

Kuro's Fire

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

by Robert Hobart

A strange new shrine has appeared in Crane lands. Samurai from across the Empire have come to see what this means. The wisdom, mystery, and danger of the sacred Elements await them.

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This is a RPGA Network adventure game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing the game (or this round of the game), but the actual playing time will be about three 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.

Scoring the game for RPGA points: The RPGA has three ways to score this game. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use:

1. *No-vote scoring:* The players write their names and numbers on the scoring packet grid, you fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
2. *Partial scoring:* The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the convention coordinator wants information as to how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
3. *Voting:* Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the best amongst them, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes. Multi-round adventures usually required advancing a smaller number of players than played the first round, so voting is required for multi-round adventures.

When using Voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities.

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 TOURNAMENT SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

This adventure is a Low Level adventure. This means that only Rank 1 and Rank 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

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

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

- All PCs should be allowed to take the Challenge.
- TNs for passing the various Tests are 5 lower. For Contested Rolls, this means a -5 penalty to the opposing roll.
- The “student” Fire Samurai in the Test of Fire has Fire 3 and Air 2 (Reflexes 3).

High End Party (all characters Rank Two or higher, and/or a third or more of them are Rank Three):

- The “student” Fire samurai in the Test of Fire has Agility 5 and rolls 7k5 to hit.
- The Air monk Kyumi has an Air of 5 and a Defense/Reflexes roll of 7k5.

Adventure Summary and Background

Naka Kuro, the grandmaster of the Elements, is the wisest and most powerful shugenja in the Empire. But with great power comes burdensome knowledge. Kuro knows that the evil power of Fu Leng is rising once more, and that soon the Day of Thunder will come again. He knows, also, that this time the power of Jigoku is allied with another, darker, force, one beyond mortal comprehension: the Living Darkness.

It is not Kuro’s role to defeat such powers himself, and even he is not mighty enough to do so. Instead, he has foreseen that it is his role to guide and teach those who will be able to triumph against these terrible evils. To this end, he has created a test, the Trial of the Elements, to mark out and teach those who are destined to lead the struggle against evil and nothingness. He has also wrought forth from the elements a new shrine, the Shrine of the Five Rings, to administer this test. The sudden appearance of a temple where none stood before has attracted the attention of all the Clans, and many samurai have been dispatched to investigate it and see what it teaches... which is exactly what Kuro intended.

This adventure is intended to be somewhat of a departure from Living Rokugan adventures, since the primary plot thread has no “problem” or “enemy” to overcome. Rather, the Challenge of the Elements presents the PCs with internal obstacles, tests of their own skill, honor, enlightenment, knowledge, and self-confidence. Success will mark the PCs as persons of destiny... and failure may be more scarring emotionally than physically.

There is also an unrelated subplot in this adventure involving a corrupted Imperial advisor, Otomo Keisuke. PCs may have encountered this unfortunate man before in the adventure *The Ties That Bind*. It is unlikely that the PCs will be able to prevent (or solve) the crime which the drug-addled and increasingly insane Keisuke will commit during this adventure, but the incident may offer an ominous warning of future problems... as well as something to occupy those PCs who fail to qualify for the Challenge of the Elements.

Introduction

The warm afternoon sunlight of early summer shines down on the sparkling waters of the Kawa sano Zatu Shudoshi, the River of the Blind Monk, a few miles south of the great Crane palace of Kyuden Doji. South of the river rise the imposing peaks of the World’s Spine Mountains, which bisect the Emerald Empire from here all the way to the edge of the Burning Sands.

A small fishing village perches on the edge of the river, sending their simple boats out into the Michi nu Mayotta Musume, Lost Daughter Inlet, to ply their nets between the dozens of small rocky islands which dot the narrow bay. Smaller villages are found on many of those islands, and one of them, so legend says, is where the First Hantei found his bride.

At the moment, however, your attention is on the rocky mountain slopes on the far side of the River of the Blind Monk. There, sparkling in the sun, is the pagoda roof of a six-story temple where none stood before. By all accounts, the temple was raised in a single day by a mighty shugenja. Every Clan has sent samurai to investigate this strange new shrine and its inhabitants, and now the first of these visitors are gathering on the shores of the river, gazing across at their destination.

The PCs are assumed to have been sent here by their daimyo to investigate the mysterious temple. Ronin PCs are here to satisfy their own curiosity. Allow the PCs a chance to introduce and describe themselves. Also, any PC can roll History, Lore (Lion or Crane or Imperial families), or Poetry to remember the famous play, “Hantei’s Bride,” by the famed playwright Akodo Taberu. The play manages to tell the tale in such a way that the Crane characters are made villains, without portraying them as villainous.

The fishing village is called Kappa no Mura (“Village of the Kappa”) and has a founding myth about a peasant who tricked a kappa into filling the bay with abundant fish. Kappa no Mura is home to perhaps 300 people. They have lived here peacefully for hundreds of years, with little contact with the outside world except for the annual visits of tax collectors. The sudden arrival of many samurai is quite alarming to them, and most of them will be hiding inside their huts. Even the fishermen look nervous as they row their small boats out into the bay.

PCs can learn this information:

- The shrine appeared a month ago. An old man with a “kind face” came to visit the village. The next morning they saw him on the far bank of the river, performing powerful magics. The shrine built itself at his commands. He went inside and did not emerge.
- A few days later, a large number of monks arrived, were ferried across the river, and entered the shrine. They have sometimes come out to fish, or to buy supplies from the village. “They seem human, but you never can tell.”
- How to cross the river? The peasants point to a small hut a few hundred yards upstream. “The monk who lives there ferries anyone across for a single zeni. Sometimes travelers use him when they are going south to the city beyond the mountains – there are paths along the coast.”

- More about the monk – he has been here for 200 years. The villagers simply accept him as a normal part of their reality. “He is a good man, although he brooks no disrespect from those he ferries.” The name of the river – Kawa sano Zatu Shudoshi, the River of the Blind Monk – is derived from his presence; it had another name before, although the villagers no longer remember it.

The Other Visitors

Besides the PCs, there are a double-handful of other samurai here, from six of the Great Clans (Scorpion, Crane, Phoenix, Unicorn, Crab, and Dragon) as well as the Imperial Families and the Minor Clans of the Centipede and the Fox. The PCs can speak with these visitors freely. Below are brief listings and descriptions of these persons; the NPCs are listed in more detail, complete with statistics, in GM’s Aid #1: NPC Visitors

It may be assumed that there are three or four other NPCs present who are not named or described in the module. This is intentional, to allow the GM to personalize the module or to bring in minor personalities who are important to a particular group of player characters.

PCs will note the absence of any Lion visitors aside from themselves and one of Otomo Keisuke’s bodyguards – the Lion are locked in war with the Crane, and have more important things to do than visit a remote temple.

The Imperial Families

Otomo Keisuke. This man, an Imperial advisor, will be familiar to PCs who have played the Living Rokugan adventure *The Ties That Bind*. He will politely greet PCs who helped him before, and coldly ignore PCs who were troublesome in the past. Keisuke is noticeably thin (thinner than he was before), but otherwise seems properly impressive: a handsome, elegant man in his mid-thirties, dressed in the finest of kimono and wearing a sash and a gold ring signifying his status as one of the Emperor’s Advisors. Keisuke is accompanied by a small army of servants, as well as a Miya assistant (see below) and a pair of Seppun bodyguards, who will insulate him from any undesirable visitors.

Keisuke is here to learn what this shrine is, and why is has appeared. However, he feels no particular desire to enter the shrine himself, and will rely on the reports of

other samurai (including the PCs) as to what he should tell the Emperor.

Keisuke also has a number of dark secrets. He is an opium addict and a serial murderer, driven to repeated violence by his accumulated guilt and remorse over his own dishonor. Each time he has been protected by the Scorpion, who find a compromised Imperial Advisor an extremely useful tool. Keisuke will kill again during this adventure, and the Scorpion will protect him again... although they are beginning to wonder if he is worth the trouble. During this adventure, he will kill again.

Miya Kyumo. Kyumo is a long-suffering Shisha (Herald), a weary-looking man in his late twenties. He will do most of the actual work of investigating the mysterious new shrine.

Seppun Ageki (male) and **Akodo Miroko (female).** The Otomo's two bodyguards are dutiful samurai, both trained in the Seppun Imperial Bodyguard School. They will not hesitate to slay anyone who threatens or insults their master.

Crane Clan

The Crane contingent is led by **Doji Konnichi**, a wealthy and stylish nobleman (Glory 5.4) who is here as a representative of the Clan Champion, Doji Satsume. Konnichi is a handsome and well-dressed man in his thirties, with a light beard and pale gray eyes. He is completely loyal to the Crane Clan and never shows any true feelings, maintaining an impenetrable mask of pleasant manners and bland smiles. He has a rather cruel sense of humor and cannot resist delivering subtle verbal jabs at those he does not respect – Lions, Crabs, and Scorpions. Konnichi is accompanied by over a dozen servants, as well as a tough Daidoji bodyguard named **Hajime**.

Asahina Yakamo. This man (named, ironically, the same as the Crab Clan heir) is the prototypical arrogant, irritating Crane courtier. A slim, almost delicate man, he wears his white-dyed hair tied back in a loose ponytail and dresses only in the finest, most carefully chosen silks. PCs who have played the adventure *Winter Court: Kyuden Asahina* may have met him before. He is arrogant, supercilious, and looks down on anyone who is not a Crane – especially ill-mannered Crab brutes, warlike Lions, and filthy ronin. He enjoys the occasional flirtation and secret affair, but only with women who meet his high standards of beauty, elegance, and wit (such as Iuchi Shahai). This will be his undoing.

Asahina Tsuki. A very young woman (15 or so), an apprentice to Asahina Tamako, her family daimyo. Tsuki is shy, retiring, and not particularly pretty, although she does dye her hair the obligatory Crane white. Tsuki is actually of Adopted Blood, a former peasant, and perceptive PCs may notice her making occasional small errors of etiquette.

Phoenix Clan

Isawa Tanaka. A square-faced, stocky man in his early thirties, with dark eyes that burn with inner power. Tanaka is an Acolyte of Fire, and tends to be somewhat arrogant and superior to any non-Phoenix shugenja, especially one who does not follow his favored element. He largely ignores non-shugenja, viewing them as good for little more than protecting their “betters.” Tanaka does, however, have an unpleasant secret – he was once close friends with a fellow Phoenix, Isawa Gonto, who proved to be a secret maho-tsukai.

Isawa Hitsukawa. This is a quiet, elegant older man, approaching the age of retirement. He is an Air shugenja with a deep interest in the spirits and Fortunes, and is also quite learned in the Tao of Shinsei. Hitsukawa is largely free of emotional problems or attachments – indeed, he is halfway to being a monk already.

Isawa Nobuyoshi. PCs who have played *Legacy of the Dark One* or *Fate of a Hantei* may have met this intense, driven, somewhat temperamental Inquisitor. Nobuyoshi is a hard-eyed man in his early twenties, suspicious and slightly paranoid, with a tendency to leap to conclusions. He distrusts the Asako family (he knows they are keeping secrets from the rest of the Phoenix), respects the Kuni, but otherwise has no opinions on other families and Clans.

Asako Tamanara. A deceptively calm and centered man, almost monk-like on first appearance, Tamanara actually guards a terrible temper which may erupt if he is offended or frustrated. He dislikes Cranes, who he sees as frivolous and materialistic, and Crab, whose violent crudity repels him. And like most Asako, he distrusts the Isawa family of his own Clan.

Scorpion Clan

Soshi Taushi. This elegant young Scorpion shugenja rides a Unicorn horse (a gift from their Clan for past assistance with some courtly difficulties) and is an assistant to Soshi Bantaro, the daimyo of the Soshi family. Taushi is Glory 5.8 and expects other Scorpions here, especially shugenja, to show him deference and obey his orders. Taushi is accompanied by his bodyguard, a Bayushi bushi-ko named Mitsumi, as well as several servants.

Bayushi Mitsumi. Taushi's bodyguard, a pretty young woman in her twenties, is a skilled Scorpion duelist. She is also secretly *junshin* (honorable) and regards her guard duties as a way of fulfilling her loyalty to her Clan while still staying true to bushido.

Dragon Clan

Mirumoto Daini. The younger brother of the Mirumoto daimyo, Hitomi, is here on his own initiative rather than his sister's orders. He is a friendly and somewhat artistic young man, quite skilled with a sword but equally skilled in courtly manners. He has a taste for poetry and the arts, and tends to be a bit superficial and smug, suffering from the overconfidence and passion of youth. Recently, he has been hearing stories of strange snake-like creatures in the Shinomen, and may speculate on these matters with other samurai who strike him as intelligent or artistically gifted. More details on Daini, for those who are interested, can be found in *Way of the Dragon*.

Daini is accompanied two lower-ranking Dragon bushi, **Mirumoto Iyesu** and **Mirumoto Fujita**. They are ordinary young men who are slightly embarrassed at being stuck with the inglorious duty of escorting Hitomi's eccentric younger brother.

Daini's party has only a couple of servants accompanying them, and will stay with the peasants in the village.

Togashi Mitsu. The legendary ise zumi (tattooed man) is here on his own, intrigued by the stories of this temple. A smiling, cheerful man who openly shows the tattoos of the Dragon, Centipede, and Tiger, Mitsu

delights in puncturing the arrogance and foolishness of samurai, and prefers jokes and the occasional biting remark to the enigmatic riddles favored by others of his kind. As with Daini, more information on Mitsu can be found in *Way of the Dragon*.

Unicorn Clan

Iuchi Shahai. This representative of the Iuchi family is the lovely young daughter of the family daimyo, Iuchi Daiyu. She leads a contingent of half a dozen Unicorns, plus assorted servants. An ambitious and secretive girl, Shahai suffers from a secret lust for power, although as yet she has not yet succumbed to it. She will flirt casually with any attractive male PCs, and shows an intense, eye-glittering curiosity about the temple and the power which created it.

Iuchi Kageki. A short, physically unimpressive man with a long goatee and drooping moustache. Kageki is eager to learn more about the magic of other clans, and resents the hostility he sometimes encounters from the more refined clans such as the Crane and Phoenix. On the other hand, anyone who treats him well will be rewarded with firm friendship. He is only distantly acquainted with Iuchi Shahai, and regards her as someone too high in the social order for him to criticize.

Otaku Yui. A cheerful, friendly, often casually flirtatious battle-maiden, a studied contrast to their more common dour aspect. Yui embraces life as a series of games and challenges, and laughs at danger and embarrassment alike. She wears her hair long and loose, allowing it to swirl around her head when she rides. Yui will flirt light-heartedly with any attractive males around (PCs and otherwise) but will not allow such amusements to go too far. She takes a dim view of Iuchi Shahai, who she sees as using her beauty to manipulate and get her own way.

Shinjo Agui and **Shinjo Shujiri.** These two representatives of the Shinjo family are brothers, although Agui has trained with the Iuchi as a shugenja while Shujiri is a bushi. Agui is cheerful and friendly, with no prejudices or enmities, and likes to indulge his skills with the flute. Shujiri seems a similar man, also with musical tastes – he plays taiko drums, and their musical duets tend to be wild and quick, full of the spirit of the open steppe. However, Shujiri seems more serious and morose than Agui, and tends to be a bit anti-social, especially around Scorpions. He is being blackmailed by the Scorpion Clan, due to a past personal failing – he was once an opium addict, and was even involved in the smuggling of the drug before

he “kicked the habit” and cleaned up. The Scorpion Clan is well aware of his past and uses it to manipulate him.

Horiuchi Shoan. The sole member of the new-made Horiuchi family, this gentle and delicate shugenja-ko will hold herself apart from the others here. Her sole interest is the mysterious temple across the river. She often has a faint disapproving frown on her face when watching Iuchi Shahai, but she will never explain the reasons for her attitude, and brushes aside any inquiries. “That is hardly a proper topic for conversation,” she remarks quietly. Additional information on Shoan can be found in *Way of the Unicorn*.

Crab Clan

Kuni Takaoka. This is a loud and rough-tempered representative from the Crab Clan, here to make sure this sudden new temple is not some Shadowlands Plot. Takaoka is a dour, grim man with bony limbs and thick, clumsy-looking hands. His hair is worn long and loose, giving him a somewhat wild look. He has better manners than many Crabs, but still makes occasional mordant comments on the wealth and safety which the other Clans enjoy, courtesy of the sacrifices of the Crab. Takaoka treats Scorpions with instinctive hostility and looks down on non-militant clans such as the Crane and Phoenix.

He is accompanied by **Kuni Tomo**, a paranoid and fanatical young Witch Hunter. Tomo wears her hair tied back in a painfully severe braid, and her usual expression is an angry scowl. She suffers from a tendency to see Bloodspeakers under every rock and twig. PCs who have played the adventure *To Do What We Must* may have encountered Tomo and her paranoia before.

Minor Clans

Kitsune Sanae. A quiet, gentle woman whose eyes show flecks of green amid their dark brown. Sanae wears her hair long and carefully bound up in a maiden’s foxtail, and always moves and speaks with complete calm and deliberation. Trained as a Mirumoto bushi, she avoids wearing armor or carrying weapons except when necessary, and spends the rest of her time dressed in formal flowing kimono, armed only with a simple tanto tucked under her obi. Indeed, many have mistaken her for a courtier or shugenja on first encounter. She is here as Kitsune Retsu’s protector, and will keep herself close to the boy whenever possible. PCs may have met Sanae in previous Living Rokugan adventures, such as *Lies, Lies, Lies*, and she

will react to them according to how they behaved on those occasions.

Kitsune Retsu. This young shugenja (15 years old, just past gempukku) is leaving Fox lands for the first time. He is a handsome youth, although easily startled or embarrassed (especially by pretty women – his bodyguard Sanae can reduce him to flustered stuttering with a single word). His father is Kitsune Iuki, a minor daimyo of the Fox Clan. PCs who have played the adventure *A Chance Meeting* have met Retsu and his father, and he will interact with those PCs according to what they did in that module. (If they exposed the dishonorable secret of the old maho cult in Iuki’s lands, Retsu will regard them as enemies.)

Moshi Wakiza. Wakiza is the heir to the Centipede Clan daimyo, Moshi Juiko, and PCs may have met her before if they played the adventure *The Falling Darkness*. She is accompanied here by her new Dragon Clan husband, Moshi (formerly Agasha) Fujita. Wakiza is a tall, willowy young woman who normally seems somewhat retiring, but grows wild and joyful when using her magic. Her husband is a restrained man who has learned to accept his wife’s eccentric ways.

Staying in the Village

The village of Kappa no Mura has no Inn, although there is a tea-house (the “Singing Fish”) which serves an assortment of drinks and meals. As evening approaches, PCs and NPCs staying in the village will have to share huts with peasants or camp outdoors.

The small armies of servants who accompany the Imperial, Crane, Scorpion, and Phoenix visitors will set up tents and pavilions to house their masters, rather than let them endure peasant huts.

Otomo Keisuke will segregate himself and has no dealings with the other visitors (PCs or NPCs). All the NPC visitors stop by to pay their respects to the Emperor’s advisor, and are received briefly but politely. Any PC making a **Contested Awareness** roll can tell that, beneath his mask of etiquette, Keisuke is quite distracted and unhappy.

Doji Konnichi will extend an invitation to PCs he favors to share his tents, and other NPCs may likewise offer hospitality if they have gotten a favorable impression of the PCs.

Soshi Taushi will invite other Scorpions, and Scorpion-allied PCs, to share his hospitality.

The large Phoenix contingent will share their tents with any Phoenix PCs, but will otherwise largely hold themselves aloof from the other visitors here. The exception will be Isawa Nobuyoshi, the Inquisitor, who will trade tales with the Witch Hunter Kuni Tomo as well as any PCs who are seekers or destroyers of *maho*.

The Unicorn contingent will also stay outdoors, but their arrangement will resemble a camp on the open steppe rather than an elegant home-away-from-home. They will start a large fire and cook stir-fried meat and vegetables on a huge iron pan (the Rokugani version of a Mongolian barbecue, complete with shockingly hot spices and sauces). They eagerly invite Kitsune Sanae and any Unicorn and Fox Clan PCs to join them.

The Dragon, Crab, and Centipede visitors, on the other hand, will choose to stay in the larger peasant huts – except for Togashi Mitsuru, who crosses the river immediately by swimming.

The peasants will be hospitable enough, and do their best to care for any boarders, but are clearly overwhelmed by so many strange and prestigious visitors.

A Strange Incident

At some point during the night, Otomo Keisuke will go wandering out of his tent, trapped in a dazed “waking dream” brought on by opium withdrawal. If any of the PCs stay awake for whatever reason, they can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 15 to notice Keisuke wandering around. If none of the PCs stay up, the Scorpion (Soshi Taushi) will notice instead.

If the PCs speak with Keisuke, he will stare at them blankly and then suddenly reach out his hands as though to strangle them. His drug-haze has caused him to flash back to his murder of Kakita Seka. A moment before his hands touch them (or the moment the PCs react, such as by shouting or catching his hands), he blinks and comes back to himself. He will stammeringly apologize, saying he was dreaming, and returns to his tent.

If the PCs watch Keisuke without speaking or approaching him, he will wander dazedly through the village for about half an hour before stumbling into the river and awakening with a splutter. He then returns hastily to his own tent. PCs who watch this entire spectacle without showing themselves can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20 to notice that Soshi Taushi is also quietly watching from his own tent.

The Next Morning

If the PCs did not interrupt Keisuke, he will seem normal enough in the morning, and shows no outward sign of his odd behavior the night before. PCs who watch him may notice a brief meeting between him and Soshi Taushi.

If one or more of the PCs spoke with Keisuke the night before, he will be cautious and cagey the next day, avoiding contact with those PCs. If they speak with him now, he denies that anything happened.

Soshi Taushi will be noncommittal to the PCs if they ask him about this matter, and suggests delicately that they should not meddle in the affairs of their betters.

At some point during the morning, a pair of Taushi’s servants will make a stealthy visit to Keisuke’s tent, delivering a wrapped package of opium. Bayushi Mitsumi will watch from the Scorpion tents to make sure no-one rudely interrupts the delivery of “an important gift for Otomo Keisuke-sama.”

Crossing the River

Whenever the PCs decide to cross the river and visit the shrine, they will find that the only ways are to swim, to cross with magic, or to use the services of the blind monk. None of the villagers will dare to interfere in the monk’s self-appointed role as ferryman, even under threat. (A dishonorable or ronin PC might decide to steal a fishing boat and cross the river themselves, of course.)

The Blind Monk

The monk lives in a small hut with only the most basic of furnishings – a futon, a tatami mat for meditation, and an iron pot for cooking his simple meals. He has a medium-sized boat, large enough for six passengers, tied up to a wooden post on the river-shore in front of his hut. The cheerful, energetic old monk moves around unerringly despite his blank white eyes, and is equally willing to cross the river in the day or at night. He charges one zeni to each passenger, regardless of rank.

The monk will calmly pole his customers across the river, showing surprising strength despite his thin frame and bent back. He will chat pleasantly with the PCs, but there are certain questions he will not answer:

- He will not give his name, saying that such things are not important. “Are you your name, or yourself?”

- He will not answer questions about his age. “I am as old as the Fortunes have permitted me to be, and not a day older. When they are done with me, I will die.”
- He will not answer questions about the shrine. “I am not the master of that place. Seek him there and he give you both answers and questions.”

The monk will not put up with rudeness or crudity from his passengers. In the face of such PCs, the monk will scoop up a bo staff from the floor of the boat and dump the offender(s) into the water with a single sharp twisting blow. (This is impossible to dodge or avoid.) The unfortunate PCs will have to swim from there, and the monk will not help them even if they are in danger of drowning. (Another PC who delivers an eloquent and honorable appeal might be able to convince the monk to relent, at the GM’s option.)

Swimming

PCs who wish to swim the river (or who are forced to after the monk dumps them in the water) must make two **Athletics/Strength** rolls, the first at TN 10 (getting halfway across the river) and the second at TN 15 (making it the rest of the way). If a roll is failed, the PC will be in danger of drowning, and must roll **Simple Stamina** at TN 10 to avoid inhaling water. The PC may continue to try to swim, but each subsequent attempt increases the TN of the **Athletics** roll by 5 (to 20, 25, etc) and each failed roll requires another **Stamina** roll at +5 on the TN (TN 15, 20, 25, etc). Once the PC fails the **Stamina** roll, s/he will begin drowning, taking 2k2 damage per round while sinking beneath the waves. If the PC is not rescued in some way, death will be certain.

Of the NPCs, only Togashi Mitsu will try to swim the river (an easy feat for him).

Using Magic

Several of the shugenja among the NPCs – Isawa Tanaka, Isawa Hitsukawa, Iuchi Shahai, and Moshi Wakiza – will use magic to cross the river, rather than relying on the monk. PC shugenja with access to the proper spells may decide to do the same.

Crossing with magic proves to be a bit more difficult than one might expect. The spirits are rebellious, unwilling to serve lesser masters while in the presence of the Grand Master of the Elements. Anyone casting a

spell for the purpose of crossing the river will be at a +5 TN penalty.

Stealing a Boat

A PC who is foolish or dishonorable enough to take this route will be able to cross the river readily enough... but will never be allowed into the shrine.

Who Goes to the Shrine?

Besides any PCs who cross the river, the following NPCs will go to the shrine:

- Miya Kyumo
- All the Crane (Doji Konnichi, Asahina Yakamo, and Asahina Tsuki)
- All the Phoenix (Isawa Tanaka, Isawa Hitsukawa, Isawa Nobuyoshi, and Asako Tamanura)
- Soshi Taushi
- Iuchi Shahai, Iuchi Kageki, Shinjo Agui, and Horiuchi Shoan
- Mirumoto Daini
- Togashi Mitsu (swims the river the night before and is waiting inside the Shrine)
- Kuni Takaoka and Kuni Tomo
- Both of the Fox (Kitsune Sanae and Kitsune Retsu)
- Moshi Wakiza (but not her husband)

Part Two: Arrival at the Shrine

If the PCs examine the exterior of the temple up close, they can roll **Theology/Perception**, **Shintao/Perception**, or a suitable **Lore** skill (chosen by the GM) at TN 10 to recognize that the classical symbols for the Five Elements (Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Void) have been worked into carvings and bas-reliefs all over the exterior walls of the temple.

The entrance to the temple is a large double-door of bronze, and two young monks in saffron robes stand to either side of the massive portals. The monks bow politely to those who gather on the bank. ***“Welcome to the Shrine of the Five Rings. Have you come to meet the Challenge of the Elements?”***

The monks will always be present, day or night – they rotate every twelve hours.

If anyone answers “yes” to the monks’ question, they will be immediately admitted to the Shrine. The only NPCs who will answer this question without hesitation will be Horiuchi Shoan and Asako Tamanura.

If the PCs say they wish to meet the one who created the shrine, to pay their respects to the Elements, to learn what the challenge is before taking it, or any similar polite request to be admitted to the Shrine, the monks will bow and admit them. “Our master will speak with you soon,” they promise.

If the PCs answer “no,” or refuse to answer, the monks will bow politely but will not admit them to the shrine. PCs can force their way in, but the monks will oppose them to the best of their ability – and such PCs will, in any case, be proving themselves unworthy to take the Challenge. PCs who are openly insulting or arrogant, or who offend the monks (such as by suggesting that they might be maho-tsukai) will likewise not be admitted to the Shrine.

If the PCs question the monks (about the Challenge or anything else), they can learn the following:

- The monks will not name or identify the “master” of the Shrine, although they will confirm that he is a man “of great power and enlightenment.” If the PCs are persistent, the monks suggest that perhaps the PCs should meet with the master themselves.
- If the PCs ask about the “Challenge of the Elements,” the monks will only say it has been created by their master to find those who are worthy of the favor of the Five Elements.
- The monks themselves are from the three temples of Ootosan Uchi, the Imperial capital. They came here on the orders of their abbots, who said they had received word of this place from the spirits.
- The monks will be quite indignant if anyone (such as Kuni Tomo) questions them about *maho* or other dark influences. “This is a place of enlightenment and spiritual purity,” they huff. “Your foolish suspicions have no place here.”
- If any PCs ask about the Fortunes, the monks reply that this is a shrine to the Elements themselves, not to any Fortune. “The spirits which bind the universe together are just as worthy of veneration as the Gods who govern it, are they not?”

Inside the Shrine

It is to be assumed that one or more PCs make it into the Shrine. Nearly all of the NPCs will also enter the Shrine – only the ultra-paranoid Kuni Tomo and the sneering Asahina Yakamo will not be admitted, much to their displeasure.

Beyond the heavy bronze doors, a short arched corridor leads into a large square chamber which takes up much of the ground floor. Small sliding panels on the walls lead to smaller rooms, presumably where the monks live and work. The ceiling of this chamber is two stories high, and you can see a balcony circling it at the second floor.

Your attention, however, is drawn to the center of the large chamber. There, the polished wood parquet floor is interrupted by a large stone circle which seems to open onto a bottomless pit. Rising out of the pit are four spirals of pure elemental force: a blazing tower of fire, a roaring wind-funnel, a rushing spume of water, and a tower of green-glowing earth. The four spirals of pure elemental force twine together as they ascend, their separate identities merging until they converge twenty feet up in a single blazing point of light, light which shifts constantly through all the colors of the rainbow.

The twining pillars of elemental force are not an illusion or show – they are exactly what they appear, pillars of raw elemental power which are merging together into a single point of Void. Any PC who doubts this can confirm it by rolling **Spellcraft/Perception** at TN 15, **Lore: Shugenja/Perception** at TN 20, or casting *Sense* (any Element). Any shugenja PC, and any other PC rolling **Lore: Shugenja/Intelligence** at TN 15, knows that only a shugenja of supreme power (or perhaps a minor Fortune) could put on such a staggering display of casual, continual power. PCs with the ability to detect magic (such as the Elemental Attunement advantage) will find their detection meters going “off the scale.”

Several monks will step forward with trays, offering the PCs bowls of rice and pots of tea. A PC who samples these offerings finds the tea to be the finest, the rice the purest and most tasty, they have ever encountered.

Togashi Mitsu will be in a corner of the Shrine, meditating. In response to greetings or questions (from PCs or Mirumoto Daini) he will say he has been here since last night. “The Master of this place preferred to wait for the rest of you before he explained his purposes.”

A short wait will ensue, during which the PCs have the chance to interact with their NPC companions.

- The Cranes regard the elemental pillar as an artwork. Doji Konnichi will begin composing a poem about it, while Asahina Tsuki summons a

small amount of air and water, attempting to form a harmonious counterpoint to the massive elemental pillar.

- The various Phoenix (Isawa Tanaka, Isawa Hitsukawa, Isawa Nobuyoshi, and Asako Tamanara) will all be fascinated by the elemental pillar and will spend their time trying to understand it, casting various spells around it, and so forth.
- Horiuchi Shonan, Kitsune Sanae, and Moshi Wakiza immediately begin meditating and/or praying to the Fortunes, each kneeling quietly to one side.
- Iuchi Shahai will be darkly fascinated by the power on display here, and watches the elemental pillars with avid, greedy eyes. Her clan-mate Shinjo Agui will try to use his magic to understand what is happening here, and is awed by the power he senses behind this place.
- Mirumoto Daini will also be fascinated, and chatters with the PCs and NPCs about the spectacle on display, what it might mean, and who could have created it. He will draw Kitsune Retsu, Kuni Takaoka, Miya Kyumo, and Iuchi Kageki into this conversation, along with any PCs who ask similar questions.
- Soshi Taushi stands quietly, watching the whole scene with a neutral smile on his face.

The GM should keep track of what the PCs do and say in reaction to the scene they find within the Shrine. Unknown to them, the “Challenge of the Elements” has actually already begun, and Naka Kuro is observing them and their reactions.

Naka Kuro Arrives

After a few minutes, the PCs and NPCs suddenly become aware of an old man standing in front of the pillar of elemental force. They have not seen him enter the room – it is as though he has simply appeared there. A thin white goatee hangs from his chin, and his face is deeply lined with age, but his eyes twinkle with vigor and humor as he regards the gathered guests. He is dressed in a multi-colored kimono which incorporates tones of brown, white, blue, and orange, and wears a small hat atop his head. He has no Clan mon, but wears a strange family mon which can be identified with a **Heraldry/Intelligence** or **Lore: Shugenja/Intelligence** roll at TN 25 as the mon for the name “Naka.” It means “Understanding” and is a name

which has only been given to those who have risen to the status of Grand Master of the Elements.

“Greetings, honored guests,” he says. “I am Naka Kuro. Have you come to take the Challenge of the Elements?”

Any PC who rolls **Lore: Shugenja**, **Lore: Phoenix Clan**, **Lore: Spirits** or **Oracles**, **Shintao**, or **History** (all with **Intelligence** trait) at TN 20 has heard of Naka Kuro, the 63-year-old semi-legendary Grand Master of the Elements. He was born to the Phoenix Clan but now calls no Clan his own, and it is said he was bestowed the name Naka by the Oracle of Air itself.

Kuro is a placid but whimsical man, and sometimes pokes gentle fun at the foolish pretensions of those less-enlightened than himself. He will often answer questions indirectly or with riddles. A few basic responses follow:

- What is the Challenge? *“The Challenge is a series of tests, each matched to the proper Element. Only those who are in harmony with the elements within themselves will be able to pass these tests. Do you think you have such harmony?”* If a PC answers in the positive, Kuro smiles. *“You must know yourself very well indeed, for not even I would answer such a question without long thought and meditation.”*
- What is the purpose of the Challenge? *“The purpose of the Challenge is to find and mark those who have the favor of the Elemental spirits, whose destiny is therefore entwined with the future of the entire Empire.”*
- Why has he created this Temple? Why is he offering the Challenge? *“I do not make decisions of my own – I only obey the dictates of the Fortunes and Kami. This shrine was built to fulfill their demands. Indeed, all of Rokugan does the bidding of the spirits. Those who defy the spirits, or seek to rule them for their own use, will only bring doom on themselves.”* These words, spoken with calm good humor, bring an angry flash to the faces of Iuchi Shahai and Asako Tamanara.
- Is he really Naka Kuro? (This one will be asked by either Kuni Takaoka or Isawa Nobuyoshi, if none of the PCs dares to ask it.) The old man’s eyes flicker just a bit, although his tone remains mild and pleasant. *“One who must ask that question is unlikely to pass the Challenge. Do*

you really think any would be foolish enough to claim my name falsely?"

If the PCs ask questions about matters outside this scenario (such as the fate of the Empire, the Hantei dynasty, and so forth), Kuro will answer elliptically and mysteriously, dropping hints but saying nothing clearly. He knows that terrible times are coming, that the Hantei dynasty is approaching its end, that Fu Leng will soon return (this time allied with the Living Darkness), and that the ultimate fate of the Empire (and indeed of the universe itself) will depend on the actions of mortal heroes. The GM should find creative ways of dropping hints about these matters.

Kuro's Decisions

Kuro will use his discussion to gauge the moral, spiritual, and personal qualities of the PCs and NPCs, watching them all with his twinkling but perceptive eyes. He will ask disconcerting questions which probe at their beliefs and personal flaws. Kuro can see into the PCs' hearts as easily as a normal man looks into clear water, and the GM should ask questions and make judgments accordingly.

In general, dishonorable PCs (those with an Honor rank of zero) will be highly unlikely to meet with Kuro's approval, while those with Honor rank 4 or 5 have a "leg up" in the contest. However, Honor is only one measure of fitness for the Challenge of the Elements. Personal qualities also matter. PCs who are paranoid, obsessed with grudges or enemies, or easily distracted by the flesh (disadvantages like Compulsion, Lechery, or Chemical Dependency) are far less likely to earn his approval. On the other hand, PCs who struggle against such weaknesses, or strive to live up to the ideals of bushido even when they don't always succeed, will be much more likely to get positive consideration.

Kuro will offer the Challenge to those PCs who, in the GM's view, meet his judgments. The following NPCs will also be invited to participate in the Challenge:

- Miya Kyumo.
- Doji Konnichi and Asahina Tsuki.
- Isawa Tanaka, Isawa Hitsukawa, and Isawa Nobuyoshi.
- Soshi Taushi. (He will be offered the chance, but chooses to decline, saying, "I thank you for your offer, Kuro-san, but I am here merely to learn the cause behind this temple's appearance. Now that I have the answer to that mystery, I have no further duties here.")
- Iuchi Kageki, Shinjo Agui, and Horiuchi Shoan.

- Mirumoto Daini and Togashi Mitsu.
- Kuni Takaoka.
- Kitsune Sanae.

The following NPCs will be rejected. In each case, Kuro will provide a somewhat enigmatic explanation for his refusal.

- Asako Tamanara. "The elements cannot be mastered until you master yourself."
- Iuchi Shahai. "Your heart is clouded, child – come back when it is clearer."
- Kitsune Retsu. "In a few years you will be more than ready, but for now, patience."
- Moshi Wakiza. "You are already chosen by the Sun, and that is more than enough blessing and weight for your soul."

The GM should use Kuro's refusals to NPCs as a guideline to how he will respond to PCs who fail his measure.

Part Three: Back at the Village

If any PCs choose not to go to the Shrine, are ejected from the Shrine, refuse to take the Challenge, are rejected from the Challenge, abandon the Challenge partway through, or otherwise dissociate themselves from the main storyline, they may have an opportunity to involve themselves in matters back at the village. There, Otomo Keisuke's growing madness will claim another victim. It is suggested that the GM alternate between the Challenge and the PCs at the village, changing scenes periodically to keep players from feeling left out.

The Challenge will take the rest of the day and all the ensuing night, although the participants will not be aware of the passage of so much time. To those waiting in the village, however, the time will drag on almost unbearably. The following sequence of events will take place:

The Rejects Return (First Wave)

In mid-morning, the two rejected visitors (Kuni Tomo and Asahina Yakamo) will return from the Shrine, along with any PCs who were not allowed entry. Yakamo, furious at his treatment, will storm into his tent and spend the rest of the day sulking. Kuni Tomo will be less patient – she immediately packs up her meager belongings and departs. "I have more important duties than waiting at the beck and call of

arrogant monks,” she snaps. She may stay a while if a PC speaks with her, but she will be gone by nightfall in any event.

Rejects (Second Wave)

A little after mid-day, the PCs and NPCs who chose not to take the Challenge, or were refused permission to take it, also return to the village. Besides any PCs, this group will comprise Asako Tamanara, Iuchi Shahai, Kitsune Retsu, and Moshi Wakiza. A general discussion will ensue, with Shahai and Tamanara expressing contempt and disinterest in this “so-called Challenge,” and Shahai further questioning the validity of this “self-titled Grand Master of the Elements.” Retsu and Wakiza will defend the honor of Naka Kuro, and Retsu expresses regret that he could not participate in the Challenge.

Afternoon Talk

In early afternoon Otomo Keisuke will emerge from his tent, looking tired and sour, and join the conversations of the other PCs and NPCs. The other NPCs will carefully avoid drawing attention to his appearance and behavior.

Evening Dinner

The village’s single teahouse, the Singing Fish, is overwhelmed by the presence of so many samurai – by evening of the second day, their stocks of sake, vegetables, and tofu are exhausted. The Crane, Phoenix, and Unicorn servants join forces to deal with the problem, providing a fine dinner under the Crane pavilion for all the samurai present.

The meal will be a mildly festive affair, enlivened by music from Shinjo Shujiri, a poetry recitation from Soshi Taushi’s bodyguard Bayushi Mitsumi, and a crackling back-and-forth barrage of wit and clever conversational byplay between Asahina Yakamo, Iuchi Shahai, and Soshi Taushi. During this time, Asahina Yakamo and Iuchi Shahai will be conducting a subtle but intense flirtation, one which other PCs can detect by rolling **Courtier/Perception** (or **Ichi Miru/Awareness**) at TN 15, or **Simple Awareness** at TN 25. At some point during the conversation, Asahina Yakamo will make a veiled reference to one of his previous romantic conquests. Any PC rolling **Courtier/Intelligence** at TN 15 can deduce that the woman he refers to is a Crane courtier and artisan, from a fairly influential family. Also, any PC who rolls **Courtier/Awareness** or **Seduction/Awareness** at TN 20 will notice that Otomo Keisuke briefly looks startled, a strange expression of mingled shame and

rage crossing his before he manages to get himself back under control. (Keisuke’s drug-enhanced paranoia has caused him to misinterpret Yakamo’s words, believing the woman Yakamo refers to may have been his own murdered lover, Kakita Seka.)

Otomo Keisuke will continue to participate in this dinner for a while, looking increasingly sullen, tired, and uncomfortable. Any PC who watches him, or engages him in conversation, can roll **Simple Awareness** at TN 15 to notice that he keeps shooting angry looks at Asahina Yakamo. Keisuke makes frequent irritable demands of his servants (more sake, better light, “now the light’s in my eyes, you fool,” and so forth), and repeatedly inquires as to when Miya Kyumo will return. Finally he pleads weariness and retires to his tent. There he doses himself with opium again and stewes in his drug-addled paranoia for a time before falling asleep.

The Murder

Sometime after dark, Keisuke will again go on a drug-dazed sleepwalk. This time, however, his trip coincides with Asahina Yakamo slipping out of the Crane camp to go pay a visit to the enticing Iuchi Shahai. Keisuke, encountering the man who has fueled his drug-addict paranoia, once again suffers a momentary flashback to his murder of Kakita Seka. He strangles Yakamo into unconsciousness and then bludgeons him to death before emerging from his drug-stupor. Shocked and trembling, he flees to Soshi Taushi’s tent.

PCs will not be able to witness this event by chance. Only if they specifically state that they are staying up late, watching or listening for trouble, keeping an eye on Otomo Keisuke, or otherwise staying alert should the GM allow them a chance to witness the incident. Such PCs must roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20 to spot Keisuke wandering, overhear the death of Asahina Yakamo, or otherwise notice something has gone wrong. (The exact discovery is at the GM’s discretion, based on what the PC is doing when they notice the crime.) The PCs should not be able to reach the scene before Keisuke retreats to Soshi Taushi’s tent.

Soshi Taushi will soothe Keisuke with soft talk and opium, promising that everything will be fine, and then sends a servant to summon Shinjo Shujiri. He will also summon any PCs who are Scorpions or who are in thrall to the Scorpion Clan (Obligations, Blackmail, etc). Once these persons have assembled, Taushi explains to them that he and Keisuke have spent the evening drinking sake and conversing together. Taushi makes it clear (without ever stating it bluntly) that all

the other PCs/NPCs are witnesses who joined in the evening of drinking. Bayushi Mitsumi watches the scene with ill-disguised misery and loathing.

Given time, Soshi Taushi will send a message to Otomo Keisuke's servants telling them to lie and claim that Keisuke went to the Scorpion's tent earlier in the evening. The Scorpion shugenja will also *Commune* with the Air spirits in the area, directing them not to cooperate with other shugenja and to distract and befuddle the other spirits (Earth and Water) in the area.

Interruption?

Aggressive PCs may raise the alarm immediately, try to barge in to Taushi's tent, and so forth. The cunning Scorpion will stonewall them completely, insisting that Keisuke has been in his tent all evening, and calling on Bayushi Mitsumi to witness the truth of his words (which she will do with pained reluctance). In this case he will use Shinjo Shujiri as a lesser supporting witness. ("Shujiri-san was with us until just a little while ago, weren't you?")

Under no circumstances will Taushi allow the PCs to enter his tent or to question Keisuke directly. He will take insult at the suggestion that either step might be necessary. ("Otomo-sama has committed no crime. Do you question the Honor of an Imperial Advisor?") If need be he will demand a duel, nominating Bayushi Mitsumi as his champion.

The Crime is Discovered

If the PCs did not raise the alarm over the murder themselves, the crime will be discovered several hours later when Yakamo's servants go looking for him. Once the alarm is raised, samurai and peasants will soon be milling about everywhere, gossiping about the awful incident. PCs who are Cranes can probably claim primacy in any investigation (Emerald Magistrates do not have jurisdiction over this crime). In the absence of any Crane PCs, Soshi Taushi will try to quietly use his social rank to take control of the scene.

Anyone who visits the murder scene views the following disturbing scene:

Asahina Yakamo lies in a sodden heap on the rocky shore of the river. His face has been beaten into a near-unrecognizable bloody mess, and bloody fist-marks also stain his garments about his chest and shoulders. His eyes bulge from his swollen, disfigured face, staring blindly up into the night sky.

Clues and Evidence

Anyone who examines the body and wounds (hopefully with the help of an eta) can roll **Medicine/Perception** or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15 to realize that Yakamo was strangled (probably into unconsciousness) before he was beaten. He was surprised and was not able to put up much of a fight.

Yakamo is about midway between the Crane and the Unicorn encampments, although this will not be obvious unless the PCs ask. If the PCs witnessed Otomo Keisuke wandering about on the previous night, they will know that Yakamo died in that same area.

If a PC searches for tracks, they can roll **Hunting/Perception** or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15 to realize that there are the tracks of two men (wearing sandals) in the riverside gravel. Trailing these tracks will require **Hunting/Perception** at TN 25. Success shows that Yakamo came here from his tent, and the other set of tracks came wandering from Keisuke's tent and then ran straight to Soshi Taushi's tent.

PCs who try to search Keisuke's tent will be met with polite but firm refusals from his servants. (See "Witnesses?" below for details of the servants' behavior.) A PC who manages to sneak into the tent (or brutishly forces their way in) can discover Keisuke's stash of opium, but such a discovery will be useless as evidence.

Witnesses?

Iuchi Shahai is the only other witness to the crime. She was waiting for Yakamo and, peeking from her tent, saw him meet his end. She will say nothing of this to anyone, preferring to hold the knowledge for her own use. PCs who make **Contested Awareness** rolls will be able to tell she is hiding something, but she will not admit it.

The servants in Keisuke's tent will tell different stories depending on whether Taushi got a message to them. If he warned them, they will claim that Keisuke-sama left the tent earlier in the evening, planning to visit the Scorpion for some quiet hospitality. If they did not get the warning from Taushi, they will not know when Keisuke left the tent (they were asleep), and say only that "he must have stepped out without informing us." Under no circumstances will these servants say anything to damage their master – they will not confess to opium usage or sleepwalking, will not allow PCs to search their tent, and will not be intimidated. All such attempts will be met with a polite, "I am sorry,

honorable samurai, but our master Otomo Keisuke-sama would not permit us to do such a thing.” These are the servants of an Imperial Adviser, and have Keisuke’s protection. PCs who use violence or brute force against these servants will be dishonoring themselves.

Communing with the Elements

Unless the PCs have managed to keep Soshi Taushi occupied since the crime took place, he will have *Communed* with the Air spirits in the area. Other shugenja will find it extremely difficult to speak with Air spirits in the area of the crime – any *Commune* spell cast with less than three Raises will fail. A **Spellcraft/Awareness** roll at TN 20 can determine that another shugenja has meddled with these spirits.

If a PC tries to *Commune* with Earth or Water spirits, they will still encounter problems. The Earth spirits can record that two men met each other, and one killed the other, but cannot offer details on the two men unless the casting shugenja makes two Raises. The Earth spirits complain that the Air spirits in the area are being “noisy” and bothering them.

The Water spirits will try to show images of what happened, but hostile Air spirits will continually disrupt the surface of the water, breaking up the images with waves and ripples. The shugenja will have to make two Raises on the *Commune* spell to encourage the Water spirits enough to overcome this interference.

Resolving the Mystery

Although the PCs can probably find enough to convince themselves that Keisuke is guilty, it is highly unlikely that they can convict him. He is, after all, an Imperial Adviser with at least two witnesses swearing that he did not commit the crime. Soshi Taushi will resolutely stick to his story, as will the unfortunate Shinjo Shujiri and the miserable Bayushi Mitsumi.

PCs with high Glory (at least 4.0) may be able to maintain their accusation if they can come up with multiple witnesses, but in that case Soshi Taushi will accuse them of insulting his Honor, and may well order his junshin bodyguard, Mitsumi, to duel the unfortunate accuser. (If the accuser is a shugenja, Taushi will duel them himself.)

Mitsumi knows full well she is defending a lie and a murderer, and her face is an exercise in shame as she prepares to cut down the unfortunate PC. However, she will not falter in her duty, seeing it as the only way for her to remain true to bushido. In the unlikely event

that a PC defeats Mitsumi, Taushi will reluctantly apologize and acknowledge that the PCs are “merely trying to find the truth, as we all are. Forgive me – in the passion of the moment, I forgot myself, and my loyal bodyguard has paid the price of my foolishness.” However, he will still maintain that Otomo Keisuke spent the evening with him.

Breaking the Conspiracy

It is possible that clever and well-spoken (or sincere and noble) PCs may be able to convince Bayushi Mitsuki or Shinjo Shujiri to privately confess to what is actually going on. However, neither of them will publicly admit to what is happening unless very unusual circumstances prevail:

Bayushi Mitsumi might be induced to confess if a fellow junshin Scorpion puts severe pressure on her. An accusation of failing to live up to bushido, or a sincere threat of protesting seppuku, might be able to jolt her into confessing. This is a pure role-playing challenge, no die rolls allowed. If she does confess, she will admit to seeing Otomo Keisuke arrive in the tent with bloody hands and babble about killing Asahina Yakamo. If Mitsumi makes such a confession, she will immediately commit seppuku to atone for her failure to her lord Soshi Taushi.

Shinjo Shujiri can be convinced to tell the truth by a fellow Unicorn of extreme Honor (at least 4.0) who delivers a passionate and eloquent appeal. Again, this is pure role-playing, no die-rolls required. Shujiri will confess that he is being blackmailed by the Scorpion Clan (although he will not say what for), and admits that he was not in Taushi’s tent and cannot confirm whether Otomo Keisuke is there.

If the PCs manage to make Shinjo Shujiri confess, Soshi Taushi will still maintain his position, insisting that Shujiri must be lying to bring harm on the Scorpion Clan. He may even call for Mitsumi to duel Shujiri to “prove” his lies. (She will win such a duel.)

However, if the PCs actually manage to get Bayushi Mitsumi to confess (whether or not Shujiri confesses), Soshi Taushi will be in trouble. He will try to fall back on insisting on a duel, while pointing out that the sudden betrayal of his bodyguard leaves him without a champion (allowing him to put off such a duel indefinitely). If a Scorpion PC offers to serve as his champion, or if one of his accusers is a shugenja, he may have no choice but to face a final trial by combat – especially if prestigious PCs (such as Emerald

Magistrates, Glory 4.0 or higher, and so forth) press the matter hard.

Only if the PCs manage to defeat Soshi Taushi in such a duel (he will insist on fighting to the death) can they make a murder accusation against Otomo Keisuke stick. In such a case, Iuchi Shahai may also mention that she saw “something odd in the moonlight” in order to cover herself.

Where's Keisuke?

Otomo Keisuke will make no effort in his own defense, and spends the entire remaining night hiding in Soshi Taushi's tent. He will refuse all requests to answer questions. In the morning, he will return to his tent (ignoring any PCs who uncouthly rush up to question him), collect Miya Kyumo, and depart.

If the PCs somehow manage to push through an accusation against Keisuke (by delivering sufficient evidence and then exposing and defeating Soshi Taushi), Keisuke will still try to brazen things out. He insists that his status as an Imperial Advisor renders him inviolate and stammers, “How dare you make such vile accusations against one of my stature!” If the PCs still pursue their accusations despite such bluster, Keisuke will fall back on insisting on returning to the capital to plead his case before the Son of Heaven. See “Resolutions” for the outcome of this event.

Part Four: The Challenge of the Elements

Once Kuro has approved some or all of the PCs (and some of the NPCs) for the Challenge of the Elements, he leads them to one of the sliding doors on the main floor of the Shrine. Two monks move forward and slide the door open, revealing a steep wooden staircase which ascends to the next floor of the Shrine. “The Challenge awaits you,” Kuro says, bowing. “May you meet it well.”

The nature of some of the elemental tests depend on the PCs taking them. Specific details and criteria are listed under each test. Except where noted otherwise, the PCs and NPCs must take each test on their own, although they will be able to re-unite and (if they choose) discuss their experiences in between each one.

Withdrawing from the Challenge

A PC can choose to withdraw from a Test at any time, simply by turning back. They will be met after a few moments by a monk, who politely inquires whether the

PC wishes to try the other Tests or simply abandon the Challenge altogether.

- If the PC asks whether there is a point to continuing the Challenge after failing one of the Tests, the monk smiles. “There is always a point. All life has a purpose dictated by the Fortunes. Do you deny the value in testing your own self?”
- If the PC agrees to continue, the monk will lead him/her through a hidden back passageway and up some narrow stairs to the next Test area.
- If the PC decides to abandon the Challenge, the monk leads him/her back down to the main room of the Temple and politely bids them goodbye. They can return to the village or wait in the Temple for the others, as they choose.

The Test of Fire

The stairs from the main floor lead to an upper balcony which circles all the way around the main room. The spiraling pillar of elemental force merges into the rainbow light of Void just above the PCs' eye level.

There are four doors on the floor – one on each wall. The PCs can enter the Test by going through any of the four doors. Once through a door, a PC (or NPC) is alone, and must face their test alone. Others who watch them go through the door perceive them to disappear. If a PC retreats from the Test, they return to the balcony, where they can consult with other PCs or NPCs who have not yet entered the Test themselves.

There are actually two different Tests of Fire, reflecting the physical and mental aspects of the element. If a PC's total MENTAL trait ranks (Intelligence, Awareness, Perception, Willpower) equal or exceed the PCs PHYSICAL trait ranks (Agility, Reflexes, Strength, Stamina), the PC will face the Mind of Fire challenge. If the PC's Physical traits exceed his/her Mental traits, the PC will face the Body of Fire challenge.

Mind of Fire

You enter a long rectangular room whose floor, walls, and ceiling seem to be made of some dark polished stone, perhaps obsidian. A pattern of small holes peppers the walls of the chamber, while the floor and ceiling are inscribed with numerous large kanji. Across the room, an open doorway leads to a steep staircase going up.

It should be obvious that the PC must cross the room and ascend the staircase. Smart PCs will hesitate and look around before proceeding. A **Simple Perception** roll at TN 15 will notice puffs of hot air which occasionally huff out of the holes in the walls. The kanji on the floors and ceiling can be read with a **Calligraphy/Perception** or **Research/Perception** roll at TN 15, or a **Simple Perception** roll at TN 25. They are an apparently random collection of Rokugani words, numbering over a hundred on each surface.

As soon as a PC moves into the room, the holes in the walls begin shooting sudden, searing jets of flame, spears of blue-white fire which stab all the way across the room. The flame-jets come out of the holes in a complex sequence which ripples continually around the room. Needless to say, crossing the room is extremely hazardous. A PC who tries to run across the room will be blasted a total of six times by these fire jets, taking 3k1 from the first two attacks, 4k2 from the next two, and 5k3 from the last two. The PC can try to dodge each of these flame-jet attacks with a **Defense/Reflexes** roll at TN 30.

A smart PC (Intelligence, an aspect of Fire) will instead hang back and observe the pattern of the flaming jets. The puzzle can be solved with a **Cipher/Intelligence** or **Investigation/Intelligence** roll at TN 20, a **Nazado/Intelligence** roll at TN 15, or a **Simple Intelligence** roll at TN 30. A PC who realizes that the kanji are the key to the puzzle, or who looks for a pattern in the kanji instead of in the flames, gets a Free Raise on this roll.

With a success, the PC realizes that a poem can be read across the floor and ceiling. The first kanji of the poem lies above the entrance to the room, and the final kanji is at the foot of the exit:

*Await a clear path
Trusting in the gifts of soul's fire
A placid day's stroll*

A **Poetry/Intelligence** roll at TN 10 realizes that "soul's fire" is a poetic way of describing one's intellect and reason.

The room can be crossed safely by waiting until the first kanji of the poem is clear of flame, and then walking at a steady pace along the path of the poem to the exit. A PC who follows this route will cross the room without injury. However, a PC who grows overconfident (or nervous) and hurries along the path, rather than walking calmly, will miss the pattern and catch the last two sets of flame attacks.

Body of Fire

You enter a large a chamber built of polished black stone. It resembles a dojo, complete with stone-carved weapons racks on the walls. An open doorway on the far side of the room leads to a steep staircase up. As you enter the room, twin bursts of flame erupt from the air in front of you, and quickly coalesce into a pair of humanoid forms. The figures resemble a pair of samurai in armor, formed out of flickering yellow-orange flames, their eyes points of white-hot light. One of them moves into a combat stance, drawing a flaming katana, while the other steps back with crossed arms and observes.

This is superficially a straightforward test of the PC's combat ability. However, wise PCs will recognize that the situation here is much like that of a master watching his student accept a challenge, and will behave accordingly.

The first Fire Samurai (the "student") will do battle with the PC until it is defeated (reduced to zero Wounds), until the PC falls (Down or lower Wound rank), or until the PC steps back and abandons the fight.

If a PC succeeds in defeating the first Fire Samurai, it will vanish in a puff of flame. The second Fire Samurai (the "sensei") watches the PC quietly, arms crossed. If the PC is polite (bows, praises the first combatant, asks whether the second samurai wishes to fight, etc.), the "sensei" bows and steps aside, allowing access to the stairs. If the PC is arrogant or aggressive in behavior, or simply attacks, the "sensei" will draw a fiery blade and fight. The PC will have to defeat this second (and much tougher) opponent in order to pass the Test.

A PC who surrenders and abandons the fight will be allowed to pass through the room and up the stairs, but has failed the Test.

The First Fire Samurai (student)

FIRE 4	AIR 3
	Reflexes 4
EARTH 3	WATER 2

TN to be Hit: 25

Attacks: 6k4

Damage: 4k2+4 (extra damage due to searing heat of the flaming blade)

Carapace Armor: 5**Wounds:** 18: +5; 32: +10; 46: +15; 54: Dead**Special Abilities:** The Fire Samurai takes normal damage from weapons and most spells (assuming they get past his carapace armor), but is not harmed by any kind of fire magic or fire effect. Water, whether natural or magical, will harm him in the same manner that fire would harm a mortal being.**The Second Fire Samurai (sensei)**

FIRE 6	AIR 4
	Reflexes 5
EARTH 4	WATER 2
	Strength 3

TN to be Hit: 30**Attacks:** two attacks per round, 8k6**Damage:** 5k2+6 (extra damage due to searing heat of the flaming blade)**Carapace Armor: 7****Wounds:** 24: +5; 48: +10; 72: Dead**Special Abilities:** The Fire Samurai takes normal damage from weapons and most spells (assuming they get past his carapace armor), but is not harmed by any kind of fire magic or fire effect. Water, whether natural or magical, will harm him in the same manner that fire would harm a mortal being.**The Chamber of Water**

Those PCs and NPCs who make it through the Tests of Fire under their own power will emerge from the narrow, steep stairs into the chamber of Water. Any PCs who were knocked unconscious (reduced to the Out Wound Rank) in either of the Fire tests will already be in the chamber, recovering from their injuries. Shinjo Agui will also be there, having failed to pass the Test.

The Chamber of Water is a large square room with a low ceiling. Four alcoves extend from the four walls of the room, giving it a layout rather like a thick plus-sign.

In each of the alcoves is a large wooden tub, filled to the brim with water. There are no windows, and light comes from small Rokugani lanterns whose blue-tinged paper gives the whole room an odd, faintly eerie look.

Two monks are seated in the center of the room, meditating, when the PCs arrive. They have bo staffs but do not use them unless they are attacked. They will treat Shinjo Agui and any PCs who were injured in the Test of Fire (using their kihos and medical skills to heal one full Wound Rank for each injured PC, and three full Wound Ranks for each unconscious PC). These

monks, who name themselves as Suana and Ikuso, will be polite and friendly but will not (or cannot) answer any questions from the PCs. Instead, they will turn questions back on their askers. For example:

- Did we pass the test? ***“Do you not know for yourself whether you passed or not?”***
- What is the next test? ***“If we knew that, we would no longer be here.”***
- How do we start the next test? ***“We are not taking the Test. Did you need our help to take the Test of Fire?”***

Behavior of the NPCs after the Test of Fire:

- Miya Kyumo is unhurt. He solved the Test of Mind with ease, and chats about it with interest. He will be curious as to how others managed to solve the Test, and will be intrigued to learn there was another, non-mental, test.
- Doji Konnichi also got the Test of Mind, and solved it while suffering only a mild burn to one hand (6 wounds). He will expect Asahina Tsuki and any other Crane shugenja present to tend his injuries.
- Asahina Tsuki unexpectedly gets the Test of Body, but is able to triumph thanks to her childhood experiences with peasant fighting techniques. She is embarrassed at having to fall back on such “low” methods, and will not discuss them with anyone unless they are persons who understand her situation (such as a recently elevated former ronin).
- Isawa Tanaka has easily passed the Test (the Mind of Fire) and is exuberant, full of confidence and ready to talk about his experiences. He shows a thinly disguised sense of superiority toward those who had trouble with the Test.
- Isawa Hitsukawa also faced the Test of Mind, and managed to pass it after “meditating on the problem” for a while. He shows no arrogance and listens carefully to others’ stories.
- Isawa Nobuyoshi failed the Test of Mind, but will not admit to such an embarrassment. He considers quitting, and quietly talks to the monks before agreeing to continue for now.

- Iuchi Kageki managed to solve the Test of Mind, but tried to hurry through the path and suffered several painful burns (11 wounds). He lacks healing magic and will try to persuade another shugenja to help him. Kageki takes the experience in good grace and laughs at his own foolishness once he realizes his mistake.
- Shinjo Agui is badly burned and disheartened by his failure in the first Test (he drew Mind of Fire). If a PC encourages him, he will continue – otherwise he bows out and waits on the main floor of the Temple.
- Horiuchi Shoen is quiet and apparently unperturbed by her experiences so far. She does not discuss the Test with others.
- Mirumoto Daini is moderately injured (down two and a half Wound Ranks) but succeeded in passing the Body of Fire. Unfortunately, he had to fight both Fire Samurai. He is nevertheless exhilarated by the experience and discusses it with anyone who will speak with him. He does not ask for healing but happily accepts it from anyone who offers.
- Togashi Mitsu is unhurt. He will not directly discuss the Test (he got Body of Fire), although he is happy to offer aphorisms and other indirect advice.
- Kuni Takaoka got the Mind of Fire test. He “solved” by simply running through and taking his damage, then healing himself. He seems surprised that there was any other solution.
- Kitsune Sanae successfully overcame the Body of Fire, and remarks on what an honor it was to match blades with “the Essence of Fire.” (She defeated the “student” and exchanged honorable bows with the “sensei.”)

Starting the Test of Water

The Test of Water is activated by a PC (or NPC) going to one of the water-tubs. A PC who gazes into the water will trigger the Mind of Water test, while a PC who touches or reaches into the water (or tries to take a bath!) will instead face the Body of Water test.

Mind of Water

You are sitting in a peaceful room with a smooth, polished floor and elegant paperwork walls. One wall

is slid open to reveal a garden full of flowering sakura (cherry) trees, their fragrant blossoms whirling through the air. Sunlight and a cool breeze compliment the scene, and the pleasant twangs of a biwa echo in the ears.

The PC also perceives a trusted person – preferably a family member, such as a spouse, parent, or sibling – kneeling and offering a fragrant cup of tea. The soothing smell of the tea is intoxicating.

This is of course a dangerous illusion. If the PC drinks the tea, they will actually be plunging their head into the tub and inhaling water. The PC will take 2k1 of drowning damage per round until falling unconscious (or dying). In order to see through the illusion and avoid drowning, the PC must make a **Contested Perception** roll against the Power of the illusion. The illusion rolls a number of dice equal to the PC’s own Water Ring +1. A PC who role-plays an effective resistance to the illusion receives a Free Raise on the resistance roll.

A PC can make only three total attempts to resist the illusion. Each successive attempt after the first is more difficult (+5 and +10 TN penalties) as the illusion becomes more all-encompassing and complete. Once the third attempt has failed, the PC will remain in the water and drown (2k1 per round) unless rescued by another PC. A PC who must be rescued fails the Test.

Body of Water

The water of the tub seems to solidify and closes around the PC like a giant fist, crushingly strong, trying to force itself over the PC’s head. The PC must resist the Strength of Water with his/her own Strength or be drowned. This requires a Contested Roll of the PC’s **Simple Strength** against the Strength of the Water, which rolls and keeps a number of dice equal to the PC’s Water Ring +1. If the PC succeeds, s/he manages to pull free, and the water collapses back into the tub with a splash. If the PC fails, s/he takes 2k1 drowning damage and can roll again. PCs will continue to take 2k1 of drowning damage until they break free or are reduced to the Down or lower Wound Rank, at which point the water releases them. These PCs have failed the Test.

Proceeding Upstairs

PCs who have passed their Test can choose to help others who are in danger of drowning. PCs who escape the water with others’ help can, if they wish, try to take the Test again (possibly switching between the “Mind”

and “Body” tests), but if they proceed on from this room without trying again, they fail the Test.

Of the NPCs, Miya Kyumo and Doji Konnichi will need to be saved from drowning (if none of the PCs save them, Togashi Mitsu will do so). Some of the other NPCs – Isawa Tanaka, Kuni Takaoka, and Shinjo Agui, if he was persuaded to continue – will choose to abandon the test after an initial attempt, although Isawa Tanaka will never admit that he has given up.

When all the PCs and NPCs have tried at least one of the two Tests (whether or not they succeeded), or chosen not to attempt the Test, the two monks rise and thump the ceiling with their bo staffs. A panel slides open and a steep staircase (almost a ladder) is lowered from the next floor. Those who ascend this ladder begin the Test of Earth. Any who decide to leave the Challenge now (such as Shinjo Agui) will be escorted back downstairs by way of a sliding hidden panel in one wall.

The Test of Earth: Stamina

The Test of Earth begins as soon as the PCs (and NPCs) begin to climb the steep, ladder-like staircase to the next level. As with all of the Tests, PCs enter each Test separately and do not perceive their fellows until after the test is over.

The stairs seem to stretch above the PCs forever, and each step seems heavier and more difficult than the one before. Within just a few steps the PCs are panting and exhausted. In order to force their way to the top of the ladder, the PCs must make a **Contested Roll** of their own **Simple Stamina** against (PC’s Earth+1). A PC whose Stamina overcomes the stairs is able to climb into the next level of the Temple. Failure means the PC blacks out, waking up in the room upstairs to go through the second part of the Test.

The Test of Earth: Willpower

Once the PCs reach the top of the stairs (either under their own power, or unconscious), they experience the Willpower side of the Test of Earth:

You find yourself in a dark place, a room to judge from the smooth wood floor beneath you. A faint pool of pallid greenish light appears in front of you. Within that pool something begins to take shape.

The object which appears in the green light is whatever the PC most desires, most wants, most desperately needs – anything from a bottle of sake to an unattainable lover. The GM should choose the object

based on the PC’s particular background and personality. The object of their desire is right there, in front of them, theirs for the taking. If the desired one is a person, it will speak to them, asking the PC to step forward and embrace happiness.

In order to resist this fearsome temptation, each PC must make a **Contested Roll** of their own **Simple Willpower** against their own (Awareness +1). A PC who effectively role-plays resistance to the temptation gains a Free Raise on the roll, at the GM’s discretion. Regardless of whether the PC succeeds or fails, the darkness and vision vanish, and the room reveals itself:

You find yourself in a large square chamber, with polished wooden floors, thick wooden walls, and heavy oaken beams bracing the ceiling. Paper Rokugani lanterns rest on several corner stands, providing a pleasant warm light. The ladder from the room below pokes through an open trapdoor in the floor, while another, slightly less steep staircase ascends through the ceiling.

Test of Earth: Results and Aftermath

In order to get credit for passing the Test of Earth, the PCs must succeed in either climbing the stairs or resisting the temptation. (They may think they have to pass both, but this is incorrect.) As always, the PCs and NPCs do not know whether they passed or not. However, a PC who actually succeeds in overcoming both obstacles will get to remove 1 point of Shadowlands Taint (if they have any).

Once the temptation is over and the darkness disperses, all the PCs and NPCs will be in the room (as usual, no matter how long they spend on the Test, they emerge from it at the same time). They are free to speak with each other before proceeding up the stairs to the next Test.

- Miya Kyumo will have been unable to climb the steps, but successfully passes the temptation test. He seems shaken by the experience and refuses to speak of it.
- Doji Konnichi resists the temptation (which offered him True Love). He will not discuss the nature of his temptation, but admits that it was “difficult” to defeat the appeal of the “Second Sin, Desire.” He does not mention the stamina test and behaves as though it did not take place (he is humiliated by his failure in that test).

- Asahina Tsuki passes the stamina test but fails the temptation test, which offered her the post of Daimyo of the Asahina family. Afterward she is quiet and reflective, trying to come to terms with her own weakness. She will confide in other PCs who have been friendly and honorable.
- Isawa Tanaka passes both tests. He is openly scornful of anyone who admits to failing either one, and is especially merciless on those who flunked the temptation test. He refuses to discuss what he was offered in the Test of Willpower.
- Isawa Hitsukawa fails both tests. He stands pale and shaken for a time, then silently departs, refusing to try the remaining tests even though the next one is Air, his favored element.
- Isawa Nobuyoshi passes both tests, but is not boastful about it. He is understanding toward those who admit to failing the stamina test, but shows a certain distance toward those who fail the temptation test. (He regards such people as the sort who might succumb to maho.)
- Iuchi Kageki fails the Test of Stamina, but passes the Test of Willpower. He openly discusses that the Test offered him “all the magical secrets of the Empire,” and is surprised at his own ability to resist.
- Shinjo Agui, if he is still in the competition, manages to pass both tests. He does not discuss them except with fellow Unicorns. (He was tempted by a chance to marry the Otaku Battle Maiden he is in love with.)
- Horiuchi Shoan is unable to pass either test. She spends some time in meditation afterward, contemplating her failure. She considers discussions of the test to be “improper” and will avoid any such conversations.
- Mirumoto Daini passes both tests easily and seems startled that so many people had trouble with them.
- Togashi Mitsu fails the Test of Stamina, but passes the Test of Willpower. He will not discuss the outcome, although as usual he will offer jokes and aphorisms to the PCs.
- Kuni Takaoka passes both tests easily. He is, after all, an Earth shugenja. He discusses the tests with any Crab PCs, and is shocked and disappointed if

any of them failed. The Test of Willpower offered him “all the power in the world, to defeat Fu Leng” but he easily overcame such weakness. “It is through the strength of mortal men, not some cheap gift, that Fu Leng will be thwarted.”

- Kitsune Sanae is unable to pass either test. She is clearly troubled by her failure, but will not speak of it except to a PC who has impressed her as honorable and selfless. To such persons she confesses that the Test “twisted my finest aspirations into selfishness and dishonor.” She now seems uncertain as to the motives of Naka Kuro in creating this test.

The Test of Air

The steep staircase emerges onto an open roof, a flat surface of polished wood, which stretches from one side of the Temple to the other. A low wooden balcony surrounds the roof. From the center of this open area, the last two floors of the Temple ascend into the sky, forming a narrow pagoda-roofed tower. It is now full night, and you can look down and see stars glimmering in the river and lights burning in the village.

There is a door into the central tower, but it is on the opposite side from the stairs – the PCs must move around the roof in order to locate it. As the PCs begin to explore, they become aware that someone is seated against the base of the tower.

A small figure unfolds itself from a lotus position and bounces to its feet. As it steps forward you see that it is a female monk, her smooth-shaven head gleaming in the moonlight. She holds a thin bo staff in her left hand, twirling it effortlessly with her fingers. She smiles broadly as she walks forward, her steps light and almost dance-like, and bows from the waist. “Greetings, visitors. I am called Kyumi, an Adept of Air. Shall we begin the test?” The staff blurs as she whips it from hand to hand, the air hissing as the thin wooden rod cuts through it.

Kyumi will not take any further action until the PCs and NPCs agree to begin the Test of Air. If anyone asks to leave the Challenge, Kyumi will lead them to the tower and the stairs which descend to the ground floor. (Kuni Takaoka and Isawa Nobuyoshi will bow out at this point, as will Shinjo Agui if he has made it this far.)

Starting the Test

Once the PCs and NPCs ask for the Test to begin, Kyumi bows and grins. “I am an Adept of Air, a servant and master of the Element. Can you manage to strike me? Or no, perhaps that would be too difficult.”

Her grin broadens. “Can you touch me? To do so is to defeat the Air itself.” She begins to whirl around in a large circle, spinning and twirling, her staff weaving an elaborate counterpoint to her own motions. The air whistles around her as Air spirits gather, protecting and supporting her.

Kyumi is a cheerful and happy young woman, perfectly relaxed and joyful even in the midst of the Test. She will not hesitate to poke fun at PCs and NPCs who are overly stiff and stuck on their own dignity – she will subject such PCs to humiliating pranks, tripping them, knocking them into each other, flipping up their kimonos to blind them, and so forth.

Kyumi will be happy to converse with the PCs before or during the Test of Air. Her speech is playful and full of puns and riddles. Some sample answers to possible questions are as follows:

- Why is the Test of Air like this? *“Air spirits are playful, are they not? Just ask the Phoenix.”* She grins at the Phoenix PCs and NPCs. *“Think of it as a game, and I am sure you will do well.”*
- But I’m a courtier, I can’t fight! *“Did Shinjo defeat Hida with her strength? Did Bayushi defeat Shinjo with his speed?”*
- Is this dangerous? *“Life is dangerous, samurai-san! Perfect safety is found only in death. Besides, aren’t you mighty samurai supposed to fear nothing? All there is to fear is Air, after all.”*
- Why is she here? *“Why does the wind blow? Why does an ox leave dung in the fields? Why are you here? Do you really want answers to any of those questions, samurai?”* If a PC answers yes, she chuckles. *“Because the farmer drives it there, of course.”*
- Did Naka Kuro tell her to do this? *“The Grand Master is a servant of the Elements. So am I. We all do our part in the Great Wheel. Of course,”* she laughs aloud, *“some of us enjoy our part more than others.”*

Overcoming the Air

Each challenger (PC or NPC) can make only four total attempts to touch Kyumi. Once they have failed four times, they fail the Test of Air, and Kyumi trips them, knocking them onto their backs. “You have not yet mastered the Air,” she remarks, and ignores those challengers thereafter.

In order to pass the Test of Air, a PC/NPC must touch Kyumi. All the contestants may attempt to do so simultaneously, and at any given time several people will probably be making the attempt. However, if anyone tries to work together against her, Kyumi will suddenly twirl in and flatten all such persons with a single whirling stroke from her bo staff. (This tripping blow inflicts 3k1 damage.) “The Test is a measure, not a battle. How can you measure yourself if you seek the help of others?”

A PC who attempts to physically touch Kyumi, with an open hand or a weapon, must make a **Contested Roll** of their (weapon skill)/**Reflexes** (using the **Jiu-jitsu** or **Hand-to-Hand** skill if they try to touch her barehanded) against her **Defense/Reflexes** (6k4). A player who role-plays a suitably wise or dramatic approach to dealing with Kyumi can get a Free Raise on the roll, at the GM’s discretion. If a PC misses, Kyumi trips him/her with her bo staff, inflicting 4k2 damage. She is not attempting to kill the challengers and will “pull the blow” (keeping low dice) rather than inflict a lethal blow.

There is no pattern to Kyumi’s wild circling movements and the whirling parries from her staff. Therefore, PCs who attempt to “think their way through” will fail. However, a PC may realize that it is possible to rely on instinct (an aspect of Air), rather than intellect, to defeat Kyumi. A PC who attempts to slip through Kyumi’s defenses by relying on instinct can make a **Contested Roll** of **Simple Awareness** against Kyumi’s Awareness of 4. Success indicates the PC has touched Kyumi. A player who role-plays an effective approach to this (such as shutting his/her eyes, meditating beforehand, and so forth) can get a Free Raise on the roll, at the GM’s discretion.

Shugenja PCs may decide to use spells to overcome the Test. The GM should adjudicate any such attempts, keeping in mind that Kyumi is a Rank Four monk with Rings of Air 4, Earth, Water, and Fire 3, and Void 5. A clever and effective application of a spell can succeed.

Trying to touch Kyumi can be a frustrating and irritating experience, especially with her delivering

humiliating blows and sharply barbed jokes. PCs who suffer from disadvantages like Brash, Proud, or similar may be forced to make Willpower or Honor tests to avoid losing their tempers. PCs who lose control of themselves in this way are considered to automatically fail the Test (succumbing to the teasing and erratic nature of Air). They might also lose some Honor, at the GM's discretion.

- Miya Kyumo will do his best, but lacks the physical skills to touch Kyumi. He is too exhausted by the previous tests to manage a non-active solution.
- Doji Konnichi flunks, his pride driven over the edge by Kyumi's mockery. He loses his temper, declares the Challenge "a foolish prank and a waste of my valuable time," and storms down the stairs, departing.
- Asahina Tsuki invokes a Kami of Air and uses its assistance to slip through Kyumi's defenses. The monk congratulates her for her mastery of Air.
- Isawa Tanaka manages to touch Kyumi on his last, desperate attempt.
- Isawa Nobuyoshi is unable to pass this Test, although he tries very hard. He is clearly angered by the experience, but manages not to lose his temper.
- Iuchi Kageki uses the spell Yari of Air to counter Kyumi's moves with an invisible weapon. On the third attempt, he manages to touch her with the elemental weapon.
- Shinjo Agui will pass this Test if he is still in the Challenge. He uses Dance of the Unicorn?
- Horiuchi Shoan sits still, meditating, until everyone else has passed or failed. At that point she quietly walks forward, slips through Kyumi's defenses, and taps her lightly on the shoulder.
- Mirumoto Daini treats the Test as a duel, whirling through a complicated combat-dance with Kyumi, parrying her staff with his katana. Eventually, after a blurring exchange too swift to see, he inflicts a very small cut on her arm – and immediately apologizes.
- Togashi Mitsu bounds forward, joining in Kyumi's jokes, but is knocked flat repeatedly, failing the

Test. He accepts his loss in good humor, laughing along with the monk.

- Kuni Takaoka fails utterly, and loses his temper. He departs, refusing to undergo the last Test. "This has all been a waste of valuable time. I should have been on the Wall, not playing foolish games."
- Kitsune Sanae is unable to pass the Test, although she gets painfully close several times. Afterward, she bows and thanks the monk for the lesson.

The Test of Void

PCs who have passed the Test of Air will be free to enter the small central tower. Within the tower, a narrow and precipitate staircase – really almost a ladder – ascends two stories to the final Test. Those who are unable to pass the Test of Air, or who are abandoning the Challenge, can also enter the tower – but instead find a descending staircase which leads them down four stories to the Temple's entry hall.

PCs who climb up the stairs encounter another monk:

You emerge from the stairs into a small, octagonal room. The walls are of heavy wooden construction with a single window whose shutter is slid half-open. A fire burns in a small hearth near the center of the room, and a man in monk's robes sits by the fire, tending the iron pot which hangs above it. A pleasant smell of cooking rice fills the chamber. Beyond the monk, you can see a wooden ladder ascending to a trap door in the ceiling.

The monk, whose name is Kodoma (meaning "child"), smiles and introduces himself. "Would you care to join me for a meal, samurai? I am sure you are hungry after your exertions." Now that he mentions it, the PCs realize they are indeed very hungry – they have in fact not eaten all day, although the passage of time was largely unnoticed until now.

Kodoma will chat pleasantly with the PCs while stirring the rice porridge which he is boiling over the fire. While he cooks and seasons the porridge, he will ask the PCs and NPCs to do small tasks, such as feeding more wood to the fire (there is a neat pile of firewood in one corner of the room) or fetching more rice and water from the barrels in another corner.

Kodoma will not hinder PCs who immediately climb up the ladder to the next floor. Among the remaining NPCs, Isawa Tanaka will choose this route, as will

Shinjo Agui if he is still in the competition. The others will stay to talk and eat for a while.

Kodoma is an Acolyte of Void, and can see directly into the souls of his visitors. He will offer enigmatic but accurate advice, warnings, and suggestions to his visitors. Examples are given here for the NPCs – the GM can use these as guidelines for how he will relate to the PCs.

- Miya Kyumo: *“The Fortunes often frown on you, and your quest cannot succeed for many years.”*
- Asahina Tsuki: *“Do not let your past be a burden to you, young one. It is your future which is important.”*
- Isawa Nobuyoshi: *“What you seek is not always where you expect it.”*
- Iuchi Kageki: *“Knowledge should never be an end in itself, but only a step on the path of enlightenment.”*
- Horiuchi Shoan: *“Your path is longer than you think, and the future is not set.”*
- Mirumoto Daini: *“Youth is the domain of foolishness, but also of promise. Remember that.”*
- Togashi Mitsu: *“Our paths are different, brother, but our journeys will end at the same place. Tread the road with care, for you tread it alone.”*
- Kitsune Sanae: *“Your people face great danger and a great choice. The end may mean your destruction or salvation.”*

Once the PCs are ready to proceed to the last Test, Kodoma offers them some further advice: *“The Void lies before you. Only the truth of your own heart can answer this Test.”*

Void: The Test

You climb into a small plain chamber, octagonal in shape, whose roof is open to a vast night sky. Uncountable stars glitter down at you, and you feel extraordinarily small and alone. Slowly, the stars shape themselves into a vast and alien face which stares down at you, blotting out all other reality. A deep, hollow, genderless voice speaks, the words echoing within your mind. “How does one defeat the Void?”

Each PC who makes it to the Test of Void must write their answer to this question on a small piece of paper and hand it to the GM. The PCs cannot consult with anyone and cannot make any skill rolls – this is an answer from the heart and soul. A player who dawdles

too long in writing their response is assumed to fail the test – when dealing with the Void, there is no room for hesitation or doubt.

The question is, in truth, a sort of trick. The true “correct” answer to this test is that the Void *cannot* be defeated – it must be accepted and embraced. A PC whose answer is in this vein passes the test. The GM should show some latitude in accepting other answers which hew to this sort of mystical/philosophical approach. Any answer which actually suggests that the Void can be defeated is inherently incorrect (unless the PC words it in such a way that it is not really a “defeat” at all).

Void: A Moment of Clarity

A PC who answers the Test of Void correctly experiences a moment of searing, primal clarity. For a timeless instant, the PC is at one with the universe, and all the petty distractions of life are seen as nothing. The PC is also suddenly and painfully aware of any darkness and distortion (Shadowlands taint, Shadow Corruption) within their own soul. They experience this perception as a dark stain (Taint) or a hollow gray spot (Shadow) within themselves.

Such PCs can attempt to turn the power of the Void against the evil within themselves. This requires a single **Meditation/Void** roll at TN 10. Success cleanses the PC of 5 points (pips) of Shadowlands taint, or one full Point of Shadow Corruption. Each Raise which the PC makes on the roll cleanses another 5 points of Taint or 1 point of Shadow. (A PC can use such Raises to cleanse both types of evil, if they are unfortunate enough to suffer from both.)

After the Void

Once the moment of unity with the Void comes to an end, the Challenge of the Elements is over. The PC can remain on the roof, but nothing more will happen. The PC is free to descend the narrow spiral staircase back down to the main room of the Shrine.

Resolutions

The Challenge of the Elements concludes at dawn. Regardless of whether or not they passed the individual tests, the PCs find a spiral staircase within the Chamber of Void which leads back down to the ground floor. They emerge from behind a sliding panel into the main room of the Shrine, where the pillar of elemental force continues to writhe and glow. Monks congratulate them on completing the Challenge (but do not tell them whether they passed any of the tests). Any PCs who

“bailed out” of the Challenge but did not return to the village will be waiting here, as will Shinjo Agui if he bailed out of the Challenge earlier.

The PCs and NPCs are escorted out of the Shrine, and find the blind monk on the shore, waiting to ferry them back across.

Who Passed?

Only one of the NPCs passed all five tests: Mirumoto Daini. Naka Kuro will draw him aside as the others depart the Shrine. If any of the PCs also managed to pass all five tests, Kuro draws them aside along with Daini. The aged shugenja informs them that terrible days lie ahead. “The Dark One will return soon, in a form and guide unexpected, and with an ally like none He had in the First War. Only the bravest, most honorable, most enlightened of men and women will be able to withstand His terrible power. You have been marked as standing among those few. May the Fortunes watch over your paths.”

These PCs all receive the “Destined Hero” cert.

The Fate of Otomo Keisuke

If the PCs managed to make their accusation of Otomo Keisuke “stick,” he will insist on returning to the capital to plead his case before the Emperor. PCs who wish to see justice done must accompany him to this hearing before the Son of Heaven.

Keisuke will make an eloquent speech in which he proclaims his innocence and insists that he is the victim of false charges and conspiracy. Allow each accusing PC to make their own speech in response. The GM should adjudicate the Emperor’s judgement based on both the strength of the PCs’ evidence and the eloquence of their presentation. PCs can help their case with **Sincerity**, **Oratory**, or **Etiquette** rolls, but ultimately, this is a role-playing challenge – die-rolls can supplement a god speech, but not replace it. Remember that ancestral guidance and Communing with spirits is not considered legal evidence in the courts of Rokugan, so a PC who relies on such evidence for their argument will be weakening their case.

If the PCs do succeed, the Emperor orders Otomo Keisuke to commit seppuku to clear his name. However, Keisuke disappears before the ceremony the next morning. All his accusers (the PCs) gain “Sworn Enemy: Otomo Keisuke.”

On the other hand, if the Emperor rules against the PCs, Keisuke is vindicated and all the accusers are publicly shamed. Such unfortunate PCs lose 1 Honor and a full Rank of Glory, and gain Keisuke as a Sworn Enemy.

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 scenario:	1 XP
Good role-playing:	1 XP
PC passes at least two tests:	+1 XP
OR	
PC solved the murder of Asahina Yakamo	+1 XP
PC passes at least four tests:	+1 XP
OR	
PC succeeded in convicting Otomo Keisuke	+1 XP

Total Possible Experience: 4 XP

Honor

None inherently awarded for the Challenge (although a PC’s responses to the various tests might result in the gain or loss of Honor, at the GM’s discretion).
-1 Honor to PCs who fail to make their charges against Otomo Keisuke stick.

Glory

None inherently awarded for the Challenge.
PCs who fail to convict Otomo Keisuke after accusing him lose 1 full rank of Glory.

Other Awards/Penalties

Those PCs who succeed in “passing” all aspects of all five Tests have been marked by the favor of the Elements and of Naka Kuro. Each such character gets a copy of the cert for “Destined Hero.”

A character who passes the Test of Earth may remove 1 point of Shadowlands Taint.

A character who passes the Test of Void may potentially remove both Shadowlands Taint and/or Shadow Corruption, depending on whether they made the Meditation/Void roll.

Characters who accuse Otomo Keisuke and take the case before the Emperor gain “Sworn Enemy: Otomo Keisuke” (whether or not the charges stick).

GM’s Aid #1: The Visitors

This section provides a complete listing (by Clan), statistics, and description of the various NPCs who are visiting the mysterious new Temple. Naka Kuro’s statistics are not listed – his powers are far beyond those of mere player-characters.

Imperial Families:

Otomo Keisuke. This man, an Imperial advisor, will be familiar to PCs who have played the Living Rokugan adventure *The Ties That Bind*. Keisuke is noticeably thin (thinner than he was before), but otherwise seems properly impressive: a handsome, elegant man in his mid-thirties, dressed in the finest of kimono and wearing a sash and a gold ring signifying his status as one of the Emperor’s Advisors. Keisuke is accompanied by a small army of servants, as well as an assistant, Miya Kyumo, and a pair of Imperial bodyguards, Seppun Ageki and Akodo Miroko, who will insulate him from any undesirable visitors.

Keisuke is here to learn what this shrine is, and why it has appeared. However, he feels no particular desire to enter the shrine himself, and will rely on the reports of other samurai (including the PCs) as to what he should tell the Emperor.

Keisuke also has a number of dark secrets. He is an opium addict and a serial murderer, driven to repeated violence by his accumulated guilt and remorse over his own dishonor. He first killed more than a year ago, at the Scorpion city of Ryoko Owari, where he slew his former lover Kakita Seka in a drugged rage. The Scorpion Clan covered up the crime in order to blackmail him. Since then he has killed twice more, each time driven to murder by drug-induced flashbacks to his first awful crime. Each time he has been protected by the Scorpion, who find a compromised Imperial Advisor an extremely useful tool. Keisuke will kill again during this adventure, and the Scorpion will protect him again... although they are beginning to wonder if he is worth the trouble. During this adventure, he will kill again.

FIRE 3 Intelligence 5	AIR 3 Awareness 5
EARTH 1	WATER 2

Stamina 3	Perception 5
VOID 3	

School/Rank: Otomo Seiyaku (Courtier) 4

Honor/Glory: 0.8/8.6

Skills: Athletics 5, Courtier 8, Calligraphy 3, Etiquette 10, Kenjutsu 7, Manipulation 9, Law 5, Lore (Imperial families) 4, Heraldry 5, History 6, Iaijutsu 8, Investigation 4, Meditation 3, Shintao 5, Sincerity 10, Theology 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Benten’s Blessing, Ear of the Emperor, Gentry, Social Position (Emperor’s Advisor, Otomo family)/Chemical Dependency (Opium), Compulsion (Geisha/Opium), Dark Secrets (murderer, indebted to the Scorpion), Lost Love (Kakita Seka).

Equipment: Exquisite kimono, fine daisho set

Miya Kyumo. Kyumo is a long-suffering Shisha (Herald), a weary-looking man in his late twenties. He is quite depressed over the current warlike state of the Empire, and is also gloomy about his current assignment as Keisuke’s aide – he realizes that Keisuke is a flawed and dishonorable man, although he will never say this aloud. Kyumo will do most of the actual work of investigating the mysterious new shrine.

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

TN to be Hit: 10

School/Rank: Miya Shisha (Herald) 2

Rank One: Voice of the Emperor. In an opposed social roll, may roll additional dice equal to School Rank. Also, when fleeing combat or performing full defense, gains a bonus to TN to be Hit equal to School Rank x 5.

Rank Two: Eyes of the Emperor. Gains Way of the Land for a chosen Clan territory (Kyumo chose Crane). Gets unlimited Raises of Perception checks within that territory, and automatically makes Heraldry rolls within that territory.

Honor/Glory: 3.4/3.8

Skills: Courtier 3, Defense 4, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 3, Heraldry 5, History 3, Horsemanship 2, Law 3, Meditation 3, Sincerity 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Higher Purpose (peace in the Empire), Social Position (Otomo Keisuke's assistant)/Unluck (rank one)

Equipment: Light armor, kimono, horo (wicker cloak).

Seppun Ageki (male) and Akodo Miroko (female). The Otomo's two bodyguards are dutiful samurai, both trained in the Seppun Imperial Bodyguard School. Ageki is a tall man with clear features and piercing eyes, and never smiles. Miroko is a short, somewhat burly samurai-ko with a quick smile but a quicker sword. Both of them are highly honorable and blindly loyal to the Imperial line (and to Otomo Keisuke as a representative of that line). They will not hesitate to slay anyone who threatens or insults their master.

FIRE 3 Miroko has Agility 4	AIR 3 Ageki has Reflexes 4
EARTH 3 Ageki has Willpower 4	WATER 3 Miroko has Perception 4
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 15/20 (22/27 in Fine Light Armor)

School/Rank: Seppun Bodyguard 2

Rank One Technique: add school rank to Honor or Willpower rank when resisting anything that would make him forsake his duty to the Hantei line.

Rank Two Technique: on the first round of combat, roll a number of additional attack dice equal to Perception, keeping one extra die. Make a Perception roll at TN of (5 x opponent's Honor rank) to detect ambushes.

Honor/Glory: 4.5/1.8 (2.6 for Ageki)

Skills: Archery 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6, Law 1, Lore: Bushido 3 (Miroko only), Lore: Imperial Families 2 (Ageki only), Meditation 2,

Naginata 3, Shintao 2 (Ageki only), Sincerity 2, Yarijutsu 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Ageki has Strength of the Earth (rank one), Miroko has Quick

Equipment: Fine daisho set (+1 to skill dice), fine light armor, fine bow (+1 skill die), 20 arrows, steed (Unicorn riding horse).

Doji Konnichi. The leader of the large Crane contingent is a wealthy and stylish nobleman (Glory 5.4) who is here as a representative of the Clan Champion, Doji Satsume. Konnichi is a handsome and well-dressed man in his thirties, with a light beard and pale gray eyes. He is completely loyal to the Crane Clan and never shows any true feelings, maintaining an impenetrable mask of pleasant manners and bland smiles. He has a rather cruel sense of humor and cannot resist delivering subtle verbal jabs at those he does not respect – Lions, Crabs, and Scorpions. He is accompanied by over a dozen servants, as well as a tough Daidoji bodyguard named Hajime.

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Doji Courtier 3

Honor/Glory: 2.6/5.4

Skills: Calligraphy 4, Courtier 6, Dance 3, Etiquette 7, Heraldry 4, History 3, Law 2, Manipulation 5, Oratory 3, Poetry 5, Political Maneuvering 4, Research 2, Sadane 3, Shintao 2, Sincerity 6, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Gentry, Servants (many, plus bodyguard), Social Position (assistant to Doji Satsume), Wealth/Bad Reputation (cruel humor), Proud

Equipment: Excellent kimono (+1 skill die to Sincerity and Etiquette rolls), fan, fine tanto (2k1, +1 skill die), scroll satchel with sheets of blank paper, writing kit, 28 koku.

Daidoji Hajime. The bodyguard of Doji Konnichi is a tough, quiet man in his early twenties. His hair is worn undyed and tied back in a traditional samurai topknot. He responds to most conversational gambits with a grunt or snort. After his master enters the Temple to participate in the Challenge, Hajime will be somewhat at loose ends and opens up a bit.

He likes Crabs, despite their lack of manners, having served a year on the Kaiu Wall.

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

[Wounds are at +2 per rank (Daidoji School)]

TN to be Hit: 25 (light armor)

School/Rank: Daidoji Bodyguard 2

Honor/Glory: 2.4/2.5

Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 2, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Crab Clan 2, Sincerity 2, Yarijutsu 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Irreproachable, Quick

Equipment: Light armor, daisho set

Asahina Yakamo. This man (named, ironically, the same as the Crab Clan heir) is the prototypical arrogant, irritating Crane courtier. A slim, almost delicate man, he wears his white-dyed hair tied back in a loose ponytail and dresses only in the finest, most carefully chosen silks. PCs who have played the adventure *Winter Court: Kyuden Asahina* may have met him before. He is arrogant, supercilious, and looks down on anyone who is not a Crane – especially ill-mannered Crab brutes, warlike Lions, and filthy ronin. He enjoys the occasional flirtation and secret affair, but only with women who meet his high standards of beauty, elegance, and wit (such as Iuchi Shahai). This will be his undoing.

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Asahina Shugenja 2

Honor/Glory: 1.8/3.8

Skills: Bard 2, Calligraphy 4, Courtier 4, Dance 3, Etiquette 5, Manipulation 3, Meditation 4, Oratory 2, Sadane 3, Sincerity 6, Shintao 2, Tantojutsu 1

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Air 1) *Quiescence of Air, Wind-Born Slumbers*, (Air 2) *Benten's Touch, Secrets on the Wind, Whispering Wind*, (Air 3) *Wisdom of the Kami*, (Water 1) *Reversal of Fortunes, Sympathetic Energies*, (Fire 1) *Extinguish*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Precise Memory/Proud.

Equipment: Fine kimono, scroll satchel with spells and blank scrolls, writing kit, tanto, 6 koku.

Asahina Tsuki. A very young woman (15 or so), an apprentice to Asahina Tamako, her family daimyo. Tsuki is shy, retiring, and not particularly pretty, although she does dye her hair the obligatory Crane white. She is actually of Adopted Blood, having been elevated from the peasantry when Tamako noticed her gifts. She does her best to leave her peasant breeding behind, but perceptive PCs may notice the occasional small error of etiquette, and the rough skin of her face and hands. Tsuki dislikes the arrogant Asahina Yakamo but will not say anything openly about it, and will disapprove of anyone who insults the Crane Clan.

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Asahina Shugenja 2

Honor/Glory: 3.6/0.9

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Courtier 1, Craft (farmer) 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Research 2, Shintao 3, Sincerity 1, Tonfajutsu 4

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Air 1) *Nature's Touch, Tempest of Air*, (Air 2) *Call Upon the Wind, Summon Kami of Air*, (Air 3) *Essence of Air, The Eye Shall Not See*, (Water 1) *Castle of Water, Path to Inner Peace*, (Water 2) *Heart of Mortality*, (Fire 1) *Fires That Cleanse*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Aligned to the Elements (Air), Great Potential (Air), Sensei (Asahina Tamako)/Adopted Blood, Social Disadvantage (former heimin)

Equipment: Kimono, scroll satchel, jitte (1k1, carried concealed).

Isawa Tanaka. A square-faced, stocky man in his early thirties, with dark eyes that burn with inner power. Tanaka is an Acolyte of Fire, one of the favored apprentices of Isawa Tsuke, the Master of Fire. He tends to be somewhat arrogant and to behave in a superior fashion to any non-Phoenix shugenja, especially those who do not follow his favored element. He largely ignores non-shugenja, viewing them as good for little more than protecting their “betters.” Tanaka does, however, have an unpleasant secret – he was once close friends with a fellow Phoenix, Isawa Gonto, who proved to be a

secret maho-tsukai. PCs who played the adventure A Chance Meeting may have been involved in unmasking Gonto – Tanaka will be hostile to these PCs, although he will never reveal his reasons.

FIRE 5	AIR 2
	Reflexes 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2
Stamina 3	
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (fire) 2

Honor/Glory: 2.3/3.5

Skills: Athletics 3, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Shuegnja) 4, Meditation 5, Research 3, Sincerity 4, Shintao 3, Spellcraft 5.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Fire 1) *Fires of Purity, Fires That Cleanse, Fury of Osano-Wo, Katana of Fire, Wings of Fire*, (Fire 2) *Fires From Within, Summon Fire Spirit*, (Fire 3) *Breath of the Fire Dragon*, (Air 1) *Quiescence of Air, Tempest of Air*, (Earth 1) *Force of Will*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Innate Abilities (all his Fire spells), Sensei (Isawa Tsuke)/Bad Reputation (arrogant), Dark Secret (was friends with Isawa Gonto)

Equipment: Kimono, wakizashi, scroll satchel.

Isawa Hitsukawa. This is a quiet, elegant older man, approaching the age of retirement. He is an Air shugenja with a deep interest in the spirits and Fortunes, and is also quite learned in the Tao of Shinsei. Hitsukawa is largely free of emotional problems or attachments – indeed, he is halfway to being a monk already. Highly enlightened or erudite PCs will find him a pleasant and educational conversationalist. He recognizes the flaws in his fellow Phoenix but is far too selfless and well-mannered to comment openly on them (although he might offer a few pithy quotations from the Tao).

FIRE 2	AIR 4
Intelligence 4	Awareness 5
EARTH 1	WATER 2
Willpower 2	Perception 3
VOID 4	

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Air) 3

Honor/Glory: 3.4/3.1

Skills: Calligraphy 5, Courtier 3, Etiquette 5, Lore (Kamis and Fortunes) 5, Lore (Shugenja) 4,

Meditation 7, Research 4, Sincerity 4, Shintao 6, Spellcraft 5, Tantojutsu 3, Theology 5.

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

Advantages/Disadvantages: Innate Abilities (all Air spells), Irreproachable/Old, Weakness (Stamina).

Equipment: Kimono, tanto, scroll satchel.

Isawa Nobuyoshi. PCs who have played *Legacy of the Dark One* or *Fate of a Hantei* may have met this intense, driven, somewhat temperamental Inquisitor. Nobuyoshi is a hard-eyed man in his early twenties, suspicious and slightly paranoid, with a tendency to leap to conclusions. He is obsessed with hunting down and destroying the Dark Oracle of Air – who used to be his brother, Isawa Gidayu. He will speak of this only with PCs who have played *Legacy of the Dark One* or who have encountered the Dark Oracle of Air in some other adventure.

Nobuyoshi distrusts the Asako family (he knows they are keeping secrets from the rest of the Phoenix), respects the Kuni, but otherwise has no opinions on other families and Clans.

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Earth) 3

Honor/Glory: 4.3/4.5

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Hand to Hand 2, Heraldry 3, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 3, Law 4, Lore (Asako family) 2, Lore (Maho-Tsukai) 4, Lore (Shugenja) 2, Medicine 3, Meditation 3, Shintao 4, Sincerity 2, Spellcraft 3, Theology 2.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Earth 1) *Elemental Ward, Jade Strike*, (Earth 2) *Courage of the Seven Thunders*, (Earth 3) *Strength of the Crow*, (Earth 4) *Tomb of Jade*, (Air 1) *By the Light of Lord Moon*, (Air 2) *Call Upon the Wind, Whispering Winds*, (Fire 1) *Fires That Cleanse, Fury of Osano-Wo*, (Water 1) *Path to Inner Peace*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Absolute Direction, Clear Thinker, Read Lips/Bad Reputation (hostile to

the Asako family), Driven (to hunt down Isawa Gidayu).

Equipment: Kimono, wakizashi, scroll satchel.

Asako Tamanara. A deceptively calm and centered man, almost monk-like on first appearance, Tamanara actually guards a terrible temper which may erupt if he is offended or frustrated. He dislikes Cranes, who he sees as frivolous and materialistic, and Crab, whose violent crudity repels him. And like most Asako, he distrusts the Isawa family of his own Clan.

Tamanara is actually a *Henshin* (elemental mystic riddler) and is acting on the behalf of the secret Asako Henshin school, trying to learn what new powers are contained in this temple and whether they can be used to further the Asako family's goals of human elemental perfection.

FIRE 3	AIR 3
EARTH 3	WATER 3
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Asako *henshin* 2 (see *Secrets of the Phoenix* for details of *henshin* abilities)

Honor/Glory: 1.7/3.6

Skills: Courtier 2, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 2, Lore (Elements) 6, Lore (Asako family) 4, Meditation 5, Research 4, Shintao 3, Sincerity 3, Theology 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Antisocial (rank one), Brash

Equipment: Kimono, wakizashi.

Soshi Taushi. This elegant young Scorpion shugenja rides a Unicorn horse (a gift from their Clan for past assistance with some courtly difficulties) and is an assistant to Soshi Bantaro, the daimyo of the Soshi family. He is Glory 4.8 and expects other Scorpions here, especially shugenja, to show him deference and obey his orders. Taushi is accompanied by his bodyguard, a Bayushi bushi-ko named Mitsumi, as well as several servants.

Taushi's main goal here is simply to learn what the temple is and who controls it. He is also here to keep an eye on Otomo Keisuke, who has proven to need "minding" in recent months. Taushi will be personally intrigued by the so-called "Challenge of the Elements" but judges that it might interfere with

his supervision of Keisuke. Besides, it should be easy enough to learn about it from others who undergo the trial.

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

TN to be Hit: 25

School/Rank: Soshi shugenja 3

Honor/Glory: 0.6/4.8

Skills: Acting 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 5, Dance 3, Etiquette 5, History 4, Horsemanship 4, Investigation 6, Law 3, Lore (shugenja) 5, Lore (Unicorn Clan) 3, Meditation 4, Poetry 3, Sincerity 5, Sleight-of-Hand 3, Spellcraft 5, Stealth 4, Theology 3

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Air 1) *By the Light of Lord Moon, Cloak of Night, Way of Deception, Wind-Born Slumbers*, (Air 2) *False Tongue, Know the Shadows, Mists of Illusion, Secrets on the Wind*, (Air 3) *Bad Karma*, (Air 4) *Forget*, (Water 1) *Path to Inner Peace, Reversal of Fortunes*, (Water 2) *Reflective Pool, The Tie That Binds*, (Fire 1) *Biting Steel, Evil Ward*, (Earth 1) *Earth's Stagnation*

Advantages/Disadvantages: Heartless, Innate Ability (Secrets on the Wind), Social Position (assistant to Soshi Bantaro), Unicorn Steed / Dependent (Bayushi Mitsumi)

Equipment: Kimono, wakizashi, scroll satchel, Unicorn riding horse, puzzle box (TN 30) containing notes and papers.

Bayushi Mitsumi. Taushi's bodyguard, a pretty young woman in her twenties, is a skilled Scorpion duelist. She is also secretly *junshin* (honorable) and regards her guard duties as a way of fulfilling her loyalty to her Clan while still staying true to bushido. Taushi is of course aware of Mitsumi's true nature, and finds her faith in bushido a useful tool in manipulating her.

Mitsumi is deeply troubled by the frequent dishonorable acts which she must defend in her duels, and uses poetry as an outlet for her feelings. If a PC seems genuinely understanding and sympathetic, she may confide some of her doubts and internal agonies. Ultimately, however, she remains loyal to the Scorpion Clan – no matter how much it pains her. "Without my Clan, what am I? Just another *ronin* wandering the roads."

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

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

School/Rank: Bayushi bushi 3

Honor/Glory: 2.6/3.2

Skills: Athletics 3, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Hand-to-Hand 4, History 2, Iaijutsu 5, Katana (specialized weapon skill) 3, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu (archery) 3, Lore (bushido) 3, Poetry 5, Shintao 3, Sincerity 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Junshin

Equipment: Light armor, daisho set, bow and arrows

Dragon Clan

Mirumoto Daini. The younger brother of the Mirumoto daimyo, Hitomi, is here on his own initiative rather than his sister's orders. He is a friendly and somewhat artistic young man, quite skilled with a sword but equally skilled in courtly manners. He has a taste for poetry and the arts, and tends to be a bit superficial and smug, suffering from the overconfidence and passion of youth. Recently, he has been hearing stories of strange snake-like creatures in the Shinomen, and may speculate on these matters with other samurai who strike him as intelligent or artistically gifted. More details on Daini, for those who are interested, can be found in *Way of the Dragon*.

Daini has not bothered to bring his elaborate suit of battle armor, and passes through this scenario wearing only a fine-quality kimono in Dragon green.

He is secretly concerned about his sister Hitomi, who has vanished from Dragon lands, and may quietly share his worries with other Dragons. If Hitomi is gone, he will have to step up as Mirumoto daimyo, a task he does not relish.

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

TN to be Hit: 29

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 4

Honor/Glory: 3.4/7.5

Skills: Archery 4, Battle 3, Defense 6, Kenjutsu 8, Meditation 4, Lore: Shugenja 3, Yarijutsu 4, History

4, Heraldry 3, Shintao 4, Horsemanship 2, Courtier 6, Iaijutsu 5

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kitsuki family), Ambidextrous, Benten's Blessing, Great Destiny, Kharmic Tie (Akodo Toturi), Luck (rank one), Quick, Way of the Land (Dragon lands)/Brash, Vain
Equipment: Fine kimono, fine daisho set.

Mirumoto Iyesu and Mirumoto Fujita, typical Dragon bushi

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

TN to be Hit: 21 (26 with Light Armor)

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 2.5/1.6

Skills: Archery 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Shugenja 2, Meditation 2, Poetry 2, Sincerity 2

Advantages/Disadvantages: None

Equipment: Light armor, daisho

Togashi Mitsu. The legendary ise zumi (tattooed man) is here on his own, intrigued by the stories of this temple. A smiling, cheerful man who openly shows the tattoos of the Dragon, Centipede, and Tiger, Mitsu delights in puncturing the arrogance and foolishness of samurai, and prefers jokes and the occasional biting remark to the enigmatic riddles favored by others of his kind. As with Daini, more information on Mitsu can be found in *Way of the Dragon*.

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Togashi Ise Zumi 3 (tattoos: Centipede, Crow, Dragon, Monkey, Tiger)

Honor/Glory: 2.3/6.4

Skills: Acting 3, Athletics 6, Defense 7, Investigation 5, Jujutsu (kaze-do) 8, Lore (heimin) 5, Medicine 4, Shintao 8, Wrestling 7

Advantages/Disadvantages: Ambidextrous, Clear Thinker, Great Destiny, Magic Resistance (rank 1), Quick/Brash

Unicorn Clan:

Iuchi Shahai. This representative of the Iuchi family is the lovely young daughter of the family daimyo, Iuchi Daiyu. She leads a contingent of half a dozen Unicorns, plus assorted servants. An ambitious and secretive girl, Shahai suffers from a secret lust for power, although as yet she has not yet succumbed to it. She will flirt casually with any attractive male PCs, and shows an intense, eye-glittering curiosity about the temple and the power which created it.

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Iuchi shugenja 2

Honor/Glory: 1.1/6.3

Skills: Calligraphy 4, Courtier 3, Etiquette 5, Horsemanship 4, Investigation 4, Law 3, Lore (Iuchi family) 3, Lore (Maho) 3, Lore (Shugenja) 5, Medicine 4, Meditation 4, Shintao 1, Seduction 5, Sincerity 5, Tantojutsu 3.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Water 1) *Castle of Water, Reflections of Pan Ku, Reversal of Fortunes, Sympathetic Energies*, (Water 2) *Heart of Mortality, The Tie That Binds*, (Water 3) *Path of the Scorpion*, (Earth 1) *Earth's Stagnation, Force of Will*, (Air 1) *Cloak of Night, Way of Deception*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Dangerous Beauty, Dark Fate (evil version of Great Destiny), Servants, Social Position (daimyo's daughter)/Driven (to gain power)

Equipment: Kimono, scroll satchel, tanto, Unicorn riding horse

Iuchi Kageki. A short, physically unimpressive man with a long goatee and drooping moustache. Kageki is eager to learn more about the magic of other clans, and resents the hostility he sometimes encounters from the more refined clans such as the Crane and Phoenix. On the other hand, anyone who treats him well will be rewarded with firm friendship. He is only distantly acquainted with Iuchi Shahai, and regards her as someone too high in the social order for him to criticize.

FIRE 2	AIR 3
Agility 3	
EARTH 3	WATER 3

	Perception 4
VOID 2	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 2

Honor/Glory: 2.5/1.7

Skills: Athletics 1, Calligraphy 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Herbalism 4, Horsemanship 5, Hunting 2, Kenjutsu 2, Law 2, Lore (Maho) 1, Lore (Shugenja) 3, Medicine 4, Meditation 3, Poetry 2, Shintao 4, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 2, Yarijutsu 4.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Water 1) *Castle of Water, Heart of Nature, Ride Through the Night* (Unicorn spell), (Water 2) *Wisdom and Clarity*, (Water 3) *Near to Ice*, (Air 1) *Nature's Touch, Yari of Air*, (Fire 1) *Biting Steel, Fury of Osano-Wo*, (Earth 2) *Summon Earth Spirit*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Benten's Blessing, Irreproachable (rank 2)

Equipment: Kimono, scroll satchel, wakizashi, Unicorn riding horse.

Otaku Yui. A cheerful, friendly, often casually flirtatious battle-maiden, a studied contrast to their more common dour aspect. Yui embraces life as a series of games and challenges, and laughs at danger and embarrassment alike. She wears her hair long and loose, allowing it to swirl around her head when she rides. Yui will flirt light-heartedly with any attractive males around (PCs and otherwise) but will not allow such amusements to go too far. She takes a dim view of Iuchi Shahai, who she sees as using her beauty to manipulate and get her own way.

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

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

School/Rank: Otaku battle maiden 1

Honor/Glory: 3.3/1.5

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

Advantages/Disadvantages: Daredevil, Luck (rank 2)

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

Shinjo Agui and Shinjo Shujiri. These two representatives of the Shinjo family are brothers,

although Agui has trained with the Iuchi as a shugenja while Shujiri is a bushi. Agui is cheerful and friendly, with no prejudices or enmities, and likes to indulge his skills with the flute. Shujiri seems a similar man, also with musical tastes – he plays taiko drums, and their musical duets tend to be wild and quick, full of the spirit of the open steppe. However, Shujiri seems more serious and morose than Agui, and tends to be a bit anti-social, especially around Scorpions. He is being blackmailed by the Scorpion Clan, due to a past personal failing – he was once an opium addict, and was even involved in the smuggling of the drug before he “kicked the habit” and cleaned up. The Scorpion Clan is well aware of his past and uses it to manipulate him.

Shinjo Agui, shugenja brother

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Iuchi shugenja 2

Honor/Glory: 2.7/2.5

Skills: Athletics 2, Calligraphy 3, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship 5, Hunting 2, Lore: Fortunes and Kamis 4, Medicine 3, Meditation 3, Music (flute) 3, Research 2, Shintao 4, Sincerity 2, Spellcraft 3, Yarijutsu 4.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Water 1) *Dance of the Unicorn* (Unicorn spell), *Reversal of Fortunes, Speed of the Waterfall* (Unicorn spell), (Water 2) *Reflective Pool, The Horse's Nose* (Unicorn spell), (Water 3) *The Flow of Time, Yuki's Blessing* (Unicorn spell), (Air 1) *Quiescence of Air, Yari of Air*, (Earth 1) *Know the Ground*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: None.

Equipment: Kimono, scroll satchel, wakizashi, Unicorn riding horse.

Shinjo Shujiri, bushi brother

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

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

School/Rank: Shinjo bushi 2

Honor/Glory: 1.4/2.4

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 2, Kenjutsu 4, Horsemanship 6, Horse Archery 5, Hunting 3, Music (taiko drums) 4, Sincerity 3, Umayarijutsu 2, Yarijutsu 4, Yomanri 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Dark Secret (former opium addict, blackmailed by Scorpion)

Equipment: Light armor, daisho set, bows (dai-kyu and yumi) and arrows, yari, set of two taiko drums, Unicorn riding horse.

Horiuchi Shoan. The sole member of the new-made Horiuchi family, this gentle and delicate shugenja-ko will hold herself apart from the others here. Her sole interest is the mysterious temple across the river. She often has a faint disapproving frown on her face when watching Iuchi Shahai, but she will never explain the reasons for her attitude, and brushes aside any inquiries. “That is hardly a proper topic for conversation,” she remarks quietly. Additional information on Shoan can be found in *Way of the Unicorn*.

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 1

Honor/Glory: 2.9/7.0

Skills: History 5, Lore: Wizard Magic 3, Shintao 2, Etiquette 4, Calligraphy 3, Poetry 4, Herbalism 3, Horsemanship 2, Kenjutsu 1

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Water 1) *Castle of Water, Speed of the Waterfall, Path to Inner Peace*, (Earth 1) *Elemental Ward, Benevolent Protection of Shinsei*, (Fire 1) *Amaterasu's Blessing* (1st Edition)

Advantages/Disadvantages: Clear Thinker, Social Position (Horiuchi “daimyo”),

Equipment: Kimono, wakizashi, scroll satchel

Crab Clan:

Kuni Takaoka. This is a loud and rough-tempered representative from the Crab Clan, here to make sure this sudden new temple is not some Shadowlands Plot. Takaoka is a dour, grim man with bony limbs and thick, clumsy-looking hands. His hair is worn long and loose, giving him a somewhat wild look. He has better manners than many Crabs, but still makes occasional mordant comments on the wealth and safety which the other Clans enjoy, courtesy of the sacrifices of the Crab. Takaoka treats

Scorpions with instinctive hostility and looks down on non-militant clans such as the Crane and Phoenix.

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

TN to be Hit: 10 (15 with light armor)

School/Rank: Kuni shugenja 3

Honor/Glory: 1.7/3.8

Skills: Athletics 2, Bard 1, Battle 2, Calligraphy 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand (Kubo) 4, Kenjutsu 3, Horsemanship 2, Lore (Shadowlands) 6, Medicine 7, Meditation 3, Shintao 2, Sincerity 1, Spell Research 5, Spellcraft 6, Tantojutsu 3.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Earth 1) *Force of Will, Jade Strike, Tetsubo of Earth*, (Earth 2) *Armor of Earth, Courage of the Seven Thunders, Hands of Jurojin*, (Earth 3) *Slash of the Lion*, (Earth 4) *Tomb of Jade*, (Fire 1) *Biting Steel, Fury of Osano-Wo*, (Fire 3) *Fist of Osano-Wo*, (Water 1) *Path to Inner Peace*, (Air 1) *By the Light of Lord Moon*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Hands of Stone, Strength of the Earth (rank 2)

Equipment: Kimono, light armor, wakizashi, tanto, scroll satchel.

Kuni Tomo, paranoid Witch-Hunter.

Takaoka is accompanied by this young woman, a paranoid and fanatical Witch Hunter. Tomo wears her hair tied back in a painfully severe braid, and her usual expression is an angry scowl. She suffers from a tendency to see Bloodspeakers under every rock and twig. PCs who have played the adventure *To Do What We Must* may have encountered Tomo and her paranoia before.

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

TN to be Hit: 10

School/Rank: Kuni Witch-Hunter 1

Honor/Glory: 1.8/0.7

Skills: Athletics 3, Herbalism 3, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 4, Law 2, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Lore: Maho 2, Meditation 2, Stealth 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Lost Love/Bad Reputation (paranoid), Driven (to destroy maho).

Equipment: Kimono, daisho set, jade pendant,

Minor Clans:

Kitsune Sanae. A quiet, gentle woman whose eyes show flecks of green amid their dark brown. Sanae wears her hair long and carefully bound up in a maiden's foxtail, and always moves and speaks with complete calm and deliberation. Trained as a Mirumoto bushi, she avoids wearing armor or carrying weapons except when necessary, and spends the rest of her time dressed in formal flowing kimono, armed only with a simple tanto tucked under her obi. Indeed, many have mistaken her for a courtier or shugenja on first encounter. She is here as Kitsune Retsu's protector, and will keep herself close to the boy whenever possible. PCs may have met Sanae in previous Living Rokugan adventures, such as *Lies, Lies, Lies*, and she will react to them according to how they behaved on those occasions.

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Mirumoto bushi 2

Honor/Glory: 2.4/1.3

Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 3, Courtier 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 6, Hand-to-Hand 2, History 3, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Fox clan) 4, Lore (shugenja) 5, Meditation 4, Sincerity 5, Tea Ceremony 3, Yarijutsu 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Balance, Different School (Mirumoto bushi)

Equipment: Fine kimono, hakama, daisho set, tanto.

Kitsune Retsu. This young shugenja (15 years old, just past gempukku) is leaving Fox lands for the first time. He is a handsome youth, although easily startled or embarrassed (especially by pretty women – his bodyguard Sanae can reduce him to flustered stuttering with a single word). His father is Kitsune Iuki, a minor daimyo of the Fox Clan. PCs who have played the adventure *A Chance Meeting* have met Retsu and his father, and he will interact with those PCs according to what they did in that module. (If they exposed the dishonorable secret of the old maho cult in Iuki's lands, Retsu will regard them as enemies.)

FIRE 2	AIR 2
Intelligence 3	Reflexes 3

EARTH 3	WATER 2
VOID 2	

TN to be Hit: 15 (20 with armor)

School/Rank: Kitsune Shugenja 1

Honor/Glory: 1.8/3.0

Skills: Athletics 2, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 1, Defense 2, Herbalism 3, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 2, Meditation 3, Shintao 3, Sincerity 2, Theology 2.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Earth 1) *Earth's Stagnation, Elemental Ward, Hidden Footsteps*, (Air 1) *Nature's Touch, Tempest of Air*, (Water 1) *Heart of Nature*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Position (minor daimyo's heir)/Social Disadvantage (minor Clan)

Equipment: Kimono, wakizashi, scroll satchel.

Moshi Wakiza. Wakiza is the heir to the Centipede Clan daimyo, Moshi Juiko, and PCs may have met her before if they played the adventure *The Falling Darkness*. She is accompanied here by her new Dragon Clan husband, Moshi (formerly Agasha) Fujita. Wakiza is a tall, willowy young woman who normally seems somewhat retiring, but grows wild and joyful when using her magic. Her husband is a restrained man who has learned to accept his wife's eccentric ways.

FIRE 5	AIR 3
	Awareness 4
EARTH 2	WATER 4
Willpower 3	
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Moshi Shugenja 2

Honor/Glory: 2.3/3.8

Skills: Athletics 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 2, Etiquette 2, History 4, Lore: Amaterasu 4, Meditation 3, Shintao 5, Tea Ceremony 1, Tessen 2, Theology 4.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Fire 1) *Amaterasu's Blessing* (1st Edition), *Fires of Purity, The Fires That Cleanse, Wings of Fire*, (Fire 2) *Amaterasu's Anger* (1st Edition), *Light of Amaterasu, The Fires From Within*, (Fire 3) *Heart of the Inferno*, (Fire 4) *Essence of Fire, The Rays of Amaterasu*, (Air 1) *Tempest of Air*, (Air 2) *Call Upon the Wind*, (Air 3) *Essence of Air*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Clear Thinker, Perfect Balance, Social Position (clan daimyo's heir)/Social Disadvantage (minor clan).

Equipment: Kimono, scroll satchel, tessen (0k2).