompany Shono. These papers will ensure cooperation from Unicorns wherever the PCs might go, even areas like Bugaisha.

Once the PCs reach Dragon-occupied lands, or travel to the City of the Rich Frog, they will find these papers are less effective. PCs who are Emerald or Jade Magistrates can write their own papers, which will ensure cooperation in those regions. Otherwise, the PCs may have problems when dealing with the Dragon (in Scene Four) and the Lion (in Scene Five).

Oshindoka Toshi

If the PCs accompany Shinjo Shono to Oshindoka Toshi, the trip will take about fifteen days, as the PCs follow the roads known as the Long Samurai’s Walk and the Southern Wind, climbing through the western edges of the Spine of the World Mountains onto the lush plains of the Unicorn Clan’s core territories. From there, the PCs circle White Shore Lake and head north to Oshindoka Toshi. The journey is time-consuming but not especially difficult.

Oshindoka Toshi is a well-designed but sparsely populated city of about 3,000 people, located at the edge of the Dragon Heart Forest. It was originally built by a Unicorn daimyo determined to prove his Clan was civilized enough for him to marry the daughter of a famous Crane nobleman. At the center of the city is a four-story castle ruled by their descendents. Aside from being a trade hub (merchant caravans flow in and out regularly), the city’s only real industry is lumber, harvesting trees from the Dragon Heart Forest.

The city has always been Shinjo territory, and served as headquarters for Shinjo Yokatsu’s army during the civil war. As a result, there is now a distinct sense of shell-shock and confusion, even despair, among the city’s

samurai population. Many local bushi, including the previous daimyo of the city, have committed seppuku in response to the civil war’s conclusion.

The current daimyo, Shinjo Setto, is a young man barely past his gempukku. He knows little to nothing about the war, and wants only to prove his loyalty to the new rulers of his Clan. He will certainly offer the PCs any hospitality he can, and gives them free reign to search and question throughout the city, but has no information of his own.

In order to find any local samurai who know (and will share) useful information, the PCs will have to spend a day asking around and roll **Courtier/Awareness** at TN 15, **Manipulation/Awareness** at TN 15, or **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 20. Alternatively, PCs who wish to take a more aggressive approach can roll **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 15. Creative PCs might also think of questioning/bribing the local merchants, who had extensive involvement in supplying the army.

Any of these sources of information can tell the PCs the same thing they could have learned in Shiro Ide: Shinjo Yokatsu left the city a couple of weeks before the last battle for a visit to the castle of Bugaisha (“Outsider Keep”), a minor outpost on the western edge of Unicorn territory. He returned twelve days later.

Some PCs may think of trying to find where Yokatsu stayed while he was here (perhaps in hope of questioning the servants or the local elemental spirits). Unfortunately, as Shono can tell them, Yokatsu and his army lived in a tent camp outside the city proper. The camp has now been completely destroyed, and it is impossible to find the specific location of Yokatsu’s tent. There are no spirits in the area who can offer useful information.

Scene Two: Outsider Keep

Regardless of whether the PCs went to Oshindoka Toshi first, or traveled here directly, their journey is uneventful. From Shiro Ide directly it takes about eighteen days, from Oshindoka Toshi five days.

The bright midday sun beats down mercilessly on the strange fortress-city of Bugaisha. Straight stone walls surround the wedge-shaped complex, with square flat-roofed towers at each corner. A rectangular two-story fort, with flat roof and no ornamentation, rests within the walls. The massive gates are open, and a steady trickle of visitors flows in and out, many of them swathed in strange robes and cloaks... perhaps as

protection against the heat? Certainly the Burning Sands lie near at hand. To the west, the pale yellow of desert can be clearly seen, and the air shimmers with heat. There is little in the way of greenery in the open land between the city and those distant sands.

The sun-bronzed Unicorn guards at the gates of the fortress will be more than a little perturbed at the arrival of non-Unicorn PCs – especially if some of them are magistrates or Imperials. However, they will reluctantly give ground in the face of Moto Gaheris' travel papers. Emerald Magistrate PCs will also be able to force the guards to back down with a suitably aggressive bit of role-playing (e.g. invoking the Imperial laws and their rights as enforcers of them).

Bugaisha is a trading center for the Unicorn Clan's illicit contacts with the Senpet Empire across the Burning Sands, and about half the people in the complex are gaijin guests. Within the fortress walls, a large tent city sprawls across the parade grounds, forming a bustling marketplace in which Unicorn merchants haggle with dark-skinned foreign traders.

Shinjo Shono will be just as surprised as the PCs to discover that Bugaisha is a center for trade with the gaijin – he has never actually visited the fortress before, and knows only that it is a dumping-ground for dishonored or shamed samurai. He will wonder aloud whether his father came here in order to flee into gaijin lands.

Speaking With the Commander

Presumably, the PCs will at some point wish to speak with the commanding officer of Bugaisha. Asking among the guards will quickly determine that the former commander, Shinjo Togojiro, fled the castle soon after news arrived of the Battle of Heigin Yuki. Word arrived a few days later that he was captured and executed for treason by Moto troops. Currently, the fortress is under the control of the garrison's senior *taisa* (captain), Otaku Sayori.

If the PCs request an audience with Sayori, she will make them wait in the fortress' stiflingly hot lower chambers for over two hours before meeting them. She is a stocky, sour-faced woman in early middle age, her skin tanned peasant-dark by the sun. Sayori waves a large fan constantly to ease the worst of the heat, but offers the PCs no refreshments and is visibly impatient with them. If they accept her insults with good grace, or try to answer them with subtlety or invocations of etiquette, she will only become more rude and ill-mannered. On the other hand, if they violate protocol

and become aggressive or lose their tempers, she will grin and back off, perhaps even offering them sake. "In a place like this, etiquette counts for far less than strength."

Regardless of whether she is cooperative or not, Sayori can share the following information:

- She does not remember a visit from the Clan Champion, and seems shocked at the idea. "Lord Yokatsu come here? That will be a strange day indeed."
- If the PCs give a physical description of Yokatsu, or ask whether any strangers came to the fortress in the weeks before Heigin Yuki, Sayori will frown in remembrance. "There was a man, in Unicorn colors. Good horse, that was for sure. He was alone, though, and didn't announce himself to the commander or anything. I assumed he was a new, ah, 'recruit.' How could he have been the Clan Champion?"
- She does not know whether the fortress commander, Shinjo Togojiro, met with the stranger. "He usually did meet briefly with each new arrival. Had this little speech he'd give them, about how they'd come to the worst place in the Unicorn Clan, and this was their last chance before Exile's Road."
- She believes the man left the next day, back the way he came. "It was the same horse, that's positive."
- If the PCs want to know more about the former commander, Shinjo Togojiro, she will grudgingly allow them to speak with the fortress major-domo, a commoner named Tachi.
- Sayori does not really have an opinion on the recent Unicorn civil war or the ascension of Moto Gaheris. "Shinjo, Moto, what's the difference? Whoever's in charge, we'll still be here."
- Sayori will absolutely not discuss what caused her to be assigned to Bugaisha, and if any PCs press her on this matter, she will throw them out of her chambers.

Speaking with Tachi

The PCs can track down Tachi through Otaku Sayori, or simply by questioning the local samurai and/or servants about who is the head servant of the castle.

Tachi is a wizened little man in his sixties, with sharp eyes, crooked teeth, and a fringe of gray hair around his bald pate. He will be friendly and obsequious to the PCs, bowing and scraping and generally playing the role of the “humble servant” to the hilt. PCs who show themselves to be serious investigators who expect the truth can roll **Kuenai/Awareness** at TN 10 or **Sincerity/Awareness** at TN 15 to put him in a less simpering and more cooperative frame of mind.

If Tachi is cooperative, he will tell the PCs everything he knows. Otherwise, he will try to say as little as possible, hiding behind claims that he is “merely an ignorant servant” – in particular, he will not recount the information about seeing Yokatsu again in ronin garb (see below).

- Tachi remembers a man meeting Yokatsu’s description who came to Bugaisha at the right time. “He went straight in to a private meeting with Shinjo Togojiro-sama. I don’t know what they discussed – Commander Togojiro-sama ordered me out of the room. Most unusual.”
- The day after the meeting, the stranger departed on the same horse on which he arrived. However, if Tachi is feeling cooperative, he will add that he noticed the man’s beard looked slightly different that day. “A curious thing. I had not thought a man could grow hair that long in a single night.”
- If Tachi is cooperative, he also remarks on something he saw the day after that. “I saw a ronin leaving the fortress who looked surprisingly like the earlier man, although he had no beard, so I cannot be sure. He took the northern road, toward Exile’s Road.”
- If the PCs ask about the timing of Shinjo Togojiro’s flight/departure from the castle, they learn that it happened two weeks later, on the evening of the day that word came of Shinjo Yokatsu’s defeat in the Battle of Heigin Yuki. “A most remarkable evening. He took his dinner as usual, although it was plain the news had distressed him. He went down to inspect the stables afterward, and the next thing anyone knew, he was riding out the front

gate. I’ve never seen such a thing in all my years serving this place.”

Speaking with the Residents

The PCs may wish to speak with the various soldiers of the Unicorn garrison, or with the Unicorn merchants who are here to trade with the gaijin. A few bold PCs may even wish to speak with the gaijin themselves, although this is certainly a somewhat questionable act.

The **soldiers** here are all men (and women) of the Unicorn who have committed some act of disgrace – falsehood, failure, incompetence, and so forth – which, while severe, was not quite bad enough to merit *seppuku* or reduction to ronin. As a result, they are generally a miserable and embittered lot. PCs who speak with them will have to choose their words very carefully to avoid giving offense. Ronin PCs, or Clan PCs who have been dishonored in some way, will be more likely to gain cooperation. At the GM’s option, skill rolls of **Etiquette/Awareness** at TN 15 or **Manipulation/Awareness** at TN 15 may also be needed to gain cooperation.

Assuming the PCs manage to be properly circumspect, the soldiers can share the following information:

- A Unicorn samurai matching Shinjo Yokatsu’s description did indeed come to the castle, with travel papers signed by a Unicorn magistrate. He left the next day, back the way he came. None of the guards remember anything different about him – they weren’t as observant as Tachi. (Needless to say, they will be offended at a PC who suggests they are less observant than a servant.)
- If the PCs ask whether anyone else left the castle at around that time, the guards will recall that a merchant caravan was camped there (to make some purchases from the gaijin), but didn’t leave until the following week. However, a ronin did leave the next day. “Maybe he displeased the merchants.” They shrug. “Wave-men come and go.” They say he took the north road toward Exile’s Road.
- They describe the ronin as a “short, older man, clean-shaven except for a moustache.” They will not notice a resemblance to the earlier samurai visitor unless a PC draws their attention to it.

- If the PCs follow-up on the merchant caravan, they can confirm that it is back here again.

If the PCs speak with the **Merchants**, they will find it a trying experience to their sense of Honor (unless they are merchant-types themselves, in which case they will fit right in). The merchants, who are a mix of commoners and actual Ide and Moto samurai, show no particular shame at having dealings with gaijin, and treat every conversation as a transaction to be negotiated. PCs who are willing to part with a koku or two can gain ready cooperation. PCs who attempt to invoke the Imperial laws as leverage against the merchants will not get far unless they are Emerald Magistrates with Glory of at least 4.5 (which is high enough to intimidate).

- Some of the merchants do recall a samurai who arrived at the fortress alone, but did not pay much attention to it. “Samurai do come here, you know. Of course, this one got to leave again, which is a bit unusual. Maybe he was a courier.”
- One of the merchants will remember that visit to Bugaisha with irritation because one of his ronin guards disappeared. “The wretch had just hired on for that trip too! Just goes to show, you can never trust a wave-man.” It will require careful questioning to pin down the timing, but the PCs can eventually determine that the ronin vanished the night after Yokatsu arrived. The missing ronin was named Konmetsu.
- If the PCs ask the merchant to describe the ronin, he remembers him only as “an older man, with a beard.”

PCs who speak with the **Gaijin** here will find it difficult and irritating. Most of these Senpet gaijin (who look and dress vaguely “Arabic”) speak only a crude, pidgin form of Rokugani which they use to trade with the Unicorn, and will use their limited language skills to avoid answering PC questions, as well as to subtly humiliate them (such as by misinterpreting everything they say as a request to buy something).

However, if the PCs are persistent and do not let themselves be immediately put off by this behavior, they will eventually be approached by an older gaijin with dark, gleaming eyes and a well-trimmed goatee. “Greetings, most excellent samurai,” he says in excellent, if accented, Rokugani. “I am Haji. I must

apologize for the ignorance of my countrymen. How may I assist your honorable selves?”

Haji is an eerily observant man, and misses very little, about the PCs or anyone else. He will not flaunt his skills, but over the course of a conversation it will become obvious that he has already learned a great deal about the PCs. However, he will always remain charming and friendly. Haji expects to be paid for any information he offers the PCs, and will start by asking for 5 koku – he expects the PCs to haggle, and will try to encourage this if the PCs protest at the asked price. On the other hand, if the PCs simply pay what he asks, he will shrug and take the money.

Regardless, once the transaction is completed, Haji can share the following information:

“You seek a man of the Unicorn, yes? An older man, bearded, of high rank, who came here some weeks before the war ended among their kind. Yes, I remember such a man. He came alone, in late afternoon, and was soon admitted to the main castle to speak with the beyer, the commander. The next day he departed again. But it was a most curious thing, samurai – the man who departed, although it looked much like him, I do not believe it was the same man. The hair on his face was different. That night, one of the Unicorn merchants with whom we have such profitable arrangements complained that one of his hired guards had gone missing. And the morning after that, I had occasion to observe a man dressed like that guard departing the fortress. Another curiosity – this guard had been bearded, but now he was clean-shaven. He took the road to the north.”

Speaking with the Spirits

If there are shugenja among the PCs, they will probably want to try to question the local spirits in hopes of tracking Yokatsu in that manner.

- There are absolutely no Water spirits in the area, nor are there any Fire spirits older than a day or two.
- There are a few weak Earth and Air spirits in the area, but the PCs will have to cast *Sense* in order to locate them.
- In order to find an Earth or Air spirit which remembers Yokatsu, a shugenja will have to cast *Commune* (in the appropriate element) with at least four Raises. A success will find a spirit which remembers a bearded man

arriving at the fortress alone, on horseback. Another man, also bearded, left the fortress the next day. The first man left the day after that, on foot, and without his beard. If the PC recasts the spell, or makes another Raise on the original casting, the spirit can also say that the man took the road to the north.

Some PCs may think of using the spell *The Ties That Bind* to locate Yokatsu. Unfortunately, this will not work. None of the PCs have ever had the opportunity to see Yokatsu for more than a few minutes, and consequently cannot use the spell, which requires strong familiarity with the target (at least an hour of close observation).

Shugenja PCs may be able to come up with other, more clever ways to use magic to trace Yokatsu's path.

Exile's Road?

PCs who roll **Lore: Unicorn/Intelligence** at TN 10, **History/Intelligence** at TN 15, or **Law/Intelligence** at TN 20 will know that Exile's Road (also known as Sorrow's Path) is a road to the Burning Sands. There is a small shrine to the Seven Fortunes, known as Exile's Shrine, at the end of this pass through the Great Wall of the North Mountains. Exile's Road is used by those few Unicorn samurai whose crimes have caused them to be banished from the Empire itself. It is guarded by Unicorn troops, and is not the same road as the much larger Path of Woe, farther north and east, which is guarded by the Badger Clan.

If none of the PCs know this, Shinjo Shono can tell them.

Scene Three: Exile's Road

If the PCs investigated thoroughly, they should have learned that Yokatsu shaved his beard and left Bugaisha dressed as a ronin, heading north toward Exile's Road. Shinjo Shono will be eager to pursue once this becomes clear.

From Bugaisha, it will take five days to reach Exile's Watchtower, the small fort which guards the pass to Exile's Road.

Exile's Watchtower is a single three-story cylindrical tower topped by a peculiar onion-shaped dome. Smaller buildings – barracks, stables, dojos, and so forth – cluster around the base of the tower. Several Unicorn bushi on horseback are patrolling the area,

dai-kyu ready to hand, and two of them gallop over as you approach.

If the PCs present valid travel papers, the Unicorn patrollers will stand aside and allow them to approach the tower. Otherwise, they will demand that the PCs depart the area. "This is the Path of Exile, samurai – unless you are leaving the Empire, you have no place here."

The PCs will be admitted to the tower after an hour's delay, for reasons which may become apparent to them.

The Commander: Moto Xian Zhu

The taisa (captain) of Exile's Watchtower is Moto Xian Zhu, a "true" Moto trained in the family school, who spent ten years of his life on deadly, fruitless missions into the Shadowlands. He is tall and was once muscular, but has grown unhealthily thin in recent years. His thick hair is tied back in a long ponytail, and an ugly network of scars runs down the left side of his face (just missing the eye) to vanish beneath his kimono. He is not Tainted, but his experiences left him bitter, unstable, tormented by nightmares, and hopelessly addicted to opium. PCs may have met him in the adventure *Winter Court: Kanrinrin's Duty*.

Xian Zhu has been assigned to this post as a last opportunity to restore his honor. Unfortunately, he has been unable to shake his addiction, and when the PCs meet with him his eyes are glassy and unfocussed.

- Xian Zhu remembers a ronin who matches Yokatsu's description. "He came through here... I think, a month ago? Said he wanted to see the Burning Sands, so I passed him on up the road. Probably a criminal fleeing prosecution."
- He does not clearly remember the ronin's name. "Korato? Kosetsu?" If a PC says "Konmetsu," he nods in recognition. "Yes, that's it!"
- Xian Zhu has trouble remembering which of his samurai escorted the ronin into the path. "We have to escort everyone, you understand, and it's hard to keep track..." The PCs will have to be either very persistent (role-play) or forceful (**Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 15) to get him to remember the names of the two bushi: Shinjo Daijitsu and Moto Chuji.

- If the PCs ask to speak with either of these bushi, Xian Zhu will grumble and temporize (especially if the PCs were threatening), muttering that he has many demands on his time and does not have time to track down his bushi while they are on duty. (It should become clear that he is not actually certain of their status, but is afraid of revealing this.)
- If the PCs continue to press him, he eventually relents and sends out an aide to summon them. Shinjo Daijitsu will arrive shortly, but Moto Chuji is reported as dead. “As you know, my lord, he was lost while patrolling the Road a month ago.” Xian Zhu will try to cover himself by staging a tantrum, demanding to know why he is not kept informed of such important matters.
- Xian Zhu’s opium addiction can be detected by PCs who roll **Medicine/Perception** at TN 15, or **Poison/Perception** or **Herbalism/Perception** at TN 20. PCs who are themselves opium addicts will recognize the symptoms with a **Simple Intelligence** roll at TN 10. PCs who played *Winter Court: Kanrinrin’s Duty* may already be aware of his addiction. Xian Zhu will become much more cooperative if the PCs bring this knowledge to bear against him.
- A Unicorn ronin calling himself “Konmetsu” and matching Yokatsu’s appearance came to the tower, claiming that he wished to see the legendary Burning Sands. He was escorted up the Exile’s Road by Shinjo Daijitsu and Moto Chuji, who were assigned to patrol duty that day.
- Shinjo Daijitsu returned alone, and claimed that both Moto Chuji and the ronin were killed by a small group of bandits – probably exiles trying to get back into the Empire. (There have been many exiles since the Unicorn civil war began.) The bandits struck before they reached the Last Shrine. Daijitsu claimed there were six bandits; he and his comrades managed to kill three of them, and the rest fled. He brought back Moto Chuji’s daisho, horse, and other gear.
- A follow-up patrol found only a few scattered bones and body parts, and was unable to identify who they belonged to. This was actually not terribly surprising – Exile’s Road is haunted by scavenger animals and carrion birds. They also were unable to track down the surviving bandits. (Some PCs may be disturbed at the thought of a samurai’s unburied remains left to carrion-eaters. The garrison troops nod grimly. “What else could we do? Return the wrong bones to his family? Such is the price of the duty we serve here.”)

The Garrison

If the PCs speak with other bushi at the tower, they will find that these men (a mixture of Shinjo and Moto) are reluctant to speak openly about conditions here, about the missing Moto Chuji, or about their incompetent commander. Unicorn PCs who speak with them privately can get them to open up with a **Simple Awareness** roll at TN 10. Other PCs will need to speak very carefully, emphasizing that they have no desire to bring shame to the Unicorn Clan or the Moto family, and roll **Sincerity/Awareness** at TN 15 to convince the garrison troops to speak openly.

PCs with an affinity for commoners (ronin, Tortoise, etc) can get information from the servants of Exile’s Watchtower. This will require a **Kuenai/Awareness** roll at TN 15, or **Sincerity/Awareness** at TN 25.

Either source can provide the following information:

- Moto Xian Zhu is an incompetent opium addict. He makes almost no contribution to running the fort.
- Nobody at the Watchtower is surprised that Moto Xian Zhu is unaware of his kinsman’s death. He was on an extended opium “bender” when Shinjo Daijitsu returned.
- If the PCs think to ask whether any other ronin have been here since then, some of the garrison troops will remember a “grubby wave-man” named Gojita who came through ten days ago. He was apparently traveling, and stayed only a single night before moving on.
- The servants at the tower (but not the troops) remember that “Gojita” asked about previous ronin visitors, and seemed quite interested in the story of “Konmetsu” and his death on Exile’s Road.

- If the PCs ask where Gojita went after he left, nobody seems to know. However, a roll of **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 20 discovers one Shinjo bushi who remembers seeing him on the road heading east, several days later.
- Nobody remembers anything particularly noteworthy about Gojita – he was just a “typical ronin,” dirty and unshaven.

Shinjo Daijitsu

Regardless of whether they track him down through the orders of Xian Zhu or on their own, Shinjo Daijitsu can be located with relatively little effort.

Daijitsu is a young man in his early twenties, with a handsome face and a sparse moustache. He seems superficially to be an honest, plain-spoken bushi, and expresses what seems to be sincere anger and grief over the death of his comrade Moto Chuji. If asked to describe this incident, he speaks as follows:

“We were about two days up the Road, and a day short of Exile’s Shrine – normally we’d move faster, but escorting the ronin slowed us down. I was riding in the lead at the time, and the bandits must have lain in wait among the rocks until I passed. They had spears, crude ones, and a couple of them carried swords, but they had little armor and no bows. Moto Chuji-san went down in the first rush, but his horse kept fighting, and crushed a bandit’s skull. The ronin managed to wound two of them, but he was a lone man on foot surrounded by spearmen – he fell before I could make it back. I dropped one bandit with an arrow as I approached, then drew sword and slew one who was trying to take Chuji-san’s swords. That was enough for the rest of them – they fled into the rocks, where my horse could not pursue, and hid. I could not tend to my comrade’s body, for I had no eta with me – I took what gear of his I could, and his swords, and led his horse back. I spoke a prayer for him, and for the ronin – he died bravely.”

- If asked to name or describe the ronin, he calls him “Konmetsu.” His description matches what the PCs are looking for: an older man, short of stature, with medium-long hair and no beard (although he did have chin stubble).
- He describes the bandits as grubby, dirty men in ragged clothing. However, he is sure they were Rokugani and not gaijin.

This entire story is a fabrication – Daijitsu and Chuji are Kolat, and conspired with Yokatsu to create this story in order to arrange a death for the “ronin” who left Bugaisha. Yokatsu and Chuji headed east on foot. In order to see through Daijitsu’s story, PCs will have to defeat him with a **Contested Roll of Investigation/Perception** against his **Sincerity/Awareness**. (Certain spells, notably *Whispering Wind* and *Dominate the Mind*, could also be useful here.)

If the PCs do realize that Daijitsu is lying (either from speaking with him, or from investigations on Exile’s Road), they may decide to confront him. He will not change his story, even in the face of threats or challenges. In order to make him tell the truth, the PCs will have to have him arrested and tortured.

Exile’s Watchtower does not have a torturer, but it does have a family of *eta*, who can be forced into this task if need be. However, this will require convincing Moto Xian Zhu to arrest Shinjo Daijitsu. If the PCs are not blackmailing or otherwise manipulating Xian Zhu, they will need to present some sort of argument or case to him, although his weakened mental faculties will make this relatively easy – as long as the PCs can present a reasonable argument, well role-played, they can convince him with a **Sincerity/Awareness** or **Law/Awareness** roll at TN 20. PCs who come up with clever justifications, or who use Shinjo Shono’s rank and position to bolster their argument, get a Free Raise on this roll.

Magistrate PCs with Glory of 4.5 or better can attempt to “pull rank” and order an arrest/interrogation on their own authority. Moto Xian Zhu will be quite upset by this, but the PCs can face him down with forceful role-play and an **Intimidation/Willpower** roll at TN 20. Again, some PCs may be able to blackmail him instead.

The spell *Dominate the Mind* could also be used to force Daijitsu to tell the truth. Note, however, that this spell is frowned upon in much of the Empire, so using it could entail a small loss of Glory (1-2 points), and possibly Honor as well, depending on the caster’s own attitudes.

Truly unscrupulous PC could do the torture themselves, but this would entail the loss of a full Rank of Honor, and equal or greater loss of Glory if others become aware of their actions. Shinjo Shono will certainly disassociate himself from such dishonorable persons.

If Shinjo Daijitsu is tortured, he will eventually break down and confess, although he holds out for several

hours. Once broken, he reveals the following information:

- He and Moto Chuji are both members in a secret cabal within the Unicorn Clan. The “ronin” who came was a senior member of the same cabal. He called himself Konmetsu, but that was almost certainly not his real name.
- He will not say the name “Kolats” but will admit that the cabal is ancient and has been a part of the Unicorn Clan for centuries. Its goal is to take control of Rokugan and free it from the domination of “false gods” such as the descendents of the Kami.
- Moto Chuji and the ronin left together, on foot, and headed east. He does not know their goal, other than leaving the Unicorn lands.
- He does not know the ronin was actually Shinjo Yokatsu – the man identified himself as a superior within the conspiracy by means of secret code words.
- Daijitsu will not give any further information on the conspiracy, nor will he name any of its members. He will say that it is spread all through the Empire, and Shinjo’s return will not defeat it.

Searching Exile’s Road

Rather than interrogating Shinjo Daijitsu, it is more likely that the PCs will search Exile’s Road for clues to Yokatsu’s fate. The “bandit ambush” supposedly took place about two-thirds of the way to Exile’s Shrine, the last settlement before the edge of the Empire. It will take about a day and a half to reach the location on foot.

Exile’s Path is a bleak, stony pass through a lower section of the Great Wall of the North Mountains. The Path ranges in width from a narrow, winding road between rocky walls to a broad gap several hundred yards wide. Rugged slopes climb to mountain peaks on either side. The bones of dead men, old and new, litter the ground to either side of the path – exiles who sought to return to the Empire, and were struck down by Shinjo patrols.

The PCs will encounter at least one such patrol (consisting of two mounted Unicorn bushi, with bows and yari). The Unicorn will be alert and suspicious, but quickly change to polite and cooperative once they see the travel papers from Moto Gaheris. (Alternatively,

the PCs can gain similar cooperation by citing Shinjo Shono’s rank, or by “pulling rank” themselves if they have Glory 5.0 or better, or advantageous social positions.) The Unicorn do not know the exact location of the ambush which supposedly took the lives of Moto Chuji and the ronin “Konmetsu,” but they can point the PCs to the approximate two-three mile section of the Road where it most likely took place.

Traces of a Missing Ambush

If the PCs search the appropriate section of Exile’s Road for signs of a recent battle, they can roll **Hunting/Perception** at TN 15, **Battle/Perception** at TN 20, or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 25 to discover a scattering of bones and other remains which are relatively fresh (a month or less old, with scraps of rotten flesh still clinging). Some of the bones have the marks of sword blows.

There is nothing about the bones themselves to help the PCs (the Kolats arranged to dump some corpses here). Investigating PCs have two ways of learning more:

Tracks: PCs can search the area for tracks and other such evidence. This will require another skill roll, either **Hunting/Intelligence** at TN 15, **Nazado/Intelligence** at TN 15, or **Investigation/Intelligence** at TN 20. A successful roll discerns (from the residual tracks on the pebbly bare soil) no sign of a battle. Two people came on horseback, one on foot. Two departed on foot, one on horseback, all heading back down the way they came.

- If the PCs ask whether anyone else visited the area later, they can tell that many groups of mounted men have been through since then. Also, at least one person on foot came here from the Watchtower, then headed back in that direction (this was “Gojita”).

Magic: Shugenja PCs who check the area for spirits (with a *Sense* spell) can find a fairly strong Earth spirit in a nearby hill, and several smaller Air spirits. Getting these spirits to remember events from a month ago will require a *Commune* spell with several Raises – two Raises for the Earth spirit, four raises for the Air spirits.

- If the spirits are questioned about the supposed “battle,” they say there was no battle here. The shugenja will have to ask careful questions to determine what actually happened: three men came, two on horseback. One of the men dismounted and stripped off his armor and weapons. Then he and the other

man on foot departed back down the valley. The man on horseback collected the gear and rode after them.

- If the PCs ask about bodies, the spirits (somewhat impatiently) explain they were “already there.” The bodies arrived the night before, carried in by a group of men in dark clothing. (Kolats ninja.) The men came from, and departed to, the direction “where the sun rises.”
- If the PCs ask about any visitors to the scene afterward, the spirits can recount various scavenger animals (jackals, crows, vultures), several visits by Unicorn patrols, and a single man who was “hard to see” who came up the road, looked around carefully, and then went back the way he came (Gojita).

Exile's Shrine

If the PCs go all the way up the Road, they will find Exile's Shrine, a small two-story temple to the Seven Fortunes, attended by three older monks and two young acolytes. The Shrine serves the spiritual needs of those who are about to be exiled, allowing them one final chance to pray and seek enlightenment before departing forever into the Burning Sands.

Questioning the monks here can ascertain beyond any doubt that Yokatsu never made it this far. Nor did anyone else who might interest the PCs (Gojita, Moto Chuji, etc).

Following the Trail From Here

Although there is no obvious trail, the PCs should be able to ascertain that Yokatsu and Moto Chuji left the area of Exile's Road on foot. If they managed to break Shinjo Daijitsu, they will know that the two were headed east, and PCs who asked carefully about “Gojita” will know that he headed east as well.

If the PCs are unable to find any of those clues, they can, as a last resort, ask in all the local villages about ronin. To find Yokatsu and Chuji, they will have to ask about two ronin, one younger and other older, traveling together about a month ago. To find Gojita, they must ask about a single ronin passing through about a week ago.

A thorough and systematic search will require two days of effort and a roll of **Kuenai/Awareness** at TN 15 or **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 20. Success

determines that both targets went east, on the road which heads out across the open plains of Shinjo lands toward the Otaku city of Yashigi.

Scene Four: On Yokatsu's Trail

Once the PCs head for Yashigi, they should be able to remain on the trail, either by asking about Yokatsu and Chuji, or by asking about “Gojita.” It will then be largely a matter of remaining on their path until they can reach the City of the Rich Frog.

Yashigi

From Exile's Watchtower, it will take about seven days to reach the village of Yashigi, located in Otaku territory. The village is actually a small city, home to about 1,500 people. It is a significant trade center, located on the Emperor's Road (the principle road through the eastern Unicorn territories), and is also home to a major jade mine. The town is plagued by frequent earthquakes, and the residents have constructed a shrine to a minor local Fortune in an effort to allay the problem.

The village is currently held by a sizable garrison of Otaku battle maidens, commanded by an aggressive young samurai-ko named Otaku Sahijir. The troops are here mainly to watch the Dragon troops who occupy the territories to the east, but they will still carefully check the PCs' travel papers, and escort the PCs to a brief meeting with Sahijir. The Battle Maidens are openly suspicious and ill-mannered toward members of the Shinjo family, but Shinjo Shono will grimly endure their hostility – he is too ashamed of his father's deeds to take offense, and will try to calm down any Shinjo PCs who get angry or aggressive.

Sahijir has obvious gaijin blood – her skin has a golden brown tone, giving her an exotic beauty, and she wears her long hair loose and unstyled. She will show slightly more respect for Shono than her subordinates did, although she will not apologize for any insults or discourtesies they might have delivered. If the PCs treat her respectfully, she will be reasonably helpful.

- She does not personally remember any ronin passing through the village, but after a brief discussion with her subordinates, she can confirm that two ronin (matching the descriptions of Yokatsu and Chuji) passed through the village four weeks ago. They stayed one day at the Inn of the Broken Reed, departed the next morning, then came back

three days later and departed the day after that. She does not know where they went during the intervening time, nor does she know where they went after that. “They left, that is all that is important to us. Wave-men are often troublemakers, sometimes even criminals.”

- Likewise, Sahijir can confirm that a ronin called “Gojita” came through the village about a week ago, stopping a single night at the same inn.
- Sahijir will warn the PCs against traveling farther east – that region is occupied by the Dragon, and their troops are as likely to attack travelers as to help them.

If the PCs visit the **Inn of the Broken Reed**, the innkeeper remembers the visits from both Yokatsu/Chuji and Gojita. “They had money! Not a common thing with wave-men – they often have empty pockets and want to get by with chopping wood or some such thing... or simply fail to pay.” He can share the following additional information:

- The two ronin (who called themselves Konmetsu and Chuji) originally seemed calm and pleasant enough. But after they returned three days later, they were anxious and irritable. The innkeeper overheard them talking about the Dragon armies. When they left the second time, he is fairly sure they took the south road out of Yashigi.
- The second ronin, Gojita, asked about the first two. “Not the first time I’ve had wave-men asking after each other. Nor are you the first samurai to come trailing after a ronin. You work for magistrates, right? What’d they do? Murder, theft?”
- The innkeeper is fairly sure “Gojita” took the same southern road as the two earlier ronin.

If the PCs ask around the city in suitable locales (at the gates, for example) they can roll **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 15 to confirm that Yokatsu and Chuji headed east the first time they left the city, then took the Emperor’s Road south the second time. Gojita took the same road.

The Dragon Occupied Zone

Some PCs may decide to keep heading east, either because they miss the clues in Yashigi or because they

suspect misdirection. It will take them just over a day to reach the edge of the Dragon-occupied zone, where they will be stopped by a patrol of eight Mirumoto bushi.

If at least half the party is composed of Unicorns (in addition to Shono), the Mirumoto will simply attack. The party will have to flee immediately if they wish to avoid combat. No peaceful parley or cooperation will be possible.

Otherwise, the Mirumoto will be courteous but also quite suspicious, not only toward Shono and other Unicorn PCs but also toward PCs who are members of the Lion or Phoenix Clans (with whom the Dragon are at war). They will check the PCs’ travel papers carefully, and will not allow the PCs to travel any further with the papers from Moto Gaheris. If the PCs have their own papers (perhaps written by an Emerald Magistrate PC), the Dragon will still be reluctant to allow them to proceed – the PCs will have to role-play an effective appeal to law and etiquette, and make a roll of **Law/Awareness** at TN 15 or **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 20, in order to browbeat the Dragon into letting them pass. If the PCs have no other travel papers, the Dragon will turn them away no matter what they say.

If the PCs are allowed into the Dragon occupied zone, they can quickly ascertain (by spending a day asking questions in local villages) that none of the three ronin they are looking for have come this far.

The PCs can potentially save themselves some time by asking the local Dragon bushi (either when they reach the border, or after managing to cross it). However, the Mirumoto will not be inclined to be cooperative unless the PCs include Dragons in their own ranks, or are Emerald or Jade Magistrates or members of the Imperial families. PCs can also “cash in” (erase) Allies or Favors with the Dragon Clan, or cite powerful advantages such as Ear of the Emperor, in order to gain cooperation.

If the Dragon do cooperate, they spend a few hours circulating questions among the local patrols. Eventually, they ascertain that two ronin (giving the names Konmetsu and Chuji) did indeed approach from Unicorn territory, but their travel papers were found to be forged. They were turned back, and narrowly escaped arrest.

To the Sleeping River

From Yashigi, the Emperor's Road goes six days south to Mura Nisa Kawa Nemui (Village By the Sleeping River), a pleasant fishing village of about 900 people, with several fine inns, teahouses, and eating establishments.

The village is currently held by a sizable garrison of Moto bushi, watching the Dragon armies to the northeast. Their commander is a thin, grim-faced young bushi named Moto Jikkou. He and his men will be cooperative with the PCs (as long as they show the papers from Gaheris), but most of their attention is on watching the Dragon troops – they do not recall any visit by two ronin a month ago. Some of Jikkou's troops do, however, recall a ronin passing through nine days ago. "Said his name was Gojita. We offered him work, plenty of Dragons to fight soon, but he headed on southeast on the Road of Lengthy Commerce. Seemed to be in a hurry, didn't even stay the night."

If the PCs do not speak with the bushi, they may try asking around the inns and other establishments in the town. The best information is found in the aptly-named Roadside Inn, located in the southern edge of town. The innkeeper, a portly and jolly middle-aged fellow named Zaku, remembers the ronin pair who stayed the night a little over three weeks ago. "They didn't like to talk much, but I supposed they were leaving on account of the war ending. Seen a few other wave-men heading on through because of that." He confirms that the two left on the Road of Lengthy Commerce, heading southeast toward the edge of Unicorn territory. He also mentions that the PCs are not the first ones to ask: "There was another wave-man in here, eight or nine days ago, asking about them. Said they were old comrades." His description of the ronin matches "Gojita."

Shugenja PCs can confirm the innkeeper's tale by *Communing* with the local spirits – there are Earth spirits on the main road, and both Air and Water spirits nearby, all of which remember Gojita with one Raise and Yokatsu/Chuji with three.

Down the Road of Lengthy Commerce

From the Village by the Sleeping River, the PCs travel south on the Road of Lengthy Commerce, paralleling the Sleeping River. After two days, they reach the point where the Sleeping River merges with the Firefly River.

Across the Sleeping River, in the wedge of land between it and the Firefly, lies Toshi no Aida Ni Kawa, the City Between the Rivers. It is a large and prosperous settlement, home to about 3,000 people, and watched over by a large fortified castle which commands the river forks. The PCs will have to get passage on a boat to visit the city, since it is on the far side of the river.

The daimyo and military commander of the city is Shinjo Yasoma, a skilled tactician who was originally 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, he is harried and depressed, shaken by the Unicorn civil war and the disgrace of his family. He took no part in the fighting himself, and tries to avoid discussing the whole topic.

- Yasoma does not keep track of every ronin who visits his city, but if the PCs ask politely (and roll **Etiquette/Awareness** at TN 10), he will have his subordinates look into the matter. After a few hours they will determine that the city has seen no ronin matching any of the descriptions which the PCs might offer.
- PCs can double-check with local commoners, merchants, boatmen, etc., by spending a few hours asking questions and rolling **Kuenai/Awareness** or **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 15. This will confirm that none of the three ronin the PCs were seeking visited the city.

Shugenja PCs can find Water spirits in the river and Earth and Air spirits elsewhere in the area. Casting *Commune* with a few Raises (three Raises for Water spirits, four for Air or Earth) will determine that Yokatsu and Chuji stayed on the far side of the river, following the Road of Lengthy Commerce southeast toward the next village, and "Gojita" followed them.

On to Kofuku Village

After passing the City Between the Rivers, it will take the PCs another day to reach the village of Kofuku, located on the far side of a secondary river called the Arasoizuki. (A ferry is in place to expedite crossing, and the operators remember both Yokatsu/Chuji and "Gojita.") On the far side of the river is the village of Kofuku.

If the PCs have played the adventures *Arrows From the Woods* or *Command of the Kami*, they have traveled through this village before. It is a fairly large and prosperous settlement (almost 500 inhabitants) with two Inns, one on each side of town, both of good quality. There is also a geisha house (the Floating Blossom), a merchant's shop near the riverside, and an assortment of artisans' shops.

The town is home to a small ronin band, Maeda's Disciples, who have been hired by the Unicorn to help maintain order along the Road of Lengthy Commerce. Takuhito, a cheerful young ronin from the Disciples, will greet the PCs as they enter the village, politely asking for their travel papers, wishing them a pleasant journey, and reintroducing himself to PCs he may have met before. Maeda himself is out on patrol, and is not expected back for several days.

- If the PCs ask about "Konmetsu" and Chuji, Takuhito can confirm that they visited about three weeks ago, and stayed several days at the Hospitable Crane Inn. They had valid travel papers for Unicorn lands.
- If the PCs ask about "Gojita," Takuhito does not remember a visit from him.

PCs who have played *Command of the Kami* may well feel quite paranoid in this village, since the last time they were here, one of the Inns was infiltrated by the Living Darkness. It is that Inn (formerly known as either the Golden Sun or the Crane's Perch) which is now called the **Hospitable Crane**. It has a new innkeeper, Chokaku, and a new signboard with an image of a crane in a kimono, making a welcoming gesture with its wings. Even more impressive, the Inn sports exotic gaijin glass lanterns with crystal panes. If asked about this, Chokaku the Innkeeper will explain that his patron, Doji Akae, has made such exotic lanterns a signature of all the Inns he sponsors. (PCs who have played the adventure *Blood of Midnight* may recall an Inn there with similar lanterns.)

Chokaku remembers "Konmetsu" and Chuji well: the two supposed ronin stayed at the Inn for five days while waiting for passage downriver on a trade barge. Chokaku can also confirm that another ronin was here ten days ago, looking for the pair. "Quiet fellow, didn't want to give his name. Probably mixed up in something bad, these wave-men usually are."

Chokaku does not know which barge the two ronin took, but knows it was affiliated with the local merchant, Tsiburo.

Tsiburo the Merchant runs a large, well-stocked shop in the village's riverside district. He is a pudgy, stoop-shouldered man with a perpetual hangdog expression. Tsiburo replaced the village's previous merchant, who was convicted of conspiring with bandits to sell their loot (in the adventure *Arrows From the Woods*). His shop is prosperous, and prominently displays the mon of the Ide family, which sponsors him.

If the PCs ask about the two ronin, Tsiburo says they hired on as guards for the barge *Precious Flower*, which is owned by his patron Ide Michitaka. The barge was carrying trade goods downriver to the City of the Rich Frog. (PCs who roll **Commerce/Intelligence** at TN 15, or **Heraldry/Intelligence** or a suitable **Lore** skill at TN 20, recognize Ide Michitaka as a prominent Unicorn merchant patron.) However, this story is a lie. Tsiburo was actually ordered by his patron to provide places for the two ronin on the barge. PCs can easily see through his story by rolling **Simple Awareness** against TN 20. They can break him down by being suitably threatening and rolling **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 20, or offering him a bribe (a few silver *bu* should suffice).

On to the Rich Frog

Based on their investigations in Kofuku Village, the PCs should know that Yokatsu and Chuji took the river-barge *Precious Flower* to the City of the Rich Frog. Shinjo Shono will be eager to pursue, but is also aware that the travel papers from Moto Gaheris may not be good in the City of the Rich Frog, which is controlled by the Lion Clan. He will seek the advice and assistance of PCs who seem likely to be able to help with this problem: Magistrates, Lion, or Imperials.

If there are Emerald or Jade Magistrates among the PCs, they can write their own papers. Otherwise, the party will be facing a potential problem once they reach the City.

Assuming the PCs do not simply give up, it will take them about five days to reach the City of the Rich Frog by following the Road of Lengthy Commerce. If they buy passage on a riverboat (probably costing 2-3 silver *bu* each), it takes two days.

Scene Five: The City of the Rich Frog

Heavy rain drenches you and churns the surface of the Kawa Nemui, the Sleeping River. The outlines of the City of the Rich Frog are hazed by the rainfall, but

you can still make out the mass of buildings sprawled across the riverbank and reaching inland for over a mile. Until last year, this was the largest ronin settlement in the Emerald Empire, home to over 5,000 people. Now it is governed by the Lion Clan.

As the PCs arrive (either at the city gates, or the docks, depending on whether they came via land or water), they are met by a pair of grim, serious Lion soldiers, who request their travel papers. Several surly-looking ronin lurk ostentatiously nearby, smoking with long iron pipes, but make no move to approach. (PCs who have played the adventures *Smoke and Mirrors* or *A Hidden Blade* will recognize these men as the Machi-Kanshisha, agents of the secretive ronin family known as “Kaeru” who ruled the city prior to the arrival of the Lion Clan.)

- If the PCs have travel papers written by an Emerald or Jade Magistrate, the Lion will inspect the papers carefully, ask a few perfunctory questions, and then admit the PCs (and Shono) to the city.
- If the PCs have only Gaheris’ papers, or no papers, the Lion will refuse them entry to the city. (They will also make a point of being somewhat rude to any Scorpion or Dragon PCs, since they are at war with their Clans.) If the PCs try to argue, “pull rank,” or otherwise persuade the Lion, they will be ordered to take their complaints to the city’s military governor, Ikoma Gunjin. One of the Lions will escort the PCs to Gunjin’s headquarters.
- None of the Lion will answer any questions about ronin coming in or out of the city. “We cannot share military information without the permission of our commander.” They will refer persistent PCs to Ikoma Gunjin.

Meeting Ikoma Gunjin

Besides a possible need for travel papers, some PCs may decide to visit Gunjin out of a sense of etiquette (announcing themselves to the local authorities), or in hopes of gaining cooperation and assistance.

The military governor resides in the residence of the former Lion ambassador (he was assassinated three years ago, and never replaced). PCs who come to see Gunjin will wait in an outer room for an hour before being granted an audience.

Ikoma Gunjin is a fit, stern-looking, quietly intense man in his late thirties, with piercing eyes and a long goatee beard. PCs may have briefly met him in the adventure *In Time of War*. He will listen politely to the PCs’ words, not speaking or showing any reaction. Gunjin is a completely honest and honorable man, a strict follower of the code of bushido, and a loyal soldier of the Lion Clan. He distrusts Scorpions and Cranes, and is loyal unto death to the Hantei dynasty. He is also one of the Lion Clan’s most skilled battlefield commanders, and feels himself wasted serving as governor of a “corrupt ronin city.”

- If the PCs are asking permission to visit the city (due to lack of travel papers), they will have to speak both politely and eloquently, present a solid reason for visiting the city (the truth is acceptable), and roll **Sincerity/Awareness** at TN 20. PCs who are Lion or Imperial Family get a Free Raise. With a successful roll, Gunjin will grant them authorization to reside in the city for one week. With a failed roll, he will regretfully explain that in a time of war he cannot freely allow visitors to come and go without papers. PCs can overturn this ruling by “cashing in” (erasing) an Ally or Favor with the Lion Clan.

The PCs may ask for information on recent ronin visitors to the city. If Gunjin has already granted them permission to stay in the city (as above), he will readily answer them. If they have simply come to him for information and assistance, they will have to explain the reason for their request and make a **Sincerity/Awareness** roll at TN 20. (Again, Lion and Imperial PCs get a Free Raise.)

If he agrees to help, Gunjin will send a subordinate for the recent reports of arrivals and departures. From these he can determine that “Konmetsu” and “Chuji” arrived in the city sixteen days ago, under travel papers granted by a Crane daimyo named Doji Sesutchiro, who had hired them as guards. However (at this point Gunjin raises his eyebrows), neither ronin has been recorded as leaving the city.

- PCs who roll **Commerce/Intelligence** at TN 20 or **Lore: Crane/Intelligence** at TN 25 can recall hearing that Doji Sesutchiro is a wealthy nobleman with connections to the even wealthier Doji Akae.

There is no information on a ronin named “Gojita” entering the city.

Gunjin will not offer the PCs any other assistance, and will certainly not detach any soldiers to assist them. “I have far too few troops to be able to spare any of them for a quest of personal vengeance,” he explains. Even if an Emerald Magistrate tries to commandeer troops, Gunjin will deny the request. “I see no demonstrable need here.”

- If any Lion PC asks him for help, he will be regretful, but still refuses. “This city is vulnerable, with the Dragon only a few days to the north. I must apologize, cousin, but I cannot offer you help.”
- To Lions (only) he may drop the suggestion that they seek assistance from the Machi-Kanshisha. “Much as it shames me to admit it, they still do much of the work of keeping the peace in this city. Without them, my small force would probably be overwhelmed by simple law-enforcement duties. I believe they even have a magistrate of sorts, a ronin woman named Ichiko.”

The Machi-Kanshisha

If the PCs have been here before, they will be aware that the Machi-Kanshisha *otokodate* (ronin brotherhood) is the true law of the city, and the primary agents of the Kaeru family who ruled the city for centuries. PCs who have not played *A Hidden Blade* or *Smoke and Mirrors* will still know these facts if they roll **Lore: Ronin/Intelligence** at TN 15 or **History/Intelligence** at TN 20. If nothing else, the ostentatious presence of so many ronin brandishing heavy iron smoking pipes is bound to attract the curiosity of some of the PCs. (Shinjo Shono does not know much about the City of the Rich Frog, other than that it was a bone of contention between his Clan and the Lion for the last two years.)

If the PCs approach any of the Machi-Kanshisha, perhaps to ask questions about strange ronin visiting the city, they will not be terribly cooperative. Indeed, their behavior will often verge on insolence, especially when dealing with pushy or arrogant PCs. (PCs who get physically aggressive will be disabled with a swift knock to the head by one of the heavy iron pipes.) However, if the PCs are polite (or offer a bribe), they will be directed to the residence of the city magistrate, Ichiko.

Regardless of whether or not they go to visit Ichiko, the PCs will soon come to see that the Machi-Kanshisha are the true protectors of peace in the City of the Rich

Frog. Those who breach the peace, regardless of whether they are Clan samurai, ronin, or commoner, are quickly set upon and disabled by pipe-wielding Machi-Kanshisha squads, who then retire into the crowd before Lion patrols can arrive.

Ichiko the Magistrate

PCs who have played *A Hidden Blade* or *Smoke and Mirrors* have met Ichiko before, and may even have performed a service for her. If not, the PCs will soon hear about her if they start asking around about ronin visitors. Innkeepers, merchants, visiting samurai and ronin, and of course the Machi-Kanshisha will all suggest that she is the one to visit if the PCs are looking for a criminal or refugee. (Even Lion troops will admit this, but only to fellow Lion.)

If the PCs ask around for more information about Ichiko, they can learn the following:

- Ichiko is hired and maintained by the Kaeru, the secretive ronin “family” (their name is not recognized by the Emperor) which ruled the City of the Rich Frog before the Lion came... and, some say, in truth rules it still. She has been in her position over six years.
- Ichiko is a Clan ronin, but nobody is sure which Clan she came from originally. She treats all Clan samurai the same.
- Ichiko uses the Machi-Kanshisha to enforce the peace, but they are not actually under her control. They obey her because the Kaeru family tells them to.

The so-called “magistrate” keeps her residence in a modest private home near the center of the city. A pair of the Machi-Kanshisha ronin squat outside, puffing on their huge iron pipes, and wave you inside casually. A servant maid greets you in the front hall and politely asks your business.

The PCs will be kept waiting only a short time, ten minutes or so, before the maid escorts them back into the house.

The maid takes you to a room whose wall opens onto a small garden, barely four paces on a side. The magistrate waits for you here, sitting cross-legged, her swords politely laid on the floor to her right. She is a sturdy, muscular woman in her thirties, dressed in a businesslike hakama and gi. Her face is serious and

roughened by weather, and her hair is cropped almost painfully short.

Ichiko is polite but not fawning or unctuous. She will introduce herself, offer the PCs tea, then asks how she can assist them.

- If the PCs ask about “Konmetsu” and Chuji, she will politely suggest that the PCs first seek the help of the Lion forces, who keep meticulous track of everyone who enters and leaves the city.
- If that is not satisfactory, or the PCs ask for more specific help in tracking down the two within the city, Ichiko frowns and folds her hands carefully in her lap. “You understand, samurai-san, I have my... patrons... just as you, too, serve your lords. I must abide by their decisions, even if at times I privately disagree with them.” Ichiko will never come out and say that the Kaeru are helping Yokatsu, but the implication should be clear.
- If the PCs ask about “Gojita,” Ichiko will get a slightly crooked smile on her face. “It is most curious that you should ask about that name, samurai-san. Others of mutual interest have also been inquiring about him. I believe he is here in the city, although I doubt it is with anyone’s permission. As for how you can find him...” she shrugs. “He does not strike me as a man who is found unless he wishes to be.”
- If the PCs ask why Ichiko still has any power and authority in the city, she smiles thinly. “The Lion are the rulers here, but I still have some influence with the ronin who live in this city. I am sure you are aware, samurai-san, how much influence matters in our Empire.”
- Under no circumstances will Ichiko offer the PCs any direct assistance. Her hands have been tied by the Kaeru, and she will not endanger her precarious position by defying them.

Contact with the White Ninja

Once the PCs reach the City of the Rich Frog, they will probably quickly come to the attention of “Gojita” – who is, in fact, Matsu Hiroru, the legendary “White Ninja.” Certainly if the PCs ask Ikoma Gunjin or Ichiko the Magistrate for information about “Gojita” or “Konmetsu,” he will soon know about it (Hiroru makes

a point of keeping tabs on what those two authorities are doing). If nothing else, he will quickly hear about PCs who go around inns and teahouses asking about “Gojita” or “Konmetsu” by name or description.

Matsu Hiroru will wait until the PCs have settled into an Inn for the evening, then approach them in a semi-public situation (such as while they are eating) and casually sit down next to them. He appears to be a nondescript ronin, with no armor and tattered, travel-stained clothing. He carries a good-quality katana in a worn-looking saya, but shows no particular anxiety about leaving it in a weapons closet (his real weapons are concealed under his clothing).

Hiroru will introduce himself as “Gojita,” (“I believe you have been looking for me, samurai-san”). However, if any of the PCs have made positive contacts with him in previous modules (*Damning Evidence*, *A Question of Honor*, or the mini-mission from the *Kyuden Bayushi* interactive), he will make a point of looking directly at them and adding, “Some of us have met, I think.” If the PCs only saw him in his “White Ninja” outfit and mask, they can roll **Simple Intelligence** at TN 15 to recognize him now.

Matsu Hiroru wants to enlist the PCs for help in rooting out Yokatsu, but he is still not completely sure they can be trusted (especially with Shinjo Shono along), and will be very cautious about revealing too much about himself. He will start out by revealing that he knows who the PCs are hunting. “You seek the one who once was called Shinjo Yokatsu.”

- Hiroru will confirm that he has been hunting Yokatsu, who he calls “an enemy of the Empire.” If the PCs ask how he got into the City of the Rich Frog, he smiles. “I have resources which are not available to the typical Lion bushi.”
- Hiroru will be suspicious of Shinjo Shono, who is, after all, Yokatsu’s son. The PCs will have to vouch for him convincingly. It will help if the PCs can also convince Shono that Hiroru is an ally – Shono will be more than a little suspicious of this strangely knowledgeable wave-man.
- If the PCs show any understanding of the conspiracy which Yokatsu serves, Hiroru will confirm that he is a sworn enemy of that conspiracy. He will not use the name “Kolot” unless the PCs use it first.

- If the PCs seem casual, flippant, or overconfident about the enemy they are facing, Hiroru will quickly dismiss them as useless fools and depart.
- If a majority of the PCs seem serious and dedicated, and at least partially understand what they are dealing with, Hiroru will begin to reveal more information (see below).
- Matsu Hiroru will not reveal his true name unless one of the PCs does something to earn his deep admiration and trust. In such a case, Hiroru will reveal his true identity privately to that individual, first demanding that they swear on everything they find honorable not to reveal it to anyone.

Once he decides to trust the PCs, Hiroru reveals that Yokatsu is hiding in a “safe house” here in the City of the Rich Frog. It is located in the basement of a geisha house, the Elegant Golden Mantis. *“He would undoubtedly have moved on from there, perhaps to the secret headquarters of the conspiracy. Indeed, it was in hope of finding it that I followed him. Unfortunately,”* he scowls, *“Yokatsu somehow became aware I was following him. The conspiracy has many resources. He has been waiting in hiding here, perhaps hoping I will give up, or perhaps waiting for his allies to try to kill me. As they have tried before.”*

If the PCs ask for more information on the safe-house, Hiroru will oblige. *“The Elegant Golden Mantis is owned by a Crane nobleman named Doji Akae... perhaps you have heard the name? I have learned that he ranks very highly in the conspiracy, perhaps close to the top. His wealth is vast, and he has property and influence all across the Empire, even in Crab and Mantis lands.”*

- He knows the geisha house has secret chambers, although he is not sure whether they are located within the building or underneath it. He has seen many more people go in and out of it (especially through the back doors) than should be possible.
- He believes the madam and her girls and other staff are not actually agents of the conspiracy, merely tools. He is not so sure about the two bouncers, who are ostensibly ronin but seem unusually skilled. “And why two, when every other house in the city gets by with one?”

- Hiroru is confident that Yokatsu has never left the house since his arrival in the city. If asked the reason for his confidence, he smiles. “Sometimes our enemies do their work too well, and create a tool for our use,” he says. He will not reveal any more unless an attack on the Elegant Golden Mantis is contemplated.

An Attack?

Once Shinjo Shono learns that Yokatsu is hiding in the Elegant Golden Mantis, he will immediately begin advocating an attack on the place. Indeed, he will regard the entire situation as the workings of fate. “Do you not see? The Fortunes must have guided all of our steps, to ensure that we could come here where our friend,” indicating Hiroru, “has trapped our quarry like a rodent in its nest.” PCs who roll **Simple Awareness** at TN 15 can tell that some of Shono’s enthusiasm is forced – he is actually very nervous and unhappy at the prospect of facing his father in combat, and is trying to psyche himself up for the confrontation.

Matsu Hiroru will agree with the idea, but will also be more cognizant of the risks. “You realize, taking such an action is a dangerous step. It is an open assault against the conspiracy. They will do whatever they can to stop us... including exploiting the troops who uphold order in this city.” He openly suggests that the Machi-Kanshisha have been bought off by the Kolat. “If any attack is to succeed, it must be secretive and strike with speed and surprise. Are you willing to undertake such an action?”

Only if all the PCs agree to an attack will Hiroru participate, offering both his own skills and the help of his reluctant ally (see below). Otherwise, he will depart and continue to observe from a distance, leaving it up to the PCs to deal with things.

Hiroru’s Ally: Saitoh

If Hiroru agrees to help the PCs in an assault on the Elegant Golden Mantis, he will take them to Ratling’s Honor, a small sake house located in the city’s licensed district, diagonally across the street from the Mantis. Here he will introduce the PCs to his reluctant ally in keeping watch over the house: Saitoh, a ronin shugenja.

Saitoh is a thin, stoop-shouldered man with a few strands of graying hair clinging to his scalp. He speaks in an unpleasant whine, and always fingers his opium pipe, even when he isn’t smoking. PCs who have played the adventure *Way of Deception* may possibly

have met Saitoh, who was once a Phoenix before the Kolat hooked him on opium and destroyed his life. Hiroru has browbeaten him into serving as a reluctant agent against the Kolat, but he remains a broken and cowardly man – he will watch, conduct magical surveillance, but will not risk open action. If any PC suggests it, he hunches his shoulders and whimpers. “You can’t imagine what could happen to me. Death would be a blessing.”

Saitoh is currently seated in a corner of Ratling’s Honor, puffing on his pipe while he hunches over a bowl of water – he is using it for the spell *Reflecting Pool*. Saitoh employs the spell to watch all the entrances to the geisha house, and is sure that Yokatsu has not yet left.

Scene Six: Assault on the Elegant Golden Mantis

The Interior and Staff of the Elegant Mantis

The exterior walls of the Elegant Golden Mantis are of wooden construction, with large paper windows. Interior walls are paper. The exterior doors are of wood, the interior doors paper. The building is single-story, with a peaked roof of high-quality tile.

The floor layout of the Elegant Mantis is shown on MAP #1. A total of ten adult geisha work at the house, residing in the small rooms marked “geisha” on the map; four young apprentice geisha inhabit the two rooms marked “apprentices.” There is also a cook (who lives in the small room next to the kitchen). The madam (“oka-san”) of the house, Hiromi, lives in the private building located in the geisha house’s gardens, and keeps a fifth apprentice girl with her as a personal servant. The two ronin who serve as bouncers live in a nearby apartment, and are only present at the House during business hours.

During business hours, and in the afternoons when the house is cleaning up and preparing for business, observant PCs will notice several male employees performing tasks such as clean-up, moving furniture, fetching supplies, and so forth. There are no apparent living quarters for these workers on-site, but they never seem to leave.

Contrary to Matsu Hiroru’s suspicions, the two bouncers are innocent – they will fight to defend the house if they are present when it is attacked, but will

certainly not die for it, and retreat from a clearly losing battle.

The house’s true defenses are the madam herself, her personal apprentice, the male employees, and three of the adult geisha, all of whom are Kolat operatives. The male “employees” are Kolat thugs and live in the hidden safe-house chambers below the house (in the room marked “barracks”). The madam and her “special” geisha are Kolat assassins and ninja, and are actually considerably more capable than the ronin bouncers.

- The number of Kolat thugs will vary depending on the party’s Rank. For Low-Rank parties, there will be six thugs. For High-Rank parties, there will be nine.

The Safe-House Rooms

The safe-house rooms are built into the ground below the Elegant Mantis, and are floored and walled in stone, with heavy wooden beams supporting the ceilings. Light comes from gaijin metal lanterns which are posted throughout the area.

Besides the barracks room for the thugs, the safe-house also contains a torture chamber, three small prison cells (currently empty), extensive storage for food and equipment, and four guest rooms for the use of Kolat members passing through the city.

- Currently, Yokatsu and Chuji are living in two of the guest rooms. Each room has a futon, closet, and other basic furnishings, as well as a writing desk, scrolls, and ink. Each room also contains a small coal-fired brazier (currently unlit). The brazier in Yokatsu’s room contains fresh ash and a few charred remnants of paper.
- PCs who manage to recover these paper fragments will see that they contain bits and pieces of an indecipherable code. There is no way to reconstruct the letters, but a roll of **Cipher/Intelligence** at TN 15 will determine that this is an extremely advanced code, and a roll of **Lore: Kolat/Intelligence** at TN 20 recognizes it as one of the Kolat ciphers.

The staircases which descend to the safe-house chambers are both trapped. The traps are deactivated by pressing in on a loose stone in the wall (the stone can be noticed casually with a **Simple Perception** roll at TN 25 – PCs who are actively searching the walls can roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15). If the

stone is not pressed, a step three-quarters of the way down the stairs will drop down, putting the lead PC's foot onto a bank of sharp 2" spikes. This will inflict 2k1 damage and gives the PC the *Lame* disadvantage until the injury heals. (*Regrow the Wound* will cure this injury, but not *Path to Inner Peace*.) Setting off the trap will also ring alarm bells throughout the safe-house area, alerting the inhabitants to intruders.

Visiting?

Some PCs may decide to try to enter the *Elegant Mantis* during "business hours," as customers, perhaps in hopes of searching the place surreptitiously. (Matsu Hiroru will not participate in such an effort, and Shono will be reluctant to engage in such dishonorable subtleties.) In order to visit the *Elegant Mantis*, the PCs will be expected to present an invitation – traditionally, customers cannot enter a geisha house without an invitation from either another customer, or the madam. Social-minded PCs can find another customer who is willing to invite them, by asking around and rolling **Courtier/Awareness** or **Manipulation/Awareness** at TN 15. Alternatively, PCs can ask to speak with the madam, Hiromi, and present her with a "gift" of at least one koku.

The PCs may try to get a "read" on the various employees of the *Elegant Mantis*. Any PC who looks at the male employees and rolls **Simple Perception** at TN 15 will be able to tell that they are quite strong and athletic for ordinary workers. A PC who observes the madam or her geisha workers can make a **Contested Roll** of **Investigation/Perception** against their **Acting/Awareness** to sense that there is much more to Hiromi and some of her geisha than meets the eye.

PCs who try to search the house during business hours will have to be careful – servants, geisha, and guests are constantly circulating throughout the house, and prying PCs will be quickly intercepted and shoo-ed away. Note that all of the male employees are Kolat thugs, so they will react quickly and raise the alarm if they find the PCs snooping where they shouldn't.

If the PCs are caught snooping and try to bluff their way out of the situation (e.g. pretending they were just curious), Hiromi may decide to try to poison them. If the PCs eat or drink anything at the House after this, they will ingest a delayed reaction venom which takes effect an hour later. Each such PC must roll **Simple Stamina** at TN 20. Failure means the PC dies. Success means the PC take 6k4 damage (which might still be fatal).

Reactions to an Attack

If the PCs launch an attack on the *Golden Mantis* (with or without Hiroru's help), they will have to consider the problem of how to do so without drawing inordinate attention.

Unlike the rest of the City of the Rich Frog, the licensed district is quite active at night – most of the businesses, and in particular the four geisha houses, do not open until evening, and remain in business until well past midnight. Lion patrols go through the district several times an hour, attempting to keep a lid on the antics of drunken and opium-addled customers, and the Machi-Kanshisha maintain an informal presence on the streets as well.

- If the PCs attack while the *Mantis* is open for business, all of the Kolat members of the staff will be awake and active, and will react immediately to an attack. The two ronin bouncers will fight to the best of their ability. Customers and non-Kolat staff will quickly rush out for help.
- Assistance from the Machi-Kanshisha will arrive within minutes, consisting of four members of the ronin band, who will try to subdue the PCs with their iron pipes. A Lion patrol of six bushi will arrive after ten minutes, and will attempt to arrest the PCs, slaying those who resist.

During the day, the district is quiet, with many of the residents sleeping and the rest doing clean-up, running errands, and so forth. However, there is still fairly steady foot-traffic on the streets, and a Lion patrol passes through the area about once an hour.

- If the PCs attack during the day, half of the Kolat thugs and one of the Kolat geisha will be awake, performing clean-up and running errands. They will respond to an attack immediately, except for one thug who will alert the rest of the staff. The madam, her apprentice, and the other two Kolat geisha will be ready for action in three rounds. The rest of the thugs will arrive after six rounds.
- If the PCs attack during the day, the Machi-Kanshisha will not respond so quickly, but will be in greater force when they do come: six of them will show up after about ten minutes. It will take another fifteen minutes after that for a Lion patrol to arrive.

Note that under either option, the PCs are likely to be seen by a great many witnesses, both customers and workers at the geisha house and passersby on the streets. (Clever PCs may come up with ways to minimize or avoid this, especially with magic.)

If the PCs wish to avoid both being seen and attracting a rapid response from the city's law-enforcers, their best option will be to strike during the "dead hours" after the geisha house closes for the night (but before dawn) – roughly 3am to 6am. During that time, there will be no witnesses outside of the Elegant Mantis' own staff, and help will not arrive from elsewhere for at least an hour.

- If the PCs invade the Elegant Mantis at this time, the thugs will all be sleeping except for one, who will be standing guard in the central hallway of the safe-house. The other inhabitants will likewise be sleeping. Unless the PCs set off the trap/alarm, the occupants will not respond in an organized fashion until the PCs do something to make a large amount of noise – shouts and screams, a major combat (lasting more than a round or two), a loud spell, etc. Once the alarm is sounded, response times will be similar to an attack during the day – the madam and geisha will be ready for action in three rounds, the thugs in six rounds.

Allies: Hiroru and Shono

If Matsu Hiroru joins the PCs for an attack on the safe-house, he will switch into his infamous "white ninja" crystal hakama for the action. He will enter the place by stealth (regardless of what approach the PCs take) and focuses his initial attacks on the geisha and thugs, leaving the PCs to deal with Hiromi, Chuji, and Yokatsu.

Shono will make a direct approach to the House – he is incapable of stealthy infiltration. He will focus his attacks on secondary targets (e.g. thugs) until and unless he can confront Yokatsu.

Yokatsu's Fate

If Yokatsu realizes the safe-house is under attack, he and Chuji will spend two rounds collecting their gear and weapons. At that point Yokatsu will send Chuji out one of the two safe-house staircases, trying to see if there is a safe escape route. Yokatsu will do his best to get out and melt into the city, if necessary leaving Chuji

to fight a delaying action (which the Moto will do willingly).

If Yokatsu is sneaking out of the geisha house while the PCs are fighting the rest of the staff, they will need to make **Contested rolls of Simple Perception** against his **Stealth/Agility** to notice him. Hiroru and Shono can also roll for this, and Hiroru gets a Free Raise because he is attentive for such a possibility.

If the PCs manage to chase down or trap Yokatsu, Shinjo Shono will rush forward, sword drawn, face twisted with emotion, demanding that his father face him in combat. Yokatsu will put on a cold front, laughing at his son for expecting an "honorable duel," and continues to try to escape or fight his way out.

While the fight lasts, Shono and Yokatsu will have a brief shouted dialogue. Shono will demand to know how Yokatsu could have betrayed the honor of the Unicorn Clan and even fought against their founder Shinjo herself, while Yokatsu will mock the boy's childish beliefs. "You think I am some dishonorable villain, boy? I am fighting for you and all our descendents, so that they can live free of domination by gods and false religions!"

PCs are free to help Shono battle his father – in fact, it is recommended, since he is not skilled enough to defeat Yokatsu on his own. If none of the PCs help with the fight, Hiroru will jump in at a critical moment and deliver a death-blow, snarling, "You think Honor matters to these people?"

If and when Yokatsu finally falls, unless he is instantly slain, his face will finally show real emotions: bitter regret and despair. "You don't understand," he gasps. "The Darkness... we were the only ones, the only ones who could stop it. It sent Shinjo, don't you see? And now the world is doomed, doomed to become Nothing."

Regardless of whether or not Yokatsu gets to make his death-speech, if he is down but not dead, Shono will insist on taking his head. "The traitor must be executed," he rasps, gripping his sword white-knuckled. He will not permit the PCs to keep Yokatsu alive.

If Shono is wounded/dead, the PCs may try to keep Yokatsu alive, at least for a while. Matsu Hiroru will be appalled. "Are you mad? You cannot hope to keep one like this a prisoner. He will never break. And they will come for him, and for you. Kill him now, while you have the chance." Wise PCs will listen to him.

Dealing With the Authorities

If the PCs' assault on the Golden Mantis is interrupted by local authorities (Machi-Kanshisha or Lion troops), the PCs will have to figure out how to deal with the situation.

Machi-Kanshisha troops will simply try to knock out/disarm the PCs and arrest them. They will refuse to listen to any stories about "Yokatsu" or any other such justification. However, they are self-preservationists and can be intimidated (especially if a couple of them are knocked out of the fight). Bribes will not work, since they are well-paid by the Kaeru.

Lion troops cannot be intimidated or bribed, but are also honorable and will become both confused and quite interested if a "geisha house brawl" turns into a fight with mysterious ninja coming out of hidden passageways. The Kolat will try to keep such secrets out of sight, but clever PCs may be able to use them to turn the Lion to their side. Also, if a confrontation does develop between Yokatsu and Shono, the Lion will quickly recognize it as a "battle of Honor" and stand aside.

Conclusion

None of the Kolat will consciously be taken alive – they are fanatics and try to kill themselves if in danger of being taken prisoner. If the PCs do manage to capture a few of them despite this, they will absolutely refuse to break or confess. The non-Kolat residents of the Elegant Mantis know nothing, and are terrified of what has happened.

If the Lion authorities learn anything at all about the hidden safe-house under the Elegant Golden Mantis, they will assume it is yakuza-related and arrest any surviving geisha and employees, trying to learn more. They will assert full jurisdiction over the investigation and take possession of any prisoners which the PCs might have. Emerald Magistrate PCs can try to argue for their own right to investigate, but their position is unlikely to be persuasive to the Lion, who point out that the only fugitive to cross Clan boundaries (Yokatsu) has already been dealt with.

If the PCs follow up on this later, they learn that a few weeks after the incident, the case is dismissed and the prisoners released on the authority of a Lion magistrate, Ikoma Yoruga. PCs who roll **Lore: Lion Clan/Intelligence** or **Law/Intelligence** at TN 15 have heard rumors that Yoruga (who used to be Akodo) has a questionable reputation. PCs who roll **Lore:**

Kolat/Intelligence at TN 20 have heard stories of several investigations into odd or unconventional crimes which were shut down by Yoruga.

Regardless, Matsu Hiroru will depart immediately after the PCs conclude their assault on the Elegant Golden Mantis. He does not say goodbye. However, if Yokatsu was successfully killed, all PCs who did not yet have the White Ninja as an Ally gain him as one now.

If the PCs and Shono successfully tracked and killed Yokatsu, and Shono survived, he will be deeply grateful for their assistance in restoring his family's Honor. (PCs who roll **Simple Awareness** at TN 20 can tell that Shono still feels deeply torn over having killed his father, but is trying to expunge such improper emotions.) Shono will arrange to reward the PCs for their deeds with a gift of an excellent item (cert).

If the PCs were ultimately unable to track down and kill Yokatsu (either due to losing the trail, or Yokatsu managing to escape), Shinjo Shono will return to his family in shame. Moto Gaheris will still accept his oath of fealty, but it will be generations before the Shinjo family's Honor can recover from the deeds of Yokatsu.

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

Experience Points

Playing through the adventure:	1 XP
Good role-playing:	+1 XP
PCs track Yokatsu to the Elegant Mantis:	+1 XP
Yokatsu is killed:	+1 XP

Total Possible Experience: 5 XP

Honor

Shinjo family PCs gain +1 Honor for bringing Yokatsu to justice.

Glory

None intrinsically awarded for this adventure.

Other Awards/Penalties

If Yokatsu is killed, all PCs gain the White Ninja as an Ally, and Shinjo Shono gives each PC an Excellent Item (cert).

Appendix: NPCs

Otaku Sayori, acting commander of Bugaisha

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

TN to be Hit: 15 (25 with heavy armor)

School/Rank: Otaku battle maiden 2

Honor/Glory: 1.3/3.5

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

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Position (taisa)/Dishonored

Equipment: Kimono, heavy armor, Otaku steed, daisho set, naginata, umayari, dai-kyu with 20 arrows.

Moto Xian Zhu, opium addict, commander of Exile's Watchtower

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

TN to be Hit: 20 (25 with Light Armor)

School/Rank: Moto Bushi 2

Honor/Glory: 0.8/1.7

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 3, Defense 4, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 5, Sincerity 2, Stealth 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Chemical Dependency (opium), Moto Curse

Equipment: Fine daisho, light armor

Shinjo Daijitsu, Kolat

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

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

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 0.5/1.0

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

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

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

Generic Shinjo/Moto 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/Moto 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: None.

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

Generic Mirumoto Bushi
(interchangeable)

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, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Shugenja 1, Meditation 2, Poetry 1, Sincerity 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: None

Equipment: Light armor, daisho

Typical Lion Bushi (interchangeable)

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

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

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 3.5/1.0

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

Advantages/Disadvantages: Death Trance/Brash

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

Typical Machi-Kanshisha
(interchangeable)

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: None, but they gain a Free Raise when using bo staffs (or their pipes), and can disarm or knock out an opponent with such a weapon by calling three Raises (Machi-Kanshisha technique).

Honor/Glory: 1.4/0.9

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

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

Equipment: Daisho (2k2 katana, 1k2 wakizashi), clothing, tobacco pouch, flint and steel, heavy iron pipe (2k2 weapon, uses bojutsu skill).

Ichiko, the Kaeru Magistrate

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

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

School/Rank: Doji Courtier 1 (clan ronin)

Honor/Glory: 2.3/1.6

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

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

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

Saitoh, fallen shugenja

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: None (ronin shugenja, Insight Rank two)

Honor/Glory: 0.4/0.6

Skills: Athletics 2, Calligraphy 3, Commerce 2, Defense 1, Etiquette 2, Gambling 2, Kuenai 2, Meditation 2, Research 3, Sincerity 2, Spellcraft 4, Stealth 3, Tantojutsu 4, Theology 3.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Air 1) *Cloak of Night, Quiescence of Air, Way of Deception*, (Air 2) *Mists of Illusion*, (Water 1) *Castle of Water, Reversal*

of Fortunes, (Water 2) Reflecting Pool, (Earth 1) Force of Will.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Innate Ability (Quiescence of Air), Patron (Kolot)/Compulsion (opium), Dark Secret (Kolot pawn), Social Disadvantage (ronin).

Equipment: Kimono and traveling pack (poor quality), opium pipe, scroll satchel, tanto (1k1, poor quality), 2 koku in purse.

Matsu Hiroru, the “White Ninja”

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

TN to be Hit: 25 (+15 when wearing White Ninja outfit)

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 4

Honor/Glory: 1.2/1.5

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

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

Equipment: As “Gojita the ronin,” Hiroru wears a grubby kimono and carries a daisho set (the blades are of Fine quality, +1 unkept damage die each). Beneath the armor he wears his crystal “White Ninja” outfit, which grants the following benefits: +15 to TN to be hit, +10 to rolls to resist Shadow Corruption, cannot be seen by anyone with 3 or more points of Shadow Corruption unless he wishes to be, and can spend a Void point to “go chameleon” and fade into the landscape (**Hunting/Perception** at TN 30 to spot him in this state). He also carries two razor-sharp tanto (2k2) in forearm sheaths.

Shinjo Shono, Heir to the Shinjo Family

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

TN to be Hit: 20 (25 with light armor)

School/Rank: Shinjo Scout 2

Honor/Glory: 2.7/6.0

Skills: Animal Husbandry 3, Athletics 4, Battle 2, Defense 4, Horse Archery 5, Horse Archery 4, Horsemanship 5, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Unicorn Clan) 4, Sincerity 3, Yarijutsu 4, Yomanri 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Absolute Direction, Social Position (Shinjo heir)/Bad Reputation (Shinjo family), Driven (to find and kill his father).

Equipment: Fine daisho set (+1 skill die), light armor, fine kimono (+1 Sincerity), Unicorn steed (+1 Horsemanship), two bows (Yumi and Dai-Kyu, both +1 skill) with 20 arrows.

Ronin Bouncers at the Elegant Golden Mantis

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: None.

Honor/Glory: 1.4/0.9

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 3, Gambling 2, Iaijutsu 2, Jiu-jutsu (hand-to-hand) 3, Kenjutsu 3, Law 2, Lore (geisha houses) 2, Sincerity 2, Wrestling 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (ronin).

Equipment: Daisho (2k2 katana, 1k2 wakizashi), clothing.

Main Villains, Low-End Version

Hiromi, kolat geisha madam

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Kolat Assassin (Insight Rank Three)

Steal the Light technique: Hiromi may make two Raises on an attack roll to deliver an attack that keeps only one die of damage but also leaves the target either blind, deaf, or mute for a number of minutes equal to her Water ring.

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 5, Athletics 4, Calligraphy 5, Cipher 6, Courtier 3, Dance 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 6, Jiujutsu (hand-to-hand) 4, Kuenai 4, Manipulation 5, Meditation 4, Music 6, Poetry 4, Poison 5, Seduction 6, Sincerity 5, Stealth 4, Tantojutsu 4, Tea Ceremony 5, Theology 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolat), Blackmail (many), Clear Thinker, Dangerous Beauty, Social Position (geisha madam), Wealth/Dark Secret (Kolat), Social Disadvantage (hinin).

Equipment: Various fine clothing. Yukima carries a hidden steel stiletto (0k2) which uses the Tantojutsu skill, and a steel-wire garrote (0k2) which uses the Jiujutsu skill.

Hiromi's Apprentice

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Kolat Assassin (Insight rank 1)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 4, Athletics 5, Climbing 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 4, Jiujutsu (hand-to-hand) 4, Locksmith 2, Poison 4, Seduction 4, Sincerity 4, Stealth 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Quick/Dark Secret (Kolat), Social Disadvantage (hinin)

Equipment: Beautiful kimono. The apprentice

wears two sharp steel hairpins (0k1) which attack with the Jiujutsu skill. They have hollow centers holding single doses of lethal poison (inflicting an additional 3k3 damage on their first hit).

Kolat Geisha-Ninja (interchangeable)

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Kolat Assassin (Insight rank 1)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 4, Athletics 4, Dance 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Jiujutsu (hand-to-hand) 3, Manipulation 3, Music 4, Poison 4, Seduction 3, Sincerity 3, Stealth 3, Tantojutsu 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolat)/Dark Secret (Kolat), Social Disadvantage (hinin).

Equipment: Beautiful clothing. All of the geisha-ninja carry either a concealed sharp tanto (2k1) or a concealed steel-wire garrote (0k2).

Kolat Thug (interchangeable)

FIRE 2	AIR 2
EARTH 2	WATER 2
VOID 1	

TN to be Hit: 10

School/Rank: None (commoners)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Athletics 3, Intimidation 3, Jiujutsu (Hand-to-Hand) 3, Stealth 3, Tantojutsu 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolat)/Dark Secret (Kolat), Social Disadvantage (heimin).

Equipment: Clothing, tanto (2k1)

Moto Chuji, Kolat

FIRE 2 Agility 3	AIR 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2

	Strength 3
VOID 2	

TN to be Hit: 16

School/Rank: Moto Bushi 1

Moto Rank One: Add School Rank to damage and to TN to be Hit.

Honor/Glory: 0.4/1.7

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 3, Defense 3, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Lore (Kolats), Lore (Shadowlands) 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolats)/Dark Secret (Kolats), Moto Curse

Equipment: Daisho, clothing (ronin garb).

Shinjo Yokatsu, Kolat Master

FIRE 3	AIR 3
Agility 4	Reflexes 4

EARTH 4	WATER 4
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 25

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 5

Honor/Glory: 0 (Apparent Honor 4.5)/0 (formerly 8.1)

Skills: Animal Husbandry 5, Athletics 4, Battle 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 8 (1 in public appearances), Horse Archery 8, Horsemanship 9, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 6, Shintao 2, Sincerity 7, Stealth 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (many), Clear Thinker, Higher Purpose, Quick Healer, Way of the Land (Unicorn lands)/Dark Secret (Kolats Master), Dishonored.

Equipment: Daisho set, clothing (ronin garb).

Main Villains, High-End Version

Hiromi, kolat geisha madam

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Kolat Assassin (Insight Rank Four)

Tiger's Claw technique: Yukima may make an extra attack each round against an unaware opponent, and gains a Free Raise on any attack against an unaware opponent.

Steal the Light technique: Hiromi may make two Raises on an attack roll to deliver an attack that keeps only one die of damage but also leaves the target either blind, deaf, or mute for a number of minutes equal to her Water ring.

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 6, Athletics 4, Calligraphy 5, Cipher 6, Courtier 3, Dance 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 6, Jiujutsu (hand-to-hand) 5, Kuenai 4, Manipulation 5, Meditation 4, Music 6, Poetry 4, Poison 5, Seduction 7, Sincerity 6, Stealth 4, Tantojutsu 5, Tea Ceremony 5, Theology 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolat), Blackmail (many), Clear Thinker, Dangerous Beauty, Social Position (geisha madam), Wealth/Dark Secret (Kolat), Social Disadvantage (hinin).

Equipment: Various fine clothing. Yukima carries a hidden steel stiletto (0k2) which uses the Tantojutsu skill, and a steel-wire garrote (0k2) which uses the Jiujutsu skill.

Hiromi's Apprentice

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Kolat Assassin (Insight rank 2)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 5, Athletics 6, Climbing 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 5, Jiujutsu (hand-to-hand) 4, Locksmith 2, Poison 4, Seduction 4, Sincerity 4, Stealth 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Quick/Dark Secret (Kolat), Social Disadvantage (hinin)

Equipment: Beautiful kimono. The apprentice wears two sharp steel hairpins (0k1) which attack with the Jiujutsu skill. They have hollow centers holding single doses of lethal poison (inflicting an additional 4k4 damage on their first hit).

Kolat Geisha-Ninja (interchangeable)

FIRE 2 Agility 3	AIR 3 Awareness 4
EARTH 2 Willpower 3	WATER 2 Perception 3
VOID 2	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Kolat Assassin (Insight rank 1)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 4, Athletics 4, Dance 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Jiujutsu (hand-to-hand) 4, Manipulation 3, Music 4, Poison 4, Seduction 3, Sincerity 3, Stealth 4, Tantojutsu 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolat)/Dark Secret (Kolat), Social Disadvantage (hinin).

Equipment: Beautiful clothing. All of the geisha-ninja carry either a concealed sharp tanto (2k1) or a concealed steel-wire garrote (0k2).

Kolat Thug (interchangeable)

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: None (commoners)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Athletics 3, Intimidation 3, Jiujutsu (Hand-to-Hand) 4, Stealth 4, Tantojutsu 5.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolat)/Dark Secret (Kolat), Social Disadvantage (heimin).

Equipment: Clothing, tanto (2k1)

Moto Chuji, Kolat

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

TN to be Hit: 21

School/Rank: Moto Bushi 1/Kolat Assassin (Insight Rank Two)

Moto Rank One: Add School Rank to damage and to TN to be Hit.

Honor/Glory: 0.4/1.7

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 3, Defense 4, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Kolats), Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Sincerity 2, Stealth 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolats)/Dark Secret (Kolats), Moto Curse

Equipment: Daisho, clothing (ronin garb)

Shinjo Yokatsu, Kolat Master

FIRE 3 Agility 5	AIR 3 Reflexes 5
EARTH 4 Stamina 5	WATER 4 Strength 5
VOID 4	

TN to be Hit: 25

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 5

Honor/Glory: 0 (Apparent Honor 4.5)/0 (formerly 8.1)

Skills: Animal Husbandry 5, Athletics 4, Battle 7, Defense 5, Etiquette 8 (1 in public appearances), Horse Archery 9, Horsemanship 10, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 9, Shintao 2, Sincerity 8, Stealth 5.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (many), Clear Thinker, Higher Purpose, Quick Healer, Way of the Land (Unicorn lands)/Dark Secret (Kolats Master), Dishonored.

Equipment: Daisho set, clothing (ronin garb).

Map #1: The Elegant Golden Mantis

