

Winter Court: Kyuden Bayushi

This adventure is designed to run as an Interactive, in essence a LARP (Live Action Role-Playing) event, in which the players portray their characters directly for much of the time. There will also be the opportunity for a few of the players to run their characters through a mini-adventures (“The White Ninja”) which will be done in the normal table-top style. The total event should, if possible, be run in a five-hour time slot to give the players the maximum time to accomplish their goals. Running longer than five hours is generally counter-productive, due to fatigue.

We encourage conventions which run this event to incorporate additional “flavor” elements, such as costumes, authentic props, or catered Japanese food. These will add considerably to the experience of the adventure.

Restrictions on Player Actions

During the Interactive, all players and judges should observe the following restrictions and guidelines in order to ensure that the event runs smoothly.

- **No Touching.** Touching in public is a major Rokugani taboo, and should be observed in play. Any player who willingly touches another automatically loses a point of Honor. Repeated offenses can result in the expulsion of the player from the Interactive.
- **Resolving Events.** Players should seek, whenever possible, to resolve their interactions through role-play rather than by rolling dice. If a player absolutely wishes to perform an action that requires rolling dice, s/he should seek out one of the event judges to have their action adjudicated.
- **Making Purchases.** Players may spend Koku to purchase items from the Taka’s Treasures booth. PCs cannot combine their money to make purchases, and the judge who plays Yasuki Taka reserves the right to refuse sales to anyone who displeases him. Yasuki Taka may opt to give certain players a 1-koku discount on the price of an item, if that player has done something to earn Taka’s favor.

Judges

It is recommended that there should be two judges for the Interactive, a “chief judge” and a “secondary judge.”

The **chief judge** should play the role of an impartial Imperial Historian, and is in charge of monitoring the overall Interactive, and of resolving any specific actions or plots which the players may put in motion. At the end of the Interactive, the chief judge should compile all the treaties, alliances, wars, and other results of the Winter Court, and hand out any certs for negotiated marriages and gifts.

The **secondary judge** plays the role of the NPC Yasuki Taka, and is in charge of pursuing Taka's various personal goals (see the "Yasuki Taka" character sheet near the end of this document) and of running a few PCs through the "White Ninja" mini-adventure.

Getting Ready

The PCs and NPCs have gathered at Kyuden Bayushi, the capital of the Scorpion territories, for the Emperor's Winter Court. A large number of vital diplomatic matters face them for the winter. In addition, many players will wish to pursue their own personal goals.

At the beginning of the Interactive, all players and NPCs should be given a copy of the document "Major Issues in Question for the Winter Court" (farther down in this file) which explains the current political and military situation in the Empire. In addition, each PC and NPC should be given a copy of their Clan's objective sheet (these are in separate files, labeled by Clan, along with the various NPC character sheets).

PCs and NPCs are free to ask the chief judge to let them inspect the certs for the brides and gifts which they can use for negotiations.

- Ronin PCs do not receive a Clan objective sheet. They are here on their own, and must choose their own path.
- Crab PCs and Unicorn PCs must choose which faction of their respective Clan civil wars they are supporting. Likewise, Dragon PCs from the Agasha family must choose whether they are "Dissidents" (followers of Agasha Gennai) or "Loyalists" (followers of Agasha Tamori).

NPCs

There are a total of 13 NPCs, plus Yasuki Taka and the chief judge/Imperial Historian, which are needed to properly run this Interactive. Character sheets for these NPCs are included with the Clan objective sheets for each faction.

- Kuni Yori, daimyo of the Kuni family (Crab loyalists).
- Doji Hoturi, Crane Clan Champion.
- Agasha Gennai, leader of the Agasha dissidents.
- Mirumoto Yukihera, acting daimyo of the Mirumoto family (Dragon loyalists).
- Matsu Tsuko, Champion of the Lion Clan.
- Isawa Akei, Jade Champion (Phoenix Clan).
- Bayushi Kachiko (Shosuro), Scorpion Clan matron, hostess of the Winter Court (minion of the Living Darkness).
- Shinjo Shono, son of Shinjo Yokatsu (Unicorn Clan, Yokatsu faction).
- Otaku Taro, Emerald Champion (Unicorn Clan, Shinjo faction).
- Seppun Baka, Imperial Advisor (Imperial families).

- Yoritomo, Champion of the Mantis Clan (Yoritomo Alliance).
- Ryosei, Daimyo of the Fox Clan (Yoritomo Alliance).

SPECIAL CASE: Hantei the 39th, Emperor of Rokugan. The Emperor makes only two brief appearances, and can be played by someone who is normally filling another role. No character sheet is provided for him.

Chronology

The Interactive takes place over the course of the Winter Court – between two and three months of “game time.”

At the beginning of the Interactive, Seppun Baka appears before the court and announces the presence of the Son of Heaven, Emperor Hantei the 39th. The Emperor should make a brief speech welcoming everyone to the Winter Court and thanking the Scorpion Clan for serving as hosts. The Emperor then withdraws.

The Gift-Giving

About halfway through the Interactive, Seppun Baka should make an announcement: the Emperor will be pleased to receive gifts from the Clans, in ten minutes. After ten minutes, the Emperor should appear. Each Clan and faction then has a chance to offer a gift of some sort to the Emperor. This is intended as an exercise in role-playing and creativity, and a chance for the Clans to try to “show up” and manipulate each other.

Conclusion

At the end of the Winter Court, each Clan should be given a chance to publicly announce any open alliances, treaties, wars, or other agreements.

All PCs who participate in the Interactive earn 2 XP. PCs who play the mini-adventure “The White Ninja” earn 1 additional XP. Honor and Glory awards may also be made, and the discretion of the judges.

Major Issues in question for the Winter Court

The Wars

The Crab are still engaged in a civil war, “loyalists” (led by Hida Kisada and Kuni Yori) against “rebels” (led by Hida Sukune and Hida O-Ushi). It is believed that the Loyalists have the stronger army. However, no major fighting has been reported since autumn began, and at least some sections of the Kaiu Wall have fallen to Shadowlands forces due to lack of defenders. A Lion army under Matsu Agetoki has been sent to intervene in the civil war, but has not yet fought any major battles; it is currently camped by the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow, on the northern edge of Crab territory. The coastal Yasuki territories have been occupied by Yoritomo’s Alliance.

The Unicorn are also still engaged in a civil war, pitting the “Yokatsu faction” (led by Shinjo Yokatsu) against the “Shinjo faction” (led by the so-called Shinjo Returned). It is believed that the Shinjo faction has the stronger army. Fighting has largely halted for the winter. No other Clan has intervened in this war so far.

The Lion and Phoenix are still at war with the Dragon Clan (and the Dragonfly), although hostilities have halted for the winter. The tide of the war has shifted strongly in favor of the Dragon, due to the disaster in Phoenix lands and the defeat of a major Lion army by Toturi the Black.

The Dragon are technically at war with the Unicorn, having occupied the northeastern Unicorn territories. However, due to the Unicorn civil war, there has been little fighting since the initial invasion.

The Lion and Crane are officially still at peace. After the treaty was signed, a Lion force attacked Shiro Sano Kakita, but was defeated. More recently, at the funeral of Bayushi Shoji, a Crane daimyo lost face and attacked the Lion delegation. The Lion are threatening to resume the war in the spring.

The Miya Daimyo

During the Snow Hare Festival, the Imperial Herald, Miya Satoshi, married Matsu Miako, sister of Matsu Gohei. At the same ceremony, Satoshi’s cousin Miya Yumi married Yoritomo, the daimyo of the Mantis Clan. Shortly after the ceremonies concluded, however, the Miya castle was attacked by a band of ronin, possibly led by Toturi the Black. Satoshi and many of his followers were killed.

There is now an open question as to who should succeed Satoshi to the post of Miya daimyo and Imperial Herald. Yumi asserts that, as Satoshi’s closest blood relative, she should inherit the position. However, the Lion point out that her marriage to Yoritomo makes her a Mantis, and no longer a valid heir. They claim that the post should go to Satoshi’s widow, Miya (formerly Matsu) Miako.

The Governor of the Karada District

Hida Reitaan, the governor of the Karada District of Ootosan Uchi, has died without heir. Accordingly, the Emperor must appoint a new governor. This is a most prestigious position, and the Clan which can claim it will be greatly elevated in the courts.

Yasuki Taka, Crab Clan Merchant

FIRE 2 Intelligence 4	AIR 3 Awareness 6
EARTH 2	WATER 2 Perception 5
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Yasuki Merchant 5

Honor/Glory: 1.2/2.7

Skills: Acting 5, Bard 5, Bojutsu 2, Commerce 9, Courtier 7, Etiquette 4, Gambling 6, Heraldry 5, Sincerity 8, Stealth 4

Advantages/Disadvantages: Absolute Direction, Blackmail (you don't want to know how many), Clear Thinker, Luck (rank 1), Read Lips, Voice/Dark Secrets (Kolats, enemy of the Kolats), Small

Appearance: Taka is the epitome of the “greasy merchant,” a skinny man who is always perpetually smiling, rubbing his hands together, and counting his many koku. He dresses simply, more like a peasant than a samurai.

Personality/Background: Taka is the daimyo of the Yasuki family, and made his fortune on the high-quality sake which he brews in his home village. He travels all over the Empire, usually bringing along a merchant's cart loaded with expensive trinkets. He is always alert for an opportunity to make more koku. Taka is somewhat nervous and cowardly, but can screw up his courage to act when he has to. He prefers to work through others whenever there is danger involved.

Beneath his harmless exterior, Taka has many depths. He is a high-ranking member of the Kolats, and at the same time one of the Kolats's greatest enemies. He secretly runs anti-Kolats operations through his huge network of contacts and allies, while at the same time serving the Kolats loyally, never letting them guess that he is their enemy.

Goals: Taka's **primary goal** here is to begin to move against the Kolats. The Kolats's decision to support Hida Kisada's faction in the Crab civil war is the final straw. The Kolats believes that this will create a climate of chaos and fear in which they will be able to advance their goals. Taka, however, fears that the only result will be to unleash the power of the Shadowlands into the Empire. Therefore, he has decided it is time to begin taking active steps against the Kolats.

During the course of this interactive, you must try to contact as many “Owned by the Kolats” PCs as possible. Establish once and for all where their true loyalties lie – with the Empire, or with the Kolats. If they choose the Empire, replace their Kolats cert with an “Agent of Yasuki Taka” cert. If they choose the Kolats, try to arrange for them to be dishonored or killed.

Your **secondary goal** is to recruit help for the mini-mission “The White Ninja.” You have learned that Matsu Hiroru, the so-called White Ninja, is based in a nearby town, masquerading as a ronin during the day while he investigates Shadow activities in this area at night. The Kolat has decided to eliminate Hiroru – he has disrupted too many of its operations – and has dispatched a team of assassins (masquerading as a traveling theater troupe) to kill him.

You must recruit a group of 4 or 5 highly capable samurai (or combat-oriented shugenja) to disrupt this assassination attempt. Your excuse for sending them will be a “rumor” you have heard, that an assassin from another Clan is hiding in the theater troupe and plans to strike at the Winter Court after their next performance. “No doubt the assassin will blame the crime on some local patsy, such as a ronin, who will be murdered in turn in order to conceal all evidence. That is the usual way that such things are done.”

If any of your recruits are reformed Kolats (recruited as per your second goal), you can warn them of the true situation, and emphasize the need to protect the ronin who is staying in the village.

Side Note: The Crab Civil War. Due to these recent events, Taka has decided to secretly support the Sukune rebel faction of the Crab civil war. Taka knows that the leader of the rebels, Hida Sukune, has fallen deathly ill and may not live out the winter. Therefore, although the Yasuki remain officially neutral, Taka will offer as much covert political and financial support as possible to the rebels, and will assist any Clan or faction which supports them.

The White Ninja

This mini-mission sends the PCs to the nearby town of Usomura, a sizable hub-village located about ten miles from Kyuden Bayushi. (In winter, it takes half a day of tough hiking to get there.) A traveling theater troupe, Sakura no Hitomi (“Vision of Cherry Blossoms”) has just arrived in the town and is planning a performance of “Oni’s Teeth and Lover’s Bridge” a minor farcical comedy about the adventures of Riko and Okami, a pair of lovers who lived in Ryoko Owari centuries ago. It is a light-hearted, slapstick crowd pleaser. However, the “actors” are actually a Kolat assassination team, and their real goal is to kill Matsu Hiroru, the “White Ninja,” who is staying in the town in the guise of a ronin.

The PCs are sent to Usomura by Yasuki Taka, who tells them he has heard a rumor from his commercial sources that an assassin is hiding in the ranks of the theater troupe. He suggests that the assassins might try to murder a ronin and frame him for their assassination attempt – this is his way of “nudging” the PCs into watching any ronin in the town.

The Town of Usomura

Usomura is a large village of about 1,500 people. Most of the buildings are concentrated into four main streets near a small tributary river which irrigates the rice fields. Now, in winter, the river is crisped with ice and the fields are white with snow. The town itself is busy and prosperous, however, as it benefits from the traffic flowing into Kyuden Bayushi for the Winter Court. It boasts a large inn (the House of the Green Lantern), a geisha house, several tea-houses and restaurants, and a couple of gambling dens. There is also a full selection of artisan’s businesses – blacksmithy, carpenter, silk works, sake brewery, and so forth.

Usomura is administered by a samurai family (of the Bayushi) which lives in a large residence on the northern side of town, well back from the main road and sheltered behind a walled garden. They mostly hold aloof from the town, and leave the business of law enforcement in the hands of the local doshin (armed peasant), a sturdy fellow named Atoji. He will greet any visitors to the town, politely asking for their travel papers “on behalf of my master, Bayushi Korotika.”

- If the PCs ask about the theater troupe, Atoji will say that “the famed troupe Sakura no Hitomi is camping in the town square in between performances.”
- If the PCs ask about ronin, Atoji will admit that a couple of wave-men are staying at the House of the Green Lantern. “We haven’t had any trouble with them.”

The Inn of the Green Lantern

As its name implies, the House boasts a large lantern with green-tinted paper outside its front door. The inn is a two-story building with a second one-story structure behind, connected by a covered walkway. The innkeeper, Yomaso, is a plump and prosperous

middle-aged man and a faithful servant of the Scorpion Clan (he will readily cooperate with any Scorpion or Scorpion-allied PCs).

There are two ronin staying at the inn: Matsu Hiroru (under the name “Gojita”) and a Crane on a warrior’s pilgrimage named Shingen, formerly of the Kakita.

Hiroru/Gojita dresses as shabbily and grubbily as possible, goes unwashed and unshaven, and sits in the corner drinking sake (faking, he really just sips a little and dumps the rest). He wears no armor. His swords are of high quality and, while externally dirty, are clearly well cared-for.

“Gojita” will be sullen and hostile to any PCs who approach him, but PCs who make **Contested Awareness** can tell that he is actually very alert and watching them carefully. He will not identify himself to the PCs, but if they played through “Damning Evidence” successfully, he will recognize them and take a slightly more friendly attitude toward them (without actually revealing his identity).

- If PCs ask him why he is in the area, he says he is “just passing through, looking for work.”
- PCs who are brazen enough to search his room will find nothing of interest. (He keeps the “white ninja” outfit hidden outside the town.)

Shingen is a pleasant young man, formerly a Crane, on a quest to track down Toturi, the fallen Akodo. He knows that Toturi has the Bloodsword Passion, and believes that if he finds Toturi and tells him the truth, he can save him. He will share this information only with those who strike him as very honorable. Currently, he has heard rumors that Toturi’s army is in Crab lands, so he is heading that direction.

The Sakura no Hitomi Theater Troupe

The theater troupe is camped in the town’s main square, in three large silk tents covered in colorful bunting. A “stage” has been set up at one end of the square by putting up two posts and stretching a silk curtain between them. Two wagons, parked to one side, hold the troupe’s supplies and gear when they aren’t traveling (the ponies are stabled elsewhere in town).

The theater troupe consists of four actors (two men, two women), three musicians, and two stagehands/laborers. The actors are samurai (Kakita trained), while the others are commoners. All of these people are actually Kolat operatives. The four actors were recruited by Doji Akae, the Kolat master moneylender, and formed their theater troupe for the express purpose of traveling around the Empire to perform assassinations. They are skilled deceivers – in order to see through them, the PCs will need to overcome their **Acting/Awareness** with their own **Investigation/Perception** or **Ichi Miru/Awareness**.

Doji Someita, Handsome Actor: This elegant, handsome, almost beautiful man keeps his hair shaved short to facilitate wearing various wigs, masks, and other stage props. His every movement and word is a study in grace and perfection. He is the head

of the troupe, and claims to be traveling through the Empire to fulfill the Crane Clan's ideal of bringing art and beauty to the common people. He always carries a pair of razor-sharp poisoned knives inside his obi, although he will not use them unless desperate.

Kakita Yukiko, Lovely Actress: The lead actress of the troupe is the Rokugani feminine ideal – small, gentle, delicate, beautiful, perfect in every way. Her hair is long, stretching halfway to the ground, and is worn undyed to facilitate her acting. While on-stage, she inhabits her roles perfectly, mastering every emotion and personality. (In the current play, she is Riko, the wife.) Off-stage, she is shy and effeminate, blushing and mincing delicately. She is an accomplished seductress, and if the Kolat becomes suspicious of the PCs, she will try to seduce and compromise one of them – whichever seems the most likely and effective target. She conceals wire garrotes in her hair, where they are always available.

Kakita Takoto, Bluff Actor: Takoto is a large, muscular, shaggy-haired man, and takes on the “brute” roles in the troupe's plays: Crab bushi, Lion thugs, dull-witted ronin, peasant bruisers, and so forth. (In the current play, he is Okami, the foolish Crab husband.) He is actually quite intelligent and erudite, and enjoys surprising people with this when off-stage. He is also a cold-blooded killer who enjoys taking life with his bare hands, although he tries his best to conceal this side of his nature.

Asahina Arisu, Tomboyish Actress: Arisu is a short, compact, athletic girl who wears her hair in a brief crop. She is in her mid-twenties but looks ten years younger. On stage, she usually plays children, young men, brash samurai-ko, and other such roles. Like Yukiko, she is an accomplished seductress, targeting anyone who seems more vulnerable to her tomboyish ways than to Yukiko's femininity. She is also a formidable acrobat, a talented swordswoman, and a pitiless killer.

Kimo, Takui, and Hisae: Musicians. These three Kolat ninja (a man and two women) all carry weapons beneath their kimono. During the day, they normally hold back and play the parts of loyal, supportive commoners. At night, they serve as forward scouts for the assassination team.

Yota and Domotai, stagehands: These two heavy-set men are Kolat thugs, and normally do not participate in assassinations, instead remaining behind to guard the encampment. If the camp comes under attack they will, of course, fight to the best of their ability.

The Encampment

There are three tents in the encampment. Yukiko and Arisu stay in one tent, Someita and Takoto in another, and the “commoners” in the third. The tents are normally lit by lanterns hanging from the center posts – these are extinguished about an hour after the performance concludes, as the troupe ostentatiously “retires for the evening.”

Superficially, everything in the camp is normal – the actor's tents contain futons, racks with costumes and wigs, folding tables with cosmetics and make-up, props (fake

weapons, oni masks, etc), and so forth. However, if the PCs manage to search the traveling trunks in the actors' tents, they can roll Investigation/Perception at TN 20 to discover hidden compartments. These contain bottles of poison, needles, extra weapons, papers in Kolat cipher, and other damning evidence. (Remember, the two stagehand thugs will remain at the encampment at all times, so the PCs will have to be stealthy or ruthless to search the area without sounding the alarm.)

The Play

If the PCs attend the play, it is held that evening, and is a rousing success. The troupe puts up colored lanterns all around the stage, and the villagers crowd into the square, chatting and socializing, warming themselves around a pair of large bonfires. Local tea-houses bring out trays of hot sake, tea, snacks and sweets to cater to the crowd, and do a brisk business. This is only the second performance of the play since the troupe came to town, and most of the crowd have not seen it yet – they enjoy themselves immensely, laughing and applauding throughout.

Both of the ronin attend the play. If the PCs watch carefully and roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 25, they can catch the fact that one of the musicians, Kimo, looks intently at “Gojita,” then makes a minute nod at Kakita Someita, motioning with her eyes at the ronin. There is no other sign from the troupe, which completes the play flawlessly.

The Assassination Attempt

That night, the assassins will invade the inn, attempting to slay Hiroru before he can leave on another reconnaissance mission. If the PCs have been waiting for this, they may be able to set an ambush, or launch a counter-attack. If they tried to warn the “White Ninja,” Hiroru will simply leave earlier in the evening, leaving the assassins to strike at an empty room.

Aggressive PCs may decide to invade the troupe's encampment, or sneak in looking for proof of their true nature. Regardless, once the PCs start taking serious action, the Kolat will attempt to slaughter all of them in order to leave no clues.

If Hiroru is attacked, he will fight to the best of his considerable ability, but will always attempt to flee a losing battle. If he survives, he will quietly thank the PCs and ask how they knew he was in danger. It is up to the PCs whether or not to reveal the involvement of Yasuki Taka.

NPC Stats

Doji Someita, Handsome Actor

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Kakita Artisan (actor, rank 3), Kolat Assassin (total Insight rank 4)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 7, Athletics 4, Calligraphy 4, Cipher 7, Courtier 4, Dance 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 6, Jiu-jutsu (Mizu-do) 5, Manipulation 5, Meditation 4, Music 2, Poetry 4, Poison 5, Seduction 5, Shintao 4, Sincerity 7, Stealth 5, Tantojutsu 6.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolats), Apparent Honor (3), Cadence, Clear Thinker, Dangerous Beauty, Heartless, Perfect Balance, Precise Memory/Dark Secret (Kolats).

Equipment: Fine clothing, "ninja" outfit, pair of razor-sharp poisoned knives (2k1 weapons, and inflict an extra 4k4 of poison damage on the first hit).

Kakita Yukiko, Lovely Actress

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Kakita Artisan (actress) 2, Kolat Assassin (total Insight Rank is Four)

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

Steal the Light technique: May take two Raises on an attack roll to deliver an attack (with a weapon or hand-to-hand) which keeps only one die of damage, but leaves the opponent either deaf, dumb, or mute for a number of minutes equal to the assassin's Water ring.

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 7, Athletics 5, Calligraphy 3, Cipher 5, Courtier 4, Dance 6, Defense 4, Etiquette 6, Jiu-jutsu (Mizu-do) 5, Manipulation 3, Meditation 4, Music 3, Ninjutsu (garrote) 6, Poetry 3, Poison 3, Seduction 8, Sincerity 6, Stealth 5, Tantojutsu 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolats), Apparent Honor (3), Cadence, Dangerous Beauty, Quick, Read Lips/Dark Secret (Kolats), Small.

Equipment: Various fine clothing, plus a "ninja" outfit. Concealed wire garrote (0k2 damage, Contested Strength to break free).

Kakita Takoto, Bluff Actor

FIRE 4	AIR 4
Agility 5	

EARTH 4	WATER 4
Willpower 5	
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Kolat Assassin (Insight Rank Four)

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

Steal the Light technique: May take two Raises on an attack roll to deliver an attack (with a weapon or hand-to-hand) which keeps only one die of damage, but leaves the opponent either deaf, dumb, or mute for a number of minutes equal to the assassin's Water ring.

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 6, Athletics 6, Cipher 5, Courtier 4, Dance 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 4, Jiu-jutsu (Kobo Ichi-Kai) 6, Lore (theater) 4, Meditation 4, Music 3, Poetry 3, Shintao 4, Sincerity 4, Stealth 5, Theology 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolats), Apparent Honor (2), Hands of Stone, Heartless, Large/Cruel, Dark Secret (Kolats).

Equipment: Various clothing, "ninja" outfit.

Asahina Arisu, Tomboyish Actress

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

TN to be Hit: 25 (30 with light armor)

School/Rank: Kakita Duelist 3, Kolat Assassin (total Insight Rank is 4)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 7, Athletics 8, Calligraphy 3, Cipher 3, Courtier 4, Dance 7, Defense 6, Etiquette 4, Jiu-jutsu (Mizu-do) 5, Kenjutsu 6, Meditation 3, Music 2, Poison 3, Seduction 7, Sincerity 5, Stealth 6.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolats), Apparent Honor (2), Ambidextrous, Heartless, Perfect Balance, Quick/Dark Secret (Kolats).

Equipment: Various fine clothing, suit of night-blackened light armor, fine wakizashi (2k2 damage).

Kimo, Takui, and Hisae: Musicians

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Kolat Assassins (Insight rank 1)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Athletics 4, Cipher 2, Climbing 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Hisomu 4, Jiu-jutsu (hand-to-hand) 4, Locksmith 3, Music 6, Poison 4, Stealth 4, Tantojutsu 5.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolats), Crafty/Dark Secret (Kolats).

Equipment: Clothing, "ninja" outfits, sharp tanto (2k2).

Yota and Domotai, stagehands

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: None (commoners)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

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

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

Equipment: Clothing, tanto (2k1)

Matsu Hiroru, the “White Ninja”

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

TN to be Hit: 25 (40 when wearing White Ninja outfit)

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 4

Honor/Glory: 1.2/1.5

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

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

Equipment: As “Gojita the ronin,” Hiroru wears a grubby kimono and carries a daisho set (the blades are of Fine quality, +1 unkept damage die each). If he manages to sneak into the forest and retrieve his “White Ninja” outfit, he gets the following benefits: +15 to TN to be hit, +10 to rolls to resist Shadow Corruption, cannot be seen by anyone with 3 or more points of Shadow Corruption unless he wishes to be, and can spend a Void point to “go chameleon” and fade into the landscape (Hunting/Perception at TN 30 to spot him in this state).

Crab Loyalists

Your primary goal here is to discredit the Crab rebels and restore the loyalists' status as the undisputed proper rulers of the Crab Clan. Hida Kisada is preparing to hire the ronin Toturi the Black in order to crush the rebels once and for all in the spring. All we need do is ensure that the other Clans step aside and leave our internal affairs alone. In particular, we need to focus on the Lion Clan, whose troops are on our border and are supposed to "intervene."

In persuading the other Clans to leave us alone to settle our affairs with Sukune, our strongest point should be that Sukune's rebellion was undertaken at the word of four outsiders (a Phoenix, a Dragon, a Scorpion, and a ronin). Clearly, he could only have taken their word over that of his father if he was already looking for an excuse to rebel.

Crab rebels: We must find a way to discredit and dishonor the Crab rebels at this Winter Court, so that their words will carry no weight. Unfortunately, we have been able to gain little leverage against them on our own. Perhaps the Scorpion Clan may be able to assist us in dishonoring them.

Crane Clan: The Crane are desperate for allies, due to their troubles with the Lion Clan. We may be able to offer them the assistance they need. Perhaps a promise of later military support, or the services of Toturi the Black, in exchange for their support in the courts? The Crane have previously spoken of intervention in our internal affairs, and we know that certain Daidoji merchants have sent support to Sukune – this must stop. We also know that the Crane are angry that a Unicorn holds the office of Emerald Champion – perhaps this will offer us an opportunity.

Dragon Clan: Mirumoto Yukihera intends to seek diplomatic support this winter for making his battlefield victories permanent. We can certainly offer our support for this venture in return for his assistance in discrediting the rebels. We can also offer him our support in any measures he takes against the foolish so-called Agasha dissidents.

Lion Clan: The Lion army on our border must be withdrawn, or at the very least, must pledge to make no further advance against us. Make it clear to the Lion that while we have no desire to fight them, we have more than sufficient strength to crush their army along with Sukune's rebels.

Phoenix Clan: The Phoenix are weak and desperate now. We need not concern ourselves with them, except insofar as we can bully them into fulfilling our needs.

Scorpion Clan: The Scorpion offer many opportunities for us. They are threatened by the Lion, just as we are, and will certainly understand our desire to tend to our own internal affairs, since they have a strong tradition of doing the same. We have reason to believe that they may be interested in joining forces with us at this Winter Court. We

may be able to arrange a joint stand against the threat from the Lion, perhaps even enlisting the Crane as well.

Unicorn Clan: Of the two Unicorn factions, the more promising appears to be the Yokatsu faction, which is trying to improve its relations with the Crane, just as we are. They, like the Crane, are unhappy with the current Emerald Champion. The “Shinjo” faction, on the other hand, is not to be trusted – their most prominent representative, the Emerald Champion, is deeply hostile to us, and we should support any efforts by the other Clans to disgrace or remove him.

Minor Clans: The Mantis Clan has occupied the lands of the Yasuki. At present we do not have the strength to do anything about this, but we should make it clear that if they remain there once we have won the war, they will suffer dearly. A wise leader would leave now, and gain our favor.

Imperial Families: The Imperial House seems quite hostile to us, and will no doubt oppose our efforts this winter. We will have no choice but to work around their machinations, while publicly professing our loyalty. Once the war is won and Sukune is defeated, there will be plenty of time to deal with the Hantei.

Kuni Yori, daimyo of the Kuni family

Glory 7.8

Personality: Sinister, Menacing, Clever, Knowledgeable, Malicious, Loyal, Ruthless, Overconfident.

Motivations: Serve Hida Kisada, Crush Kisada's enemies, Conceal his Taint

Notable Advantages/Disadvantages: Shadowlands Taint

Goals: Kuni Yori believes he is loyally serving the needs of his lord Hida Kisada. Unfortunately, in the course of doing this, he has become deeply Tainted and has begun to drift down the path of evil. Yori refuses to recognize this – he believes he has his Taint under control, and has learned a Shadowlands Gift which allows him to conceal his Taint from others (purely so can continue to serve Lord Kisada, of course).

- **The Civil War:** It is true that you sought an alliance with the Shadowlands. However, you did this at Hida Kisada's orders, with the goal of using the Shadowlands forces to seize control of the Empire, and then turning on them to crush them forever. The fool Sukune could not see the truth of this, and is threatening to cripple your Clan with his rebellion. He must be crushed at all costs. Of course, the rest of the Empire will not understand or approve of your actions. In order to protect the Crab Clan, you must steadfastly deny any alliance with the Shadowlands, and must destroy any support for Sukune's rebellion. In particular, you must block Sukune's continuing attempts to persuade the other Clans to intervene in the internal affairs of the Crab.
- **The Lion Army:** the Lion have moved an army to the border of your lands, threatening to intervene directly. Those troops must be withdrawn. Otherwise, you will be forced to take action to destroy them, by employing the magic of the Black Scroll in your possession. If the Lion have not agreed to withdraw by winter's end, you will unleash the Scroll.
- **Hida Yakamo:** Kisada's eldest son has, unfortunately, fallen under the Taint. You have kept him in isolation while you try to find a way to control his corruption – if his fate became public knowledge, it would badly weaken morale in the ranks of the loyal Crab.

Crab rebels:

We have gained modest support from the other Clans in our struggle against Kisada's treachery. The Crane have smuggled aid to us, and the Lion have moved an army to the border. Unfortunately, in other respects our struggle has gone poorly. Our leader Sukune is deathly ill, and his sister O-Ushi is with child, leaving us without an experienced field commander. Furthermore, our armies are still outnumbered by Kisada's forces, and the legions of the Shadowlands continue to cross the wall and ravage our territory while leaving Kisada all but untouched. We must conceal these weaknesses, lest our potential allies desert us.

We must also block any diplomatic activities by the Kisada so-called "loyalists." In this regard, we have learned some useful information. First, Hida Kisada's son Yakamo has not been seen in months – the absence of such a mighty warrior from the battlefield raises many questions. Could it be that he does not support his father's activities? Second, we know that Kisada is negotiating with Toturi the Black to hire his ronin force for the spring fighting. This will surely be of interest to some of the other Clans, especially the Lion.

Crane Clan: The Crane have been offering us covert support. Since they are unlikely to be able to offer more than that, we should be grateful, and give them what help we can. In particular, we should seek their help in gaining leverage against the Lion.

Dragon Clan: We have no position on the Dragon Clan's wars, which are far away from us. It is unlikely that we can find help here, although it cannot hurt to try.

Lion Clan: The Lion have moved an army to our borders, speaking of intervention. But they seem reluctant to commit to battle. Why could this be? We must remind the Lion of their courage, and convince them to join the battle and defeat Kisada.

Phoenix Clan: The Phoenix have suffered a dreadful disaster and are unlikely to be able to offer us much help, nor do we have the resources to assist them. Nevertheless, since they have so recently suffered from the power of Jigoku, they may be understanding of our quest, and willing to at least offer us some diplomatic support.

Scorpion Clan: The Scorpion have held aloof so far from our war as well as the other conflicts in the Empire. This winter may be our chance to finally convince them to take action. To do so, however, we will have to block any possibility of a war between the Scorpion and the Lion.

Unicorn Clan: The Emerald Champion, who hails from the Unicorn "Shinjo" faction, openly favors us. Perhaps we can use this to our advantage. The "Yokatsu" faction has so far shown no interest in helping us, and is hostile to the Emerald Champion, so we should probably support the "Shinjo" faction.

Minor Clans: The Mantis have occupied the Yasuki lands and show no interest in leaving. Perhaps we can offer them some sort of permanent concession there in return for their support in the civil war.

Imperial Families: The actions of Kisada seem to have ruined the Emperor's faith in the line of Hida. We must prove that there are a few Hida, at least, who can still be trusted to serve the Empire. Improving our relations with the Crane and Mantis should be helpful in this regard. Perhaps also we can persuade the Emperor to let one of our own become the new governor of the capital's Karada District, where we can demonstrate our honor and loyalty.

Crane Clan:

Our primary goal is to prevent a resumption of our war with the Lion Clan. Whether or not that is possible, we must also secure allies so that the Lion will be less likely to move against us in the future. The Lion will certainly try to humiliate us over the deeds of Doji Takashi, who dishonored himself at the funeral of Bayushi Shoji. However, we should remind all in the courts that Takashi was executed for his crime by Doji Hoturi himself. Furthermore, it was the Lion who broke the truce between our Clans, attacking without provocation at Shiro Sano Kakita. (Lion claims that they were deliberately lured into the attack should be dismissed as the feeble lies that they are.)

We are not happy with the ascension of Otaku Taro to the office of Emerald Champion, especially since he took the life of our revered sensei Kakita Toshimoko in the Emerald Tournament. Perhaps we may be able to assemble support to petition the Emperor to remove him from office – he can hardly fulfill his duties when he is distracted by a civil war among his own people, and one who kills in a non-lethal tournament is hardly suited to maintain the Emperor's laws.

Crab Clan: Sukune's rebels have sought our assistance, claiming that Hida Kisada is allied with the Shadowlands. Indeed, some in the Daidoji family have been secretly arranging financing and support for Sukune. However, given that Sukune's faction seems the weaker of the two, it may have been unwise to commit ourselves so totally. Let us see what Hida Kisada's loyalists have to offer us this winter.

Dragon Clan: Since the Dragon are at war with the Lion, they may be a good choice for allies. We must see what they want and how we can assist them. If nothing else, keeping them at war with the Lion will ensure that the Lion are less likely to attack us.

Lion Clan: We know that the Lion have suffered heavy losses in the last two years of war – heavier than they wish to admit. They do not have the strength to fight all their enemies at once. By making sure that they cannot avoid fighting one of their other enemies, such as the Dragon or the Scorpion, we can ensure that they will have to accept continued peace with us. We also know that the Lion will seek to place Miya Miako (formerly Matsu Miako) in the office of Imperial Herald – no doubt we can use this to our advantage.

Phoenix Clan: The Phoenix will no doubt be seeking peace, an end to their war with the Dragon, and help in rebuilding their Clan from the recent catastrophe. All of this should provide us with fine diplomatic opportunities.

Scorpion Clan: The Lion have been threatening war with the Scorpion for over a year. Perhaps now is the time to push them into it. And with a war on their hands, the Scorpion will not be able to cause us as much trouble in the courts... perhaps they will even need our help.

Unicorn Clan: The Unicorn are divided, and we have not yet decided which faction to support. However, among the most prominent members of the “Shinjo” faction is Otaku Taro, the new Emerald Champion, who slew our revered sensei Kakita Toshimoko in order to ascend to his current position, and who spurned our Clan to marry a Dragon. The “Yokatsu” faction will surely be interested in supporting our efforts against Taro. Let us see whether this leads to more fruitful negotiations.

Minor Clans: Improving our relations with the Mantis would seem to be a good idea, since they are now strongly in favor with the Imperial House. In particular, we might wish to support the appointment of Yoritomo’s wife to the leadership of the Miya family.

Imperial Families: The Lion intend to seek the post of Imperial Herald for Miya Satoshi’s widow, Miya Miako, formerly of the Matsu. We should oppose this, since it would leave the post in the control of the Lion Clan. Yoritomo’s wife, the former Miya Yumi, would be a far better choice.

Doji Hoturi, Doji Family daimyo, Champion of the Crane Clan

Glory 9.0

Personality: Handsome, Flirtatious, Stylish, Well-Spoken, Eloquent, Proud, Infatuated (with Kachiko).

Motivations: Please his lover Bayushi Kachiko, protect the Crane Clan.

Notable Advantages/Disadvantages: Benten's Blessing, Luck, Kharmic Tie (Kachiko), Cadance, True Love (Bayushi Kachiko).

Goals: You are in love with Bayushi Kachiko. At the funeral of her husband, Shoji, she resumed her ten-year-old relationship with you, swearing that she had loved you all along and that only duty to her Clan prevented her from seeing you. Now that she is merely the advisor of her son, she is free to be your lover once more.

You will do almost anything that Kachiko wants or asks. You trust her implicitly. Only a request which specifically endangers the health and safety of the Crane Clan would make you hesitate.

Other than helping Kachiko, your main goal at this Winter Court is to wreck the name and reputation of Otaku Taro. Kakita Toshimoko was your personal friend, the finest man in all your Clan, and this young upstart slew him with brutal efficiency. Small wonder that the ancestor Kakita has turned his face away from the Clan. Although some in the Clan seek to mend relations with Taro, for the sake of harmony and peace, you find it difficult not to heed the call of vengeance. If an opportunity arises to harm Taro or to remove him from office, you will pursue it with all your energy.

Dragon Clan Loyalists

We have won many glorious victories on the battlefield this year, and our position is strong. However, in order for these victories to last, we must secure them in the courts this winter. Mirumoto Yukihera intends to ask the Emperor to permanently recognize our territorial gains against the Unicorn and Phoenix. In order for the Son of Heaven to grant us his favor, we must persuade other Clans to support us, especially those of great political strength, such as the Crane. It will also be helpful if we can win concessions from one of the Unicorn factions.

Our other goal this winter concerns our treacherous cousins in the Agasha family. We know that their “hosts” in the Iuchi family have told them they cannot remain there past spring. Now is the time to force them to bow their heads and return home in a proper tone of submission and apology. If they do not, make clear to any other Clan which might dare to host them that the Dragon will not tolerate giving shelter to traitors.

With regards to the Agasha, we also intend to petition the Emperor to recognize the renaming of our loyal Agasha after their daimyo, Tamori. This, too, will require the accumulation of political support.

Crab Clan: Mirumoto Yukihera believes that a secret alliance with Hida Kisada and his loyalists might be wise at this time. It seems quite likely that Kisada will win his civil war and crush the rebels, and he will remember those Clans who stood by him in the hour of crisis. The Lion, Crane, and Scorpion have all threatened to intervene against Kisada, so supporting him will give us leverage against those other Clans.

Crane Clan: Although the Crane have not been the best of friends to us, their enmity with the Lion makes them potential allies. We should seek their political support. We know they are unhappy with the current Emerald Champion, a Unicorn from the Shinjo faction – perhaps we and they can ally together with the Yokatsu faction. We might also join forces with them to push the Lion into attacking the Scorpion, giving our Clan a strong bargaining position with the Underhand. And if the Crane rebuff us, we can always make peace with the Lion and encourage them to resume their war with the Crane.

Lion Clan: The Lion have tasted the bitterness of defeat at our hands, and are unlikely to forget it. However, they are also eager to fight the Scorpion and Crane. We can use this to our advantage.

Phoenix Clan: The disaster of recent months leaves the Phoenix in a very weak position, and we should take full advantage of this. Undoubtedly they will seek peace – we should force them to pay a high price, both in the courts and in lands and wealth. We know that they plan to seek the Agasha family to join their Clan – do not allow this, make rejection of the Agasha a price of peace. Warn them, unless they make all concessions that we demand, we will resume our campaign against them in the spring. Of course, if it proves

in our best interests to make peace with the Lion, we will need to accept a truce with the Phoenix – but we should push them as hard as possible, and show no signs of weakness.

Scorpion Clan: The Scorpion have been valuable friends to us in the past, and we should seek to cultivate this relationship further, especially since there are rumors that they may soon be at war with our enemies, the Lion Clan. Should the Lion strike through Beiden Pass, an army of Mirumoto hitting their northern flank would surely give them pause. And remind them, if they are tempted to shelter the Agasha, that we can also switch sides and ally with the Lion against them.

Unicorn Clan: The Unicorn civil war offers us many opportunities. Surely, one of those two factions will be willing to cede the lands we have occupied in exchange for our help against their enemies. It matters not whether we ally with Yokatsu or Shinjo, either will serve our purpose. And of course, if both refuse, it is unlikely that they can muster the strength to fight us and each other at the same time.

Minor Clans: The ambitions of the Mantis Clan are a fair match to our own quest to improve the status of the Dragon Clan. We should make the Mantis see that we and they are worthy allies, standing against the arrogance of the other Clans. Also, the Mantis are strong in the favor of the Imperial House at present, so we should seek their support for our petition to the Emperor.

Mirumoto Yukihera, acting daimyo of the Mirumoto

Glory 8.1

Personality: Aggressive, Proud, Arrogant, Insanely Ambitious, Ruthless, Clever, Unscrupulous

Motivations: Strengthen the Dragon Clan, Enhance his personal power and reputation.

Notable Advantages/Disadvantages: Proud, Cruel, Dark Fate.

Goals: Mirumoto Yukihera is a man consumed by ambition, both personal and for his Clan. He believes he is the man destined to bring the Dragon Clan to true greatness, to make it pre-eminent among all the Clans of the Empire. The disappearance of his cousin Hitomi, the true daimyo of his family, is to him a gift from the Fortunes, destiny working on his behalf. And nothing can be allowed to stand in the way of this destiny. All obstacles must be crushed, all opponents ground into the dust. For him, no power is too corrupt, no ally too dishonorable, no deed too ruthless or cruel. All that matters is the results.

Yukihera has personally dictated the Dragon Clan's goals for the winter, and intends to achieve as many of them as possible. Although ruthless and without conscience, he is not completely impractical, and is willing to settle for most of what he wants, if getting everything proves impossible. However, he will hold out as long as possible, and push things as hard as he can, before backing down by even the tiniest amount.

Yukihera has heard the siren song of the Taint, with its promises of limitless power. Although he has so far rejected such a call, it tempts him more and more as time goes by. Someday soon, he will convince himself to accept it. After all, it would only be for the greater good of the Dragon Clan.

Agasha Dissidents

The Iuchi have informed us that, regrettably, we must leave their lands by spring. Therefore, we must find a new home, and hopefully a permanent one – either returning to the Dragon Clan, or being accepted into another Clan as a fully equal family.

We know that the Dragon leader Mirumoto Yukihera plans to ask the Emperor to recognize his territorial gains against the Unicorn and Phoenix Clans. He will need political support from many Clans for this, especially the Crane and Scorpion. Furthermore, he has no intention of making peace with the Phoenix unless they make abject and total concessions to him this winter. Finally, we also know that Yukihera fully intends to attack us, and whatever Clan shelters us, unless we return to the Clan by spring.

We must use this knowledge to our advantage. We can obstruct and sabotage Yukihera's political goals, unless he allows us back into the Clan with no loss of face. If he still refuses us, we can seek the support of the Phoenix. Even in their desperate state, it is unlikely that they will make concessions on the scale needed to avoid the continuation of the war. And if they cannot avoid a war, the assistance of a new and powerful family may make the difference between survival and defeat. Under such circumstances, even the proud Phoenix may be willing to grant us equal status with the Isawa family.

If none of these plans succeed, we should seek a home in a Clan which either already finds itself at war with the Dragon, or which the Dragon will be unable to attack.

Agasha Gennai, leader of the Agasha dissidents

Glory 6.8

Personality: Serious, Sad, Thoughtful, Honorable, Devout, Worried

Motivations: Find a home for the Agasha.

Goals: Gennai is a well-educated, thoughtful, world-weary man who feels bitterly frustrated at the recent course of events in the Dragon Clan, especially the war with the Lion-Phoenix alliance, which he considers a disaster for all participants. He led the majority of the Agasha family (the so-called “Agasha dissidents”) out of the Dragon Clan last spring in the hope that this dramatic act would force the leadership of his own Clan to see reason and abandon a foolish and unnecessary war. Instead, his act seems only to have strengthened the hand of the militant Dragon leader, Mirumoto Yukihera.

Gennai would very much like to find a way to bring the Agasha back into the Dragon Clan, but he fears that this may be impossible with Yukihera in charge. The Phoenix would surely welcome the Agasha now, but Gennai knows that Yukihera will almost certainly continue the war under such circumstances. Gennai feels himself caught in a trap, and increasingly despairs of finding a way out.

Imperial Families

In your hands is the decision as to which Clan will take over the governance of the Karada district of Ootosan Uchi. Although the Emperor will most likely award the position to that Clan which accumulates the most support from the others, such a Clan must also demonstrate true loyalty to the Hantei dynasty, and a willingness to support our own goals at this Winter Court.

The Emperor is displeased at the many attempts to form large alliances among the Clans, and is especially determined that nothing resembling the infamous “triple alliance” of last year shall come to pass. Therefore, we must disrupt any attempts to form large open alliances.

The Emperor has expressed no opinion as to whether Miya Yumi or Miya Miako should be the heir to the post of Miya daimyo and Imperial Herald. Therefore, in the absence of his divine guidance, we must rely on the considered advice of the Clans. That candidate which can gain the greater show of support among the Clans, clearly, will be the one worthy of the Emperor’s approval and appointment.

Crab Clan: The Emperor no longer trusts the ruling house of the Hida. Neither of these factions is worthy of our support. Let them compete to prove their loyalty, to show how deeply they can grovel and abase themselves.

Crane Clan: Our loyal Left Hand has suffered deeply in the recent war with the Lion. Perhaps it is time that the Imperial favor protect them from further suffering.

Dragon Clan: The Dragon have performed well on the battlefield. However, they must prove themselves in the courts as well before the Son of Heaven will offer any recognition to their conquests. Let us see how well they perform, and how much loyalty they demonstrate.

Lion Clan: Our Emperor’s strong Right Hand remains steadfast and loyal. Their courage should not be allowed to falter now, although it might best be turned elsewhere than against the Crane.

Scorpion Clan: Although our relations with the Scorpion have been good, the Underhand seems to have grown too arrogant and aggressive. Perhaps it is time for a war to show them the importance of humility and caution.

Unicorn Clan: The two Unicorn factions squabble like petty children. The Emperor is most displeased that another of his Clans has fallen into civil war. Let us see whether either of them can offer any excuse for their behavior.

Minor Clans: The Mantis Clan have done a fine job of making amends for their missteps of last winter. However, we are not yet prepared to declare them suited for Great Clan status, nor to grant every wish they might have.

Seppun Baka, Imperial Advisor, senior member of the Seppun Family

Glory 9.0

Personality (Apparent): Simpering, Delicate, Educated, Witty, Venomous, Sickeningly Loyal (to the Hantei)

Motivations (apparent): Serve and strengthen the Hantei dynasty.

Notable Advantages/Disadvantages: Gentry, Social Position, Ear of the Emperor, Shadow Corruption (rank five).

Goals: You are actually Goju Baka, a servant of the Living Darkness, assigned to watch the Emperor as he succumbs to the Shadow and to spread the Shadow's power wherever your influence can reach. Your goals are the Shadow's goals: spread chaos.

In order to advance the goals of the Shadow, war and chaos must reign across the Empire. Peace, goodwill, and alliances must be disrupted, and war must be promoted at every turn. In particular, as many Clans as possible, including the Scorpion and Mantis, must be drawn into the wars of Rokugan. The warmongering of the Lion and Dragon Clans should be especially supported, as well as the aggression of the Crab "loyalists."

Your principle ally in this is Bayushi Kachiko, who is actually Shosuro, among the oldest and most powerful servants of the Living Darkness. Shosuro has seduced Doji Hoturi, the Champion of the Crane, and he will do almost anything for her, as long as it does not openly threaten his own Clan. You should coordinate with Shosuro to use Hoturi to your best advantage.

You also have one specific goal: the **Crystal Tears Dojo**. This secret Shadow-fighting organization is unacceptable to the Lying Darkness. Its members must be disgraced and dishonored, thrown out of their Clans and left to wander the Empire as vulnerable wave-men. (Due to your Shadow abilities, you will automatically know whether any PC is a member of the Crystal Tears Dojo.)

Lion Clan

Our goal this winter is simple: punish our enemies. Sadly, the high price we have paid these last two years to smite our enemies and defend our honor means that, for now, it will be impossible to fight all of our foes at once. Instead, we will have to focus our military strength against one opponent, and use the battlefield of the courts to hold our other enemies at bay. In this regard, placing Miya Miako, the widow of Miya Satoshi and sister of our own Matsu Gohei, in the post of Imperial Herald will be especially important.

Crab Clan: Although we have moved an army to the border of the Crab lands, we must consider most carefully before intervening directly in their civil war. Those troops could be vital to our efforts on other fronts. But, to appear to retreat in the face of threats from Hida Kisada would be a great loss of face. Perhaps we can convince Kisada to make a suitably humble gesture to allow our withdrawal. Also, of course, we must determine what the Emperor's position is on this matter – the Imperial families have encouraged some intervention in the Crab civil war, but have not yet made a specific judgment against either Kisada or Sukune.

Crane Clan: The Crane insulted us grievously at the funeral of Bayushi Shoji, and for that, they should be punished. However, it may not be possible to inflict their chastisement this year. We must not show them weakness, but if it appears that we cannot avoid conflict on another front, let us allow the Crane to get by with an apology.

Dragon Clan: The Dragon used the filthy ronin Toturi the Black against our troops, and their daimyo Yukihera is an arrogant aggressor who oversteps the bounds of his Clan's place in the Empire. We shall have to see whether or not it is possible to continue the war – our troops cannot fight both the Dragon and another – but if nothing else, we should obstruct all that the Dragon attempt in the courts.

Phoenix Clan: Our allies in the Phoenix have suffered greatly, and are likely to abandon us and seek peace with the Dragon. We should try to strengthen their spirits – if they remain firm and defiant, they can win a better peace than if they retreat abjectly. Peace may not be possible if the Dragon are too arrogant, and in that case we must see to it that the Phoenix remain allies at our side.

Scorpion Clan: The Scorpion have defied us for too long. If it is possible for us to make peace with the Crane and Dragon without loss of face, then it may be time at last to punish the lying followers of Bayushi.

Unicorn Clan: The Unicorn civil war has removed them from consideration as a threat. We need pay them no concern militarily. We have no position on their conflict, and will consider offers from either group if they are advantageous to us. However, we are not pleased that the Unicorn upstart Otaku Taro holds the office of Emerald Champion. Taro slew one of our finest sensei, Akodo Kansei, in a duel, and has since demonstrated his

bloodlust again in the Emerald Tournament. Such a murderous barbarian has no place upholding the Emperor's laws.

Minor Clans: We know that the Mantis daimyo, Yoritomo, harbors ambitions of not only elevating his own rabble to Great Clan status, but also of taking control of the Crab Clan, whose ruling family has lost the support of the Divine Hantei. We must oppose such uncouth ambitions. The Crab Clan, whatever dishonor may have befallen them, are still a Great Clan and are not to be usurped by some Minor Clan upstart.

Matsu Tsuko, the Lady of Lions, Champion of the Lion Clan

Glory 8.9

Personality: Fearless, Decisive, Aggressive, Straightforward, Honorable, Proud, Loyal (to the Lion and the Hantei)

Motivations: Strengthen the Lion Clan, Crush the Enemies of the Lion (especially the Crane and Scorpion), Support the Hantei Dynasty.

Notable Advantages/Disadvantages: Death Trance, Leadership, Driven (destroy Crane), Lost Love (Akodo Arasou)

Goals: Your goals are the Lion Clan's goals. The following specific additional considerations apply.

You are painfully aware of how heavy the Lion Clan's military losses have been over the past two years. The Clan needs time to rest and recover its strength. However, if you fight none of your enemies next year, the Lion will lose great face and the glory and respect they have won on the battlefield will melt away. The Crane, especially, will feel that they can now maneuver against the Lion with impunity.

Therefore, the Lion must fight somebody in the coming year. A single opponent can be beaten decisively, maintaining the Clan's face and political strength. This foe must be chosen with care. Although you would dearly like to crush the Crane beneath your heel once again, it may prove to be a better choice to fight the Scorpion, or to punish the Dragon for hiring the filthy ronin Toturi. All that matters is that the Lion not be lured into fighting on multiple fronts again this year.

Phoenix Clan:

Our Clan has been grievously wounded. The Elemental Council is dead, Kyuden Isawa and the Phoenix library is in ruins, and Tainted beasts still stalk our lands. If we are to rebuild, it will not be enough to end our war with the Dragon Clan – we will also need all the help which the other Clans and the Emperor can spare.

The Agasha family is still without a home, for the Unicorn civil war has left them stranded. Let us offer them a place with our Clan. In these dire times, a new shugenja family could be the difference between our salvation and destruction. We can offer them equal status with the Isawa family, and the right to hold seats in the Elemental Council, if only they will join us.

No doubt this decision will anger the Dragon family, and we must have peace with the Dragon if we are to survive. Although we cannot reject the Agasha, we will offer the Dragon almost anything else, including an end to our alliance with the Lion and large territorial concessions. We will even grant them dominion over the Shrine of Jurojin, which has been in the care of our Clan for a thousand years. Surely this will be enough to slake even the bloodlust of Mirumoto Yukihera.

Crab Clan: The Crab civil war leaves it unlikely that they will be able to offer much assistance to our Clan. Nor can we afford to take much interest in their internal struggles now, however suspect might be the activities of Hida Kisada.

Crane Clan: The Crane have often been our friends in the past, and we must appeal now to their generosity and honor. Surely, the fact that we must end our alliance with the Lion will stand in our favor.

Lion Clan: Our Lion allies will no doubt wish to continue the war with the Dragon, despite our desperate situation. We must make our peace without angering the Emperor's Right Hand. Perhaps if we support them in other matters, it will take the sting out of our withdrawal from the alliance.

Scorpion Clan: The Scorpion seem to have good relations with the Dragon, so perhaps we can use them as intermediaries in our negotiations. We must be cautious, though, for the Scorpion will seek their own advantage in such talks. Our Lion allies are hostile to the Scorpion – perhaps we can use that to safeguard any arrangement.

Unicorn Clan: The Unicorn, tragically, are still locked in civil war. We have previously favored the “Shinjo” faction, whose representative Otaku Taro, the Emerald Champion, has been a friend to our Clan in the past. However, at the moment our primary concern must be ending our war with the Dragon. Whichever of the Unicorn factions can assist us more in this matter should be the one to receive our support.

Minor Clans: Yoritomo of the Mantis listens too often to his own ambitions, but he has much wealth, and the ear of the Imperial House right now. We should see what can be gained from supporting him in the court.

Imperial Families: We must, of course, appeal to the generosity of the Emperor for help in rebuilding our lands. Also, the two Imperial offices which stand vacant – the Imperial Herald and the Governor of Otosan Uchi's Karada district – will undoubtedly be the subject of intense political maneuver this winter. By carefully choosing which faction to support for each position, we should be able to win much of value.

Isawa Akei, Phoenix shugenja-ko, Acolyte of Air, Jade Champion

Glory 7.5

Personality: Serene, Soft-spoken, Outwardly Modest, Secretive, Power-Hungry, Unscrupulous, Tainted.

Motivations: Gain power (magical and political), Protect her political position.

Notable Advantages/Disadvantages: Ally (Dark Oracle of Air), Dark Secret (Tainted, Servant of the Dark Oracle of Air)

Goals: Isawa Akei is obsessed with gaining power, especially magical power, by any means possible. She has “sold out” to the Dark Oracle of Air, allying herself to him in order to attain the office of Jade Champion. She regards the office chiefly as a means of securing her power and gaining more magical knowledge.

Akei is deeply Tainted – so deeply that all her spells are now fulfilled by *kansen* (evil spirits), not *kami*. However, she has also mastered a Shadowlands Gift which makes her Taint undetectable.

Recently, Akei has become aware that certain samurai in the Empire know about her true nature, and are trying to weaken her position and reputation. They are led by a ronin named Makoto, a former Lion *sodan-senzo*. In addition to undermining her directly, they have also meddled with the Dark Oracle of Air, attempting to weaken the source of her power.

In order to avert this, Akei must secure her political power as much as possible this winter, as well as damaging the reputations of those who oppose her. Akei also needs to develop a network of personal allies who can support her. This will mean, first and foremost, that she must negotiate for the Phoenix Clan as skillfully and effectively as possible, in order to show herself indispensable to the other high-ranking members of the Clan. She must also secure favor within her Clan in order to position herself for future elevation to the Elemental Council, where she will be untouchable.

To support her goals (and to further the Phoenix Clan’s cause), Akei can negotiate a marriage for herself. She can also appoint up to three Jade Magistrates over the course of the Winter Court.

Scorpion Clan

The Scorpion are in a strong position, and our new champion Bayushi Dairu, ably advised by his mother Bayushi Kachiko, has decreed that it is time for us to take a more aggressive stance in the Empire. Our enemies and rivals have been weakened by war and internal conflict, while those we support have grown strong. No longer need we fear the anger of other Clans – rather, it is time for them to fear us. Those who threaten or defy us must be taught harsh lessons, whether on the battlefield or in the courts. Those who have supported us should be rewarded.

The aggressive Lion are an especially worthy target. They remain at war with other Clans, and threaten renewed war with the Crane as well – we need not fear them.

Worthy, too, of enmity are the sanctimonious and barbaric Unicorn, who have too long sneered at us for our “dishonorable” ways. Now that they are wracked with civil war, it is time for us to make them pay – especially the Emerald Champion, Otaku Taro, who has shown open contempt for our Clan in the past. The Unicorn who follow Shinjo Yokatsu have expressed an interest in allying with us to bring Taro down – how perfect, to use one set of enemies to destroy another! And perhaps we could arrange for a Scorpion to take his place, since ours is the only Clan which has proven worthy to host the Emperor for Winter Court.

The arrogant Crane have been badly weakened by war. If they have learned proper humility, perhaps we can assist them now, in return for suitable compensation and respect. We suspect they, too, wish to remove Otaku Taro from his post. But if they remain too proud to ask us for help, we will punish them appropriately.

The Dragon Clan, on the other hand, has shown us respect and struck against our enemies in both the Unicorn and the Lion. If they show skill here in the courts, and approach us in a suitable manner, we can reward them with our support, especially if they remain at war with the Lion.

The Phoenix are now in a position of extreme weakness, their only strength being their new control of the office of Jade Champion. This would be a suitable time to press them for support, to force them to make concessions to the Dragon, and to punish them if they are uncooperative.

As for the Crab civil war, we have no intention of intervening in another Clan’s internal affairs, any more than we would wish them to intervene in ours. It seems likely that Kisada will crush this rebellion by his son – so be it, the boy has offered us nothing save bleating cries that we assist him.

The Mantis now pursue their ambitions almost unchecked, and give aid and shelter to the traitors of the Wasp, with the assistance of the Imperial House. It is time to remind them that they are still a Minor Clan. A few painful roadblocks in the march of their ambition will put them in a more respectful frame of mind.

As for the house of Hantei itself, we have a strong ally there in Seppun Baka, the Imperial Advisor. He should prove quite helpful in whatever endeavors we pursue.

To support our goals this winter, we have accumulated a wide array of secrets on our opponents, which we can use to manipulate and control them.

- We know that the Lion intend to seek the post of Miya Herald for Miya Miako, the widow of Miya Satoshi, rather than allow his cousin and heir Miya Yumi to take the office. Yumi, the wife of Yoritomo of the Mantis, also intends to petition the Emperor for the position. Both claimants will be in need of support wherever they can find it.
- We know that the Crane are hoping to marry their young Kakita daimyo, Kakita Kaiten, to a Lion in order to ensure a peace.
- We also know that some among the Crane are secretly arranging financing and support for the Crab “rebels” under Hida Sukune.
- We know that the catastrophe which befell the Phoenix Clan has left them desperate for help. They are now willing to do almost anything to get the Agasha family to join them.
- We know that in the Unicorn civil war, many troops of the “Yokatsu” faction have been deserting to the “Shinjo” side, which is now numerically superior.
- We know that the Fox Clan wishes to leave the Yoritomo Alliance, and is seeking a Great Clan’s support to ensure it can take that step without retaliation.
- Finally, we know that while the new Empress is not yet with child, one of his concubines is pregnant. This may create problems with the eventual succession.

Bayushi Kachiko, widow of Bayushi Shoji (Shosuro, Mistress of Deception)

(Apparent) Glory 7.8

Personality (Apparent): Seductive, Subtle, Manipulative, Ingenious, Loyal (to the Scorpion Clan), Vengeful.

Motivations (Apparent): Protect the Scorpion Clan.

Notable Advantages/Disadvantages: Dangerous Beauty, Blackmail, Ally (Doji Hoturi)

Goals: You are actually Shosuro, one of the oldest and most powerful servants of the Living Darkness. Your goals are the Shadow's goals: spread chaos. In order to advance the goals of the Shadow, war and chaos must reign across the Empire. Peace, goodwill, and alliances must be disrupted, and war must be promoted at every turn. In particular, your own Clan must be drawn into the wars of Rokugan – otherwise, your own machinations will not be able to proceed. The warmongering of the Lion and Dragon Clans should be especially supported, as well as the aggression of the Mantis and of the Crab “loyalists.”

Your principle ally in this is Doji Hoturi, the Champion of the Crane. You have renewed Kachiko's old love affair with Hoturi, and as a result he is wrapped around your finger. He will do almost anything for you, as long as it does not openly threaten his own Clan. You should be able to use this to your advantage.

Your other ally is Seppun Baka, the Imperial Advisor, who is actually a fellow servant of the Shadow. By coordinating with him, you should be able to wreak havoc among the other Clans.

You also have two specific goals:

1. The Crystal Tears Dojo. This secret Shadow-fighting organization is unacceptable to the Living Darkness. Its members must be dishonored at this Winter Court, publicly shamed and cast out from their Clans. Alone on the roads of the Empire, wave-man without Clans, they will be easy prey for our minions. (Due to the power of the Shadow, you will always know whether a PC is a member of the Crystal Tears Dojo.)

2. The Egg of Pan Ku. You have come into possession of this artifact, which will allow you to create an evil, malicious copy of someone. Choose an appropriate victim, preferably someone who is obstructing your goals of chaos and war, and get them alone. Notify the chief judge when this happens. The PC will safely escape at the end of the Interactive, but in the meantime, s/he must play as a twisted, evil duplicate.

Unicorn Clan Shinjo Faction

We have won many victories against the traitor Shinjo Yokatsu and his loyal but misguided followers. We know that Yokatsu has gone into hiding, unwilling to lead his dwindling forces any longer. The man at the front of their armies is a look-alike. No doubt this helps explain why so many of his troops have been switching to our side. His armies are now significantly smaller than ours. If we can simply find the supplies we need by spring, our victory is certain.

Sadly, those supplies are desperately needed. Due to the strategic situation, we control the poorest lands of our Clan territory, and much of the wealthiest land has been occupied by the Dragon Clan. We are bankrupt. If we do not gain the support of at least one other Clan by the spring, our troops will starve.

In order to ensure the future purity and honor of our Clan, Shinjo has decided to invest the leadership of the Unicorn into the hands of Moto Gaheis. However, this decision will be unpopular among the more traditional of our own Clan. Therefore, we must keep it secret until the war is over and our Clan is united under mother Shinjo.

Crab Clan: The Crab are divided against themselves, and if our Emerald Champion Otaku Taro is to be believed, the dominant “loyalist” faction has formed an unholy alliance with the Shadowlands. Although we previously promised our aid to the Crab “rebels” under Hida Sukune, such pledges cannot be honored now, in this desperate time. Sadly, it is likely that we must hold apart from these matters until our own crisis is ended.

Crane Clan: The Crane have been friends to us in the past, but in recent months they have grown cold and distant, and we have heard rumors that they have been negotiating with the followers of Yokatsu. We must learn why, and if possible, turn them back to supporting us. If there is any Clan which should see the justice of our cause, it is the Crane, especially since we share the enmity of the Scorpion and the Lion.

Dragon Clan: The Dragon occupation of our northeastern lands is a grave affront and deadly blow to our Clan’s wealth and prosperity. Unfortunately, until we can defeat Yokatsu, we cannot spare the strength to drive the Dragon from our lands. Perhaps we can bargain some political favor in return for their withdrawal. Of course, it now seems clear that our decision to offer shelter to the Agasha dissidents was probably a mistake, and we have ordered the Agasha to depart by springtime.

Lion Clan: The Lion have been our enemies in the past, and we must not let them become so in the future. Fortunately, it seems that the Lion have many other foes which they are more eager to fight. If possible, we should nudge the Lion in the direction of fighting the Dragon or the Scorpion, or both – such wars could be used as leverage to our advantage.

Phoenix Clan: The Phoenix have suffered badly, and wish to end their war with the Dragon. Although they will probably not have much help to spare for us, perhaps we can

still gain something by assisting them in their negotiations with the Dragon. Surely the word of the Phoenix will count for much with the Imperial House, since the Empress is herself a former member of the Clan.

Scorpion Clan: The Scorpion have been our enemies in the past, and this is unlikely to have changed. We must beware of anything they offer.

Minor Clans: We have caught hints of improving relations between the Mantis and Yokatsu's faction. Beware of this, for the Mantis have much wealth which could powerfully influence the fighting in spring. On the other hand, the Mantis also are much in favor with the Emperor right now – if we can cultivate them, and keep them free of Yokatsu's clutches, there is much to be gained for our cause.

Imperial Families: We must seek the favor of the Imperial House, whose wealth and influence alone would be more than enough to ensure our victory against Yokatsu. If possible, seek a private audience with the Son of Heaven to prove the righteousness of our cause.

Otaku Taro, Emerald Champion

Glory 9.0

Personality: Brash, Aggressive, Honorable, Fearless, Driven, Haunted, Unstable.

Motivations: Protect the Empire, Resist his inner demons, Support the “Shinjo” faction, the Crane, and the Crab rebels.

Notable Advantages/Disadvantages: Idealistic, Haunted (father), Shadow Corruption (rank 2), Shadowlands Taint (rank 1), Bloodsword (rank 3), True Love (Bayushi Nishari), Kharmic Tie (Bayushi Nishari), Bitter Betrothal (Kitsuki Sakiko).

Goals: Otaku Taro believes he can save the Empire. He is wrong.

Taro, despite his ideals, is driven by resentments and passions. He hates the Otaku Battle Maidens for their treatment of men. He hates his father’s hounding spirit, and is determined to prove himself better than his father, and better than any Battle Maiden. He hates the aggression of the Lion and Dragon Clans, and automatically assumes the best about their enemies in the Crane and Phoenix Clans, regardless of evidence. He despises the “treason” of the Yokatsu faction within his own Clan. And he is in love with his advisor, Bayushi Nishari, and has betrayed his honor and vows with her several times.

Taro knows there is something wrong with him – that he is possessed by evil spirits, voices of darkness that hound him night and day. He is arrogant enough to believe that he can overcome them, with the help of his lover Nishari. He does not recognize that this very pride and arrogance is only empowering the evils within him. He refuses to believe there is anything wrong with his sword – after all, it was given to him by the Emperor himself. He refuses to believe that it was the sword, not his own skill, which allowed him to kill Kakita Toshimoko, win the Emerald Tournament, and ascend to his current position as Emerald Champion. He refuses to realize that succumbing to his passion for Nishari is weakening, not strengthening, his soul.

The influence of Taro’s bloodsword, combined with his growing Taint, has made him aggressive and prone to outbursts of temper. So far, he has managed to keep these under control, although it grows more difficult every day.

Taro’s combination of idealism and arrogance often blinds him to the realities of the Empire, and he frequently mistakes his personal judgments on individuals with a judgment on their Clan. He blames the Lion-Crane conflicts almost entirely on the Lion, and regards the Crane as a peaceful, enlightened, and admirable Clan. He hates the Scorpion and regards them as little more than scheming, useless villains. He assumes Dragons to be truthful and honorable, because those he has met are so.

Although Taro now attempts to make his first loyalty to the office of Emerald Champion, his underlying sympathies usually show through. He wishes to support the Crab “rebels,” and is also anxious to win support for the Unicorn faction led by the returned Shinjo, to whom he has pledged his loyalty.

To support his goals, Taro has the power to appoint up to three Emerald Magistrates over the course of the Interactive.

Unicorn Clan Yokatsu Faction

Although our armies have suffered defeats at the hands of the misguided followers of the false Shinjo, all is not yet lost.

The crisis has forced our leader Shinjo Yokatsu to go into hiding, lest he be assassinated by the false Shinjo's fanatics. A look-alike has taken his place at the head of our armies. There is no need to fear, however – so long as this is kept secret, our efforts in the Winter Court will not be harmed. It is also true, regrettably, that many misguided souls have abandoned our ranks to join the false Shinjo, and at the moment, our armies are smaller than hers. However, their organization is inferior to ours, and they control the poorest lands in our territory. If we can gain allies and support in this Winter Court, we can swiftly reverse the situation.

A particular point of strength for us should be the office of Emerald Champion, currently held by a bloodthirsty young man of the Shinjo faction, Otaku Taro. The Crane have not forgiven Taro for killing their sensei Kakita Toshimoko in the Emerald Tournament, and have expressed interest in joining forces with us to petition the Emperor to remove Taro from office. We should seek other Clans to join us in this effort. Without Taro's voice in the court, the Shinjo disloyalists will be hard-pressed to find any allies at all.

Crab Clan: We have been assisting certain elements in the Crane Clan in their efforts to funnel small amounts of supplies to the Crab rebels. This earns us friends among the Crab at no cost to ourselves, and we can still maintain public relations with Hida Kisada. Otaku Taro is one of Kisada's most vocal opponents, so perhaps by opposing Taro we can gain the support of both sides of the Crab conflict.

Crane Clan: With Taro in the office of Emerald Champion, the Crane are natural allies to us, and we should cultivate this as much as possible. In particular, we should support the Crane in their efforts to avert further war with the Lion Clan.

Dragon Clan: The Dragon occupation of our eastern territories is a serious problem, although so far it seems to be hurting the Shinjo rebels more than us. The Lion have expressed some interest in gaining our support against the Dragon – perhaps an exchange of military assistance, or at least of diplomatic support, will be possible? Also, the association of the Iuchi (who sheltered the Dragon Clan's dissident Agasha family) in the ranks of the "Shinjo" traitors will surely be a weapon we can use against them.

Lion Clan: In addition to their problems with the Dragon and Crane Clans, the Lion are also eager to have Miya Miako appointed as the new Miya daimyo. There should be plenty of opportunity here for fruitful negotiation.

Phoenix Clan: The Phoenix are now in need of help wherever they can find it, and will probably be eager to end their war with the Dragon. We should be able to convince them to support us in exchange for our assistance in their own problems.

Scorpion Clan: Sadly, the Scorpion cannot be trusted – they are the enemies of all the Unicorn, regardless of faction. Still, it may be possible to use them against our enemies in the so-called “Shinjo faction.” Do not make the mistake, however, of thinking them our friends – they remain the enemies of our honorable Clan, and we should not hesitate to maneuver against them in other matters for our own advantage. Beware of any offers they make which seem too generous.

Minor Clans: Yoritomo is an ambitious man, and an unscrupulous one. If there is any Clan which we can expect to listen to the appeals of wealth and self-interest, it is the Mantis Clan.

Imperial Families: Sadly, so long as Otaku Taro remains the Emerald Champion, we can expect little assistance from the Imperial House. We must accumulate as much influence as possible to bring to bear against Taro with the Emperor.

Shinjo Shono, Eldest Son of Shinjo Yokatsu

Glory 7.0

Personality: Dutiful, Uncertain, Brave, Honorable, Intelligent.

Motivations: Serve his father loyally.

Goals: As the eldest son of Shinjo Yokatsu, Shono is in line both to lead the Shinjo family and to rule the Clan... if the revolt led by the “returned Shinjo” can be defeated. His father has sent him here to ensure that will happen. As a loyal and competent son, he is determined to accomplish his father’s order to the very best of his ability. He has already proven his diplomatic skills at the Festival of the Snow Hare, and he is glad to serve his father again in this even more important venue.

And yet... Shono is plagued by doubts. Why have so many Unicorn flocked to the banner of the “false Shinjo”? Why have the Otaku, the most loyal and honorable of all Unicorn families, embraced the traitor almost universally?

Shono will not let his doubts interfere with his duty. But they boil beneath the surface, inevitably coloring his attitudes and decisions.

Yoritomo Alliance

These are great times for our dream of attaining equality with the other Great Clans. Our actions have gained the approval of the Hantei dynasty, and our occupation of the Yasuki lands has brought additional wealth pouring into our coffers. The Great Clans, weakened by war and internal division, now seek our favor instead of demanding that we come crawling to them. This should provide great opportunities for us to advance our dream of becoming a Great Clan. It will be important that all of us stand together, lest the Great Clans be able to exploit divisions between us to weaken our cause.

It is our intention to promote the end of Hida family rule in the Crab lands. Through their recent civil war, the Hida have shown that they are no longer competent to lead the Crab Clan or protect the Empire. In their place, we would propose to place our lord Yoritomo, direct descendent of Hida Osano-Wo, on the throne of the Crab. Of course, such an ambition must be pursued with caution, for the more traditional Clans will not readily approve of it, and both of the Hida factions would surely seek to thwart us should they learn the truth. Therefore we must avoid openly announcing this ambition, and instead focus on building our case against the corrupt Hida, and enhancing our own support and position throughout the Empire.

The Imperial House is our most important ally in these matters, and we must seek diligently to learn their wishes and support their goals.

Another important step will be the appointment of Lord Yoritomo's wife, Miya Yumi, to the office of Imperial Herald and head of the Miya family. As the cousin of the late Miya Satoshi, she is the rightful heir to the office, and certainly a far more worthy and proper choice than Satoshi's widow Miako, who is a Matsu and unlikely to maintain the traditions of the Miya family. Achieving this goal will be a vital step in our overall strategy, for control of the Miya family will all but assure Lord Yoritomo's ascension once the Hida have been fully discredited.

Crane Clan: The Crane are eager for the help of anyone who can strengthen them against their Lion enemies, and may finally be willing to set aside their former contempt for us. Since we have occupied and humiliated their long-time enemies the Yasuki, we can offer those lands as a bargaining chip, although we have no intentions of actually giving them up to the Crane or Crab.

Dragon Clan: The current ruler of the Dragon, Mirumoto Yukihera, is almost a match for Lord Yoritomo in his ambitions. This would seem to make him a suitable ally, especially since he will be needing political support to cement his military victories. Let us see what the Dragon might be able to offer us.

Lion Clan: The Lion are unlikely to change their opposition to our goals. Therefore, we must seek the help of the Lions' enemies.

Phoenix Clan: The Phoenix are crippled, and reduced to begging for the help of others. It is unlikely that they can make an offer which can match their enemies in the Dragon Clan. Still, let us at least entertain their offers – who knows, it may yet prove more useful to support them. It might even be possible to find a way, in this war-torn time, to win the support of both the Dragon and the Phoenix.

Scorpion Clan: The Scorpion must be approached with caution. Although they have sometimes shown a willingness to help us in the past, they are also the bitter enemies of the Wasp, and it is unlikely that they wish to see us elevated to their Great Clan rank. Consider any Scorpion offers with great caution.

Unicorn Clan: Both of the Unicorn factions are interested in our support. Let us see which of them can make the better offer, and which is more advantageous to our goals.

Yoritomo, Champion of the Mantis Clan

Glory 7.6

Personality: Ambitious, Aggressive, Impulsive, Fearless, Embittered, Proud.

Motivations: Achieve Great Clan status for the Mantis, at all costs.

Notable Advantages/Disadvantages: Ancestor: Gusai, Combat Reflexes, Great Destiny, Natural Leader, Quick/Bad Reputation (Mercenary), Brash, Insensitive

Goals: Yoritomo's goals are the goals of his faction – he issued the orders personally. He is determined to win Great Clan status for his Clan, no matter what it takes, and will do almost anything to achieve that goal.

At present, Yoritomo has decided that the best way to pursue his goals is to cozy up to the Imperial House and support them strongly. Although he is convinced that the Hantei dynasty is decrepit and failing, the last year has proven that the Hantei are still too strong to openly defy, and Yoritomo has concluded that he should instead try to use them for his own purposes. Of course, Yoritomo is an opportunist, and if something happens to convince him to change his mind, he will drop his support for the Hantei in an instant.

Yoritomo enjoys the dream of taking over the Hida family, but is enough of a realist to see that it is an extreme long-shot. (Also, he does not fully trust the Imperial courtier, Seppun Akihita, who first proposed the idea.) Although he will seek to lay the groundwork for such a maneuver, he is not confident of success and will quickly drop the scheme if it seems to be going sour.

Finally, Yoritomo has a personal enmity with Bayushi Kachiko. He will not help her in any way, and will do his best to sabotage anything she is attempting.

Ryosei, daimyo of the Fox Clan

Glory 6.5

Personality: Serious, Spiritual, Fearless, Independent, Cunning.

Motivations: Secure the Independence of the Fox Clan.

Notable Advantages/Disadvantages: Ancestors (Osusuki and Akomachi), Crafty, Kitsune Tabboo (must follow word of Honor).

Goals: You have decided that it is time to leave the alliance with the Mantis. Otherwise, the ancient and precious independence of the Fox Clan may be lost forever. Already the Wasp, Sparrow, and Centipede seem all but indistinguishable from the Mantis. The Fox must not be allowed to suffer the same fate.

Unfortunately, Yoritomo of the Mantis is an ambitious and vengeful man, and will not readily accede to your departure. You must secure the support of at least one of the Great Clans, to ensure that you can leave the alliance without fear of military retaliation from the Mantis.

In order to soften the blow to the Mantis Clan's pride, you intend to work hard for their other political goals this winter. If you can offer Yoritomo some gains this winter, he will be more willing to accept your departure in good grace.