

The Flower's Kiss

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

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A Unicorn magistrate's son is kidnapped in Ryoko Owari, the City of Lies. Your search for the boy uncovers a sinister conspiracy by an enemy the Empire thought defeated.

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

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

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

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

GM's Information

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

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

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

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

- Lower the TNs of skill rolls by 5.
- There are six total drug-minions, two of whom will be encountered in the alleyway.
- The drug-minions have only 18 Wounds rather than 27. The apprentices have Earth 3, and Kitsu Akemi has Earth 4.

High End Party (most/all characters Rank Three):

- The GM can selectively increase skill roll TNs by 5 if it seems appropriate.
- There are ten total drug-minions, four of whom will be encountered in the alleyway.
- Kitsu Akemi has Earth of 6 and Taint rank of 4.

Adventure Summary and Background

Kitsu Akemi is a corrupted Lion, a former half-blooded sodan-senzo who became a devoted member of the Bloodspeaker Cult. Five years ago, she lost control of an Oni she had summoned and was forced to flee the Lion lands, traveling the Empire under various assumed names and identities. Her fellow Bloodspeakers saw her failure as a sign of weakness and ostracized her as well. The Oni itself was eventually unmasked and destroyed (in the adventure *Evil Feeds Upon Itself*).

Akemi spent her time seeking for a way to restore and advance her powers. She summoned other Oni and wrenched knowledge from them, she tracked down isolated members of the Bloodspeaker Cult who did not know of her disgrace, and she used her *sodan-senzo* powers to commune with dark, unimaginable forces – the Dark Oracles. In this way she discovered two powerful tools to support her planned return to power. The first was Kuchidzuke no Hana (Flower's Kiss), a foul, maho-infused herbal drink which drained the will of those who consumed it, while greatly enhancing their physical strength. The second tool was a maho ritual which seemed to promise untold power to the one who could complete it: a ritual to create a new Dark Oracle, one more powerful than any of the five already in existence.

Early last year, the Bloodspeaker Cult was defeated and scattered during its attempt to resurrect Iuchiban (as recounted in the adventure *Fate of a Hantei*). Akemi saw this as her chance to return to power. She recruited two lesser but talented apprentices from the remnants of the cult, Iuchi Nakato and Isawa Tenko, and set about completing the ritual she had unearthed.

Akemi has determined that the ritual requires sacrificing the souls of 13 children from various levels of the Celestial Order, from lowliest *eta* to the Imperial line. Their deaths, performed with the proper invocations of Jigoku's ruler Fu Leng, will infuse her own person with the power to dominate the mortal world which they symbolize. Not even the magical wards of Otsan Uchi will be able to withstand her. She will be the Dark Oracle of Rokugan.

Only one serious problem lies in Akemi's path. She needs one of the children to be a blood relative of the Emperor himself. Where to find such a child, especially after the disasters of recent months have made the Imperial House so cautious? A *Dark Divination*, however, has shown her that a chance is coming – the Emperor's only surviving niece, Otomo Onatsu, will be passing through the Scorpion city of Ryoko Owari on her way back to the capital. The city is the perfect place to make her kidnappings and hold the ritual – with the Unicorn threatening to annex the city forcibly from the Scorpion, the place is in ferment, and little energy is available to investigate a few vanished children.

When the adventure begins, Akemi has already taken 11 children, and has sent her apprentices to capture the 12th, the daughter of a minor Unicorn daimyo who is passing through the city. She plans to take Otomo Onatsu soon thereafter. However, the presence of the PCs will threaten to disrupt her plans.

The Player Characters

The PCs are in Ryoko Owari on behalf of their daimyo, to deliver their daimyo's annual request for medicinal opium. They may also be on their way to Winter Court in Crab lands – the Crab daimyo has issued an unusual number of invitations to representatives from other Clans. The PCs are under no immediate time pressure and will be free to help once Shinjo Yakomo's daughter is kidnapped.

Once the PCs are recruited to help recover Yakomo's daughter, they may seek out help within the city. The Scorpion authorities, however, have much else on their minds, including not only the looming Unicorn threat but also the safety of the Imperial niece as she travels through the area; they will have little time for a group of samurai investigating on behalf of one of the hated Unicorn.

The Emerald Magistrate of Ryoko Owari, Shiba Tachinaba, is a well-meaning man in over his head in the City of Lies. He has been recalled to the Imperial capital due to the recent death of the Emerald Champion, Doji Satsume, in a deadly earthquake. In his absence there is no Imperial enforcement in the city, and PCs who are themselves Emerald Magistrates will be on their own.

There is one ally who can potentially help the PCs – a ronin named Yojiro, a self-appointed champion of the common folk who has begun looking into the

children's disappearances. Yojiro has problems of his own, however – he is quite unpopular with the Scorpion authorities, and PCs who associate with him will earn unfriendly attention from the local Scorpion Clan magistrate.

Ultimately, it will up to the PCs whether they can defeat Kitsu Akemi's scheme.

Part 1: The Inn of The Silent Wanderer

Your duties have taken you to the Scorpion city of Ryoko Owari, sometimes called the City of Stories... and by those with grudges against the Scorpion, the City of Lies. After several days, your mission is completed, and you have returned to your residence at the Inn of the Silent Wanderer for a quiet evening's rest. The Inn is a small but well-reputed place, located in the Merchant District. The innkeeper, Waza, makes sure his customers can enjoy themselves in quiet, untroubled by rowdy drunkards or rude commoners. You relax and enjoy the fine food and sake. Tomorrow you will be able to depart for home.

Allow the PCs to introduce and describe themselves. It may be assumed that they have been staying at the Inn for at least a few days, and have had the opportunity to make each other's acquaintances.

Besides the PCs, the only other samurai guests at the Inn this evening are a pair of Scorpion (a shugenja and his bushi yojimbo), a female Miya herald, a Phoenix shugenja-ko (apparently traveling alone), and a minor Unicorn daimyo accompanied by his daughter and yojimbo. There are also several commoner merchants, who will keep to themselves and avoid contact with their betters.

The **Scorpions** are **Soshi Sauketsu** (rank 2 Soshi shugenja) and his bodyguard **Soshi Hokaru** (rank 3 Bayushi bushi). They are on their way north to Shiro no Soshi and are simply stopping here for the night. Sauketsu is a short, rotund man in his mid-thirties, with a balding pate and a half-masked face creased with scowls. He is a bitter man of limited talents, and will amuse himself by heckling and insulting those of lesser station (he is Glory 3.4); his favorite targets will be Lion and Unicorn. He will sullenly avoid provoking those of equal or higher social stature, such as Shinjo Yakomo.

His bodyguard Hokaru is a quiet man who secretly despises his shallow and venomous master, and will

refrain from any speech or open action unless Sauketsu is challenged or attacked.

- These individuals play no role in the larger scenario and are here only for role-playing potential.

The **Miya** is named **Miya Kotomi**, a small, deceptively delicate young woman with a plain face and intent, penetrating eyes. She dresses in a practical traveling kimono inscribed with the Miya mon, and carries no weapons, only a fan and a small pouch of money and personal belongings. PCs who have played the adventure *Occult Murders* have met her before.

Kotomi is a woman fiercely dedicated to the traditional Miya goals of peace and harmony. She is a trained Shisha, from the Miya school of peacemakers who travel the Empire spreading the Emperor's word and bringing an end to conflicts and violence. Currently she is on her way back to the Miya lands after helping to mediate the peace on the Crab-Crane border.

- Kotomi is deeply concerned about current events in the Empire, especially the continued Lion-Crane war, the brewing conflict between the Shiba and Mirumoto families, and the new crisis between the Lion, Scorpion, and Unicorn.
- She is also secretly uneasy about the ascension of her new daimyo, Miya Satoshi, who was raised by the Lion Clan. She will speak of such concerns with anyone who strikes her as properly enlightened and peaceful (especially Crane, Sparrow, and Isawa).
- On the other hand, Kotomi will turn a dark and disapproving eye on those who promote or condone violence (especially the Lion Clan, in light of their current savage war with the Crane and their threat to attack the Scorpion), and will try to enlighten them about their misguided ways.
- Kotomi is aware that the Emperor's only surviving niece, Otomo Onatsu, is currently staying in the city while taking a break from her trip back to the capital. She will only mention this to PCs who are Imperial family or who strike her as honorable and trustworthy.

The **Phoenix** is **Isawa Kenko**, a Bloodspeaker and Akemi's *maho-tsukai* apprentice. She seems to be a distant, remote woman who watches the room and its occupants with an expression of cold distaste. If anyone speaks with her, she will be polite and

detached, and shows no interest in keeping a conversation going. She has paid for a room and will claim she is on her way back to Phoenix lands after some unspecified Clan business with the Kuni in Crab lands. Anyone who rolls **Simple Awareness** at TN 20 after speaking with Kenko will get a sense of icily controlled rage directed toward everything around her.

Kenko is actually here to observe while Akemi's other apprentice, Iuchi Nakato, kidnaps the Unicorn's daughter. She is Tainted, but has used the spell *Pekkle's Visage* to protect herself from being detected by a Witch Hunter or burned by jade. See "NPCs" for more details on her nature and motivations.

- Any PC who, for whatever reason, keeps an eye on Kenko during the evening can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20 (or **Courtier/Perception** at TN 15) to notice that she is carefully but surreptitiously watching the Unicorn party. She will deny this if a PC asks her about it, and will grow coldly but frighteningly angry if she is pressed on the matter.

The **Unicorns** are **Shinjo Yakomo**, a minor Daimyo (Glory 5.3), his daughter **Shinjo Kimoko**, and his yojimbo **Moto Miken**. Yakomo, a handsome man in his mid-thirties, is a friendly, outgoing sort, and will strike up a conversation with anyone who is of suitable rank or background (Glory 3.0 or better, Emerald Magistrate, Unicorn, Lion, or Crane Clan, or Imperial family). He will do most of the talking – his daughter Kimoko is only twelve, has never before left Unicorn lands, and is painfully shy. Moto Miken will content himself with small sips of sake, while glaring at any who seem likely to threaten his Lord and his Lord's Daughter. (He will also glare silently at anyone but a fellow Moto who tries to speak with him.)

Yakomo will ask the PC's about their trip to Ryoko Owari, where they are going for the winter, and other such topics. He is himself on the way to the Imperial capital, Otsan Uchi, where he has important and pressing business (he will not elaborate – it actually concerns the Unicorn Clan's ongoing effort to wrest control of the medicinal opium trade away from the Scorpion Clan). Yakomo will comment that he finds the City of Stories a fascinating place, and wishes he could stay longer. "There is no other city like this one anywhere in the Empire. Truly a place with many faces, where one never knows what might lie around the next corner. Very different from the Imperial capital."

The PCs should generally get a positive impression of Yakomo. He is an honorable man who tries to think the best of everyone he meets, and endeavors not to let Clan enmities get in the way of civility or personal friendship.

The Kidnapping

At some point, Kimoko will stifle a yawn, then blushes and lowers her eyes in embarrassment. Yakomo smiles and sends her upstairs to sleep in her room. Moto Miken escorts her up and then returns to watch his Lord. Yakomo will stay up about another hour, after which he rises and excuses himself. "A long road awaits me tomorrow," he apologizes. "With the favor of Shinjo, perhaps we will meet again." He heads upstairs, accompanied by his ever-watchful yojimbo.

A few moments later, the PCs hear him shout his daughter's name.

Those who rush to see what happened will discover the young daimyo standing in the door to his daughter's room. The window shutters are open and the room is empty, except for the frantic yojimbo who is searching everywhere.

Within a few minutes, two of the Thunder Guard, Shosuro Akio and Bayushi Kaii, will arrive to investigate the crime. These elite Scorpion troops report to the city magistrate and the governor, and begin questioning everyone in the Inn (including the PCs), asking where they were and what they were doing when Kimoko disappeared. Their tone is blandly professional and disinterested, and they will frown on anyone who tries to involve themselves in the investigation. A PC who rolls **Simple Awareness** at TN 15 can tell that the Thunder Guards are not terribly interested in helping a Unicorn daimyo, although they put on a superficial show of dedication.

Isawa Tenko will retreat to her room as soon as she is finished answering questions, and departs the next morning to meet with Kitsu Akemi.

Shinjo Yakomo will quickly see which way the wind is blowing, and becomes quite upset, berating the Scorpion for "letting my daughter suffer in the hands of some vile criminal while you dawdle here." The Scorpion will have little choice but to grit their teeth and accept Yakomo's insults, since he is of significantly higher rank.

Eventually the Thunder Guards head back to their barracks to make their report. At that point, if Yakomo

had any kind of favorable impression of any of the PCs (and particularly if they seemed to support his complaints against the Thunder Guards), he will have his yojimbo ask them to meet with him privately. He will be especially favorable to Unicorn (obviously), but also to Crane, Lion, Phoenix, and Crab, all of whom he regards as trustworthy compared to the Scorpion. If any of the PCs are Scorpions, he will judge them on an individual basis – if they seemed to support the Thunder Guards or to oppose the Unicorn Clan, he will not ask them for help, but if they seemed honorable or genuinely concerned over his daughter's disappearance, he will seek their help along with others. Ronin, of course, will be offered employment.

The young Shinjo daimyo is pacing back and forth, his face drawn with tension. As you enter he looks up and smiles with a strained attempt to master the emotions flickering across his features.

Any PC who rolls **Simple Awareness** at TN 10 can tell that Shinjo Yakomo is both deeply worried about his daughter, and deeply conflicted over his duty. After a few brief pleasantries, Yakomo will explain himself: “My daughter has been taken, and I fear the magistrates of the City of Lies will do little to aid me. They see my Clan colors more than my identity as a father, I fear.” His face tightens into a mask as he struggles to control himself. “My duty to my Clan forces me to depart this city tomorrow morning, and it may be many days before I can return. I fear that by then my daughter will have long since made her journey to Yomi. I would ask you to find her and to bring justice to whoever this vile criminal is who would steal children in the night. You will have my eternal gratitude.”

If any of the PCs are ronin, Yakomo will offer them 2 koku, with the promise of 5 more if they can bring his daughter back alive and unharmed.

If the PCs agree, Yakomo will sag with relief, and retires for the night to try and catch a little sleep before his journey tomorrow. He can offer no information beyond what the PCs already know. Before the PCs depart he will warn them earnestly to beware who they trust in this city, the City of Lies.

If the PCs refuse to help, Yakomo will be obviously disappointed and angry. “I see that I have misjudged you,” he says coldly, and has Moto Mikeno escort them out of his quarters. At this point the adventure is essentially over, unless the PCs decide to investigate further on their own.

Part 2: Investigations

Assuming the PCs have agreed to help, they must now decide how to go about investigating the disappearance. There are basically two avenues they can take: speaking with the innkeeper and his employees, and investigating Shinjo Kimoko's room.

The Room

If the PCs search Kimoko's room carefully, they can roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 20 to discover some scuff marks at the windowsill, where Kimoko was dragged outside. The window is on the second floor, and there are no signs of someone climbing the wall or descending from the roof. It should be fairly obvious that magic was involved here.

Also, any PC who rolls **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15 or **Simple Perception** at TN 20 notices a faint scent of flowers in the air. (Iuchi Nakato arrived and departed with the spell *Call Upon the Wind*, and fed the Flower's Kiss drug to Kimoko to subdue her.)

If a shugenja PC seeks to *Commune* with spirits in the room, they will find Earth and Air spirits in abundance, and Fire spirits in the lamp. There are no Water spirits. The Air spirits have been mildly subverted by Iuchi Nakato, and will not cooperate unless the PC uses at least two Raises.

If the spirits are invoked successfully, they can report that a man came in “riding on Air spirits,” grabbed the girl and forced something from a bottle into her mouth. The girl stopped moving, although she was still alive. Then the man picked up the girl and flew away again. They describe the man as thin and with hair on his face.

If a PC asks what color his clothes were, the Earth and Fire spirits will not be able to answer (color is a difficult concept for spirits), while Air spirits will say he wore the color of “sky after sunset.” All of the spirits dislike the man, who “felt bad” (due to Shadowlands Taint).

It will not be possible to track Nakato through the air with spirits. The spell *The Ties That Bind* will not work at locating Kimoko – the PCs were not able to study her long enough beforehand.

Questioning the Guests

None of the guests know anything about the crime, and the two Scorpions (Soshi Sauketsu and Soshi Hokaru) will act offended at being asked about the matter. If the PCs question any of the commoner merchants, they will be alarmed and look around nervously. They know

nothing and beg the samurai's forgiveness for not being able to help.

If the PCs look for Isawa Kenko, they can find her in her room, although they will have to be both polite and persistent to make her talk with them. She claims to know nothing about the incident, and exudes a cold anger at the PCs for daring to interrupt her rest and question her about it. "I have already spoken of these matters to the Scorpion Guard. What business do you have interfering with their duties?" A PC who can defeat her in a **Contested Awareness** roll can sense that she knows more about this matter than she is letting on, but she will firmly deny any such thing. If the PCs press her, she will refuse to speak with them further, and calls for the Thunder Guard if they refuse to back down.

PCs who decide to follow Isawa Kenko when she leaves the Inn the next morning may be able to take a shortcut to the finale of the adventure (although they will need to use dishonorable Stealth to follow her without detection). See "Following Kenko" below for details.

Questioning the Innkeeper

The innkeeper, Waza ("work"), is a short, balding, well-kept man. He generally has a polite, charming smile on his face, although it looks somewhat pasted-on after the kidnapping. He will bow and ask the PCs how he can help them.

Waza knows the following:

- He was downstairs taking care of his other guests when the Shinjo's daughter was kidnapped. He did not see anyone go upstairs other than her and her bodyguard (and any PCs who retired before the kidnapping). Nothing like this has ever happened at his Inn before.
- Waza will mention that there are rumors of other children being taken in the night. He has no concrete information on this – no one seems sure when it started or how many have been taken, although he has heard that as many as 8 or 9 children are missing. Some folk are blaming ninja, ghosts, or Shadowlands monsters for the problem.
- The missing children are said to be all commoners, heinin and hinin, although he has also heard a tale of a ronin child who vanished while accompanying his mother to the early-morning marketplace. (He does not know the name of the ronin involved.)

- If none of the PCs are Scorpions, Waza will confess (in a low voice) that the city magistrate does not seem to be very interested in figuring out what is happening. The Scorpion seem to regard the matter as nothing but rumor and gossip. Perhaps the loss of a daimyo's child will change their attitude.
- Waza will mention that a ronin named Yojiro is known to be conducting a private investigation into the disappearances. If none of the PCs are Scorpions, he will also mention that Yojiro is not popular with the Scorpion authorities, who regard him as a troublemaker.
- If the PCs ask where they can find Yojiro, Waza will direct them to another Inn, the "Oracle's Blessing," located in the dockside district of the Merchant Quarter. "It is said he saved the innkeeper from some bandits a few years ago, and in return is allowed to stay there from time to time."

The other servants at the Inn cannot add to Waza's information, although the stable-boy can remember hearing a strange moaning wind around the time of the kidnapping. He will also make an excited comment about how "Yojiro will come here soon to find the bad persons." The boy hero-worships Yojiro and will make exaggerated claims of the ronin's courage, skill, generosity, and kindness.

Following Kenko

In order to follow Isawa Kenko through the city the next day, PCs will have to make four successful **Investigation/Perception** or **Hunting/Perception** rolls at TN 15. Also, for each such roll, the PCs will also have to make **Contested** rolls of their **Stealth/Agility** (or **Hisomu/Awareness**) against her **Investigation/Perception**. If any of the tracking rolls fail, the PCs lose sight of Kenko in the bustling crowds of the city. (Clever PCs, and especially shugenja, might be able to find ways to locate her again, or to follow her without being seen.) If any of the Stealth rolls fail, she notices the PCs following her and changes her destination to the Temple of Daikoku, where she spends the day in "prayer and contemplation." If the PCs are still watching her that evening, she will confront them and demand to know their business, possibly threatening to call the nearest Scorpion patrol to her aid.

If Kenko does not spot the PCs, she eventually reaches the small dockside fisherman's shack where Akemi has her secret chambers. PCs who have followed her this far may well be facing a battle with all three *maho-tsukai* plus all of Akemi's drugged minions. See "Arriving Early" in "Part 6: Breaking the Circle" for details.

Independent Investigations

If anyone asks around the city about other kidnappings, missing children, and so forth, most samurai will profess ignorance or dismiss the matter as "commoner gossip and foolishness." Heimin or hinin will deny all knowledge unless the PC drops a few bribes (a silver bu or more in total value) or is someone who can establish a rapport with commoners (ronin, monk, a PC with an appropriate personality or background, etc). Threats might also work, if they are delivered out of sight of the Thunder Guard patrols. If any commoners are persuaded to talk, they can share the following information:

- At least eight, and perhaps as many as fourteen, children have been kidnapped. (The number varies with each person questioned.)
- The child victims include a variety of commoners, and at least one ronin's child. (The ronin is named Hoja, and lives in the merchant district, where he serves as bodyguard to a wealthy commoner.) If the PCs specifically ask, they can also learn that the victims include at least one *eta* child, and a young girl at one of the geisha houses on Teardrop Island.
- The Scorpion authorities have done little to investigate the disappearances, and many citizens privately suspect that the Scorpion are hoping the problem will simply go away.
- A ronin named Yojiro, also known as the "Sitting Hawk" after his personal mon, has been investigating the disappearances for several weeks (well before Hoja's son was kidnapped). He can usually be found at the Inn of the Oracle's Blessing in the northern Merchant Quarter, near the Unicorn Gate.
- PCs who make a point of trying to seek out the parents and learn the identities of all the victims will have to spend the entire day tracking down rumors and interviewing parents. This will require an **Investigation/Willpower** roll at TN 15. If

successful, the PCs determine that there are 11 actual victims, plus Shinjo Kimoko.

- If a PC who learns the identities of all the victims makes an **Investigation/Intelligence** roll at TN 20 (or **Nazodo/Intelligence** at TN 10), s/he can figure out that there is a pattern to the crimes: the victims started at low rank, then ascended through the Celestial Order to the most recent target, Shinjo Kimoko.
- PCs who roll **Theology/Intelligence** at TN 15 can theorize that the social rank of the victims reflects the structure of the Celestial Order, and could be said to symbolize or embody the Order itself.
- If the PCs question the parents of the various victims about the disappearances, they will not be able to learn much. The children generally vanished at night or in the early morning (the ronin child disappeared while his mother was conducting early-morning shopping for fresh fish). Nobody heard any cries or saw anything strange. Some of the children vanished from their rooms, much like Shinjo Kimoko, leaving only open windows behind. If the PCs ask about a scent of flowers, one or two of the parents will remember noticing such a thing.
- If shugenja PCs question the spirits at any of the kidnapping locations, they can get descriptions of either a man (Iuchi Nakato) or a woman (Isawa Kenko) taking the victims, using a drink to subdue the victims and snatch them away. At least some of these locations will have Water spirits that allow for visual identification of the kidnappers.
- If the PCs realize the order in which the kidnappings are taking place, they may start asking around about high-ranking children. Assuming the PCs did not already learn about Otomo Onatsu from Miya Kotomi, they will need to ask around among the samurai of the city and make a **Courtier/Awareness** roll at TN 20. Success learns the rumors of Onatsu's visit to the Shosuro Palace. Such a roll will also identify a number of other high-ranking individuals in the city who have young children, including several Scorpion and Unicorn noblemen. (These are red herrings.)

Help?

If the PCs decide to seek help from the Scorpion Clan magistrate in the city, they will be invited to meet with him (if Great Clan or Imperial samurai) or ignored (if

ronin or Minor Clan). PCs who investigate on their own will likely attract the attention of the authorities anyway, especially if they are asking about Yojiro. See “Scorpion Interference” in Part 3 below for details of what happens if the PCs meet with the magistrate.

Part 3: Yojiro and the Kidnappings

Assuming the PCs do not immediately realize Kenko’s significance and follow her to Akemi’s headquarters, their best lead will be the ronin Yojiro. The PCs will have little trouble tracking him down, so long as they are willing to lower themselves to speaking with commoners – Yojiro is very popular with the heimen and hinin of Ryoko Owari. Asking around among the common folk will quickly gain directions to the Oracle’s Blessing, if the PCs did not already get them from Waza.

Scorpion samurai in the city, if they have heard of Yojiro at all, generally regard him as either insignificant or as troublesome scum. Other bushi are less likely to have heard of him, although most ronin have at least heard of his name and reputation.

Scorpion Interference

If the PCs begin actively seeking out Yojiro (asking around about him, etc), or if they are aggressively involving themselves in the search for one or more of the missing children, word will soon reach the city’s Scorpion magistrate, Bayushi Kagoni. He will dispatch two Thunder Guard bushi, who politely but firmly ask the PCs to visit the magistrate at the Civic Hall in the Noble Quarter. Only the most foolish of PCs will refuse such an “invitation” from the local authorities.

The bushi lead you into a small audience room where a nondescript man in Scorpion colors awaits you. He wears a small mask that covers the upper half of his face, showing his lips quirked in a smile. He waves the two guards away and slowly looks you over before bowing in greeting. “Konichiwa. I am Bayushi Kagoni, Clan Magistrate for Governor Shosuro Hyobu of Ryoko Owari. I understand you are making certain inquiries about a recent disappearance. Could you explain why, please? Your actions might be misconstrued as showing a lack of trust in my ability to maintain law and order in our city.”

Kagoni will be polite and friendly, but with an undertone of menace. He tries to learn what the PCs are up to and why they are investigating the disappearances. If the PCs mention Yojiro, he will

frown and describe the ronin: “Nothing more than a bandit who has not yet been caught. He lulls the common folk into thinking him a hero, and lives off their illusions. You would be unwise to seek the help of such a man.” A PC who can defeat Kagoni in a **Contested Awareness** roll will realize that Kagoni is actually jealous and paranoid about Yojiro’s popularity with the commoners.

Depending on how the PCs impress him, Kagoni may wish them well on their quest, or he may warn them not to meddle in the Scorpion Clan’s enforcement of the law within its own territory. He will take the latter approach with any PCs who seem to be hostile, or who denigrate the Scorpion Clan’s ability to solve the crimes. He will also be instinctively hostile to ronin and Unicorns. Regardless, he will not provide the PCs with any information of his own, and will dismiss the rumors of multiple disappearances as “idle peasant gossip.”

If any of the PCs are non-junshin Scorpions, Kagoni will meet with them privately after dismissing his other visitors. He warns them that Yojiro is a “troublemaker” who “stirs up the common folk,” and suggests they find a way of having him discredited or arrested. He also mentions that the Scorpion Clan has no intention of going out of its way to help one of the hated Unicorns, especially now when “the Thunder Guard has many other concerns, and the Governor has important guests.” He will not mention Otomo Onatsu by name, but will smile knowingly if a PC mentions her.

The Oracle’s Blessing

The Oracle’s Blessing is a rather plain and run-down looking Inn for such a portentous name. It is a single-story structure, tucked into a side-street near the city’s northern gate, the so-called Unicorn Gate. The walls are weather-beaten and the shutters are a bit warped. The signboard is so worn with age that you can barely make out the kanji announcing the name of the establishment.

The PCs will have an especially difficult time finding the Inn at night, since it is so nondescript. Inside, day or night the place is poorly-attended and ill-kept, seldom crowded even during mealtimes. A tattered, worn-looking boy will open a creaking cabinet for the PCs to leave their weapons while they are here. An equally worn-down maidservant brings them food and drink.

If they arrive the night of the kidnapping, Yojiro is absent – anyone at the Inn can tell them that the ronin is out investigating, which he often does at night.

If the PCs arrive the next day, Yojiro will return in mid-morning, his eyes shadowed with lack of sleep, and immediately begins eating a breakfast of rice and dried fish.

Yojiro is a strong, healthy-looking man whose hair is shaved and tied back in a traditional samurai topknot. His clothes, while plain, seem in better condition than most ronin you see. He does not appear to notice your party as he slowly eats his rice, his hands moving with the careful deliberation of exhaustion.

Once the PCs approach Yojiro (he will ignore them until they speak with him), they will need to convince him to take them into his confidence. He will be instinctively reserved and distrusting toward Cranes and Scorpions, especially Scorpions – he has faced frequent harassment over the years from those two Clans, and the Scorpion have been obstructing his investigations. Otherwise he is polite, respectful without being subservient, and reasonably friendly. He will not open a discussion of the kidnappings himself, instead waiting to see what the PCs want.

The PCs will have to convince Yojiro that they genuinely want to help solve the disappearances. He will be irritated if they focus on Shinjo Kimoko and ignore the other children, remarking, “Does a mother mourn her child less because she is heimin?” Also, he will be reluctant to help PCs who insult or harass him – especially PCs who treat him with suspicion. If any PC questions his motives or reasons for trying to solve the disappearances, Yojiro will grow quite agitated. “I seek only to fulfill the tenets of bushido, which call on those who bear arms to protect those who cannot. Too many samurai forget that the duties and responsibilities of the Celestial Order extend downward as well as upward.” Depending on the nature of the PCs involved, this may well lead to a debate about the nature of bushido and duty.

The PCs can convince Yojiro to help them if they seem genuinely interested in solving the kidnappings. PCs who focus solely on rescuing Shinjo Kimoko can still earn his trust if they seem sufficiently dedicated and honorable. Yojiro especially respects anyone who acknowledges the virtue of Compassion and the need to protect and care for those who are lower in the Celestial Order. He dislikes those who behave with needless condescension or arrogance toward those of lower

status. He will not be impressed by PCs who try to use social rank or position to demand his cooperation.

If none of the PCs convince Yojiro to help them, he will politely explain that he knows nothing that would interest them, and goes on with his meal. Such PCs may still be able to convince him later, or they can try to follow him around and learn more that way, or they can investigate on their own (see “Independent Investigations” in Part Two above).

If Yojiro decides to trust the PCs, he can share the following information:

- Yojiro has identified a total of 11 other children who he believes are involved in this crime. (Shinjo Kimoko makes 12.) The first two victims were an *eta* and a young geisha, followed by several commoners (merchants, craftsmen, and farmer’s children, in that order), and finally the ronin’s son. Yojiro has realized that the kidnappings are following the Celestial Order, although he will not automatically mention this unless the PCs have earned his trust. PCs who figure it out on their own will impress him. (PCs who roll **Theology/Intelligence** at TN 15 can theorize that the social rank of the victims reflects the structure of the Celestial Order, and could be said to symbolize or embody the Order itself.)
- Yojiro believes the kidnappers must have a specific reason for committing their crimes in such a particular order. He suspects that magic is involved, possibly black magic, although he lacks the knowledge to confirm this. (PCs who made the earlier connection between the kidnap victims and the Celestial Order can roll **Lore: Maho/Intelligence** at TN 25 to speculate that it might be possible to influence the Celestial Order in some way by symbolically controlling or sacrificing it with these children.)
- Yojiro believes that the next victim will be someone of even higher rank, perhaps an Imperial. He has heard gossip that the Emperor’s niece is in the city, and suspects she will be the next, and perhaps last, target. (Again, Yojiro will not volunteer the information on the Imperial visitor unless the PCs strike him as trustworthy. PCs who mention Otomo Onatsu on their own will impress him.)
- Yojiro has tried to explain his theory to the Scorpion authorities, but they have not been cooperative. If the PCs ask why, his reaction will

vary depending on whether there are Scorpion among them. If there are Scorpion PCs, Yojiro will shrug and say simply, “Who will listen to a mere wave man?” If no Scorpion are present, he will explain that many samurai in the city, including the magistrate Bayushi Kagoni, are unhappy with the favor he has found among the heimen and hinin. “I suppose they see that as some sort of threat to their authority,” he snorts.

- Since he cannot guard the Imperial niece directly, Yojiro plans to sneak into the Noble Quarter and circle the Shosuro Palace tonight, watching for the kidnappers. He will only share this information with PCs who truly impress him as brave and honorable. If the PCs propose some way of getting Yojiro into the Noble Quarter “legally,” he will be both grateful and enthusiastic. He will also be enthused by any PCs who offer to help him guard the Palace, whether at his side or on their own.
- If the PCs have impressed him strongly, Yojiro may ask them to help him, either by accompanying his nighttime patrol or by standing guard on their own. “The Scorpion have many bushi in the Palace, but they do not realize what they may be dealing with.” He will sneer at any suggestion that they try to convince the Scorpion of the need to watch for an attack. “This Bayushi Kagoni will never do anything until it is too late.”

Seeking Help From the Scorpion

After speaking with Yojiro, some of the PCs may decide to try to warn the Scorpion Clan or to seek their help. Bayushi Kagoni will be of no assistance in this matter – he is too poisoned in his attitudes toward Yojiro to listen to anything associated with the ronin, and will dismiss any stories of kidnappers targeting Otomo Onatsu as the “babbling of fools.” Kagoni has Glory 4.5 (he is the magistrate of the second-largest city in the Empire) and will not be easy to overawe. PCs who match or exceed his Glory Rank may be able to convince him to take them seriously, if they role-play an effective appeal that does not tread on his authority (or which plays on his vanity or paranoia).

Some PCs may decide to try and bypass Kagoni and speak with the Governor, Shosuro Hyobu. Only PCs with Glory of 5.0 or better (4.0 or better for non-junshin Scorpions), or who have significant political connections (Ear of the Emperor, Major Allies or Favors with the Scorpion Clan), will be able to arrange a meeting with the Governor before the end of the day. Hyobu will receive them in the Shosuro Palace:

After a long trip through the winding, maze-like corridors of the Shosuro Palace, you arrive in a private, well-appointed room on an upper floor. Late-autumn sunlight turns the room warm, despite the brisk chill outside, and servants offer tea and sweet cakes. After a wait of about half an hour, the Governor glides in, an elegant middle-aged woman with a silk mask covering her lower face and a large Scorpion-shaped pin holding her hair in place. She bows, fluttering her fan. “To what do I owe the honor of such an... urgent meeting?” she asks.

The PCs will have to be both diplomatic and persuasive to convince the Governor to help them (especially if they have already alienated Bayushi Kagoni). This is a role-playing exercise, and the GM must adjudicate whether the PCs succeed. If they fail, Hyobu will politely explain that her magistrate is more than capable of dealing with any such problems, and dismisses them with a smiling, “We must chat again sometime.”

If the PCs do manage to convince the Governor and/or the magistrate to acknowledge the possible threat against Otomo Onatsu, the Scorpions will agree to boost security on Onatsu’s quarters (although this will actually be useless against the power of the Flower’s Kiss), including posting a female bushi inside her room. They will also give the PCs permission to patrol outside the Shosuro Palace if they wish. Especially persuasive or influential Clan PCs may be able to convince the Scorpion to let them stand guard inside the Palace, although they will not be allowed within Onatsu’s actual quarters (that would be an insult to the Scorpion Clan’s ability to protect her, not to mention improper if the PC in question is male).

Truly exceptional role-players may be able to convince the Governor to let Yojiro into the Noble Quarter to patrol around the Palace (this will require the permission of the Governor – Bayushi Kagoni will never agree to this on his own). Under no circumstances, however, will Yojiro (or for that matter, any ronin PC) be allowed inside the Shosuro Palace.

Part 4: Shadows in the Night

Getting into the Noble Quarter

In order to stand guard over the Shosuro Palace where Otomo Onatsu is staying, the PCs will have to enter the Noble Quarter of Ryoko Owari. The Noble Quarter is surrounded by fifteen-foot stone walls, pierced by only three gates – the Dragon’s Gate which leads to the

Bridge of Drunken Lovers, the Gate of Condescension which leads to the Merchant Quarter, and the Pious Gate which leads to the Temple District. All three gates are guarded and controlled by the Thunder Guard day and night, and locked between midnight and 6 a.m. (gaijin time). PCs will not be allowed through these gates unless they can claim to have legitimate business in the Noble Quarter.

If the PCs do not have permission to stand guard and cannot bluff their way through the gates, they will have to sneak across the walls in some way. This will most likely be by climbing them (**Athletics/Agility** or **Mountaineering/Agility** rolls at TN 20, TN 15 if they have climbing gear), or by using magic to fly over them. This will need to be done at night, since there are plenty of guards within eyesight during the day. Yojiro will climb over the wall unless the PCs can convince Governor Hyobu to let him in.

Another method would be to bribe the gate guards (these are Scorpions, after all). A PC can identify a guard who is a suitable target for a bribe with a **Contested Awareness** roll. A bribe of five or more koku should be sufficient.

Standing Guard with Yojiro

If the PCs stand guard with Yojiro (either secretly or with the Governor's permission), he will meet up with them near the Palace and explain that he plans to circle back and forth, watching for signs of both normal and magical entry. If the PCs number less than five he will suggest that they all patrol together. Otherwise he will prefer to work alone unless PCs he trusts insist on staying in one group.

The ground around the Palace is flat and clear for about fifty yards before other buildings (noble residences, the Civic Hall) begin to appear. There is a three-quarters moon. PCs who want to avoid being noticed (by guards or the enemy) will have to stay out of the cleared area, or find some magical way of concealing themselves.

Standing Guard Alone

If the PCs stand guard without Yojiro (due to alienating him or figuring out the threat on their own), it is up to them how to go about watching over the Shosuro Palace. If they are here in secret, they will also have to worry about avoiding the attention of the Scorpion sentries on the Palace walls. Allow the PCs to take whatever approach seems best to them. Again, there is fifty yards of open space around the Palace.

In the unlikely event that the PCs somehow convinced the Governor to let them stand guard inside the Palace, they will be located in an antechamber outside the guest quarters. They will not be allowed into Otomo Onatsu's suite unless something goes wrong.

The Apprentices Strike!

Kitsu Akemi dispatches both her apprentices to capture the final target – this is much too important to entrust to merely one of them, especially with additional busybodies (the PCs) involving themselves. The apprentices are supported by several drugged slaves of Akemi's sinister creation, the Flower's Kiss.

Iuchi Nakato and Isawa Kenko will use Air magic and Maho to slip into the Palace unobserved. Unless a shugenja PC manages to come up with an ingenious use of magic to protect Onatsu's quarters from a distance, the party will not be able to stop this, although they might be able to find out the moment it happens. *Evil Ward* will not work because both maho-tsukai are protected by the *Pekkle's Visage* spell. Any guards in or around Onatsu's room will be subdued with magic, primarily *Wind-Born Slumbers*, and then dosed with Flower's Kiss to keep them out of action.

If the PCs managed to get themselves inside the Palace, they are in an antechamber outside Onatsu's suite. They can make **Simple Perception** rolls at TN 25 to hear the faint sounds of the guards inside collapsing. If they fail that roll, they can make a second roll at the same TN to notice the faint odor of flowers seeping out of Onatsu's suite. Either way, they can rush inside in time to see the two shugenja flying out the window with Onatsu's drugged form held between them.

If the PCs are patrolling outside the Palace (either officially or secretly), they can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20 to spot the ghostly forms of the two maho-tsukai, a man and a woman, as they float out of the Palace, carrying their victim. Nakato will carry Otomo Onatsu and head for the alleyway where the drugged minions are waiting. Kenko flies away in a different direction, unwilling to help her rival more than necessary. Allow the PCs two chances to spot the flying shugenja before they disappear over the walls of the Noble Quarter. Remember to make a roll for Yojiro as well – if he spots the kidnappers, he immediately raises the alarm and races off in pursuit. (This may come as a surprise if the PCs did not realize that Yojiro was here.)

PC parties who have shugenja with magical surveillance abilities may be able to watch over Onatsu

from afar and actually see the crime as it occurs. They will not be able to prevent it, but they can react more swiftly.

Pursuing the Apprentices

Iuchi Nakato is headed for an alleyway in the Merchant Quarter where Akemi's drugged minions are waiting for him. Kenko will flee to another side-street and then retreat alone. If the PCs noticed the two apprentices on their first **Perception** roll, the flying maho-tsukai will still be close enough for the PCs to get off two archery shots or spells. (However, PCs attacking Nakato will need to make a Raise to ensure that any archery or spell attacks do not hit Otomo Onatsu.)

If the PCs do not notice the apprentices until their second **Perception** roll, they will only be able to get off one such ranged attack each.

Regardless, if the PCs manage to reduce Nakato to Down or lower, he will tumble out of the sky. Kenko, if she is still functional, will swoop in and grab Onatsu.

The PCs will be able to get off one more attack on her before she makes it out of range. (In this case simply substitute Kenko for Nakato in the subsequent alleyway confrontation.) The PCs will need to kill or disable both apprentices in order to keep them from getting over the wall of the Noble Quarter with their prize.

PCs who choose to simply pursue, rather than attack, will be able to stay close behind the flying maho-tsukai, and gain bonuses on maintaining pursuit (as outlined below).

Once the apprentices get over the wall, the PCs will have to track them through the dark night air to the alleyway. This will require a **Hunting/Perception** roll at TN 15 (TN 10 if the PCs pursued immediately instead of attacking) or **Simple Perception** at TN 20 (or TN 15). PCs who come up with creative ways to track their foes (especially using magic) can get bonuses to these Perception rolls. Also, since the two villains are heading in different directions, each PC must specify whether they are chasing Nakato or Kenko.

Remember that in order to maintain pursuit the PCs will have to either cross the Noble Quarter walls or go through the Gate of Condescension. PCs who sneaked in earlier may have problems here, although good role-play and effective use of skills like Intimidation and Obeisaseru (or a quick, large bribe) can bypass the problem.

If all the PCs fail the rolls to track Nakato to the alleyway, the GM can opt to have Yojiro succeed. He will come bursting out of the dark, shouting frantically for the PCs to follow him.

Confrontation with Nakato

Once he reaches the alleyway, Iuchi Nakato will hand Otomo Onatsu to one of the drug-minions and shout for him to "take her back to the mistress." (Pursuing PCs can hear him shout. They can make out his exact words with a **Simple Perception** roll at TN 15.)

PCs who pursued immediately without stopping to make any attacks, and who got across the wall with little to no delay, can arrive in time to spot the drug-minion fleeing out the other end of the alleyway with Otomo Onatsu tucked under one arm. Spotting this will require a **Simple Perception** roll at TN 20 (TN 15 if they understood Nakato's shouted command). Such PCs can opt to pursue the minion instead of fighting, although this will require that they run past Nakato and the other minions, probably being attacked along the way.

PCs who reach the alleyway via the air (with spells like *Call Upon the Wind* or *Wings of Fire*) can make this same **Perception** roll to spot the fleeing minion, regardless of whether they attacked or pursued immediately (aerial observation does have advantages).

In the darkened alleyway, barely lit by Lord Moon, you can make out several burly shapes that appear to be commoners. With them is a thin, shaggy-haired man in dark purple robes, clutching a tanto. "Destroy them! Our mistress commands it!" he shrieks, and the commoners lurch forward. Their blank eyes glisten oddly as they reflect the moonlight.

Iuchi Nakato will fight for at least five rounds before attempting to flee (if he is still conscious). The drugged minions accompanying him will of course fight to the death. Nakato screams curses and abuse at the PCs, ranting that "you will all grovel before us by sunrise," while alternating between *maho* and normal magic, whatever seems most effective (his *Pekkle's Visage* expires as he leaves the Palace). If possible, he will use one of the drug-minions as a source of blood to power his *maho* spells. If he is reduced to Down, he will try to stab himself to death with his tanto.

There will normally be three drug-minions, not counting the one who flees with Onatsu. (Against Low-Rank parties there will be two, and against High-Rank parties there will be four – see the play-balance

section at the start of the module.) The PCs will be able to clearly smell the odor of flowers from them, an unsettling, cloyingly sweet smell which seems to ooze out of their very pores. See “Appendix One: NPCs and Villains” at the end of the module for further details on how these poor victims of Akemi’s drug behave. Also, remember they are Tainted and are therefore vulnerable to anti-Taint magic.

Tracking Kenko

PCs who choose to pursue Isawa Kenko rather than Iuchi Nakato will need to make the same **Hunting/Perception** or **Simple Perception** roll to track her down from the sky. Kenko will touch down in a side-street in the Merchant District, near the riverside. If she is not pursued, she immediately heads for Akemi’s shack. If she hears or otherwise notices PCs pursuing her (which will be pretty much automatic unless they are using Stealth), she will quickly cast *Mists of Illusion*, creating a false image of herself holding a knife as though ready to slash her arm and cast a maho spell. She will then try to stealthily slip away while the PCs are distracted trying to “kill the spellcaster!”

Sneaky PCs who try to follow Kenko through the darkened city to her base will have to defeat her in four **Contested** rolls of **Stealth/Agility** against her **Investigation/Perception**. A failed roll means she notices them.

If Kenko is closely pursued, or if she notices stealthy followers, she will turn and fight, hoping to quickly destroy or disable her pursuers and then make good her escape.

Following Onatsu

PCs who want to pursue the minion who is carrying Onatsu will have to spot the drugged man fleeing the alleyway and then chase him immediately, without hesitation. They will then have to succeed in a **Contested Athletics/Stamina** roll with at least one Raise. PCs who come up with creative ways to gain ground in the chase, or to slow down the drug-minion, can get one or more Free Raises on this roll, at the GM’s discretion.

PCs who are magically flying will not be able to travel fast enough to keep the minion in sight for more than a couple of minutes once he flees the alleyway.

The muddy streets of Ryoko Owari are too well-traveled for the PCs to pick out the minion’s footprints once they lose sight of him. Persistent and stubborn

shugenja PCs can repeatedly question the spirits to try and learn which way the minion went, but it will require questioning an improbably large number of spirits (twenty-seven of them, to be exact) to trail the minion all the way to Akemi’s shack.

Aftermath

If the Scorpion were alerted to the danger earlier, a squad of Thunder Guards will arrive in the alleyway a few rounds after the fight ends. They will attempt to cooperate with the PCs, but will be deeply suspicious of Yojiro if he is there.

If the PCs did not warn the Scorpion of the danger, the Thunder Guard will only respond if the PCs created a stir while pursuing the maho-tsukai through the Gate of Condescension. In this case the guards will be very suspicious of the PCs and will question them carefully, possibly delaying them from further pursuit or investigation.

It will be up to the PCs how they deal with the Scorpion in either case. Note that, since the maho-tsukai put everyone in Onatsu’s suite to sleep, the Shosuro Palace will not realize that anything is amiss unless the PCs themselves raise the alarm. The Scorpion will be quite upset if the PCs stood guard without permission, and may even try to haul the PCs in for extensive questioning.

Clues

If the PCs defeated Nakato and/or Kenko, they will be able to search their scroll satchels and traveling packs. Each shugenja has scrolls for all of the spells they know. Each traveling pack contains several koku in assorted coins and three slim vials of some kind of smelly potion (Flower’s Kiss). Nakato’s pack also contains a crumpled sheet of paper, scrawled with a list of herbal ingredients and the name “Hoshi.”

The potion in the bottles smells strongly of flowers, with a rancid, sickly-sweet undertone. PCs who can detect Shadowlands Taint will detect a faint hint of Taint from the potion. If a PC is foolish enough to take a drink, they must roll **Simple Stamina** at TN 20 or fall immediately into a deep sleep, from which they cannot be awoken for 1k1 hours. They must also make a **Simple Earth** roll at TN 10 or gain one point of Shadowlands Taint. A PC who actually consumes an entire dose (a full bottle) must roll **Simple Earth** at TN 30 or fall under the power of the Flower’s Kiss. See “Appendix Two: The Flower’s Kiss” for details.

Any PC who reads the list of ingredients can roll **Poison/Intelligence** or **Herbalism/Intelligence** at TN 15, or **Medicine/Intelligence** at TN 20, to determine that the ingredients are quite exotic (some of them spices imported from the Burning Sands) and in several cases toxic. No known drug or treatment uses all of them together.

The name “Hoshi” will be difficult to identify immediately unless Yojiro is with the PCs. He can recall that there is an apothecary of that name in the Merchant Quarter. “An honest enough fellow, or so I’ve heard. He sells medicines and ointments to both commoners and samurai.” Yojiro scowls. “But I remember hearing that the Shosuro family sponsors him.” He can give rough directions to Hoshi’s shop, and will accompany the PCs if the party numbers less than five. Otherwise he will head off, hoping against hope to track down the fleeing drug-minion.

If Yojiro is not present, or if the PCs do not share the name “Hoshi” with him, they will need to deduce a connection with drugs and medicines, and then either ask around the Merchant Quarter, or inquire with the Thunder Guard about doctors or herbalists by that name. Either way, they will have to be persistent (and perhaps drop a few bribes) if they want to find Hoshi before dawn. Hopefully, with an Imperial relative on the line, the PCs don’t drag their feet.

Interrogations

It is possible (unlikely, but possible) that skilled and creative PCs may have been able to take one or both of the apprentices alive. In this case, the PCs may want to question them. Neither prisoner will cooperate, and both will attempt to escape or kill themselves if they get the chance. (Kenko will try to bite through her tongue, but Nakato does not have the nerve for that.) Pain will be needed to get information from these people – and torture is an incredibly dishonorable Low Skill.

A PC who is willing to lose a lot of Honor (half a Rank or more, depending on the PC) can attempt to torture a prisoner. This will require either a **Contested Willpower** roll against the prisoner, or a **Torture/Willpower** roll at TN 15 (if the PC actually has the skill). With a success, the prisoner “cracks” and tells everything.

If none of the PCs are willing to dishonor themselves by torturing the prisoners, they will have to go to the Shosuro Palace and ask permission to employ the services of the official torturer, Itoshi (Pitiful). This will require some good role-playing and several hours

of game-time (although this can be shorted if the PCs are Emerald Magistrates, have Glory of 4.0 or better, or gained earlier cooperation from the Governor). Itoshi will be able to quickly break the prisoner and extract whatever information is desired.

Once broken, either prisoner can share the following information:

- They serve the “mistress,” Akemi. She is a mighty sorceress and soon all will bow to her.
- Mistress Akemi used to be a Lion but now she is free of that “slavery to bushido.” She also used to be a Bloodspeaker, but no longer – the prisoners sneer at that “gang of fools.” Soon she will rule over them along with everyone else.
- Akemi has found a way to bend the Celestial Order to her will. All that is needed is the sacrifice of thirteen children symbolizing the various layers of the Order. If the drug-minion made it away with Otomo Onatsu, the prisoner will gloat that “she was the final ingredient, soon you will all crawl at Mistress Akemi’s feet.”
- Akemi cannot be stopped because she has also created the “Flower’s Kiss,” an infusion which turns men into mindless slaves to her will. “You have felt the power of those who have tasted the Flower’s Kiss. She has more, many more.”
- If the PCs demand to know where Akemi is, it will require additional torture before the prisoners finally break down completely and describe an abandoned shack in the Fisherman’s Quarter.

Part 5: A Prescription for Crime

Hoshi the Apothecary owns a small shop in the southern Merchant Quarter, near the border of the Temple District. If the PCs are guided by Yojiro, they can find the shop in less than an hour. If they must track it down themselves, it will take them anywhere from 1 to 6 hours, depending on who they ask (the Thunder Guard will get them there quickest) and how urgently they pursue the matter.

After a confusing trip through the dark, narrow streets in this portion of the city, you finally locate the shop. A signboard above the door shows a bowl with a stirring rod resting in it. The building is small but appears to be well-tended compared to many of the

structures lining these streets. Although the windows are shuttered and the front door is closed you can see the faint glow of light from within. A few heimin look out sleepily from other buildings as you approach the shop, but they duck back out of sight when you glance in their direction.

Hoshi is actually a Shosuro Actor, and runs his business as a way of gaining information for the Scorpion Clan and especially the Shosuro family. However, as he has grown older he has found himself becoming closer to the commoners he lives among, often seeing them to be more admirable people than the samurai lords he serves. He often spends more time helping the people in this neighborhood than in selling his wares. The locals are quite worried by the sudden appearance of armed samurai at his door, and will continue to watch anxiously as long as the PCs are here.

Speaking with Hoshi

Hoshi appears to be an old man in his late fifties or early sixties, with thinning white hair and faint muscle tremors in his hands. He dresses in the plain brown clothing of a commoner, although his style of speaking is somewhat more cultured than most commoners. Presently, Hoshi is up late preparing an herbal infusion for a sick child in the neighborhood.

If the PCs knock, or at least enter the place without unnecessary violence, he will smile and ask what he can do for them at this late hour. If the PCs politely explain the situation and show him the paper from Nakato's pack, he will set down his mixing bowl and help them as best he can. If the PCs are arrogant or brusque, or accuse him of involvement in the kidnappings, he will quietly take offense, and offers minimal cooperation until they mend their attitudes. If Yojiro is here, he will suggest that the PCs give Hoshi the benefit of the doubt. "He has lived here for many years and proven himself an honorable member of the community."

Violence?

Desperate or thuggish PCs may decide to simply break in, accuse Hoshi of involvement with *maho*, or similar aggressive behavior. Hoshi will be thoroughly uncooperative in the event of such boorish behavior, and may even drop hints about his protection from the Shosuro family. Furthermore, if anything like this happens, the other commoners in the neighborhood will quickly send for help from the Thunder Guard, who will arrive in ten-fifteen minutes. The Guards will

threaten to arrest the PCs for an unjustified assault on a "law abiding vassal of the Shosuro family."

Unless the PCs immediately and thoroughly apologize, they will be unable to gain any information from Hoshi, and will probably either be expelled from the city or spend the rest of the adventure in the custody of Bayushi Kagoni.

Poison's Trail

Once the PCs explain the situation and win his trust, Hoshi will do his best to aid them (especially since the ingredients were purchased at his shop). He picks up the paper and reads it through carefully, holding it close to his eyes. Then he sets it down with a sigh. "Yes, I remember the man who came to get this. I was rather surprised by such an odd combination of ingredients, and could not fathom their purpose. He was a Unicorn, a very thin and intense young shugenja. He named himself Iuchi Nakato." He squints as he works to recall the details. "It was close to a month ago that he first came. And he kept coming back every few days, requesting more be prepared for the next day. The last time was just three days ago. Quite peculiar." He looks at the PCs with eyes that gleam with keen intelligence. "What could anyone want with such a useless combination of drugs? Of course, I had need of the money, so I did as he bid. But I also had my delivery boy, Tetsuo, follow him home." His smile broadens at the PCs' reactions.

Hoshi can provide the following additional information, if the PCs ask the right questions:

- He can give directions to Kitsuo Akemi's shack in the Fisherman's Quarter. Or, he can have the boy Tetsuo guide the PCs there. (He will warn Tetsuo not to get closer than a block away from the shack.)
- Hoshi can give a detailed description of Iuchi Nakato which matches the man the PCs encountered. He does not remember anyone resembling Isawa Kenko. However, he does remember that the last few times, Nakato was accompanied by a couple of "commoner thugs" who waited outside while he came in to fetch his ingredients.
- If the PCs tell Hoshi about the scent of flowers they encountered, or the behavior of the drug-minions, he will be both intrigued and troubled. If they show him one of the potions, he will ask if he can be allowed to analyze it. It is up to the PCs

whether they let him do this or not – they may well be suspicious of putting this potion into the hands of a Shosuro vassal. If they do give some or all of the potions to Hoshi, he will ferret out their secrets and then, horrified, destroy them before making a report to the Shosuro family.

- Hoshi has heard good things about Yojiro, and will speak up for the ronin if any PCs seem suspicious or hostile toward him. Due to his sympathies with commoners, Hoshi will support Yojiro against his own Clan's orders.

Part 6: Breaking the Circle

Whether or not they were able to prevent the kidnapping of Otomo Onatsu, the PCs by now should be well aware that there is some kind of sinister plot underway in the city, and that it is based out of a shack in the Fisherman's Quarter. If the PCs pursued the clues aggressively, they should be able to reach the shack before dawn, when Akemi performs her *maho* ritual and steals the souls of her thirteen sacrificial victims. If they managed to rescue Otomo Onatsu, they will probably still want to track down and destroy the leader of this sinister conspiracy.

Arriving Early

It is possible that the PCs may discover Akemi's shack before the kidnapping of Otomo Onatsu (most likely by following Isawa Kenko from the Inn of the Silent Wanderer). In this case, if they storm the shack, they will be facing the entire gang of bad guys: Kitsuru Akemi, Iuchi Nakato, Isawa Kenko, and all eight (six/ten) drug-minions. This can easily be a party-killing encounter, particularly if the PCs blunder in without knowing what to expect. The GM should try to give the PCs a chance to back off if they realize they are overmatched.

If the PCs attack the shack and then retreat without killing Akemi, she will still try to carry out her plot as long as she has at least one apprentice to send into the Shosuro Palace. She will relocate herself and her prisoners and minions to a hut outside the city (in the *eta* district) – the PCs will have to question a captured apprentice, follow an apprentice or drug-minion, or make effective use of scrying magic to find her again.

Getting Help

If the PCs have gained the cooperation of the Governor, and the Scorpion know that Onatsu has been

kidnapped, the PCs can easily get help from the Thunder Guard. The Guard will dispatch a full squad of eight bushi to accompany them to the shack.

Emerald Magistrate PCs can try to exercise their authority to requisition troops from the Scorpion. How cooperative the Scorpion Clan will be depends on what information the PCs present, and what Clan the Emerald Magistrate belongs to (the Scorpion will be very uncooperative with Unicorns, Lions, and Crabs).

Either way, the troops will fight bravely and help the PCs to the best of their ability.

Arriving in Pursuit of Onatsu

It is most likely that the PCs do not arrive until shortly before dawn, unless they pursued the clues very aggressively. If the PCs arrive earlier, modify this description as needed:

In the chill, gray light before dawn, you approach the fisherman's shack. It is one of dozens of such structures, many of them abandoned and all in need of repair, crammed into the narrow spaces between the wharves. The door and the window shutters are closed, and no light is visible within. The street is silent, and the faint scrutch-scrutch of your sandals on the ground seems to echo loudly.

Inside the Shack

Breaking through the door (which is barred from the inside) or forcing open the window-shutters will make noise, although not enough noise to alert Akemi as long as the PCs are reasonably careful. Inside the shack, the main room contains only a low rickety table and some threadbare tatami mats. However, if the PCs arrive after the successful kidnapping of Otomo Onatsu, they can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20 to hear a faint murmuring sound from below them: Akemi chanting her invocation.

There is a trapdoor beneath the table. It is not locked (it lifts upwards), but has an alarm system: there are several bells hanging from the bottom which will ring loudly when it is lifted. The PCs will not be able to notice this alarm system unless they lift the door *very* slowly, or step on the door before lifting it, in which case they can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20 to hear a very faint tinkle.

Beneath the trapdoor is a steep staircase, more of a ladder, descending into a damp earthen tunnel that looks to have been fairly recently dug. If Akemi is

conducting her ritual, her voice will be more clearly audible at this point.

The tunnel is unlit, but extends only a few yards before ending in a heavy wooden door mounted crudely into the earth. Yellow lamplight is visible through cracks in the door. Akemi, if performing the ritual, will be clearly audible from the other side of the door, chanting an invocation of Fu Leng's dark power. If the PCs arrive after defeating the kidnapping, there will be no chant, but a **Simple Perception** roll at TN 20 will detect the faint whimpering of children.

The door cannot be easily slid open – it is barred from the other side, and a **Simple Strength** roll at TN 25 will be needed to force it. Physical blows (with a tetsubo or dai tsuchi, a shoulder, battering ram, etc) will knock the door out of its hinges by inflicting a total of 20 points of damage. Alternatively, PCs may realize that the earthen tunnel does not make the firmest mounting for the door – by digging out a little of the earth around the frame, the door can be easily knocked over with a **Simple Strength** roll at TN 15.

Confrontation

Once the PCs get through the door into Akemi's cellar, what they see will vary depending on when they arrived, whether Akemi heard them coming, and whether Onatsu was kidnapped.

If the PCs arrive during the ritual (the most likely outcome):

Beyond the door is a low-roofed, soggy earthen cave, the ceiling braced with cheap wooden slats. A pair of lamps on a low table provide flickering yellow light. A dozen or so children lie in a circle on the far end of the room, and in the center of the circle stands a small, stocky woman in tattered robes of brown and yellow. Her eyes blaze with a fanatic's determination as she continues to chant, holding her hands over one of the children. Suddenly the child shudders, skin turning a horrid shade of gray, and goes still.

Between you and the children are several men, commoners by their garb. They have the same dull eyes and flower-like stench as the men you fought in the alleyway.

If Isawa Kenko escaped earlier, she will be here as well. If the PCs set off the alarm on the trapdoor, the drug-minions will be positioned in a semi-circle around the door, and Kenko will have a spell ready to cast. They will attempt to hold off the PCs so that Akemi can

complete the ritual. She has already sacrificed eight children and will kill one additional child every two rounds (every three rounds against Low-Rank parties). The last two victims will be Shinjo Kimoko and Otomo Onatsu.

There will be five drug-minions against an average party, four against a Low-Rank party, and six against a High-Rank party.

Akemi herself will not fight unless the PCs get through her apprentice and minions to attack her. In that case, with her ritual defeated so close to completion, she will fly into a rage and fight to the death.

If the PCs arrive after thwarting the kidnapping the situation will be somewhat different:

Beyond the door is a low-roofed, soggy earthen cave, the ceiling braced with cheap wooden slats. A pair of lamps on a low table provide flickering yellow light. A dozen or so children are slumped against the far wall, heads lolling as though asleep, some of them whimpering softly. Kneeling by the table is a short, stocky woman in tattered robes of brown and yellow. Between you and her are several men, commoners by their garb. They have the same dull eyes and flower-like stench as the men you fought in the alleyway.

Again, if Kenko escaped she will be here as well. If the PCs set off the alarm, the drug-minions will be positioned around the door as above, and both Kenko and Akemi will be ready to cast spells.

If the fight goes badly, Akemi will scoop up her papers and journal from the table and attempt to escape. If Kenko is still on her feet at that point, she will attempt to escape as well. There is an escape tunnel in the back of the cave, hidden beneath a ragged curtain: a sliding earthen chute which dumps out in the ankle-deep shallows at the edge of the Bay of Drowned Honor. PCs who pursue Akemi or Kenko will have to defeat them in **Contested Athletics/Stamina** rolls in order to catch them. Due to the favor of the other Dark Oracles, Akemi gets a Free Raise on all her rolls to escape.

If the PCs arrive before the kidnap attempt, the situation is the same as that outlined just above, but Iuchi Nakato and the remaining 2/3/4 minions will also be present. As mentioned, this will be a very dangerous fight, especially if the PCs set off the alarm.

If the PCs do manage to overcome these odds, Akemi will again attempt to escape with her research.

Failure?

If the PCs fail to prevent Akemi from completing her ritual, she throws up her hands in triumph as the room suddenly howls with unearthly power. Her eyes blaze and then go completely black as she becomes the new Dark Oracle. She makes an arrogant, casual gesture with one hand, and everyone in the room (including both the PCs and the other villains) is flung violently into the corners, suffering 3k2 damage and being stunned for one round. Akemi the Oracle turns and simply walks through the wall, leaving any surviving apprentices and drug-minions to try to finish off the PCs.

If Yojiro did not accompany the PCs, he will eventually track down the shack on his own, and will anonymously report the locations of the dead children to the Scorpion authorities.

Victory and Aftermath

If the PCs defeated Akemi, they will be free to rescue the children and “clean up.”

The children have been doped with Flower’s Kiss and will not awaken for several hours. Fortunately, none of them drank enough of a dose to be damaged or Tainted by the foul drug.

If Akemi did not manage to recover her journal and notes, the PCs will find these on the table beside the lamps. They will also find a mortar and pestle and two more bottles of Flower’s Kiss beneath the table. The journal identifies Kitsu Akemi and recounts her career in the Bloodspeakers and her struggle to recover her power (as outlined in the Introduction). The notes contain both the “recipe” for creating Flower’s Kiss (which involves a *maho* ritual to complete the potion) and her research on the ritual to make her the Dark Oracle of Rokugan.

All of these materials are *maho*-related, and a PC who keeps them personally (as opposed to handing them over to some higher authority) is both breaking the law and violating bushido.

Once the children are returned safely, Governor Shosuro Hyobu will meet privately with the PCs, assuring them of the gratitude of her family and Clan. She will also hint delicately (or bluntly, if some of the PCs are thick-headed types) that no mention of danger to the Emperor’s niece should ever be spoken in public. The Scorpion would be greatly dishonored if such a thing were ever made known. In exchange for their silence, all PCs gain a Favor with the Shosuro family.

If the PCs refuse to hush up the story, they gain much Glory as they are publicly praised... but they also gain the sworn enmity of the Shosuro family.

Regardless, Shinjo Yakomo’s gratitude is more tangible: some weeks after his daughter is rescued, each PC receives a gift of a Unicorn riding horse. If the PC already has a Unicorn horse (or an Otaku warhorse), Yakomo instead sends a fine-quality leather saddle which awards +1 skill die in Horsemanship.

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

Experience Points

Playing through the adventure:	1 XP
Good role-playing:	1 XP
PCs stop Akemi’s ritual:	+1 XP
Otomo Onatsu and Shinjo Kimoko both survive:	+1 XP

PCs face the entire group of villains at once, and defeat them:	+1 XP
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Total Possible Experience:	5 XP
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Honor

PCs rescue Otomo Onatsu, or prevent her from being kidnapped: +1 point of Honor (+2 for Imperial Family, Emerald Magistrates, and Scorpions)

PCs fail to rescue Otomo Onatsu: -2 points of Honor (-3 for Imperial Family and Emerald Magistrates)

PCs fail to rescue Shinjo Kimoko: -1 point of Honor (-3 for Shinjo family PCs, -2 for all other Unicorns)

PCs realized what Akemi was plotting and failed to stop it: -1 additional point of Honor

Glory

PCs rescue Shinjo Kimoko: +1 point of Glory (+2 for Unicorn PCs)

PCs refuse to hush up the kidnapping of Otomo Onatsu: all PCs gain +2 points of Glory for rescuing the Imperial niece.

Other Awards/Penalties

If a PC keeps Kitsu Akemi's notes, that PC gets Dark Secret: Forbidden Maho Knowledge.

If the PCs save Otomo Onatsu, and agree to keep the secret of her kidnapping, they gain a Favor with the Shosuro family.

If they refuse to hush up the kidnapping, they gain Sworn Enemy: Shosuro family.

If the PCs save Shinjo Kimoko, they gain either a Unicorn riding horse, or (if they already have a Unicorn horse) a fine leather saddle which grants +1 rank in Horsemanship.

Appendix One: NPCs and Villains

Bayushi Kagoni, Magistrate of Ryoko Owari

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

TN to be Hit: 20 (25 with armor)

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 3

Honor/Glory: 1.1/4.5

Skills: Athletics 2, Courtier 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 5, Heraldry 3, History 2, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 3, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Law 3, Manipulation 4, Meditation 2, Shintao 1, Sincerity 6, Stealth 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Crafty, Social Position (magistrate of Ryoko Owari)/Cruel, Driven (to maintain his authority).

Equipment: Fine kimono, light armor, fine daisho set, badge of office.

Yojiro, heroic ronin, protector of the people

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

TN to be Hit: 20 (25 in armor)

School/Rank: None (true ronin)

Honor/Glory: 2.7/0.2

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Gambling 4, Hisomu (urban stealth) 4, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kuenai (commoner Etiquette) 5, Kyujutsu 4, Law 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Higher Purpose (to protect commoners), Personal Mon (Sitting Hawk), Provincial Hero/Social Disadvantage (ronin), Sworn Enemy (Bayushi Kagoni)

Equipment: Clothing, light armor, daisho set, yumi bow with 10 ya arrows, tanto, 23 zeni.

Isawa Kenko, corrupted Phoenix, maho-tsukai apprentice

Kenko is the newer of Akemi's two apprentices, and is dangerously ambitious. She is loyal to Akemi, but dreams of achieving power comparable to that of her mistress. If she had the chance, she would kill Akemi and try to take her place as the Dark Oracle of Rokugan. However, combination of Nakato's loyalty and her own fear of Akemi's power has kept her from acting. Akemi recognizes this and plays off her apprentices against each other.

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

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 2.3

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Isawa shugenja (Air) 2

Honor/Glory: 0.0/2.2

Skills: Athletics 2, Bojutsu 4, Calligraphy 4, Etiquette 1, Herbalism 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 2, Lore (Maho) 5, Lore (Shugenja) 4, Meditation 1, Research 3, Stealth 4, Tantojutsu 2.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Air 1) *Cloak of Night, Tempest of Air, Wind-Born Slumbers*, (Air 2) *Call Upon the Wind, Mists of Illusion*, (Air 3) *The Eye Shall Not See*, (Water 1) *Bo of Water, Reversal of Fortunes*, (Water 2) *Reflective Pool*, (Fire 1) *Extinguish*, (Maho) *Fires of Corruption, Obsidian Armor, Pain, Pekkle's Visage, Tomb of Earth*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Innate Abilities (all maho spells, Wind-Born Slumbers, Call Upon the Wind, Mists of Illusion)/Antisocial, Cruel, Dark Secret (maho-tsukai), Driven (to gain power).

Equipment: Kimono, tanto, wakizashi, scroll satchel, traveling pack (contains 3 vials of Flower's Kiss).

Iuchi Nakato, corrupted Unicorn, maho-tsukai apprentice

The older of Akemi's two apprentices, Nakato is a demented Unicorn whose obsession with earthly power drove him to join the Bloodspeakers. Disillusioned by their defeat last year, he was easy

prey for Akemi's appeals. He is loyal to Akemi, and looks forward to the day when she ascends to her position as a Dark Oracle. He knows Kenko is less trustworthy and is proud that Akemi trusts him the most.

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

Shadowlands Taint rank: 2.8

TN to be Hit: 25

School/Rank: Iuchi shugenja 3

Honor/Glory: 0.0/1.3

Skills: Athletics 3, Calligraphy 3, Etiquette 2, Herbalism 3, Horsemanship 4, Intimidation 2, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore (Maho) 6, Lore (Shugenja) 3, Meditation 2, Research 4, Stealth 3, Tantojutsu 3.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Water 1) *Heart of Nature, Reflections of Pan Ku, Sympathetic Energies*, (Water 2) *Purify Water, The Tie That Binds*, (Water 3) *Regrow the Wound*, (Air 1) *Wind-Born Slumbers*, (Air 2) *Call Upon the Wind*, (Earth 1) *Force of Will*, (Maho) *Corruption of Earth, Mists of Fear, No Pure Breaths, Pain, Pekk's Visage*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Innate Abilities (all maho spells, Force of Will, Sympathetic Energies, Wind-Born Slumbers), Sensei (Kitsu Akemi), Strength of the Earth (rank 1)/Dark Secret (maho-tsukai).

Equipment: Kimono, tanto, wakizashi, scroll satchel, traveling pack (contains three vials of Flower's Kiss).

(Kitsu) Akemi, corrupted sodan-senso, maho-tsukai

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

Shadowlands Taint rank: 3.7

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Kitsu shugenja 3

Honor/Glory: 0.0/0.6

Skills: Athletics 4, Calligraphy 4, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Heraldry 2, Herbalism 6, History 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 4, Lore (Ancestors) 2, Lore (Dark Oracles) 7, Lore (Maho) 6, Lore (Shugenja) 4, Manipulation 4, Meditation 4, Poison 5, Research 6, Seduction 4, Stealth 3, Tantojutsu 4.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Ancestral) *Sense Ancestor*, (Water 1) *Path to Inner Peace, Reversal of Fortune, Sympathetic Energies*, (Water 2) *The Tie That Binds, Wisdom and Clarity*, (Air 1) *Tempest of Air, Wind-Born Slumbers*, (Air 2) *Whispering Wind*, (Maho) *Corruption of Earth, Dark Divination, Fires of Corruption, Mists of Fear, No Pure Breaths, Obsidian Armor, Pain, Pekk's Visage, Tomb of Earth*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Chosen by the (Dark) Oracles, Dark Fate, Half-Blooded, Quick, Voice/Black Sheep, Dark Secret (maho-tsukai), Driven (to gain power).

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

Drug-Minions, commoners controlled by Flower's Kiss

These men have been reduced to near-mindless, brutish slaves by the effects of the Flower's Kiss drug. Their eyes are glazed and reflect the light oddly, and their over-muscled forms bulge out of their ragged peasant garments. They will obey any commands from Akemi or her apprentices. They will not obey anyone else, but a forceful command from a PC might cause them to pause for a round if the PC can roll Simple Willpower at TN 20.

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

Wounds: 27: Dead. Due to their unnatural stamina and lack of pain sense, the drug-minions ignore all Wound Rank penalties and continue to function normally until killed. They are all considered to have the Shadowlands power Blessing of the Dark One (+1 Wound per rank).

Shadowlands Taint rank: 1.2

TN to be Hit: 15

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 1, Jiujutsu 3, Nofujutsu (peasant weapons) 3, Wrestling 4.

Equipment: Clothing, jo staff (0k2 one-handed short staff).

Generic Thunder Guards, Scorpion troops

FIRE 3	AIR 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2
VOID 2	

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

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 1.5/1.0

Skills: Athletics 3, Bard 2, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Heraldry 2, Iaijutsu 3, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu (Archery) 4, Sincerity 5, Stealth 2, Yarijutsu 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: None

Equipment: Light armor, daisho set, yari.

GM's Note: Maho Spells

Maho spells are cast by rolling Earth+Taint Rank, keeping Earth. The caster must spill blood (their own or another's) equal to the spell's Mastery level, and gains Taint equal to twice the Mastery level.

The caster may take Free Raises for each additional amount of blood (equal to the Mastery level) which they spill.

Corruption of the Earth

Base TN: 15

Casting Time: 3 Actions

Duration: 4 rounds

Mastery Level/Wounds Required: 8

Raises: Area (3 feet diameter per raise), Casting Time, Duration (4 more rounds per raise)

Effect: This spell causes the earth within three feet of the target to turn to mud and swallow them up at the rate of two feet per Action. PCs trying to escape must roll Simple Earth at TN 15 to move three feet. Each attempt to move (whether successful or not) requires a Simple Water roll at TN 10 to avoid sinking an

additional foot into the mud. Pulling free of the mud requires a Simple Earth roll at a TN of 5 times the number of feet the victim has sunk into the mud.

Fires of Corruption

Base TN: 20

Casting Time: 3 Actions

Duration: Instantaneous

Mastery Level/Wounds Required: 9

Raises: Casting Time, Number of Targets (one per raise)

Effect: This spell is a twisted, maho-powered version of the shugenja spell Fires from Within.

The caster calls forth a pillar of black, pulsating fire which smites the target(s), who must be visible and within 100 yards. The spell's DR is equal to the caster's Fire+Taint, keeping Fire.

Mists of Fear

Base TN: 10

Casting Time: 2 Actions

Duration: 5 Rounds

Mastery Level/Wounds Required: 4

Raises: Casting Time, Duration (5 rounds per Raise)

Effect: The caster can summon an image of that which his target fears most (usually a person or thing associated with that fear). To the target, the caster appears as this person or object. This will activate any Phobia disadvantages, and gives the caster a Fear rating of 3 for the duration of the spell.

No Pure Breaths

Base TN: Target's Earth x 5

Casting Time: 2 Actions

Duration: Instantaneous

Mastery Level/Wounds Required: 5

Raises: Casting Time, Damage (one non-kept die per raise), Number of Targets (one per raise)

Effect: The air within the target suddenly corrupts and explodes out of the body, rupturing the lungs and tissues. The target suffers wounds of a DR equal to the caster's Taint rank. The victim also suffers a +10 penalty to all TNs until magically healed, due to the pain of ravaged, Tainted lungs.

Obsidian Armor

Base TN: 15

Casting Time: 3 Actions

Duration: 10 Rounds

Mastery Level/Wounds Required: 6

Raises: Casting Time, Duration (5 rounds per raise)

Effect: This spell summons a powerful aura of Taint which surrounds and protects the caster. The Taint will absorb and nullify the first Taint-targeting spell or special ability (such as Jade Strike) which targets the caster. The spell disperses once this ability has been used.

Pain

Base TN: 10

Casting Time: 1 Action

Duration: 1 Round

Mastery Level/Wounds Required: 4

Raises: Duration (1 round per raise), Number of Targets (one per raise)

Effect: The target (who must be visible and within 25 feet) is suddenly wracked with terrible, debilitating pain. The victim may not act for the duration of the spell. Further, victims of this spell must roll Simple Earth at TN 15 or cry out in agony, dishonoring themselves.

Pekkle's Visage

Base TN: 15

Casting Time: 3 actions

Duration: 1 hour

Mastery Level/Wounds Required: 6

This spell causes the caster's Taint to recede within, becoming undetectable. For the duration of the spell, all physical symptoms of the Taint vanish, it cannot be sensed by Witch-Hunters or others, and the caster cannot be affected by spells which are triggered by Taint (such as Evil Ward). However, while this spell is in effect, it is the only *maho* spell which the caster may employ.

Tomb of Earth

Base TN: Target's Air x 5

Casting Time: 3 Actions

Duration: Variable

Mastery Level/Wounds Required: 6

Raises: Casting Time, Number of Targets (one per raise)

Effect: A dark reflection of Tomb of Jade, this spell replaces the target's Earth with the caster's Taint. If successful, the spell turns a target to stone, starting from the outside (armor, then clothing, then flesh). Each round the target must make a Contested Air roll against the caster's Earth or suffer 2k2 wounds. The spell ends when the target dies (becoming a statue), or when the target succeeds in the Air roll. The stone remains for 1-10 days before crumbling to dust.

Appendix Two: The Flower's Kiss

The drug known as the Flower's Kiss is a foul herbal drink which has been infused with maho power. Anyone who drinks even a small amount of it must roll **Simple Stamina** at TN 20 or fall immediately into a deep sleep, from which they cannot be awoken for 1k1 hours. They must also make a **Simple Earth** roll at TN 10 or gain one point of Shadowlands Taint.

A person who actually consumes an entire dose (a full bottle) of the Flower's Kiss must roll **Simple Earth** at TN 30 or fall under the power of the drug. This causes the victim to immediately gain one point of Shadowlands Taint. Over the course of the next few hours, two of the victim's physical Traits increase by 1, while two of their mental Traits drop by 1. Their minds will be dazed by the drug and they will be in a continual, highly suggestible state – especially prone to obeying the commands of those with Shadowlands Taint stronger than their own. Furthermore, they will be addicted to the drug and will require additional doses every day. Each additional dose continues the process of unnaturally strengthening their body while weakening their mind (affecting two random physical and mental Traits each time, but never lowering a Trait below 1 or raising it above 5). Once all four mental Traits reach 1, the victim has become a semi-mindless drug minion and can never be freed from its effects – at that point, if the drug-minion misses a dose, he or she will die in agony.

Resisting the addictive properties of the drug requires a **Simple Willpower** roll. The TN is 20 after the first dose and increases by 5 with each additional dose. Success means the victim resists the urge and slowly begins to return to normal. Suggestibility ends immediately, and stats revert at the rate of one per day. The Taint, however, remains.

A victim of the Flower's Kiss who cannot break the addiction, but cannot get their dose of Flower's Kiss, will go insane, running amok in search of their "fix."