

Stain Upon the Soul

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

by Rob Hobart

A string of murders shatters the tranquility of Otosan Uchi. Who is behind this ghastly crime spree? And is the Scorpion Clan interested in solving it, or in burying the truth?

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

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

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

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

GM's Information

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

This adventure is a Low/Mid-Rank adventure. This means that only Rank 1, 2, or 3 Characters should be allowed to play. This adventure was not written with Rank 4 or 5 characters in mind and cannot anticipate all that these characters may bring to the table.

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

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

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

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

- TNs for skill checks are reduced by 5.
- Togashi Kenjin will never attack the party, even if they provoke him.

Adventure Summary and Background

Otomo Keisuke is an honored and glorious man – daimyo of the Otomo family, personal advisor to the Emperor Hantei the 39th, and betrothed to a cousin of the Crane Champion.

He is also an opium addict, a Scorpion puppet, and a serial murderer. Three years ago, while under the influence of opium, he brutally murdered his one true love, Kakita Seka, in a fit of irrational rage. The Scorpion Clan, which had already learned of his opium addiction, helped him to cover up the crime, blaming it on a local maho cult cell.

In the years since then, Keisuke's drug addiction has greatly worsened, and his shaky grasp on sanity has failed. Repeatedly, he has compulsively reenacted the murder of Seka against other innocent victims. The Scorpion have so far protected him for the sake of controlling the daimyo of the Otomo family, but as Keisuke's crimes have become more frequent, it has become increasingly difficult for them to keep protecting him.

At this year's Chrysanthemum Festival, matters come to a head. Keisuke's wife, Otomo (formerly Doji) Koihime, is the daughter of a prominent Crane daimyo, and cousin to the Doji ruling line. She is a perceptive woman who comes to realize that her husband is an opium addict and a tool of the Scorpion. She confronts him while he is in a drug-added state, and he murders her in a burst of crazed rage, recreating his original murder of Kakita Seka.

This time, however, when Keisuke calls on the Scorpion to help him, they refuse, deciding that he has become more of a liability than he is worth. Keisuke manages to clear his head long enough to dispose of the body, sneaking it out of the Forbidden City and dumping it in the River of the Sun.

After this grisly deed, Keisuke flees to Benten's Gift, the main geisha house of Otosan Uchi, and spends the night there, smoking his remaining supply of opium. In the early morning hours, half-mad on the drug, he wanders through the house and murders a lone geisha. He leaves the house the next morning, frightened and increasingly insane, seeking more opium and drink to dull his madness. The body is discovered somewhat later, when the residents of Benten's Gift awaken and begin to clean up from the evening's revelries.

Meanwhile, the Scorpion Clan takes action. They are unable to legally prove Keisuke is the murderer, but know he will soon kill yet again. The Scorpion decide to send a group of cat's-paws (the PCs) to uncover Keisuke's crimes and bring him to justice.

Note for the GM: This adventure relies heavily on materials published in the *Otosan Uchi* boxed set (Alderac 2000). Enough material has been included to let the GM run the adventure without the use of that product, but we encourage GM's to acquire and read through the OU set to enhance their presentation of the Imperial Capital.

Player's Introduction

The Imperial Capital of Otosan Uchi is the largest and most splendid city of the Empire, and it has seldom been more splendid than now, as it prepares for the Chrysanthemum Festival. The week-long festival to celebrate the longevity of the Hantei dynasty will be especially magnificent this year, for it will see the marriage of the young Emperor, Hantei the 39th, to his betrothed Isawa Kaede, the Acolyte of Void. Furthermore, this festival will also see two other special events: the Emerald Tournament, to choose a new Emerald Champion to enforce the Emperor's laws, and a Jade Tournament, the first such tournament in centuries.

Those great events, however, still lie a few days in the future, at the end of the Festival. For now, everyone is free to enjoy the performances, celebrations, and nightly fireworks of the Festival. The Imperial Palaces are being rebuilt, and soon the splendor of the city will be completely restored. Samurai from all across the Empire are here to celebrate and to witness the great Tournaments and especially the blessed Imperial wedding. Even the uncertain and frightening news from the lands of the Unicorn and Crab, and the ongoing war in the northern Empire, cannot disrupt the festive spirit. The Champions of the Crane, Lion, and Phoenix Clans are in the city, and Bayushi Shoji of the Scorpion is expected to arrive at almost any time.

And if there seems a special intensity, almost desperation, to the festival this year... well, no one will be uncouth enough to call attention to that.

The PCs are all presumed to be in Otosan Uchi to attend the Chrysanthemum Festival, and have been fortunate enough to gain admission to the Ekihokey, the inner city where the most prestigious portions of the Festival will occur. It may be presumed that the PCs

are staying at the same Inn (the Inn of a Thousand Stories, one of the most famous inns in the Empire), and have been there for at least two days before the scenario begins. Allow them to describe and introduce themselves, and perhaps role-play a bit, before moving into Scene One.

Part One: The Inn of a Thousand Stories

The Inn of a Thousand Stories is a famous and splendid Inn, two stories high and as large as three normal inns, located in the Hito district, right next to the famed Hito Water Gardens. The innkeeper is Ikoma Chomei, a young Lion in his early twenties, who true to the name of the establishment has a seemingly inexhaustible supply of magnificent stories. He makes a point of visiting the table of each of his guests, delivering a different vivid tale to each.

If any PC seems surprised to find a samurai performing such a lowly job as running an Inn, Chomei observes that here, in the Imperial capital, even a job as simple as this carries great honor.

Other Guests

There are many other guests at the Inn – it is a large establishment, and the Festival has brought in samurai from across the Empire. The GM can improvise whatever NPCs are needed to flesh out the scene, but the following individuals are definitely present:

Daidoji Mei: The handmaiden of Otomo Keisuke's wife is a beautiful, delicate young woman, only nineteen, who speaks in a soft, melodic voice. Some of the PCs may have met Mei, or even gained her friendship, in the adventures *Face of Fear* and/or *Ancestral Dictate*. She will remember these PCs and will make a point of greeting them in a friendly (but polite and correct) manner.

Other PCs may notice her as well, since she is the only woman at the Inn who is alone and unescorted. She is more than a little ill-at-ease with the situation, and will welcome the presence and conversation of honorable samurai and samurai-ko, especially familiar ones. She withdraws nervously from anyone who is loud, crude, or uncouth.

Mei will speak about her mistress, Otomo Koihime, wife to “the honorable and glorious Otomo Keisuke, daimyo to the Otomo and advisor to his serene majesty Hantei the 39th.” She will speak at some length about

the honor of serving as handmaid to such the wife of such a glorious personage.

- If the PCs ask where her mistress is now, Mei explains that Koihime is “attending her husband in the Forbidden City.”
- If any PC mentions that Mei seems a bit lost, or wonders why she does not have a bodyguard, she blushes with embarrassment. “We only had one guard, and the lady wished me to remain here to prepare her room for the evening. He accompanied her to the palace.” She names the guard as Seppun Morito.
- If the PCs ask why she and her mistress are staying here, instead of with Otomo Keisuke in the Forbidden City, she explains, “Due to the reconstruction work on the Imperial Palaces, there are insufficient rooms for all those attending on the Son of Heaven. Otomo-sama graciously gave up his right to larger family quarters until the work is completed.”

Although Mei will never say anything critical of Otomo Keisuke, any PC who rolls **Simple Awareness** at TN 20 can tell that she is actually somewhat worried about her mistress' husband. She will not admit that there is a problem, and will take offense at PCs who refuse to take her at her word.

Shosuro Tajiki, Emerald Magistrate: A handsome and elegant young man, Tajiki is an Emerald Magistrate, a Shosuro assassin, and a ruthless agent of the Scorpion Clan. He is also a sworn enemy of the Kolat, and has spent much of the last year hunting for clues and evidence about that sinister organization. PCs may have met Tajiki in several previous adventures, including *In Time of War*, *Way of Deception*, and *A Foreign Legacy*, among others.

Tajiki does not have any direct role in this adventure, but will speak in a friendly and charming fashion with any PCs who have met him before, and will make a point of introducing himself to any Emerald Magistrate PCs. He is very current on gossip in the Empire, and will share it with anyone who doesn't provoke him.

Kitsu Takahara: PCs who have played through the adventures *Evil Feeds Upon Itself* and *Ancestral Dictate* have met this idealistic young *sodan-senzo* (ancestor-shugenja). An earnest, smiling young man, Takahara will be happy to speak with anyone, but especially seeks out those who are marked by the attentions of ancestral spirits (Ancestor advantages, or

Haunted disadvantages). Takahara is not only idealistic but extremely naïve – he tries to think the best of everyone he meets, assumes everybody is a loyal servant of the Emperor, and accepts bushido as an unquestioned fact of life. He discusses current events in the Empire with interest and enthusiasm.

Matsu Akotsu: This strong, thick-moustached and somewhat loud man is the polar opposite of Kitsu Takahara, and very much represents the ascendant type in the Lion Clan right now. (PCs may have encountered him in the adventure *Scorpion's Sting*.) He is an honorable and brave man, but lacking in subtlety or sophistication, and believes quite blindly in the virtue and superiority of the Lion Clan. He will avoid pushing anyone into a duel (he is not Brash), but does not hesitate to express a low opinion of Cranes (posing sycophants), Unicorns (unreliable foreign barbarians), Dragons (current leader insane), Crabs (civil war, their daimyo allied with the Shadowlands), and especially Scorpions (treacherous and dishonorable dogs, although he knows better than to say that to their faces).

Mirumoto Taki: A formidable and arrogant warrior who is here to compete in the Emerald Tournament, Taki has little patience or manners to spare for those he considers inferior swordsmen (anyone who is not Mirumoto), but will converse politely with shugenja, courtiers, and fellow Dragon. He is intensely proud and easily provoked, and shares the general militancy of his family's current leader, Mirumoto Yukihera. He will be openly hostile to Phoenix, Lions, and Unicorns, although he will stop short of provoking a duel when the Emerald Tournament is due to begin in just two days.

(Kakita) Shingen: This young Crane shows signs of a tough childhood – he was born a ronin and was adopted into the Kakita family after several heroic deeds. At present, although he still dresses in the colors of the Crane, he wears no mon – he is on a musha shugyo, a warrior's pilgrimage. The goal of his quest is nothing less than tracking down Toturi, the fallen Lion champion. Shingen knows that Toturi possesses one of the legendary Bloodswords, and hopes against hope that he can reveal the truth to Toturi and redeem him. For now, however, he has halted his quest in order to visit the capital for the Emperor's wedding. Shingen is a friendly and honorable young man, and will explain his quest to anyone he finds sympathetic.

Gossip

The Inn is full of conversation and rumor-mongering about the current state of the Empire. The following information will emerge in any conversation which the PCs

- The Lion and Crane have finally made peace, after a year and a half of bitter warfare. The Lion have agreed to return some minor territorial gains, but retain control of both Toshi Ranbo and Shiro Kyotei. Most Lion regard the war's outcome as a triumph, and their swaggering attitude has provoked several duels in the last few weeks.
- Recently, the mysterious snake-men of the Shinomen Forest sent a representative to the capital to speak with the Emperor. The creature called itself "Dashmar." However, when it finally appeared before the Son of Heaven last week, it hissed and spat and called him "foul." The Emperor ordered the creature executed, and imprisoned the other snake-men in the capital. The Imperial Legions have been notified to prepare for movement. Rumor has it that Hantei the 39th will soon make a formal pronouncement against the creatures as enemies of the Empire.
- The Crab Clan is still convulsed in civil war, and there are persistent rumors that Hida Kisada, the Crab Clan Champion, has allied himself with the Shadowlands. The recent announcements that the Lion, Mantis, and Crane all plan to send troops to intervene in the civil war has given these rumors additional strength. Gossip has it that the Imperial Legions were also slated to intervene, before the incident with the snake-man so outraged the Emperor.
- There is also much rumor and controversy about the current actions and status of the Unicorn Clan. Two months ago, the Clan announced several conflicting diplomatic agreements, ceding the City of the Rich Frog to the Lion while simultaneously proclaiming an alliance with the Lions' enemy, the Dragon Clan. Almost immediately afterward, the Unicorn were convulsed by stories that their Clan founder, Shinjo, had appeared among them. Since then, the news from Unicorn territory has been confused – there are reports of civil war, of barbarians sweeping in from the Burning Sands, and other strange events. Two different groups of Unicorn contestants have arrived in Otosan Uchi for the Emerald Tournament, further fueling the rumor-mongering.

- The Dragon Clan is facing difficulties as well. Even while the war with the Phoenix and Lion continues, Dragon Clan leader Mirumoto Yukihera has publicly denounced the Unicorn for failing to live up to their alliance with him, and has moved troops to their border. Some stories have it that he has actually invaded. Meanwhile, Mirumoto Daini, the younger brother of missing daimyo Mirumoto Hitomi, has returned to the Dragon lands and called for an end to the war with the Phoenix.

Daidoji Mei Asks for Escorts

At some point, Daidoji Mei will begin to wonder whether her mistress will indeed return this evening. Eventually, she will decide to visit the Forbidden City and ask the lady Koihime for her plans. Worried about traveling the night city alone, she will ask at least one PC to escort her.

Mei's preferred choice of escort will be a samurai-ko who strikes her as honorable and skilled. In the absence of such a person, she will ask an honorable male bushi, a female non-bushi (shugenja or courtier), or a male non-bushi, in that order. She will try to avoid approaching ronin, uncouth Crab, sinister Scorpions, or other frightening or dishonorable types.

Assuming at least one PC is kind and honorable enough to escort this young innocent, she will be very appreciative, thanking them and repeatedly apologizing for the inconvenience she is imposing on them. She asks the innkeeper for a lantern, and a young boy arrives shortly, carrying a large paper lantern on a long stick. The boy, Toji, accompanies Mei and her PC escorts through the night-darkened streets of Otosan Uchi.

From the Inn of a Thousand Stories, it is a twenty minute walk across the city to the gates of the Forbidden City. The Inn lies on the north side of the River of the Sun, and at present there is only one intact bridge across the river, the Naka Higashi (eastern bridge). The Naka Nihachi (western bridge) collapsed in the earthquake last year, and the replacement bridge is only half-completed.

The PCs' route takes them through the Hito District's entertainment quarter, and even at this late hour the Chrysanthemum Festival is well underway: the PCs pass dancers, jugglers, acrobats, actors performing plays on open stages, puppet theaters, and many other entertainments, all attended by enthusiastic crowds.

Part Two: A Grisly Discovery

The PCs' slow but pleasant progress across the city is interrupted as they cross the Naka Higashi. Daidoji Mei pauses for a moment to catch her breath, apologizing for her weakness. ***"I fear my life has been too secluded, samurai-sama, and I lack the stamina for a bustling city life."*** She leans on the railing of the mighty bridge, looking down on the moonlight reflecting from the river-water... and screams in horror.

Floating face-down in the water is a human form, swathed in the heavy folds of a formal kimono. The river's gentle current has swept the unmoving body up against the bridge supports. Although you cannot make out colors or details in the pale moonlight, the long hair and the shape of the kimono clearly suggest a woman.

The body is, of course, Otomo Koishime, wife of Otomo Keisuke. The PCs can react to this grisly discovery in whatever way they see fit (open exclamations of shock and horror should cost them a point or two of Glory and/or Honor). Daidoji Mei turns pale and dizzy, and slumps against the bridge railing, pressing one hand to her chest. She will not actually faint, although she finds it very difficult to look at the corpse for more than a few seconds.

Notifying the Authorities

Presumably, the PCs will want to summon help and inform the authorities of what has happened, as well as summon eta to extract the body from the river. (If they do not, other passers-by will soon do so.) Calling for help will quickly create a problem, however – since the body was found in the river, it falls under the jurisdiction of three different districts of the Ekohikei (inner city of Otosan Uchi): the Karada, Kanjo, and Hito districts.

Regardless of which district the PCs first notify, troops and magistrates from all three will arrive within a few minutes of each other, and a quarrel over jurisdiction will develop. The troops from the Kanjo District want to make sure the crime was not committed in their jurisdiction, while those from the Karada District will take offense at this, behaving belligerently and suspiciously, accusing those from Kanjo of shirking their responsibilities. The troops from the Hito District will try to assert full jurisdiction over the crime, on the

grounds that the other two districts cannot be trusted with the investigation – which will draw the ire of both of the other groups. They accuse the Hito troops of serving a “soft-hearted fool” who will botch the investigation.

The reasons for these problems lie with the governors of each district:

- The governor of Kanjo District, Shiba Kagi, is locked in an agonizing power-struggle with a member of the Isawa family who is trying to bend him to their will. Kagi tries to keep out of anything he can, in order to avoid distracting himself. As a result, his district is ill-governed, and his troops take their cue from him by trying to shirk responsibilities... while taking offense at those who insult them.
- The governor of Karada District, Hida Reitaan, is a man driven half-mad by a curse. He utterly ignores affairs in his district. His troops operate with almost no guidance, and try to dodge any problem they canbut again, they will be insulted at having their performance criticized by others.
- The governor of Hito District, Ide Ukuri, is a dedicated and compassionate man, well-liked by commoners, but disliked by the Imperials (and the other district governors) for his forgiving ways and easy-going treatment of heimin.

Emerald Magistrate PCs can solve this problem by asserting authority over the crime (the murder of a member of the Imperial families is certainly within their jurisdiction). The various guards will reluctantly back down and offer their cooperation to the PCs.

Absent that solution, the PCs will have to try to mediate between the different groups, reminding them of their duties and shaming them for their rivalries. Depending on the approach the PCs take, this might require a TN 15 skill roll with **Manipulation**, **Oratory**, **Sincerity**, or even **Intimidation**.

Assuming the PCs can calm down this arguing troops, they will eventually summon eta to remove the body from the river, and conduct a cursory interrogation of those in the area. The PCs will be more-or-less free to participate in the investigation as they see fit (if they have asserted jurisdiction, they will of course be in charge).

Investigations at the Scene

Presumably, at least some of the PCs will want to investigate this discovery, especially if any of them are magistrates (Emerald or otherwise). The following sections outline the clues which can be found:

The Body: Once the body is removed from the water, Daidoji Mei can identify it as her mistress, Otomo Koihime. The body has been brutally beaten, but close examination and a **Medicine/Perception** roll at TN 20 or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 25 (or asking an eta the right questions) can determine that the actual cause of death was strangulation – the brutal imprints of fingers still crease the neck.

The Clothing: Koihime is dressed in a torn, bloodstained formal kimono in colors of gold, brown, and emerald green. The damaged remnants of the Otomo family mon and the Doji Courtier school mon can be found on it with a **Heraldry/Perception** roll at TN 10. Carefully searching her clothing and rolling **Investigation/Perception** at TN 25 can discover some black silk threads stuck in the folds of her kimono. There are no other clues.

Searching the River: If the PCs hire a boat and search the river (or use a spell to fly above it), they can try to find the dark cloth which wrapped Koihime’s body. They will have to search downstream for at least a half-mile and roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 25 to spot a sodden black cloth caught against the pilings of a pier on the outer city. The cloth, apparently a coverlet from a futon, still holds some very faint bloodstains. It is clearly of high quality, but the PCs cannot learn anything more about it unless a shugenja interrogates the Earth spirits in the cloth. See “Magical Investigations” below for details of what can be learned there.

Questioning the Locals: If the PCs question people on the riverside upstream from the bridge (or send out troops to do so), they can roll **Investigation/Awareness** or **Kuenai/Awareness** at TN 20 to find a business called “Catch of the Day” whose commoner employees fish the River of the Sun every morning, catching fish for various restaurants and noble residences. Some of the employees were up drinking the night before, and remember seeing someone drop a long, heavy bundle into the river from the incomplete Naka Nihachi (western bridge). The person was dressed in a long cloak, and was probably a man, but they remember nothing else about him.

The Western Bridge: If the PCs visit the Naka Nihachi (western bridge), they find it is about half-complete, a forlorn wooden skeleton sticking out into the river. Very close examination of the bridge will discover (with an **Investigation/Perception** roll at TN 20, or **Hunting/Perception** at TN 25) a small, smudged bloodstain on one of the boards.

Investigating at the Palace

The PCs will likely go to the Forbidden City to report Otomo Koihime's death (and perhaps to question her husband).

There are two entrances to the innermost sanctum of Otosan Uchi: a heavily-guarded main gate where samurai enter and exit, and a largely unguarded servants' gate which opens toward the lower-class neighborhood by the river (a region known as the Road of Precious Shadow). The PCs will have to actively ask about alternative entrances in order to notice the servants' gate – it is “beneath the radar” for most samurai.

Speaking with the Otomo: The palace guards will not admit the PCs until they explain the reason for their visit – otherwise they will summon a servant to take a message. (He promises to deliver it to Lord Otomo Keisuke “as soon as practicable.”)

If the PCs do explain the situation, they will be taken to a small room in the Seppun palace (the Hantei and Otomo palaces are still being rebuilt from last year's earthquake). After a long delay, a low-ranking Otomo courtier named Otomo Mitsumane comes in to speak with them. Mitsumane is supercilious and patronizing, and will exploit his social advantages (even as a low-ranking Otomo, he is Glory 6.3) to snub and belittle the PCs.

- The courtier will claim that Otomo Keisuke is “resting” and cannot be disturbed. “He is of course filled with grief at the news of his wife's death, and has full confidence that the murderer will be brought to justice.”
- Under no circumstances will Mitsumane permit a meeting with Keisuke – in fact, Keisuke isn't even in the palace. The courtier will never admit this, but PCs who can beat him on a **Contested Sincerity/Awareness** roll (he rolls 6k3+5) can tell he is lying.
- Mitsumane will claim that lady Otomo Koihime left the palace over an hour ago (a Rokugani hour,

equivalent to two gaijin hours). This is also a lie – he does not know where she is or what happened to her, and is simply covering up.

Speaking with the Servants: Some PCs may decide to speak to the Palace servants, either on their own or because they are not admitted to speak with the Otomo. Normally, the servants will simply say that “lord Otomo-sama” is resting. Getting the servants to speak openly will require appropriate role-play and either a **Sincerity/Awareness**, **Intimidation/Willpower**, or **Kuenai/Awareness** roll at TN 15. If successful, the servants can share the following additional information:

- They can report that lord Otomo Keisuke was “in seclusion” when his wife arrived. However, she insisted on going in to see him soon after she arrived, and dismissed all the servants.
- The servants do not know what happened after that, but they do know that neither Keisuke nor his wife are in the palace now. They do not know how they left, but if the PCs mention that nobody saw either person leave the main gate, the servants will mention that the servants' entrance is usually unguarded.
- If the PCs ask about a missing black cloth, the servants will not have an answer (to inventory all the coverlets in the palace would require several hours). However, if they are shown the cloth, they can confirm that it matches the coverlets found in Keisuke's quarters.
- If the PCs ask about a dark cloak (such as the one Keisuke wears), the servants can confirm that he possesses a cloak of that sort.
- If the PCs ask about conditions in Keisuke's quarters, they will have to be very persuasive (and perhaps drop a few bribes) to track down the specific servants who clean those rooms. These servants will not say anything in the presence of other Imperials (such as Otomo Mitsumane). However, if spoken to in private and with delicacy, they will confess that there are “smudges” on the floor of Keisuke's room, as though something was hurriedly wiped up.
- The servants will not admit that Keisuke is an opium addict unless the PCs have Advantages that allow them to gain special trust or cooperation from commoners. If they do admit it, they cannot say where he gets his opium – it is delivered by

other servants, and they do not ask questions about such things.

Speaking with the Guards: The Imperial guards at the Forbidden City are dutiful and honorable men, and will do their best to cooperate with the PCs so long as it does not violate their other duties. They can share the following information:

- Lady Otomo Koihime and her bodyguard, Seppun Morito, arrived at the main gate early in the evening. Everything seemed normal and neither the lady nor her guard behaved in any way that could be considered odd.
- Neither the lady nor her bodyguard were seen to leave the Forbidden City. The guards can summon Seppun Morito for questioning if the PCs ask. They do not know how Lady Koihime got from the palace to the river.
- Otomo Keisuke has not left the Forbidden City either. If the PCs ask whether there is any other way to leave the area, the guards will at first deny it (“the tunnels beneath the palace were located and sealed off after the Bloodspeaker attack two years ago”), but eventually one of them will remember the servants’ entrance.
- If a PC thinks to ask whether there are other places in the city which Otomo Keisuke visits frequently, the guards will report that he often visits the various Clan embassies, as well as the Hito Water Gardens, the artisan districts, and the geisha house known as Benten’s Gift.

Speaking with Otomo Koihime’s Yojimbo: If the PCs specifically ask after Koihime’s yojimbo, Seppun Morito, they can learn that he is still in the palace. He is a dutiful and honorable young man, and will do his best to answer their questions while trying to avoid bringing any dishonor on the Otomo family.

- Morito can confirm the guards’ report of Lady Koihime’s arrival. He escorted her to her husband’s quarters, where she dismissed him, saying she would call for him later. He never saw her again. Morito is distraught over his “failure of duty” (allowing Koihime to die while under his protection). He has no idea how she left the palace without him.
- He will claim he was unaware of any tensions or problems between Koihime and Keisuke. This is a

lie, and any PC who beats him on **Contested Awareness** (his Awareness is 3) can tell it is a lie.

- If the PCs press Morito on this issue, they will have to be both eloquent and skillful, making it clear that they have no wish to damage the Otomo family or to compromise his honor. This may require a skill roll (TN 20) with **Manipulation**, **Sincerity**, **Courtier**, or a similar skill. With a success, Morito will very reluctantly confess that “there did seem to be some tension” between the two, and “Lady Koihime seemed to have something on her mind” when she came to the palace this evening.
- If the PCs ask whether Morito has any idea why Koihime and Keisuke were not getting along, the guardsman genuinely does not know – he was never privy to their private conversations.
- Morito is also genuinely unaware of Otomo Keisuke’s opium addiction, although he will reluctantly admit that “Lord Keisuke-sama did sometimes seem... distracted. I assumed it was simply the many duties which weigh upon him.”

Magical Investigations

If the PCs have shugenja in their ranks, or send for an NPC shugenja (such as Kitsu Takahara) to assist them. The obvious choice here is to *Commune* with spirits to try to learn what happened – this is not legally acceptable evidence, but it can tell the PCs where to look and who to investigate.

To find an **Air spirit** which saw anything useful will not be easy, due to the large number of such spirits which float around the city. A shugenja who takes at least three Raises for clarity can find a useful Air spirit.

Such spirits can provide a verbal description of a man in a dark cloak dropping a cloth-wrapped bundle into the river. If the PC made at least one additional Raise past the minimum three, the spirits remember that the man came out of the “small door” in the Forbidden City.

The **Earth spirits** in the bridge can describe the dumping quite accurately, although they cannot be more specific about the man than to say he was “a man in a cloak, not young, not old.” At least three Raises will be needed to find an Earth spirit strong enough to know that the man came from the servant’s entrance of the Forbidden City.

Interrogating the **Water spirits** in the River of the Sun will not be fruitful (since they are constantly flowing past and being replaced by new ones), but casting *Commune* with at least four Raises will summon the minor Kami of the river. This spirit can show an image of a man in a long hooded cloak dumping a body wrapped in black cloth into the river. If the PC made any additional Raises past the minimum four, the image will be clear enough to recognize Otomo Keisuke's face. (He is a tall man in his mid-thirties, thin, handsome but sallow-faced, with a neatly trimmed moustache and goatee.)

There are no **Fire spirits** close enough to the river to have useful information. If a PC thinks to check at the servant's entrance to the Forbidden City, they can find a lit lantern with a Fire spirit who remembers a cloaked and hooded man carrying out a bundle wrapped in black cloth.

Clever shugenja PCs may be able to find other ways to investigate the crime. The GM should be prepared to improvise when dealing with such methods.

Additional Questions for Daidoji Mei

After the murder, the PCs may decide to speak with Daidoji Mei at greater length about Otomo Koihime and her husband. Although Mei is clearly shaken by the murder of Koihime, she is an honorable Crane and will do her best to pull herself together and answer the PCs' questions honestly (unless she considers some of them as her enemies).

- If the PCs ask about the state of Keisuke and Koihime's relationship, initially, Mei will try to insist that her mistress enjoyed an "honorable and harmonious" marriage. However, a Contested Awareness roll will show she is hiding something.
- If the PCs ask whether Koihime had any specific reason for visiting her husband at the palace (other than simply being a dutiful wife), Mei will at first deny it. Again, any PC who beats her with a **Contested Awareness** roll can tell she is hiding something.
- If the PCs press her on either of these issues, they will need to be persistent but also sensitive – Mei is a gentle soul and has no desire to bring ill-repute on her mistress. Honorable and eloquent PCs will be able to make her open up, but crude or bullying PCs will inspire her to remain silent.

- If Mei does open up, she will confess that the marriage was actually "disharmonious." Otomo Keisuke continued to visit geisha houses after his marriage, a practice which offended Koihime. He also spent much time in the company of Scorpions, although Mei will try to rationalize that – "surely the duties of Otomo family daimyo requires much dealing with the Emperor's loyal Underhand." She also suspected that he was a drunkard, since he sometimes behaved erratically and seemed sleepy or distracted.

Part Three: The Scorpion Step In

It is possible that the PCs will learn enough to go looking for Keisuke at a geisha house, in which case the story skips ahead to Part Four. However, it is more likely that the PCs will be at something of a loss – they may know that Keisuke is the murderer, but not have any way of proceeding against him.

Regardless, the next morning the PCs will receive a message from the Scorpion Clan:

Three bushi are waiting for you in the Inn's common room. None of them wear Clan colors or mons, although their garments and weapons appear to be far too good for any ronin. They are fit, well-kept young samurai, two men and woman, and obviously skilled from the way they move. They smile and bow politely. "Greetings, samurai," one of the men says. "I am called Chiu, and my companions are Tsunako and Denori. We have been asked to escort you to a private meeting."

The three are Shosuro Actors, but will not break character or reveal themselves, not even to fellow Scorpion. They will be persistent, but not use violence, and if the PCs absolutely refuse to accompany them, they smile, nod, and depart.

- If the PCs ask the trio about their own identities, they say only that they are "bushi who offer our services to those who might require them."
- If the PCs ask who they are to meet, the bushi smile. "Someone who would prefer to remain anonymous, samurai-san. But I am sure you will find the meeting fruitful and informative."

Assuming the PCs agree, the three bushi escort them to a private residence in the Kanjo District. If the PCs refuse, the Scorpion will not offer them any further

help. The PCs will be free to continue investigating on their own, but are unlikely to solve the crime on their own.

A Meeting with the Honest Scorpion

Your trio of polite, smiling escorts lead you across the Ekihokei to a small but high-quality private dwelling, surrounded by a walled garden. They stop in the gardens and politely ask that you leave your weapons in their care.

If the PCs refuse, the three “bushi” will not allow them to enter the house. Stubborn PCs will be thanked for their time and escorted from the premises. Assuming the PCs do give up their weapons, the Shosuro open the door and gesture for them to enter the house. They remain outside.

Inside the house, the light is dim – the window-shutters are closed, allowing only a faint luminescence in from outside. A man in a dark, heavy kimono, his face concealed behind a wooden mask, bows silently to you and gestures for you to seat yourselves. He places himself opposite you. An equally silent serving-girl ghosts in on slippered feet and places a tray with tea and rice-cakes before you before departing.

The man in the mask is Bayushi Yojiro, the “Honest Scorpion.” He will wait until the PCs have taken (or refused) his hospitality before beginning to speak. His voice is low, and he speaks slowly and carefully, forcing the PCs to listen to him attentively.

“A most tragic murder has broken the peace of the Imperial City. An honorable and beautiful lady, Otomo Koihime, wife of the Imperial Advisor. A great tragedy, and all who seek justice wish her murderer caught and punished. Do you not agree?”

Presumably the PCs will agree. They will probably also ask Yojiro’s name and his purpose. He will identify himself as “a servant of the Emperor’s Underhand,” and explains the situation further. “We desire justice for the lady Koihime as much as any honorable samurai. However, although we know who did this crime, our information would not be considered acceptable evidence in the courts. We cannot even act against him without exposing ourselves to dishonor and public disgrace. Therefore, we must call upon the services of outsiders such as yourselves to seek out the killer and bring him to justice.”

Yojiro will not name the killer, but if the PCs accuse Otomo Keisuke, he will not deny it. He will provide the following additional information to the PCs, depending on what questions they ask:

- The killer is a man, and of high social rank. “You will find it most difficult to accuse him without the strongest of evidence.”
- Koihime is not his only victim. “Sadly, others have also fallen victim to his depravity, although his victims have never been of such... prominence... before. I would hope that you can bring him to justice before more fall at his hand.”
- Yojiro will not openly name Keisuke’s location, but if the PCs say anything suggesting their inability to find him, he will give them a broad hint. *“The killer has a certain affection for women, both of the noble classes and those found in geisha houses. I would suggest that you begin your investigation in the Floating World. I am sure you will find information there to carry the case forward.”*

If the PCs refuse to investigate the case, Yojiro will quietly shame them with invocations of honor and duty. “Surely it is the task of any honorable samurai to solve such a heinous crime.” If the PCs continue to balk, he will “call in” any Obligations or Alliances any of them have with the Scorpion Clan in order to force them into action. Likewise, any of the PCs with Dark Secrets which could be reasonably discovered by the Scorpion will be blackmailed into taking action. (Yojiro cannot use meta-game secrets such as “Toturi’s Sword” or “Emperor is a Goju.”)

Part Four: The Geisha House, Benten’s Gift

If the PCs have spoken with Bayushi Yojiro, they will have an important hint – Keisuke likes to visit geisha houses. Alternatively, the PCs can pick up this clue in other possible ways:

- As mentioned earlier, the guards at the Imperial Palaces can report that Keisuke sometimes visited the city’s geisha house.
- If they ask Daidoji Mei where her mistress’ husband might be found (other than the Imperial Palaces), she will hesitantly confess that “Otomo Keisuke-sama was known to frequent geisha houses, although he did so discreetly.” (This last is

a polite fiction – Keisuke was rather blatant in his visits.)

- They can also learn this by asking around for general Imperial gossip and rolling **Lore: Imperial Families/Intelligence** at TN 20 or **Courtier/Intelligence** at TN 25.
- If the PCs have met Otomo Keisuke before (in the adventures *The Ties That Bind* or *Kuro's Fire*), they may have spent enough time around him for a shugenja to cast the spell *Ties That Bind*. The spell will track Keisuke to the geisha house.

Finding Benten's Gift

If the PCs ask around about geisha houses, they can quickly find someone who knows about Benten's Gift. If nothing else, the innkeeper, Ikoma Chomei, can direct them: "The only geisha house in the Ekohikei is the esteemed house of Benten's Gift, located in the southern Karada District. A fine and well-reputed place."

It will take the PCs between thirty and forty minutes to reach Benten's Gift. They will most likely pass through the Chisei District, assuming they start from either the Inn of a Thousand Stories or the Scorpion safe-house. If they arrive the next day (as is most likely), the scene will be as follows:

You walk up a wide, well-kept street. To your right, close to the Forbidden City of the Emperor, are an assortment of fine private homes, residences for those honored enough to live in the Ekohikei. To the left is one of the Artisan Quarters, and you can see dancers, jugglers, and other entertainers beginning to warm up for the day's festivities. Behind them is the imposing mass of Seppun Hill, where the first Seppun met the eight Kamis when they fell to Earth. A lone figure is perched atop the hill – an Ise Zumi, who is said to have been there for many years without moving.

As you round the corner of the Forbidden City's mighty wall, you come in sight of the famous geisha house, Benten's Gift. It is actually two large three-story buildings, connected by covered walkways, the exterior decorated with beautiful silk banners and with large paper lanterns which must provide impressive illumination at night. At this time of day, a geisha house is normally quietly asleep, but as you approach the front doors you can see an excited crowd gathered – including district guards.

- If the PCs arrive at night, the scene will be different: the artisan's quarter will be alive and full of energy, and the geisha house will be well-lit and positively bustling with customers. See "Early Arrival" below for more details on what happens if the PCs come on the same night as Keisuke.
- If the PCs arrive very early the next day, the murder has not been discovered yet, and Benten's Gift will be quiet, the residents sleeping off the previous night's labors. The murder will be discovered while the PCs are still in the process of gaining admission.

If the PCs arrive at any time past the very early morning, the scene will be as described above – an uproar, with guards trying to restore order and begin an investigation. If the PCs have already asserted authority over the murder of Otomo Koihime, it will be a simple matter for them to expand their authority to include this crime. Otherwise, they will have to convince the guards to let them take over the investigation. This will not be terribly difficult, since this is the Karada District and the guards know their erratic Governor will not have any attention to spare for a murdered geisha.

Investigating the Murder

The **madam** of Benten's Gift is a plump, cheerful woman in her fifties, Haruka ("Scent of Spring"). The morning after the murder, she is haggard and tearful, and with no time to apply her usual makeup her wrinkled face shows her true age. She will cooperate readily, although she will try to protect the privacy of her customers and will be shocked at the suggestion that Otomo Keisuke might be involved in the crime.

- If the PCs ask about the victim, her name is Chio, and she was an apprentice geisha who had only recently come of age. She entertained a group of Crane samurai the previous night, but they departed by midnight and she had no further duties.
- Chio had no previous connection with Otomo Keisuke.
- If the PCs ask about Otomo Keisuke, or about "guests from the Imperial families," Haruka will admit that an "honorable Otomo" visited last night, although she will be loath to give his name. (A sufficiently well-played appeal backed by a social skill roll at TN 20, or a bribe of at least 4 koku, will convince her to give up the name.)

- Keisuke was a regular customer. He arrived late last evening and spent the night. (If the PCs ask, he was wearing a dark cloak with a hood, and had a formal court kimono underneath.) Before retiring, Keisuke shared the company of his two favorite girls, Moe and Kana. (They are both fine this morning.)
- If the PCs ask about opium, Haruka will be very reluctant to say anything that might seem critical of Keisuke. The PCs will have to be very persistent and role-play well (either appealing to duty and honor, or making effective threats). In such a case she will sadly confess, “Otomo Keisuke-sama did sometimes indulge in the pipe.” She insists he brought his own opium, and did not get any from her house – “We are a respectable geisha house, samurai-sama, not some den of perversity like you might find in certain... other cities.”
- Haruka can show the PCs to Keisuke’s room, if they ask. It is one floor up from where the murder took place.
- She does not know when Keisuke left the house, although he is definitely gone. The door was locked after the last of the evening guests departed, but this morning it had been unbarred and left open.

The **body** of the victim is found in an upstairs side hallway, sprawled on the floor. Chio is a pretty young girl dressed in a yukata (nightgown/bathrobe). Her face is purple, the tongue protruding between the lips, and many brutal bruises and abrasions are also visible. A **Medicine/Intelligence** roll at TN 15 can determine that at least half of the bruises were delivered after death by strangulation.

- If the PCs interrogate the spirits in the hallway, they can speak with Air, Earth, and Fire spirits (there are Fire spirits in the lanterns which light the interior hallways). All of the spirits can describe a man resembling Keisuke (tall, thin, with a moustache and goatee) walking erratically down the hallway, speaking with the geisha girl, then attacking and strangling her.
- PCs who have played the adventures *Ties That Bind* or *Lies, Lies, Lies* can roll **Simple Intelligence** at TN 20 to notice a superficial resemblance between the dead Chio and Kakita

Seka, the woman Keisuke murdered three years ago, as well as Seka’s younger sister Ayami.

- There were no witnesses to the crime. It occurred in the early morning hours, when almost everyone in the house was asleep. PCs can figure out from the layout of the house that Chio was heading back from the toilet facilities when she encountered her killer.
- If a PC thinks of examining Chio’s hands (or has an eta do so), an **Investigation/Perception** roll at TN 20 will notice some blood under her fingernails – she managed to scratch her attacker.

The **two girls**, Moe and Kana, who spent the evening with Keisuke are both pretty young women in their late teens. They are the geisha ideal – gentle, beautiful, artistic, restrained, and sympathetic. They are also very considerate of their customers’ privacy.

- The girls will admit that they spent a “pleasant evening of music and conversation” with the honorable Otomo Keisuke. He retired to bed about one in the morning.

In order to get any more information out of the two girls, the PCs will have to either be very persuasive (good role-playing and a TN 20 skill roll with **Courtier**, **Manipulation**, or **Seduction**) or very intimidating (same roll with **Intimidation** or **Obiesaseru**, or a **Contested Willpower** roll against their Willpower of 3). Having the madam order them to speak will also work (if the PCs have already convinced the madam to open up), or a bribe of three or more koku will suffice.

- The girls will reluctantly admit that Keisuke seemed very agitated, and kept muttering about how “she said she’d do it, I had to, I had to,” and complaining that his friends had betrayed him.
- Both of the girls were somewhat frightened by Keisuke’s behavior. “He kept looking around, samurai-sama, like he expected a ninja to jump through the wall.”
- If the PCs ask about any injuries, damage to his garments, etc., the girls will confess that Keisuke had bruises on his knuckles. They didn’t ask him about them. “It isn’t our place, samurai-sama.”
- Keisuke brought some opium with him, and smoked all of it before the evening was through.

He also drank a lot of sake, and kept asking where he could get more opium. The girls claim they didn't know what to tell him, since they don't know where to get opium. (A lie.)

- If the PCs confront the girls on this lie, Kana will finally confess, "Well, I've heard you can get opium at the Inn of the Last Rise, in the Outer City. But Keisuke-sama said he couldn't go there anymore. I didn't know what else to tell him – maybe try the other Inns?" Moe will chime in: "Maybe the artisan quarters, I've heard... that is, the gossip is that they sometimes use opium."

Keisuke's **room** is a well-appointed bedroom, with a fine quality futon and coverlet, a closet and rack for holding clothes and gear, and a writing desk with supplies for those who might wish to compose. (Keisuke didn't.) There are obvious signs that the room was used last night – the bedclothes are rumpled and sweat-stained, there are empty sake bottles in the corners (and stains on the tatami mats where sake was spilled), etc.

- PCs who examine the futon can roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15 to spot an opium pipe under the covers. There is recent ash in the pipe (from last night) and the scent of opium can be recognized with a **Medicine/Intelligence** or **Poison/Intelligence** roll at TN 15 (TN 5 for those with experience with opium).
- If a PC searches the closet, it contains several yukata (Rokugani nightgown/bathrobe) and a dark brown hooded cloak. An **Investigation/Perception** roll on the cloak (TN 20) detects a few smudges of dried blood. TN 30 or better also discovers some black threads which match the cloth that swaddled Otomo Koihime's body.

Early Arrival

It is possible that very aggressive PCs may be able to arrive the evening before, while Keisuke is still at Benten's Gift. In this case, they will have difficulty getting in to see him – Haruka will be much more protective of her customer's privacy under these circumstances. She will carry a note to Keisuke but will not willingly interrupt him. He will not respond to any note, if one is delivered.

PCs with high Glory or social status (Emerald Magistrates, Imperial Families, etc) may be able to overawe Haruka and bully their way in to see Keisuke. He will be frightened and outraged by this invasion of

his privacy, and will practically scream at the PCs to "get out, get out, I want nothing to do with you, get out!"

Even if the PCs have seen spirit images of Keisuke dumping his wife's body, they do not have enough evidence to arrest or detain someone of such high Glory. If they demand to question him about the crime, he will angrily promise to meet with them "at an appropriate time." If they want to know why he is here when they were told he was in the Imperial Palace, he will shout that his private affairs are none of their business.

- Any PC can roll **Medicine/Perception** or **Poison/Perception** at TN 20 to spot the tell-tale signs of opium in Keisuke's glassy eyes and erratic behavior. If the PC has previous experience with opium addiction, the TN is only 10.

If the PCs remain in the geisha house into the early morning hours (around 4 am), they may be able to notice and interrupt Keisuke's murder of the geisha. This will require that the PCs be standing watches, guarding Keisuke's room, conducting magical surveillance, or otherwise staying alert. The GM must adjudicate whether such PCs will notice when Keisuke wanders out of his room, down the stairs, and encounters poor Chio in the hallway.

Depending on what the PCs do, they may be able to catch Keisuke literally "red-handed" in the act of murdering Chio. See Part Six, "Accusations and Convictions," for details of what happens then.

Tracking Keisuke from Benten's Gift

If the PCs spoke with Moe and Kana, they may have gotten a hint that Keisuke went looking for opium, possibly to the artisan quarter or an Inn. Otherwise, they will have to figure out where he went on their own. There are three possible methods:

- **Footprints.** If the PCs arrive in the early morning (immediately after speaking with the Scorpion), and do their best to get the crowd away from the geisha house to preserve footprints, they can roll **Hunting/Perception** at TN 20 or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 25 to spot the tracks of a pair of high-quality sandals heading east toward the artisan district. The tracks will be lost as soon as they enter the heavily traveled artisan district, but at least the PCs will know where to look.

- **Interrogating the Locals.** If the PCs question the local commoners about seeing a man like Keisuke, or a man dressed in the clothes of an Imperial, they can roll **Kuenai/Awareness** at TN 15, **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 20, or **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 20 to find a couple of commoners who remember seeing Keisuke head for the artisan quarter.
- **Questioning the Spirits.** Any spirit outside the geisha house (Earth or Air) can inform shugenja PCs that a man resembling Keisuke left the building and headed for the artisan quarter.

Seppun Hill and Togashi Kenjin

If the PCs come during the day, they may notice the Ise Zumi seated atop Seppun Hill. If any PC asks the locals about this person, they can learn that his name is Togashi Kenjin, an aged and possibly insane monk, who has been on the hilltop for over ten years. Supposedly, when he first came to the hill, he told a local heimin that he was “seeking questions,” since he had already found all the answers. He has been on the hilltop ever since, waiting for visitors to bring him questions. (PCs can know this story themselves if they roll a suitable Lore skill, such as **Lore: Dragon Clan** or **Lore: Imperial City**, at TN 20.)

In actuality, the Ise Zumi was replaced two years ago by a Rakshasa, a malignant spirit from the Ivory Kingdoms. This creature enjoys using the form and memories of Togashi Kenjin to inflict strife and disharmony on the world. It witnessed Keisuke’s arrival last night, and sensed the evil and chaos in his soul. It knows that he murdered the geisha, and saw where he went early the next morning.

Some PCs may decide to speak with “Togashi Kenjin” in the hope that he noticed something useful. This will be an unsettling experience:

The old Ise Zumi sits cross-legged atop the hill, dressed only in a tattered hakama. His limbs are stick-thin and his fingernails quite long and yellow. He looks at you with wide eyes that seem to burn with an inner light, and an unsettling open grin stretches his mouth. Tattoos cover every part of his visible body, including both elaborate abstract patterns as well as images, such as a Dragon coiled across his stomach and a fierce Tiger snarling from his chest.

“Kenjin” will speak with the PCs in a rasping, sinister voice. Although he is skilled at using the style and language of the Tao, he uses it to unsettle and disturb

those who visit him, and tries to subtly provoke discord and violence among his visitors. His tattoos occasionally shift and change, moving across his body and taking new forms, although the Tiger on his chest never moves.

PCs who threaten or provoke the Rakshasa are putting themselves in serious danger, since this spirit being is both deadly and nigh-invulnerable. However, it is trapped in Kenjin’s form, which makes it less lethal than if it retained its own body. Also, if the PCs flee ignominiously, it will be too amused to pursue.

If the PCs avoid this, and ask the right questions, “Kenjin” can provide them with some useful (if enigmatic) clues:

- **Otomo Keisuke:** “Ah yes, the man without a face. You all hide your faces, yes? Behind masks and deceptions. But his masks have broken and he deceives only himself.”
- **The Murders:** “Did not Shinsei say that death is a part of the Celestial Order, just like birth? Perhaps this man is a truer student of Shinsei than you might guess.”
- **Events in Bente’s Gift:** “Men must all take off their faces at some time, or go mad. Even the Seven Thunders must have done so, for they were only men, were they not? Oh yes, and women too.” Cackling laugh. “Still, if a man has already lost his face, why would he go to a place where they are removed? Did he want to take off his skull as well?”
- **Where Keisuke is now:** “Everyone has a quest they must pursue. He seeks dreams, but those who bring them to him have abandoned him. Such a betrayal! Where can he find them now? Perhaps he seeks them among those who wear extra faces, to entertain with deception.”

Part Five: Pursuit

Otomo Keisuke has been driven to madness by his drug addiction and his crimes. If (as is most likely) the PCs did not catch him at Bente’s Gift, Keisuke will wander across the city, committing several more crimes. If the PCs pursue him aggressively, they may be able to catch him at almost any point during this sequence of wanderings and murders.

First Stop: The Artisan Quarter

From the geisha house, Keisuke heads east toward the rising sun, passing through the artisan quarter located there (and which the PCs may well have passed on their way to Benten's Gift). He wanders through the area for an hour or more, looking at the various jugglers, dancers, and acrobats as they warm up and prepare for the day's entertainments. Several times, he approaches female artisans in a threatening manner, on one occasion actually trying to strangle a woman (who flees). Since Keisuke is a nobleman, none of these commoner entertainers dare to do anything about his behavior. Eventually he wanders away north, toward the Kanjo District.

If the PCs are looking for Keisuke while he is still in this district, they will have to roll **Hunting/Perception** at TN 20 or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 25 to spot him. Or, they can ask the entertainers if they have seen him – this will require rolling Kuenai/Awareness at TN 15 or **Sincerity/Awareness**, **Law/Awareness**, or **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 20 to get the locals to open up and speak about an Otomo nobleman. This can direct the PCs to Keisuke if he is still here, or give the following information if he is gone:

- Several entertainers saw a man meeting Keisuke's description wandering around the area, seemingly in a daze. At least two female dancers remember him staring at them very intently, so much so that it disturbed and frightened them. One woman remembers him suddenly shouting at her ("a wordless shout, samurai-sama, almost like on a battlefield").
- With a Raise on one of the social rolls, the PCs find the woman who fled from Keisuke. She describes him as "reaching for me, samurai-sama, reaching for my throat, and his eyes were so wide, I thought they would fall out of his head." She also remembers seeing dark stains, possibly bloodstains, on his hands.
- If PCs ask if anyone saw Keisuke leaving the area, and where he was headed, an **Investigation/Awareness** roll at TN 15 finds several witnesses. "He was heading north, samurai-sama, into the Kanjo District, and I kept hearing him mutter. Smoke, smoke, he kept saying."

If the PCs encounter Keisuke here, he will be uncooperative, agitated, and paranoid. His hands and fingers are smeared with flakes and remnants of dried

blood. He will try to drive the PCs away, refusing to cooperate and demanding that they "leave me alone, I'm taking a walk, there's nothing wrong with a walk!" See Part Six, "Accusations and Convictions," for details of what happens if they press him.

Second Stop: The Inn of the Last Cherry Blossom

From the artisan quarter, Keisuke wanders north across the elevated Imperial Road into the Kanjo District, passing between a small residential neighborhood and a large private stable, Ebisu's Rest. Past that he comes to the Inn of the Last Cherry Blossom, a somewhat disreputable establishment, and there he stops, looking for drink and opium.

If the PCs are trying to track Keisuke on their own, they have their work cut out for them – they will need to make a **Hunting/Perception** roll at TN 30 to spot recent tracks from Keisuke's high-quality sandals. If the PCs wait for more than an hour or two, traffic will obliterate the tracks. Absent that, spells such as *The Horse's Nose* can also track him. The PCs can also ask the local commoners if they have seen Keisuke – this approach will work, although it will slow the PCs down enough that they will not be able to catch up with him at the Inn.

The Inn of the Last Cherry Blossom is a squat, small structure at the meeting of two major roads. A large window looks in on a central feasting chamber, giving the guests a fine view of traffic on the street. At this early hour, the Inn is quiet, although you can see one or two customers sipping tea and a few servants cleaning and doing maintenance. As you enter, a short rosy-faced commoner bustles forward, smiling. "Welcome, samurai! I am Tsuyuge, and this is my Inn. May I offer you some fine tea this morning? We pride ourselves on being the finest brewer in the city."

Tsuyuge is a cheerful fellow with a knack for making all his guests feel at home. He welcomes samurai and commoners alike into his establishment. At present, the guests here are all commoners, enjoying cups of hot, fresh tea before the day's work.

If the PCs ask about Keisuke, Tsuyuge remembers him readily enough. "We seldom get such prestigious visitors, especially this early in the morning." He will at first pretend that he had no trouble with Keisuke, but a **Contested Awareness** roll (his Awareness is 4) can determine he is lying. Whether the PCs realize this or not, he will try to protect the privacy of his customers. A serious appeal which emphasizes the gravity of the

situation will get him to open up. A bribe of 2 koku or more will also suffice.

- If he speaks openly, Tsuyuge will confess that “the honorable Otomo” seemed very agitated, and refused to give his name. He demanded sake, which was unusual this early – Tsuyuge had to heat some up, and Keisuke became even more agitated while he was waiting.
- Keisuke kept asking if this was a “Scorpion Inn.” “I cannot imagine what he meant by such a question, samurai-sama.” (Smiling bow to any Scorpion PCs.) “We are simple commoners here.”
- If the PCs ask the right questions, and show proper discretion, Tsuyuge may confess that “I think the honorable Otomo was trying to ask about opium, samurai-sama, although he never came out and said so. Certainly he was quite agitated, much like some opium addicts I have seen.”
- Where did Keisuke go from here? If the PCs ask either Tsuyuge, other servants at the Inn, or the customers, they can learn that Keisuke left after one of the customers began talking about the mysterious quarter known as “The Riddle.” “There’s some new artwork there, I saw it on the way here, and I mentioned that Bayushi Hamanari must still be alive and drawing. The Otomo lord became quite interested and left soon after.”

If the PCs do not ask where Keisuke went, they will have to try some other method of following him. Apart from magic (*Communing* with the spirits, casting *The Horse’s Nose*, etc), the PCs can try to continue tracking his footsteps, although this grows more difficult as they enter more populated areas (**Hunting/Perception** at TN 25 or **Investigation/ Perception** at TN 30).

Third Stop: The Riddle

If the PCs have heard something about “The Riddle” at the Inn of the Last Cherry Blossom, they can learn more by asking the locals, or by rolling **Shintao/Intelligence** at TN 20 or a suitable **Lore** skill at TN 25. Regardless, the story they learn is the same: Decades (or perhaps centuries) ago, an unassuming Bayushi named Hamanari came to the neighborhood and began writing strange nonsense-kanji on the walls. Shop owners and residents asked magistrates to intervene, but somehow, they could never get Hamanari to stop. Eventually the businesses moved out of the neighborhood, and the locals began skirting it rather

than look at those strange kanji... which continue to appear to this day.

The “Riddle” neighborhood is easy to spot – a large cluster of abandoned buildings, covered in strange drawings, abstract symbols, and kanji with no meaning.

Even if the PCs are not following Keisuke’s trail, this neighborhood will catch their eye.

Once inside the “Riddle” area, the PCs can easily spot Keisuke’s tracks on the abandoned dirt streets: a **Hunting/Perception** roll at TN 10, **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15, or **Simple Perception** at TN 20 will suffice. The trail will wander through the neighborhood and eventually enter what appears to be an abandoned house.

Inside the dimly lit house, every wall, floor, and even the ceiling is covered with the strange drawings and symbols. Ink, chalk, charcoal, and paint have all been used in the strange scrawlings, and in many rooms it appears as though several layers of pictures have been laid one atop the other over a period of years. The floors are covered in bits of chalk, broken brushes, smashed crockery, and other detritus. From somewhere in the back of the building, you can hear a man’s voice humming tunelessly.

Bayushi Hamanari, “the Answer,” is an old, old man, his hair hanging lank from a balding scalp, his wrinkled yellow skin covered in age spots. His eyes, however, are clear and sparkling. He wears only a simple, baggy garment, stained with paint and ink, and his fingers are blackened with ink-stains as well. When the PCs find him, he is busily mixing black paint in a cheap pottery bowl; after a few minutes, he begins to add new mystery-symbols to a section of wall.

Hamanari is charming and friendly, and also eerily perceptive. He is, in his own strange way, enlightened, and can see past all the weaknesses, pretenses, and deceptions of ordinary folk. He does not answer questions directly, but will be helpful in his own enigmatic way.

- If the PCs ask about Keisuke, he nods. “He came here, yes. He is lost, but perhaps not forever. I found the Answer. Perhaps he can as well. He left seeking Redemption.”
- Where is Redemption? “Everyone seeks it in their own way, like the path, like the riddle. He seeks it in this world, by its name.” Any PC who rolls **Theology/Intelligence** or **Shintao/Intelligence** at TN 20 can remember that one of the temples in

Otosan Uchi is called the Temple of Eternal Redemption. Also, PCs who have played the adventures *Winter Court: Kanrinrin's Duty* or *Fist of the Earth* can roll **Simple Intelligence** at TN 15 to remember the name of the Temple.

- If any PC asks Hamanari about his own identity or purpose, he will smile broadly. “I am asking the Riddle. Do you wish to ask as well? I will gladly share my paint – I think there are brushes in the corner.” The PC speaking to him must roll **Simple Willpower** at TN 20 to avoid taking a brush and starting to paint. The PC will continue to paint for at least an hour, unless physically dragged away.
- If a PC asks how Hamanari survives, or where he lives, he will chuckle. “I do well enough. The Answer has no needs.”
- If any PC asks whether he really the same “Bayushi Hamanari” who came here so many years ago, he will not be offended. “The riddle, and the answer, are eternal.”
- If a PC asks about the Riddle itself: “There is only one Riddle, but it is asked more times than can be counted. And there are many answers, but only one Answer.”
- If a PC spends more than a few minutes looking at the strange symbols of the Riddle, the PC must make an **Honor Test** at TN 20. Failure means the PC hinds him/herself remembering any sins or misdeeds of the past. If these are sufficiently grave, the PC is overwhelmed with remorse and must roll **Simple Willpower** at TN 15 to avoid open and Glory-robbing demonstrations of guilt (confessing aloud, breaking down weeping, etc). This effect lasts for about fifteen minutes.

From here, the PCs can trail Keisuke (with the same **Hunting** or **Investigation** rolls) to the edge of the “Riddle neighborhood,” from which it is a straight line to the Temple of Eternal Redemption.

If the PCs missed Keisuke at the Artisan quarter, but have pursued him aggressively since then, they may be able to catch him while he is leaving the “Riddle” area. This will only be possible if they were quick and efficient following him from the Artisan quarter to here, and if they do not spend much time speaking with Hamanari (and above all do not start painting).

In these circumstances, if the PCs are able to follow Keisuke’s trail away from Hamanari, they can locate

him. It is up to them whether to approach him or to follow him to the Temple. If they do approach him, he is a remorseful state, and they may be able to get a confession out of him. See Part Six, “Accusations and Convictions,” for details.

Fourth Stop: The Temple of Eternal Redemption

At the “Riddle,” Keisuke gains a momentary sense of remorse and regret. He flees to the Temple of Eternal Redemption, driven not only by crazed guilt but also by a memory that the candy-seller who works outside the Temple is an agent of the Otomo family. Keisuke’s dementia causes him to see this man as a possible savior. However, when he arrives, the candy-seller (a heimin named Kokei) is confused and alarmed by Keisuke’s behavior, and tries to call for help. In a fit of madness, Keisuke murders him, and flees to the Scorpion Embassy.

If the PCs are following Keisuke, they may be able to witness this incident and possibly intervene in it. If they are close behind (just missed him at the “Riddle”), they can arrive just as he finishes committing the crime. Either way, see Part Six for details.

If the PCs are lagging behind (such as if they got bogged down with painting the “Riddle,” or if they lost the trail completely and start waiting for news of additional murders), they arrive after the crime is committed:

The small Temple has been fully rebuilt from the fire and damage of last autumn, and its glazed roof-tiles reflect the bright morning sunlight. The walls around the temple compound have been recently white-washed, and the place seems a perfect harmony of artistic simplicity and design symmetry. The scene is badly marred, however, by the body lying in the street in front of the Temple entrance, next to a small merchant’s cart.

Kokei’s body is covered in blood – the first blow broke his nose. Drops of blood trail away from it, although they grow sparse after a few paces. PCs can trail the blood drops to the Scorpion Embassy with a **Hunting/Perception** roll at TN 15, **Investigation/Perception** at TN 20, or **Simple Perception** at TN 25.

If the PCs arrive at any time after the first few minutes, a crowd will have gathered around the body, exchanging conversation and gossip. At least three

people in the crowd, including a ronin named Hoku, witnessed the crime and can describe it:

- All witnesses agree that a “frenzied man” in fine robes approached Kokei and began berating him. They could not hear what was said, but caught words like “confess” and “safety.” Kokei seemed to be trying to calm down the strange nobleman.
- After a few moments, the nobleman suddenly struck Kokei, knocked him down, and strangled him. “Poor Kokei, he was just a candy-seller, why would anyone attack him?”
- The nobleman fled the scene toward the northeast. Nobody in the crowd dared to follow him, but if the PCs ask around (**Sincerity/Awareness** at TN 20 or **Kuenai/Awareness** at TN 15), or drop a few silver *bu* in bribes, they can find a couple of neighborhood boys who trailed Keisuke for a while. They report that he headed for the Scorpion Embassy.

Shugenja PCs who interrogate the spirits can learn the same thing as the witnesses describe.

Fifth Stop: The Scorpion Embassy

Keisuke beats on the door of the embassy compound, demanding help, but gets no answer. After a few minutes, the terrified, demented man flees west across the city, toward the Yasuki Trading Grounds. The Scorpion assign a spy to follow him.

If the PCs come here directly from the murder, without wasting time investigating the crime scene or speaking with the locals, they will find Keisuke outside shouting and beating on the door with bloody hands. Otherwise, he will be gone, and a servant will be washing the blood off the door.

If the PCs wish to trail Keisuke from here on their own, they will not be able to find tracks – he enters a well-traveled part of the city, and as the morning goes on the crowds are growing. The PCs will have to ask local residents, shop-keepers, and other passers-by about sightings of Keisuke in order to trail him to the Yasuki Trading Grounds. Simple Commune spells will not be able to trail Keisuke through the crowds, although spells like *The Horse’s Nose* and *The Ties That Bind* will still work.

If the PCs ask to speak with the Scorpion at the embassy, a minor functionary named Bayushi Baka will come out to speak with them. He is a sour, middle-

aged man who conceals his face completely beneath a heavy wooden mempo. Baka will explain that “some sort of ruffian” beat on the embassy door and then departed. He will claim (with an **Acting/Awareness** skill of 7k4) to have no idea who the man was or why he was demanding entrance to the embassy.

While Baka is speaking, a bland young man in nondescript commoner’s clothing will trot up, bow, and whisper in his ear. Baka’s voice turns more pleasant. “Ah. Samurai, I took the precaution of having one of my servants follow the man, in case the authorities were interested. If you would like to accompany young Chubo here, he will show you where the miscreant is now.”

“Chubo” (who is actually a Rank Five Shosuro Actor) will lead the PCs to the Yasuki Trading Grounds, arriving in time to witness Keisuke’s next murder.

Sixth (Final) Stop: The Yasuki Trading Grounds

From the Scorpion Embassy, Keisuke (now almost completely insane) flees westward across the city to the Yasuki Trading Grounds, hoping that the Yasuki “merchant scum” will be able to give him opium. He wanders through the Trading Grounds, frenziedly demanding “smoke” from the merchants, and eventually comes to a stall which offers jewelry and tobacco pipes. Keisuke demands opium from Yasuki Shio, the young girl who is managing the stall. (She is the daughter of a Yasuki merchant house, and therefore of the samurai caste.) When she refuses, he murders her, then hastily searches the stall for opium before fleeing.

- If the PCs come here with the help of the Scorpion, or with the help of spells such as *Ties That Bind*, they will arrive in time to witness the murder.

Inside one of the merchant stalls, a thin, crazed-looking man in a torn, blood-stained high-quality kimono is crouching over the body of a young girl. His bloody hands are locked around her throat, and he is screaming at her, “Smoke! Where is it? Where? Tell me!”

If the PCs do not immediately disable or subdue Keisuke, he will try to flee, running through the aisles of the Trading Grounds (**Contested Athletics/Agility** to catch him) and then fleeing into the nearby Imperial Museum of Antiquities.

If Keisuke escapes pursuit, he eventually sneaks back into the Forbidden City.

- If the PCs have to get here by questioning the locals, they will arrive after the murder, and will have to ask around some more in order to track Keisuke's wandering and discover the body.

Lying in the back of the merchant's stall, amid toppled crates and spilled jewelry and tobacco pipes, is the body of a pretty young woman. He face is a smashed, bloody wreck, and handprints are impressed deeply into her neck.

The PCs can track Keisuke by looking for a blood trail (**Hunting/Perception** at TN 15 or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 20), by casting a quick *Commune* spell, or by running through the Trading Grounds asking if anyone has seen a tall, thin man with blood on his hands. If they take any of these actions, they can catch Keisuke on his way back to the Forbidden City. As above, they will need to make **Contested Athletics/Agility** rolls to catch him, or find some other way of stopping him before he makes it back to safety.

If the PCs canvass the Trading Grounds later, and make either a **Sincerity/Awareness** roll at TN 20 or **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 25, they can find two Yasuki family merchants (samurai caste) who witnessed the crime, as well as numerous commoners.

Part Six: Accusations and Convictions

At some point, the PCs will probably attempt to arrest and accuse Otomo Keisuke. This will be difficult – even if all the PCs have relatively high Glory, Keisuke has Glory 9.1, far higher than any of them. He is the daimyo of the Otomo family. Accusing him is fraught with risk, even if the PCs have what seems to be an open-and-shut case.

To some degree, the success of the PCs' actions will depend on exactly where and how they catch Keisuke. If they catch him in the middle of a crime, or while fleeing the scene of a crime, they can arrest him outright. If they catch him elsewhere, they will need an Order of Appearance in order to arrest him. For someone of Keisuke's rank, such an order can only be issued by one of the four District Governors, the Emerald Champion (there won't be one until after the Emerald Tournament concludes), or the Emperor himself. Needless to say, if the PCs take time out of

their investigation to seek an Order of Appearance, they will not be able to maintain their pursuit of Keisuke.

PCs catch Keisuke at Chio's Murder

If the PCs catch Keisuke in the act of murdering Chio, they will have grounds to immediately arrest him outright. Although the murder of a geisha is a lesser crime than killing a peasant or a samurai, it is still a crime. Keisuke will be too dazed to do more than mumble incoherent pleas and denials as the PCs take him into custody.

PCs catch Keisuke in the Artisan Quarter

If the PCs find Keisuke in the artisan quarter, after leaving Benten's Gift, he will have recovered his equilibrium enough to deny everything and try to brush them off, insisting that he is just "taking a walk." He knows the PCs cannot arrest him without an Order of Appearance, and will try to exploit this. If they press him, or question him about the dried blood on his hands, he will shout "that is none of your business," and will try to push past them, heading back toward the Imperial palaces. If any of the PCs are Scorpions, he will suddenly round on them, snarling that they are "traitors" who have betrayed his friendship. "You will pay the price, you will all pay the price," he shouts before heading off again.

If the PCs push Keisuke hard enough, and do not allow him to intimidate them, he will eventually snap and attack them with his fists, screaming that "you are with them, betrayers, betrayers all!" The PCs will then have cause to physically subdue and arrest him. Otherwise, he will retreat back into the Forbidden City, ending his crime-spree and the investigation.

PCs catch Keisuke in the "Riddle" Area

At this point, Keisuke will be in a brief state of stricken remorse. If male PCs approach him in a respectful or sympathetic way, without threats, he will break down and confess his crimes, allowing the PCs to arrest him. However, if a female PC approaches him, his confession will end with his suddenly flying into a psychotic rage and attacking her, screaming that "you too, you'll betray me, like all the others!"

Any aggressive or threatening PCs will cause Keisuke to go into a panic and flee toward the Scorpion embassy (bypassing the Temple of Eternal Redemption). The PCs will need to make Contested

Athletics/Agility rolls to catch him (or make creative use of magic). Once caught, he will break down in hysterical tears and confess.

PCs catch Keisuke at the Temple of Eternal Redemption

If the PCs catch Keisuke during or immediately after the murder of Kokei, he will be in a psychotic state and will try to attack the PCs, babbling that they are “all against me, all!” After a few minutes, if he is left alone, he will recover enough to try to deny everything and leave the area (going to the Yasuki Trading Grounds if he is unaware of being followed, or retreating to the Forbidden City if the PCs are confronting him). The PCs will be able to arrest Keisuke if they catch him during or immediately after the crime.

PCs catch Keisuke at the Scorpion Embassy

Keisuke will try to get control of himself and bluff, denying everything, and then trying to retreat back to the Forbidden City. Essentially, his behavior will be a more frazzled, incoherent version of his behavior at the artisan quarter (above). Unless the PCs have maintained direct pursuit of Keisuke from his last crime, they will not be able to arrest him without an Order of Appearance.

However, due to his more fragile mental state, it will now be much easier to push him into “snapping” and attacking the PCs, at which point he can be arrested.

PCs catch Keisuke in the Yasuki Trading Grounds

At this point Keisuke has lost the ability to behave rationally and will simply try to flee, running toward the Imperial Museum (if caught during the murder) or the Forbidden City (if caught after the murder). If the PCs can catch him, they can arrest him easily enough.

PCs fail to catch Keisuke before he returns to the Palace

If Keisuke manages to make it back to the Forbidden City, he will closet himself there and will refuse to meet with the PCs or answer their messages. At this point the PCs must have an Order of Appearance, and with Keisuke inside the Forbidden City, only the Emerald Champion and the Emperor himself have jurisdiction. The PCs will have to either delay and wait for the

outcome of the Emerald Tournament, or petition the Emperor himself with their accusations.

Either approach will require an eloquent and intelligent explanation of their charges and evidence, followed by a **Sincerity/Awareness** roll (TN 20 for the new Emerald Champion, TN 25 for the Emperor). With a success, Keisuke can be arrested and charged with the crime.

Convicting Keisuke

If the PCs catch Keisuke under conditions in which he confesses, their problem is largely solved for them. A confession witnessed by several samurai is more than enough for Rokugani law. Keisuke is condemned to death. In order to maintain face, his execution takes place in secret, and the public (including the PCs) is told that Keisuke committed seppuku in order to atone for an unnamed “breach of honor.”

If Keisuke did not immediately confess, the PCs will face a much more difficult task. Once he is in confinement (or safely back in the Palace), Keisuke somewhat recovers from his insanity, enough to marshal his resources as Otomo daimyo in his defense. He will demand to plead his case before the Emperor.

The PCs will have to present their case (and their witnesses) in a private audience with the Son of Heaven. Aside from the Emperor and a few of his immediate advisors (including the new Emerald Champion), only Keisuke, the PCs, and their witnesses (if any) will be present.

In order to convict Keisuke, the PCs will need overwhelming evidence, and if possible the testimony of samurai, preferably Clan samurai (whose word outweighs ronin). The word of commoners is useless except in so far as it can confirm and strengthen the testimony of a samurai. The testimony of spirits is, of course, invalid in the courts of Rokugan.

The GM must adjudicate the strength of the PCs’ case. In general, if they cannot supply the testimony of at least three samurai eyewitnesses, their case will fail no matter how much circumstantial/physical evidence is available. Also, the PCs will need to role-play an effective presentation.

As a last-ditch effort, the PCs can try to beat Otomo Keisuke on a **Contested Sincerity/Awareness** roll. This will be extremely difficult, given Keisuke’s skills as a courtier (although he does suffer a -10 penalty to his roll due to the effects of opium withdrawal).

If the PCs fail to prove their case, the Emperor will ask if they wish to withdraw their accusation. This will be their chance to apologize, back out, and get away with only modest Glory loss. If they refuse to withdraw the accusation, the Emperor rules Keisuke innocent, and the PCs suffer a drastic Glory loss (possibly leading to their being named ronin).

If the PCs succeed, the Emperor turns to Otomo Keisuke and orders him to prepare himself for the afterlife. Keisuke is visibly crushed and staggers out of the room on shaky legs. The PCs are quietly told that Keisuke will commit seppuku to atone for his actions. “This matter is closed,” the Emperor declares. “Let none speak of it.”

Epilogue

If the PCs successfully convicted Keisuke, they are invited to another meeting with Bayushi Yojiro, who is once again hidden behind a mask. He quietly thanks them for bringing a dangerous criminal to justice, and praises their skill and perseverance at dealing with such a difficult case. “The Under-Hand is grateful,” he remarks, and promises that the PCs will be rewarded for their efforts. Each PC may choose to either erase one Disadvantage which could reasonably be resolved by the Scorpion (GM’s adjudication – examples include Sworn Enemy, Obligation, and some Dark Secrets). Alternatively, the PCs may instead receive the cert for Favor of the Scorpion Clan.

PCs may choose to refuse all reward from the Scorpion Clan, in which case they gain 2 extra points of Honor, but lose 2 Glory as the Scorpion wage a whispering campaign against them (unless they are Scorpion themselves).

Immediately after each PC makes their choice, the following scene occurs:

One of the ronin samurai who guided you here ducks into the room and whispers in your host’s ear. Through the holes of the mask you see his eyes widen just slightly. Then he dismisses the ronin and bows politely to you. “I am sorry, my friends. I cannot speak with you any further tonight. Urgent Clan business commands my attention. I thank you again for your efforts, and assure you that the Scorpion Clan will remember you with gratitude.” Servants quickly show you out of the building.

Within a few hours, word spreads throughout Otosan Uchi of the news which has just arrived from

Scorpion lands: Bayushi Shoji, the Master of Lies, is dead – slain not by some mighty foe, but by simple heart failure, as his caravan prepared to depart Kyuden Bayushi to attend the Emperor’s wedding.

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

Experience Points

Playing through the adventure: 1 XP
Good role-playing: +1 XP
PCs successfully convict Keisuke: +2 XP

Total Possible Experience: 4 XP

Honor

If Keisuke is arrested and convicted, all PCs gain +1 Honor for bringing Otomo Koihime’s murderer to justice.

If he is not convicted, but the PCs knew he was guilty, all PCs with Honor of 2.0 or higher lose 2 points of Honor as their faith in the Celestial Order is shaken. PCs who refuse any reward from the Scorpion gain 2 points of Honor.

Glory

PCs who successfully accuse Otomo Keisuke gain +4 points of Glory.

PCs who accuse Keisuke, but have to withdraw their accusation, lose 8 points of Glory. PCs who refuse to withdraw their accusation and lose the case suffer the loss of 2 full Ranks (20 points) of Glory. Any PC reduced to zero Glory by either result is made ronin.

Non-Scorpion PCs who refuse the reward of the Scorpion Clan lose 2 points of Glory due to a whispering campaign against them.

Other Awards/Penalties

PCs who accept the reward of the Scorpion may either erase a suitable Disadvantage (subject to GM’s approval) or take the cert for the Favor of the Scorpion Clan.

Appendix: NPCs

Otomo Keisuke, Imperial Advisor, Otomo Family Daimyo, Opium Addict and Serial Killer

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

School/Rank: Otomo Seiyaku (Courtier) 4

Honor/Glory: 0.4/9.1

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

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

Equipment: Exquisite kimono, fine daisho set

Daidoji Mei, handmaiden to Otomo Koihime

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Doji Courtier 2

Honor/Glory: 4.3/3.8

Skills: Acting 2, Bard 2, Courtier 5, Dance 3, Etiquette 6, History 3, Lore (Crane Clan) 5, Lore (Imperial Families) 2, Poetry 2, Political Maneuvering 1, Shintao 3, Sincerity 5, Theology 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Benten's Blessing, Irreproachable, Social Position, True Friend (Miya Ejiki), Wealth/Idealistic, Small

Equipment: Fine kimono.

Chiu, Tsunako, and Denori, Shosuro Actors posing as Bushi-for-Hire

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Shosuro butei 5

Honor/Glory: 0.4/1.5

Skills: Acting 6, Athletics 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Forgery 5, Hand-to-Hand (Jiu-jutsu) 4, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Locksmith 3, Meditation 4, Sincerity 3, Sleight-of-Hand 4, Stealth 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Crafty, Bland (all three)

Equipment: Kimono, light armor, daisho set, nageteppe (smoke grenades), false identification papers and chops, 2 koku each.

"Togashi Kenjin," Rakshasa posing as an Ise Zumi

FIRE 3 Agility 5	AIR 7
EARTH 5	WATER 3 Perception 6

TN to be Hit: 35

Skills: Acting 6, Astrology 3, Athletics 8, Defense 6, Hand-to-Hand (used with claws) 7, History 3, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3, Lore (Ivory Kingdoms) 6, Manipulation 7, Mimic 5, Mountaineer 8, Ratling Speech 2, Sincerity 3, Stealth 9, Traps 7.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Absolute Direction, Daredevil, Fascination (humans, especially when toying with them), Heartless, Perfect Balance.

Special Abilities: "Kenjin" is trapped in his current body, but still retains the ability to instantly extend his fingers into tiger-like claws. He cannot be hurt by mundane weapons, nor is he vulnerable to jade. Magic spells (except jade-based spells) can hurt him, as can nemuranai, awakened crystal, and obsidian. He suffers no Wound Penalties until reduced to zero Wounds, at which point he is dispelled back to the spirit realm.

Weapons: Claws 2k2

Typical Imperial Guard

FIRE 3	AIR 3
EARTH 3	WATER 3

VOID 3

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

School/Rank: Seppun Bodyguard 1

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

Honor/Glory: 4.5/2.4

Skills: Archery 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6, Law 1, Meditation 2, Naginata 3, Sincerity 2, Yarijutsu 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Position (Imperial Guard)

Equipment: Fine daisho set (+1 to skill dice), fine light armor, fine bow (+1 skill die), 20 arrows, fine yari (+1 damage die).

Locations in the Imperial City

- 1. Palace of the Seppun (current residence of Otomo Keisuke)**
- 2. Palaces of the Hantei and Otomo (being rebuilt)**
- 3. Miya Palace**
- 4. Main Gate of the Forbidden City**
- 5. Servant's Entrance to the Forbidden City**
- 6. Naka Nihachi (Western Bridge), still under construction – Body Dumped Here**
- 7. Naka Higashi (Eastern Bridge) – Body Found Here**
- 8. Inn of a Thousand Stories**
- 9. Benten's Gift (geisha house)**
- 10. Chisei District Artisan Quarter**
- 11. Inn of the Last Cherry Blossom**
- 12. "The Riddle"**
- 13. Temple of Eternal Redemption**
- 14. Scorpion Embassy**
- 15. Yasuki Trading Grounds**

