

Time of the Void

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

by Rob Hobart

The Shadowlands Horde is loose in Rokugan, the Imperial capital is in the hands of a traitor, and the fabric of reality itself is beginning to unravel! As the final hours of the Emerald Empire approach, the Brotherhood of Shinsei requests your help to protect its sacred relics from the forces of Fu Leng.

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

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

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

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

GM's Information

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

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

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

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

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

- The "Victory" is only caught in the Skull Tide for a short time, requiring only one Willpower roll at TN 10.
- The Oni no Gekido will only be in Rage for one round before becoming Exhausted.

- One of the Sisters (Yumi) will be absent on a mission for Kanomi.
- Kanomi has Lesser Invulnerability (takes half damage from normal weapons) rather than normal Invulnerability. She does not have Superior Speed.

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

- The “Victory” is caught in the Skull Tide slightly longer, forcing a fourth Willpower roll at TN 25.
- The two Mantis Sisters (Misa and Yumi) both have Fire of 3, Agility 4, Earth of 4, 72 Wounds, and are Mantis School Rank 3 (may make two attacks per round when using two small weapons).
- Konami has Lesser and Greater Blessings of the Dark One, raising her total Wounds to 135.

Adventure Summary and Background

The final days of the Emerald Empire are at hand. Fu Leng, in the body of Toturi the Black, has taken possession of the Imperial Capital, joined by the corrupted legions of the Crab Clan. The Shadow is spreading across the Empire, devouring souls and unraveling the fabric of reality itself.

The leader of the Crab Clan, Hida Kisada, has been replaced by the first and most powerful of all Fu Leng’s *akutenshi* (evil angels) – Hida Atarasi, the fallen Thunder. Under his foul leadership, much of the Clan has succumbed to the Taint. The true Kisada, meanwhile, is a prisoner in the Shadowlands, where he is being slowly tortured into submission.

But all is not quite lost. From the ranks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, the descendent of Shinsei himself has stepped forward, quietly rallying the Empire’s remaining strength. Almost too late, the tattered armies of the seven Clans are gathering to contest Toturi’s seizure of the Emerald Throne.

Introduction

This scenario takes place in autumn, late in the month of the Rooster (October to gaijin), as the last of the brown leaves are drifting down from the trees. The weather is cold and rainy, and the roads are muddy, making travel slow and difficult. Bedraggled peasants

are struggling to collect that last of the harvest before winter begins.

It is most likely that the PCs play this adventure immediately after *The Dragon’s Heart*, which ends in eastern Dragon lands with the deaths of Togashi and Mirumoto Hitomi. That adventure concludes with the PCs learning the news that Toturi and his Crab allies have attacked the Imperial Capital. In this situation, the PCs start this adventure as part of a larger group of samurai who are trying to make their way toward Otsan Uchi. By the time the scenario begins, the PCs have made it to the Lion city of Toshi Ranbo (where they began *The Dragon’s Heart*).

The streets of Toshi Ranbo are soaked in late-autumn rain, and the journey which brought you here has left you tired, wet, and cold. The streets of the city are crowded with weary bushi from several Clans, most notably the local Lion troops, who are marching about in a state of high agitation. The reason for their excitement lies outside the walls of the small fortress-city: a large army of Dragon troops and an equally large force of the Naga snake-men, camped on the open plains to the north. Both armies have arrived within the last few days, and seem to be engaged in a cautious negotiation, while the small Lion garrison fumes and watches.

The streets of the city are crowded with panicked commoners and merchants, anxious courtiers, ronin, tense and angry Lion troops, and Clan samurai wondering what their duty is in this unprecedented circumstances. (PCs will note a complete absence of Crab samurai except for any among their own ranks.) The PCs are presumed to have arrived in the city together, and are free to speak with anyone they like to learn more of what is happening:

- Nobody in the city is sure why the Naga are here or what they intend. At last report, their advance was halted by the Fists of the Emperor Legion, but since then the Fists have withdrawn to the capital and the Naga have apparently resumed their march eastward, only to halt here. Most of the Lion expect these “inhuman beasts” to attack, and are confused and angry at the apparent negotiations between the Naga and Dragon.
- There are also rumors of a Unicorn army marching fast up the Drowned Merchant River toward here, although whether they are coming to attack the Naga, attack the Lion, or to move toward the capital is uncertain.

- Some sort of riot or general breakdown of order has afflicted the Scorpion city of Ryoko Owari. It is reported that the Temple District suffered especially heavily.
- The latest news from the Imperial Capital is several days old. According to it, Toturi's ronin army was besieging the city but had not been able to break through the Enchanted Walls.
- Rumors are pouring in of the steady advance of the mighty Crab army under Hida Kisada, now said to be through the Beiden Pass and brutally fighting its way through the Lion lands.
- However, word also has it that the Scorpion armies which previously avoided combat with Kisada's massive army are now striking hard at the rear of his force.

The roads outside the city are churned into mud by the passage of armies – in addition to the newest arrivals, the Fists of the Emperor Legion passed through last week, force-marching toward the capital.

If any of the PCs are Lions or Imperials, they will be aware that the Lion commander of Toshi Ranbo, Matsu Morishige, is deeply suspicious of the approaching Unicorn force, and believes the Dragon and Naga are about to join forces to attack the city. (The Shadow has delivered him a false letter from Tsuko, warning him not to trust any of them.)

Alternate Start

If the PCs did not play through *The Dragon's Heart* prior to this adventure, the PCs are simply here as part of the general effort to rally the Empire. They are already aware that Toturi has attacked the capital.

A Message From the Capital

Once the PCs have picked up a little bit of news, the following scene takes place:

A courier rides up the street, his mount and clothing soaked and spattered with mud. He seems to be a man in his thirties, and wears the colors of an Imperial of the Otomo family. He slides off his pony and sways in the street, clearly exhausted, as several Lion troops hurry over to speak with him. "Otomo-sama! What has happened?"

PCs who have encountered Otomo Hiroshi before (in the adventures *Fist of the Earth*, *Fires of Retribution*, or

Blood of Midnight, among others) will recognize him as a prominent Imperial Historian. Other PCs can recognize him with a roll of **Heraldry/Intelligence** at TN 15.

Hiroshi gratefully accepts any offers of food or drink – the Lions will bring him hot tea, which he sips with trembling hands. As soon as he has taken a drink and wetted his dry mouth, he speaks: "The Emperor... the Emperor is dead."

Shocked gasps pass through the crowd of Lions, and the news quickly spreads. Hiroshi goes on to describe what has happened:

"It is the army of Toturi the Black. He attacked the city three days ago, before dawn. The Fists of the Emperor were overwhelmed. I have never seen ronin fight like that, with the ferocity of the damned. They say Toturi was at the front lines, shouting them on, screaming that the Emperor was consumed by darkness and must be destroyed." He shudders and sips deeply from the tea before continuing. "The Emperor had proclaimed he would remain in the palace, to defy this rebellious ronin, and of course the court and the Emerald Champion remained at his side. But then..."

He shakes his head in bewilderment. *"Toturi got over the Enchanted Walls somehow – I heard a rumor that the spirits inhabiting the Walls were released from their binding, although that should have been impossible! He marched to the very gates of the Forbidden City, and shouted for the Emperor to come out and face him. And... and the Emperor did so! He commanded that the gates be opened! The captain of the palace guard remonstrated, but the Emperor would not be denied. He took only the Emerald Champion with him. And..."*

He falls silent for a moment, tears beginning to stream down his face. *"I watched from the windows of the palace. The Emperor stood before the Black, defiant, as the ronin madman shouted at him... and then, without warning... the Emerald Champion, he, he drew his sword and slashed off the Emperor's head! Then he turned and bowed to Toturi! A woman rushed out to him and threw herself at the Champion's feet – I think it was one of his advisors, a Scorpion – and he struck her aside and slew her as well. Then he led Toturi's soldiers into the Forbidden City." Hiroshi shudders and scrubs at his face. "Those of us who could, fled the palace. Many were slain, very many. The Emerald Champion hunted them without mercy, right alongside Toturi's murderous*

troops. I saw the Imperial Chancellor perish, and others as well."

Any PC who rolls **Simple Awareness** at TN 15 can tell there is something which Hiroshi is not saying. If they ask him about this, he will look around and hesitate, clearly uneasy about the presence of Lions. So long as he is not speaking to a Lion or Imperial, however, he will confess what he saw: ***"It seemed to me, when the Son of Heaven perished, the blood which came from his neck... it was streaked through with black, and clouds of smoke seemed to boil away from it. Toturi shouted something about how the Emperor was Tainted, and this proved it."***

Regardless of whether the PCs learn this tidbit, the situation in Toshi Ranbo will quickly become even more tense and anxious. Matsu Morishige will order all Lion troops to prepare to march on the capital, and sends couriers out to the Dragon and Unicorn forces, demanding to know their intentions.

Shinsei's Servants

Immediately after Otomo Hiroshi tells his tale, while the city is stirring into a beehive of activity, the PCs will notice an unusual trio on the streets of Toshi Ranbo:

Amid all the half-panicked crowds of anxious courtiers and furious Lions, you see a trio of men who seem calm, almost serene: three monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, dressed in off-white robes and wearing large straw jingasa (hats) which shield them from the rain. The lead monk, shorter and slighter than the other two, is playing softly on a flute.

The lead monk, Koun, is the reincarnated Shinsei, setting out to fulfill his destiny. He appears to be a small, slim man of uncertain age, perhaps between thirty and forty. His usual expression is a gentle, whimsical smile, although he grows stern when directly confronted by the forces of evil. He enjoys playing on his flute and sometimes does so as a way of defusing a situation or delivering a subtle message (such as playing a merry, playful tune when someone is giving in to despair or fury). He always speaks in a pleasant, modest way, even when discussing serious matters, and never loses his temper or raises his voice.

The other two monks, Kadokawa and Mizuko, are from the Temple of Amaterasu in Ryoko Owari. PCs who played the adventure *Arrows From the Woods* may have met them before. Along with the rest of their order, they have fled the destruction of that Temple at

the hands of the Shadow during the recent riots. Kadokawa is the taller of the two, a looming man with a narrow face and a gloomy mien. Mizuko is short and slightly portly, with a face accustomed to smiling, although now it is creased with care and grief. Both men are emotionally scarred by their recent experiences, but remain dedicated to the Brotherhood. They know who Koun is and defer to him, listening respectfully whenever he speaks.

Koun will approach the PCs and greet at least one of them by name. "These are dark times, my friend," he says. "But as we both know, Fear is a sin. Do you wish to fight it?"

A Request for Help

Koun needs the PCs to help him, but wishes them to do so of their own free will. He will not openly ask them for assistance, instead engaging in an indirect, elliptical conversation in which he discusses the current crisis in the Empire, makes note of recent Shadowlands attacks against various major targets (Shiro Kitsuki, Shiro Sano Kakita, etc), discusses the bleak situation as a whole (a good opportunity for the GM to mention any news the PCs didn't pick up at the beginning of the adventure), and remarks on the need for brave men and women to take action. ***"As a wise man once said, only mortal men can change destiny."***

At some point, the conversation should segue into the current state of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. Koun will remark that the Brotherhood's temples are coming under attack, and may call on his two companions to recount their experiences:

"It was a few weeks after the great Orb was broken, releasing the fire of the Dragon." If any of the PCs played the adventure *Unmaker's Shadow*, the monks will not realize they were involved – they were not among those who dealt with the PCs on that day. ***"The priestess Meiyo awoke us all in the middle of the night, declaring that we were in danger and must flee the Temple. Many of the younger monks did not wish to flee, instead asking to fight whatever was coming. We were still discussing the matter when dark figures began to come over the wall. Like ninja, but black and formless."*** The monks shudder in memory. ***"They were led by a... a great fat man covered in tattoos, but darkness chased itself across his hands and face. Those who tried to fight were dragged down and torn apart with blades and shurikens and bare hands, or consumed by the shadows which flowed from them. The lady Meiyo stood against them – their shadows could not touch her, and even the fat man recoiled***

from her – but then a shuriken struck her and she fell. She... smiled at them, even then, as the poison took her life.” The monks confess with shame that they fled abjectly from their temple, leaving it to the dark creatures.

The goal of this conversation should be for at least one of the PCs to offer help to the Brotherhood, or to Koun personally. The small monk smiles and nods to the PC with a pleased expression. *“Indeed, I have been seeking one who can help me in this matter,”* he says. *“As you may know, the Brotherhood of Shinsei possesses certain artifacts, items of purity and enlightenment. In these dark times, such items will be desperately needed. My companion Mizuko will soon be departing on a journey to recover some of these items from one of our more remote shrines. The journey is a hazardous one, and a few traveling companions would go far toward ensuring that he can make it safely.”*

If the PCs ask for details, or promise their help, Koun smiles and provides further information: *“The shrine is located in the village of Shinsei’s Last Hope. Have you heard of it?”*

Any PC who rolls **Shintao/Intelligence** at TN 15, **History/Intelligence** at TN 20, or **Lore: Shadowlands/Intelligence** at TN 20 has heard of Shinsei’s Last Hope. It is a village located within the boundaries of what is now the Shadowlands, but which has remained free and un-Tainted for a thousand years. Supposedly, Shinsei himself said that the village would never fall as long as the Crab guarded it, and that the Empire would someday depend on the town for its salvation. The Crab Clan has garrisoned and defended the village ever since, and during Twenty Goblin Winters it is the favored staging ground for expeditions into the Shadowlands.

Assuming the PCs do not back out at the prospect of visiting a village inside the Shadowlands, Koun will happily send them along with Mizuko. *“My brother will need passage of a ship, but we have heard of one whose captain might be willing to undertake such a hazardous trip. Reaching him may be a challenge, but I am sure it will be less difficult with you accompanying young Mizuko here.”*

- If the PCs ask for more details about this ship and captain, Koun will say the ship is named the “Victory.” *“The captain is said to be a most capable man, although one lacking in the gifts of enlightenment. He is expected to dock soon at Dragon’s Guard City.”*

- If the PCs ask more about the artifacts which must be rescued, Koun smiles. *“There is much wisdom which the Brotherhood has held in trust for this time. More than that I shall not say, for Desire is also a sin.”*
- If the PCs seem intrigued by Koun himself, he becomes serious. *“I am simply one who serves, just as you do. You serve your lords. I serve mankind.”* If any PC has **Shintao** or **Theology** of Rank 5 or higher, that PC feels an awed chill run up their back.

Scene One: Traveling with Mizuko

The rest of this adventure assumes that the PCs agree to escort Mizuko to Shinsei’s Last Hope. If, for whatever reason, they refuse (most likely out of a sense that their greater duty is to go immediately to the capital and avenge the death of the Emperor), they are out of the adventure.

Mizuko has no travel papers, and if none of the PCs are Emerald or Jade Magistrates, they may feel anxious about going on their journey without them. PCs who have Allies or Favors with the Lion Clan can trade those in to acquire travel papers for Lion lands, but in order to reach Dragon’s Guard City, the PCs will have to pass through the Imperial lands north of Otosan Uchi – indeed, they will be passing close by the Castle of the Emerald Champion, a prospect which should give them pause.

However, with the Empire collapsing into crisis, the PCs will find that travel papers are less vital than in the past. Even inside the Lion lands, a small group of samurai traveling with a monk will get little attention from Lion troops marshalling desperately for a march to the capital. Once the PCs enter the Imperial lands, they will find no authorities at all – the remnants of the Imperial troops and Emerald Magistrates are already in the capital.

To Dragon’s Guard City

From Toshi Ranbo, it will take four days of travel to reach the city – three and a half days if the PCs push hard and minimize their rest. After two days, the PCs will enter the Imperial lands north of the capital, crossing the Emerald Champion Plain and passing close to the castle pledged to that same office (where a few of these PCs may have participated in *Satsume’s*

Tournament). These lands have been devastated by the passage of Toturi's Army, which left behind a miles-wide swath of trampled fields, burned and pillaged villages, and wreckage and debris of all kinds. The Emerald Champion's Castle itself has been razed, leaving a smoking, ruined shell decorated with the corpses of Imperial troops.

Dragon's Guard City is a modest walled city located on the shores of the Amaterasu Umi. The Treacherous Pass Road passes the outer walls of the city, heading north toward the Mountains of Regret, whose low, rugged shapes loom on the northern horizon. As you approach the city, descending a gentle slope toward the coast, you can see that the city's small port is desperately crowded, scores of kobunes squeezing in side-by-side, so that a second city seems to have sprouted from the water.

A trio of well-kept ronin stands watch over the city gates. The ronin ask the PCs what their business is in Dragon's Guard City. So long as the PCs give a reasonable answer (e.g. they are looking for a ship to take passage down the coast), and do not behave furtively or suspiciously, the ronin will be polite and do not demand travel papers. (The city is currently being flooded with samurai uprooted by the crisis, none of whom have travel papers.) If the PCs ask for news or information, the ronin can share the following:

- The city is administered by Seppun Tajiro, a man appointed by the previous Emperor, Hantei the 38th. Both he and the city's Emerald Magistrate, Shinjo Kasuka, left a few days ago, heading south with the handful of Imperial troops they had available.
- The protection of the city has been left in the hands of Tajiro's small force of hired ronin, who are doing their best to keep things in hand.
- In recent weeks, as Toturi's Army moved through the lands just west of here, the city has been flooded with refugees, both peasants and samurai.
- The ships crowding the harbor are mostly from Otosan Uchi. Fearful rumors are spreading of what has happened there, including stories that the ships were attacked in harbor by a fleet of Crab "iron turtle" ships.

Dragon's Guard is indeed crowded, and the PCs can hear these tales and rumors repeated and told in more detail from many different sources. There are numerous ship captains and crew who can confirm that

a fleet of Crab iron-armored "turtle ships" attacked the harbor of Otosan Uchi, sinking more than half the ships there. A few captains, those who escaped last, also report seeing a dark gray cloud which followed the Crab fleet into the harbor... a cloud which emitted inhuman howls and screams, and a chattering sound like a thousand skulls...

Presumably, the PCs will begin asking around for the "Victory," or at least for a ship whose captain is willing to risk a trip down-coast to Shinsei's Last Hope. They will eventually find the "Victory" anchored at the far northern end of the bay, close to open water. A pair of small rowboats shuttle cargo and supplies on and off the boat. PCs who seek a meeting with the captain will be taken aboard after a short delay.

The Victory's Captain

Yoritomo Shuzomura is a muscular, athletic man with a casually menacing air. He wears a pair of kama thrust through his belt, and is often chewing on a piece of straw. Although he is a senior member of the Mantis Clan and a newly-appointed member of the Storm Legion, he dresses like an ordinary sailor and keeps his swords in his house on the Mantis Isles. Shuzomura is a former player character, and some PCs may have friendship (or enmity) with him from previous adventures. They may also have met him in the adventure *Along the Coast at Midnight*.

The PCs will have to convince Shuzomura to take them to Shinsei's Last Hope. He will freely acknowledge that he can probably make it there – he claims to have one of the finest ships in the Mantis fleet, and sneers at the notion that Crab "turtle ships" or Shadowlands menaces could catch the "Victory." However, as a loyal servant of the Mantis Clan, he will require powerful motivation to put his ship in the service of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. "Our Clan is facing difficult times, and I am constantly needed to serve our needs. If I am to forsake that for you, I must show it to be worthwhile to the Clan."

Such mercenary and commercial attitudes will no doubt offend some of the PCs, but Shuzomura will be adamant. He has a strong position to bargain from, since he is the only ship captain willing to risk his vessel and crew on such a dangerous journey. He will demand 14 koku (2 koku per passenger) to undertake the journey, but this can be modified by the following factors:

- If any of the PCs have had friendly relations with Shuzomura in previous adventures, he will allow

them on the ship for only 1 koku each. Conversely, PCs with a record of hostility to Shuzomura will be charged 3 koku each.

- PCs may cash in Favors or Allies with the Mantis Clan to cover their passage. Each such Favor or Ally will pay for one person's passage. Also, at present the Mantis and Crane Clans are allied, so PCs may also spend Crane Allies and Favors in the same manner.
- Shuzomura is indebted to the Kolat. If any PC has an Ally or Favor with the Kolat, he will allow that PC on board for 1 less koku.
- Shuzomura is not an honorable man, and cannot be reached by appeals to honor, bushido, or religious piety. (Mizuko will attempt such appeals, to no avail.) However, he does have a deep enmity for the Shadowlands and for the corrupted Crab "loyalists," especially Kuni Yori. A PC who role-plays an effective appeal to these feelings can roll **Sincerity/Awareness** at TN 20 to persuade Shuzomura to reduce the total cost of passage by 50%.
- Also, because of his hatred for the "loyalist" Crab, Shuzomura is instinctively sympathetic to "rebel" Crab PCs. He will give such PCs a 1 koku discount unless they are personal enemies.
- PCs who are witty and skilled at banter can win Shuzomura's sympathies. (He dislikes overly rigid and hyper-honorable PCs, however.) Such PCs can try to "jolly" him into letting them aboard for less money, potentially saving a koku or two. The GM must adjudicate such role-play.
- PCs can offer the gift of a valuable item or treasure in place of cash. This could include a Fine or Excellent item, a certified magical item such as a Naga Pearl or a Jade Arrow, etc. In general, a minor item should be valued at about 5 koku, while a major item such as a sword would be worth 10-15 koku. Of course, some PCs may feel a sense of lost Honor from having to stoop to such miserably merchant-like behavior.
- PCs with commercial connections (such as Allies among merchant families) can try to offer Shuzomura an "IOU" rather than paying cash. This will probably require a **Commerce/Intelligence** roll at TN 15 to convince

him that their offer is legitimate. He will insist on a much higher rate for such a delayed payment.

- PCs who try to overawe Shuzomura with Imperial authority or other such traditional political influence will find him quite impervious to such approaches. "In the name of the Emperor, samurai? Would that be the Emperor who just had his head cut off? Or the usurper who now sits on the Emerald Throne?"

As a last resort, PCs could try something extreme such as threatening *seppuku* or even trying to take Shuzomura hostage or magically influence his mind. Such approaches are extremely hazardous, and likely to backfire on the PCs. However, skillful role-play could allow such a high-risk strategy to work. The GM must adjudicate such actions.

Sailing the Umi Amaterasu

Once rates have been agreed and paid, Shuzomura will swing into action, ordering his crew to ready the ship, collecting the last of his supplies, and setting sail within the hour.

From Dragon's Guard City, the ship sails south, putting well out to sea to avoid Otosan Uchi, and running south at full speed throughout the day and night, risking night travel rather than putting in to shore. Toward dawn, the PCs can see an orange glow on the western horizon. "Otosan Uchi burns," Shuzomura murmurs, chewing his piece of straw, his face set and grim.

The ship sails the whole next day before finally putting ashore that evening on a tree-sheltered beach in the lands of the Crane Clan. The Mantis crew builds a bonfire, roasts fish and drinks sake, and generally behaves like it has not a care in the world – except for the sentries who go into the woods to keep watch. Shuzomura will stay sober. If any PCs seem worried about the safety of camping here, he explains that this is an isolated section of the coast, free of settlement, and the Mantis regularly use it as a place to make camp.

Paranoid PCs may expect an attack, but their fears are needless. The next day, the "Victory" continues its voyage down the coastline.

It will take almost four more days to reach Shinsei's Last Hope. The ship again sails through the night and the following day, to reach the Crane city of Mura Sabishii Toshi, where the crew (and the PCs) are able to sleep in an Inn instead of making camp on a beach.

The next morning, Shuzomura warns that the ship will not be able to put in to shore again. “South of here, the followers of Hida Kisada hold the coastline. Earthquake Fish Bay is now controlled by them as well. We cannot risk stopping anywhere. The crew will sleep on deck, in shifts.”

Into the Dark Waters

The final “run” to Shinsei’s Last Hope takes place almost entirely out of sight of land, Shuzomura navigating by the Sun, Moon, and stars. On the afternoon of the second day, as Shuzomura turns the ship back toward land, the waves turn dark and muddy, and dark mist begins to drift across the water from the west.

As the “Victory” forges its way through the mist, visibility drops to less than a hundred feet. Shuzomura looks about with a grim expression, chewing his straw ferociously and fingering the handles of his kama. His anxiety is confirmed when an eerie clattering, rattling noise drifts across the waters. Shuzomura’s face turns pale as he snarls an order for his oarsmen to go to full speed. “Pull! Pull for your lives!”

Any PC who rolls **Lore: Shadowlands/Intelligence** at TN 15 will recall hearing stories of the Skull Tides – patches of corrupted seawater, inhabited by ferocious skull-like *gaki* (hungry ghosts). If the PC makes TN 20 or better, s/he will also recall that the Skull Tide is known to drive men mad with its horrible cackling.

Within moments, the waters around the “Victory” will be churned to froth by hundreds of pale, chattering skulls, bobbing and floating on the surface of the water, crowding around the ship to gnaw at its hull. This forces an immediate **Fear** test at Rank 4. Also, while the “Victory” is struggling through the cackling horde of skulls, the PCs must each roll **Simple Willpower**:

- High-end parties roll three times, at TNs 10, 15, and 20.
- Low-End parties roll only twice, at TNs 10 and 15.

Any PC who fails one of these rolls will become extremely paranoid and violent until the ship escapes the Skull Tide. If a player fails to effectively role-play this condition, the GM can force a roll on the following table:

- 1-3:** PC attempts to start a fight with another PC.
- 4-6:** PC strikes out at another PC without warning.
- 7-9:** PC tries to damage or impede the ship.

10: PC leaps overboard.

Two of the “Victory” crew will get into a violent fight, which Shuzomura suppresses by the simple expedient of stunning both men with fist strikes. A third crewman begins hacking at the sailing lines with a knife, but Mizuko the monk seizes him and immobilizes him with a wrestling hold. Unfortunately, a fourth crewman leaps madly into the water, and will be devoured by the Skull Tide unless the PCs rescue him.

Anyone who falls into the Skull Tide will take 5k3 damage per round until rescued. There is plenty of heavy, sturdy rope on board the “Victory,” but convincing a paranoid PC to catch the rope might be difficult. Lassoing a PC in the water will require **Simple Agility** at TN 25. Pulling a PC out of the water will require **Athletics/Strength** at TN 20 (up to three PCs can combine their efforts). Shugenja, obviously, may be able to rescue PCs in other ways.

Although the Skull Tide has no special protections or invulnerabilities, the sheer number of skulls makes it difficult to destroy. There are 110 skulls in this particular Tide. Each skull is TN 10 to be Hit and has 5 Wounds. Fire spells will only inflict one-quarter damage against the Tide, due to the skulls being mostly submerged.

If the PCs are able to avoid falling victim to the Skull Tide (by making all their **Willpower** rolls), the “Victory” will sail free of it after a few minutes. The chattering fades behind them as the ship rows steadily closer to shore.

Scene Two: Shinsei’s Last Hope

As you sail through the lingering wisps of fog, you see ahead of you a bleak, swampy coastline, dotted with twisted, misshapen trees. The bitter landscape is interrupted, however, by a field of natural, if slightly yellowed, grass, and a stream whose water sends a wedge of purity into the gray-brown waves of the Tainted sea. In the midst of this patch of pure coastline is a sturdy wooden dock, with a pair of small boats tied up alongside. Farther inland, you can make out what appears to be a palisade wall and the outlines of a couple of watchtowers. The wall glitters with the faint green light of holy jade.

This surprisingly pleasant scene, however, is made somewhat less harmonious by the shouts and

clangour of a battle somewhere ahead, apparently on the far side of the wall.

There is a single Crab sentry standing at the dock, watching the waters carefully. He regards the “Victory” with suspicion, and insists on randomly testing one of the PCs with jade before allowing anyone else onto the pier. (If that particular PC tests as Tainted, the PCs will be in trouble – the Crab will bellow for aid while unlimbering his tetsubo and attacking these “Shadowlands infiltrators.”) If the PCs ask him about the noise of battle coming from the settlement, he scowls grimly. “My duty is to guard the docks,” he says. “If I fail here, it will not matter whether my comrades succeed in protecting the far side of the village.” Once he accepts that the PCs are not Tainted, however, he will be more than happy to urge them into the village to help in the defense.

Shuzomura will go ashore, but will not let his crew leave the ship – he does not trust it to remain safe without the crew to guard it. Mizuko will, of course, be eager to get ashore and meet with his brethren in the village.

Shinsei’s Last Hope

The village is a large one, home to over six hundred peasants. A thick wooden palisade surrounds both the village and its fields of rice and grain, and the outer face of this palisade is covered with chips of jade, imbued with powerful enchantments laid by Kuni shugenja. There are two gates in the palisade: one faces toward the shore (and the docks) while the other faces inland and north, toward the Crab lands (and also, unfortunately, toward the intervening Shadowlands territory). Both jade-studded gates are normally kept closed and barred, with a pair of Crab sentries standing watch on squat wooden towers to either side.

Within the palisade, the total land is about fifteen acres. The village lies on the north side of this territory, near the land-side gate. There is a spring in the center of the village, a large pool surrounded by rock. Pure icy water wells up from below and flows out as a wide stream, watering the fields and then passing through a dike in the palisade and flowing down to the sea.

The village is composed mostly of ordinary peasant dwellings, but there are also several teahouses, two inns, noodle shops, a sake brewery, two blacksmith’s shops, a carpenter’s shop, and several other minor businesses. Located near the center of the entire settlement, outside the village proper, is a large monastery, with a granite statue of Osano-Wo standing

by its gates. Opposite the monastery, close to the western palisade wall, is the barracks and command post of the Crab garrison which defends the village.

The Attack

When the PCs arrive at the village, they will not have the opportunity to explore immediately – the place is under attack. Shadowlands forces are striking at the inland side of the palisade wall. Crab bushi and Brotherhood monks fight side-by-side on the wooden battlement, beating down the monsters and undead trying to clamber over. Smoke is boiling up from a section of wall which has been set afire with goblin “magic mud,” and scores of villagers are carrying buckets of water to try to extinguish the blaze. An old, scarred monk with a long white beard is helping organize the bucket-brigade.

PCs who have played the adventures *Falling Darkness*, *Drawing Out the Darkness*, or *Fate of a Hantei* can roll **Simple Intelligence** at TN 10 to recognize the old monk as the former Kuni Vistan.

As you hurry toward the scene, the bucket-brigade suddenly comes under attack! A grotesquely skinny creature, like a man stretched thin and taut across distorted bones, makes it over the palisade and charges forward, uttering a high-pitched maniacal laugh. Long, razor-sharp claws project from its spiny fingers, and slaver drools past the sharp teeth filling its bestial mouth. Most of the peasants drop their buckets and flee, but a few gather around the old monk, clutching crude weapons. The old man has a walking staff, which he hefts in a defensive posture.

The creature is an Oni no Gekido, and has launched its fearsome Rage attack, in which its powers grow enormously. (PCs can roll **Lore: Shadowlands/Intelligence** at TN 20 to know something about the Oni and its abilities.) It attacks mercilessly, interspersing its awful laughter with whispered praises to Fu Leng.

Old Vistan is not strong enough to fight it – he will go Full Defense, trying to protect the peasants. Mizuko will do likewise, fighting alongside his fellow monk. Yoritomo Shuzomura will join the PCs in doing battle with the Oni, although he is only willing to fight as long as they are – if they retreat, so does he.

- If the PCs are High-End, the Oni no Gekido has just entered its fearsome Rage state. For the first two rounds of combat, it is immune to all normal weapons (*nemuranai* and weapons made from

sacred substances like jade will do normal damage). In addition, during that time any spells which target it must add +20 to their TN to succeed. After two rounds, these effects no longer apply, but the Gekido will remain at its “Rage” stat level (see the Appendixes) for six more rounds before dropping to its Exhausted state for 1-10 rounds.

- If the PCs are Low-End, the Gekido has already completed its invulnerable period, and will remain in Rage for only three more rounds before dropping to its Exhausted state for 1-10 rounds.

Once the PCs dispose of the Oni, they will find that the attack has guttered out. The Crab troops are patrolling, checking the wounded, and beheading the dead, and the village’s *eta* are beginning the work of disposing of the corpses. The bucket brigade goes back to work and quickly extinguishes the fire, while Kuni Vistan totters forward to thank the PCs for their assistance. (If any of the PCs met him before, he remembers them, and thanks them by name.)

As soon as it seems an opportune moment, Mizuko will ask to speak with the abbot of the monastery. “We are here on desperately important business for the Brotherhood of Shinsei.”

Conditions at the Palisade

Some of the PCs may wish to check on the palisade, speak with the Crab garrison, or otherwise involve themselves in the defenses of Shinsei’s Last Hope. Shuzomura will certainly do this, since he has no interest in speaking with the monks.

The palisade itself is a sturdy fifteen-foot-high wall of massive wooden posts, their tops sharpened to ugly points. A battlement circles the entire wall from within, and a half-dozen staircases connect the battlement with the ground, enabling the defenders to rush to any threatened area within minutes. At present, the western side of the palisade is festooned with the smoking corpses of goblins, undead, and the occasional oni, their foul flesh burning where it touches the jade in the wall. The palisade remains firm, and glows with the holy light of the jade fragments imbedded in its outer surface. Carpenters are already taking measurements to replace the worst of the burned section.

The Crab garrison here is a sizable one – almost 350 bushi – since the Clan has known for a thousand years of Shinsei’s prophecy that the Empire will someday

depend on this village to survive. The commander, Hida Fuyutsoro, is a grizzled middle-aged man, outwardly very much the classic brutish Crab, but with a thoughtful, contemplative soul beneath his harsh exterior – years spent sharing conversation with the abbot of this place has given him a degree of enlightenment which most Crabs never attain.

None of these Crabs care one way or the other about the Crab civil war, except insofar as it has made it harder for them to get supplies. “Our duty lies here, and whatever happens elsewhere in the Empire, it will not change. This place must not fall to the forces of darkness. That is all that matters.”

The Crabs can report that attacks on the settlement, rare in recent years, have escalated violently in the last few months. They remain confident and defiant, however. “Shinsei promised this village would never fall, so long as we defend it. We are here. We shall not fail.”

Meeting the Abbot

If any of the PCs accompany Mizuko, they are led inside the monastery, to a large open chamber with a polished wood floor and mighty pillars holding up the ceiling. Statues of several Fortunes are arrayed along one wall, with Osano-Wo prominent among them. The abbot sits cross-legged in the middle of the room, praying quietly. As the PCs approach he turns, smiles, and offers tea from a simple tea-set at his side.

Churoku the Abbot is a quiet, contemplative man in his late forties. Like many of the monks here, he is of the order of Osano-Wo, but lacks the physically aggressive style which characterizes many of those monks. He never loses his temper or raises his voice, and has a knack for finding humor in even the grimmest of circumstances.

Mizuko will explain the situation – the Brotherhood is preparing for a final showdown with the forces of darkness, and has need of the artifacts in Churoku’s care. He will never openly use the words “Day of Thunder” or “Shinsei,” nor will he name the items which the monks are protecting.

Churoku will nod and send a junior monk to fetch the items. While waiting for them to arrive, he will engage the PCs in conversation, asking about the situation elsewhere in the Empire, and listening with especial attention to anything the PCs have to say about the fall of Otsan Uchi, the rise of the Living Darkness, etc. If any of the PCs mention Koun, Churoku will smile. “He is... among the wisest of us. I am sure he had

many reasons for choosing you to escort young Mizuko on this mission.”

A Visit From a Ratling

The PCs’ discussions with the abbot are interrupted by the arrival of a strange ratling, who scuttles nonchalantly into the shrine, walking with an uneven gait from a twisted, misshapen hind leg. One of the younger monks immediately brings the ratling a riceball and a bowl of soup, which he attacks with gusto, while eyeing the PCs and chittering to himself.

This is Wh’ezir. The PCs may have encountered this ratling once before, in the adventure *A Mantis and His Rat*, but they will find him much changed since then. Wh’ezir’s traumatic experiences in that adventure altered him permanently, leaving him half-insane and “gifted” with strange insights into the world.

In appearance, Wh’ezir remains small, with an erratic and somewhat hyperactive manner (even by the standards of ratlings), but he now expresses his energy in fidgeting and chatter (in a mixture of broken Rokugani and his own speech) rather than in meddling or thievery. One of his legs has been left twisted and crippled by his experience, his left eye is swollen shut, and he habitually holds his head sideways, leaning to the left.

Occasionally, Wh’ezir suffers from hysterical fits in which he curls up in a ball, wrapping his paw-like hands around his head, and squealing out protests and pleas for mercy: ***“Put Wh’ezir down! Me not do it! Wh’ezir good rat, me only borrow! Me give back! I not know shinies yours! Me find in woods! Me not put those things in your stuff! Me just tryin’ give you presents! Me bring fun ... Wh’ezir not weapon! Whe’zir good rat! You hurtin’ Wh’ezir! Ohhhh! Wh’ezir’s a die’n. Oh, it hurts...”*** and so forth.

Wh’ezir will quickly become interested in the PCs, and begins watching them closely while chittering aloud to himself: ***“Maybe these ones listen-listens to Wh’ezir, the other ones wouldn’t listen but maybe these-these ones do, maybe,”*** interspersed with squeaks and clicks.

If any of the PCs are Crabs, or have a Ratling Ally, he will approach them directly, squeaking to himself, shuffling forward with an awkward, sideways gait. ***“Wh’ezir tells you, yes. Maybe you listen-listen, not like others here.”***

If anyone asks the monks about Wh’ezir, they explain that he is a harmless creature who seems to suffer from fits or visions. “Shinsei teaches us to show compassion

to all suffering, even that of creatures such as this. He even pitied the slaves of Fu Leng.” They explain that Wh’ezir has been visiting the village for over two years, and sometimes warns them about goblin raids or other such threats. If the PCs ask what Wh’ezir is talking about now, the monks confess ignorance. “He has been trying to tell the Crabs something, but they have not been very interested. I believe they think the poor creature deranged.”

- If none of the PCs go to the monastery, the ratling will instead appear elsewhere in the village, or at the Crab garrison. Everyone in the village knows him, and can share the same general information as the monks.

What Wh’ezir Knows

“Man-man is out there, in the bad place. Great, great big man-man, and they hurts him, on and on and on, just like they hurts Wh’ezir, no no, don’t hurt Wh’ezir no mores!” The ratling goes into one of his fits and does not emerge until the PCs do something to calm him down (speaking gently, offering him some food, etc). With careful questioning, the PCs can pry the following additional information out of Wh’eezer:

- He can identify the “great big man” as a Crab, if the PCs ask the right questions. He does not know the man’s name. He describes the man as “big-big, bigger than any of you, samurai-man.”
- If the PCs ask where the “big man” is, he says “in the dark-dark place, old man-man place, all dark-dark now.” He cannot describe it further, except to say it is “stone and mud and sticks” and that there are many “nasty bad-magic things, scary-scary, not a good place to be.”
- If the PCs press him for more details, such as by asking who rules the “bad magic things” or who is hurting the “big man,” Wh’ezir grows anxious and skittery. “Woman, bad-bad woman, carries big metal rope with hook,” he finally says. If any of the PCs are Mantis, or if they speak with Wh’ezir in the presence of Yoritomo Shuzomura, he will point and say, “Woman sometimes dressed like that, yes-yes.”

If the PCs express an interest in finding the “dark-dark place” or rescuing the “big man,” Wh’ezir will reluctantly offer to lead them there. “Whe’zir shows you, man-man, but you’s must promise Whe’zir to not let them hurt-hurt him.”

What Do the PCs Do?

It is up to the PCs whether or not to investigate Wh'e'zir's story. The Crab garrison will not take any action – they have enough on their plate protecting the village, and cannot spare any troops to go exploring in the Shadowlands, even to rescue one of their own.

Shuzomura and Mizuko will likewise refuse to go – Shuzomura because he will not abandon his ship, and Mizuko because his duty is to safeguard the relics. However, if the PCs do decide to investigate, Shuzomura will offer to keep the “Victory” here for up to five days. (He will not be willing to leave and then return – the voyage has become too dangerous for him to risk his ship again.) Mizuko will be uneasy at this delay but accepts it reluctantly.

The Relics

Regardless of what the PCs decide to do about Wh'e'zir's news, the junior monks will eventually return with the promised relics. Three items – a shobo (an iron cylinder with a single ring, worn on the hand when fighting), a bo staff, and a simple jingasa (straw hat) – are placed reverently before the monks. None of the items look especially impressive – in fact, they all appear old and comfortably well-used.

“This,” says Churoku, lifting the shobo, *“was carried by Togashi Kaze when he first taught our brotherhood the ways of the open hand. This,”* he touches the smooth, polished wood of the staff, *“was carried by Hido, the greatest monk ever to come from the ranks of the Crab Clan. And this,”* he lifts the jingasa with reverent hands, *“was worn by Shinsei himself, when he carried his teachings across our Empire.”* He passes the jingasa carefully to Mizuko. *“Take it to he who shall have need of it.”* The younger monk accepts the item with a deep bow.

PCs can recall some of the history behind the other two items by rolling **Shintao** or **Lore: Relics** (or a similar **Lore** skill) with the **Intelligence** trait at TN 20, or **History/Intelligence** at TN 25. Togashi Kaze was the founder of Rokugani martial arts, and was executed for refusing to share his discoveries with the samurai caste. Hido was a proud, arrogant Crab general who learned humility through defeat at the hands of the Shadowlands, and thereafter became among the humblest and most enlightened of monks.

If the PCs express their intent to travel into the Shadowlands and attempt to learn more about the “great big man,” Mizuko and the abbot may consider allowing them the use of the shobo, the bo staff, or

both. However, this will only happen if (a) the PCs have come across as honorable and devout, and (b) they seem to have the skills needed to employ the items effectively.

If the PCs are offered the items, Mizuko will make them promise to return them. *“These are potent treasures of the Brotherhood, and must not be lost to the Shadowlands. Even if it costs your own life, they must be returned.”*

Part Three: Into the Shadowlands

The rest of this adventure assumes that the PCs do indeed go into the Shadowlands to investigate Wh'e'zir's story. The ratling will promise that it will only take “one day, maybe two” to reach the “dark-dark place.”

The PCs are free to prepare for their trip into the Shadowlands in whatever way seems best to them. Although the Crab garrison cannot offer the PCs any direct assistance, they can give each PC a finger of jade to protect them from the Taint for a week, along with preserved rations (rice balls, dried fish) and water for the same period of time. (They will remind Crab PCs, and warn friendly non-Crab, to store their jade with their food to keep it from becoming Tainted or diseased.)

The Crab do not have any armor or weapons to spare, but if the PCs are Low-Rank, the Crab will offer them two pouches of jade powder.

Effects of the Shadowlands

Once the PCs leave Shinsei's Last Hope, they will be in the Shadowlands. Within that domain, the following special conditions apply:

- Wood, cloth, and other flammables will not burn properly, emitting only a weak, sputtering blue flame which offers little or no heat (but does attract nocturnal predators). Dead bodies also are reluctant to burn naturally, should the PCs need to perform an emergency cremation (the Crab usually use spells).
- Wounds will not heal naturally. Curative magic (such as *Path to Inner Peace*), kihos, and nemuranai (such as Crane fetishes or Dragon Clan potions) will work normally, however. Also, any

time a PC is injured, they must roll **Simple Earth** at TN 10 or gain a point of Taint.

- All spellcasting rolls (except for *maho* spells) are at +10 TN due to the unfriendly nature of the local spirits.
- Void points and spell rings do not recover naturally (e.g. through rest). The **Meditation** skill will still work for recovering both Void and spell rings. It is impossible to perform a Tea Ceremony inside the Shadowlands.
- If the PCs fail to acquire jade “fingers,” or lose them, they will be vulnerable to the Taint. They must roll **Simple Earth** for each day and each night they spend unprotected in the Shadowlands. The TN is 5 for the first roll, 10 for the second, 15 for the third, and so forth. If a roll is failed, the PC gains a point of Taint immediately, and one additional point each day and each night thereafter until they leave.
- Food and water will quickly become Tainted and diseased unless it is stored in proximity to jade. Likewise, any food or water the PCs find in the Shadowlands carries the Taint. Eating Tainted food or drinking Tainted water requires a **Simple Earth** roll at TN 15 to avoid getting 1-5 (1 die halved) points of Taint.

Into the Realm of Darkness

The Crab will allow the PCs out through the northern gate in the palisade, which faces toward the distant Kaiu Wall (out of sight over the horizon). There is a road there, heavily scarred by battle and weather, and slicked black at its edges by discarded corrupt jade. Wh’ezir immediately leads the PCs off the road and to the west, into the Shadowlands. The ratling hunches low, hiding behind rocks and rotten tree-stumps, and scuttles from one patch of shelter to another. He will be distressed by PCs who do not share his caution. “You die-die if you not hide, samurai-man!”

The first few hours the PCs spend inside the Shadowlands are uneventful. They pass over rugged, hilly ground, covered in rocks, boulders, leafless trees, and the occasional smelly bog. The PCs see signs of the Shadowlands force which attacked the village – tracks, goblin dung, the occasional corpse – but meet no living creatures.

In late afternoon (as nearly as time can be measured in the Shadowlands), the party enters a truly forbidding

territory of steep, jagged boulders. Progress slows to a crawl as the PCs clamber up and down the rocks, which bruise and cut exposed skin. Visibility is sharply reduced as well, as the rocks obstruct sight in all directions. About an hour into this territory, Wh’ezir becomes edgy and anxious, shifting and squeaking nervously. “Bad-bad things nearby,” he mutters. “Dead-dead things.”

The March of the Dead

If the PCs attempt to improve their visibility, by climbing to the top of a tall boulder (**Athletics/Agility** at TN 15) or sending up a flying shugenja, they can spot the source of Wh’ezir’s discomfort: a massive horde of undead, thousands of them, trudging mindlessly forward like some unnatural mass migration.

PCs who attempt to scout the area without seeking altitude can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 15 to notice the odor of rotting flesh drifting in the air. If they do not catch the odor in time, the scouting PCs will round a large boulder to find themselves face-to-face with scores of shambling zombies, their blank eyes staring at nothing, rotting fingers lifting to reach forward.

As long as the PCs realize the undead are in the area, they can easily evade this slow-motion horde. If they actually encounter the zombies up close, due to failing to notice them or refusing to avoid them, they will be facing great danger. The sheer numbers of undead make them impossible to destroy (although powerful shugenja might be able to give it a pretty good try). The PCs will ultimately have no choice but to either flee abjectly (which might be damaging to some PCs’ Honorable self-image) or do something to delay the sluggish but relentless pursuit of the zombies. Possibilities for delaying the horde could include leading the zombies into a cul-de-sac, incinerating the front ranks with a Fire spell, knocking down a large number of zombies with an Air or Earth spell or a physical charge, etc. Wh’ezir will simply flee, of course, and meets up with the PCs later if and when they manage to escape.

Regardless of what the PCs do, the undead horde trudges on, moving slowly northward, toward the Kaiu Wall.

Night in the Shadowlands

After the PCs escape the endless zombie horde, there will be no further problems until the end of the day. Camping in the Shadowlands is an unpleasant experience – fires will not burn properly, cold wind

cuts through the PCs' garments, and foul odors drift on the wind. The night sky is chillingly clear, and the stars seem to burn down on the PCs like cold, pitiless eyes. Wh'ezir curls up in a ball and sleeps fitfully, whimpering and occasionally waking up with a panicked "squeak!"

Presumably the PCs will set watches. This is wise, since during the night they will attract the attention of a wandering Goblin Sneak. The Sneak will attempt to slip into the PCs' camp and steal something small and valuable (such as a finger of jade, a spell-scroll, or a small weapon).

In order to succeed, the Sneak must make a **Contested Roll** of its own **Stealth/Agility** against the PCs' **Hunting/Perception**. The Sneak gets three Free Raises against PCs who are sleeping. If the Sneak makes the roll, it manages to slip into the PCs' camp and steal an item, chosen by the GM.

If the Sneak is discovered, it will attempt to flee rather than fight – it is a coward, albeit a vicious one.

Across the Marshes

The next day, Wh'ezir leads the PCs down into a vast, swampy lowland, a gray-brown body of water interrupted only by occasional hillocks of sickly yellow-brown grass. Thick fog drifts across the water, which sometimes bubbles as foul gas rises to the surface. The water also frequently ripples for no reason, as though unseen creatures are swimming beneath the surface. PCs moving through the swamp find foul, disgusting mud clinging to their legs and feet.

Fat gray leeches may also decide to cling to the PCs. Have each PC roll **Simple Void** at TN 15 – any PC who fails will acquire a leech. The leeches are easily spotted, since they are disgustingly large and obvious, but the PCs will have to find a way to remove them safely. Application of fire, jade, or salt will make the leeches let go voluntarily. If they are pulled off by force, the PC suffers 1 Wound and must roll **Simple Earth** at TN 15 or gain a point of Taint.

As the PCs move deeper into the swamp, the fog becomes quite thick, swirling close around them and seeming to caress their faces with icy breaths. The fog reduces clear visibility to less than fifteen yards, and also seems to muffle sound, so that the PCs find even their own voices failing to carry far.

At some point, have all the PCs roll **Simple Perception**. Any PC who rolls TN 25 or better spots a

strange, alarming outline in the distant fog: a kobune, its mast sticking up without a sail, drifting smoothly through the water. Despite the lack of sails or oars, the boat moves with unnatural speed, and is quickly lost to sight. The PCs are left uncertain as to whether they saw anyone on the strange ship or not.

What About Wh'ezir?

Wh'ezir becomes very cautious once they reach the swamp, and sticks to the grassy hillocks, hopping unsteadily from one to the other and panicking if he finds himself in deeper water. "Close now, close-close," he chitters. "Maybe it best if Wh'ezir not stay with men-men now. Hide-hide better without you." If the PCs are insistent without being overly threatening, Wh'ezir will remain with them – otherwise he will leave them, pointing deeper into the swamp and chattering, "That way, big man-man is there," before skulking off. Despite his miserable physical appearance, the PCs will find it difficult to threaten him – he still has the preternatural ability to dodge attacks.

If Wh'ezir stays with the party, he becomes extremely furtive and fearful, constantly hanging back and whimpering to himself in a low voice: "Oh dear, oh no, me oh my, this is bad-bad," and so forth. As soon as the PCs get into a fight, he will disappear, not to be seen again.

Part Four: Lair of the Dark Mantis

Ahead of you, through the twining fog, you can see what appears to be the ruins of a fortified castle. The upper levels have long since crumbled away, but the main floor and outlying walls are still mostly intact. The marsh water laps at the base of the ancient stone walls, making the old fortress look like an island. Smudgy black smoke rises from somewhere inside the main structure.

A crude wooden dock or pier of some sort has been attached to the shattered gap where the main gate once passed through the walls. Tied up at this pier is a low, sleek kobune, its hull covered in foul-looking stains, its bare mast rising into the sky like an impaler's spike. You can see the indistinct outlines of kanji on the ship's scabrous bow.

PCs can roll **Engineering/Intelligence** or **Lore: Crab/Intelligence** at TN 15, or **History/Intelligence** at TN 20, to recognize the construction of the fortress as a style favored by the Crab several centuries ago, before they were driven back by the armies of the Maw.

If the PCs hang back and observe the scene for a while, they will hear a hollow bellow, a sound of pain and fury, from somewhere inside the ancient fortress. If Wh'ezir is still with the PCs at this point, he will clutch his ears and whimper, "the big-big man, hurt-hurts he does."

The layout of the Dark Mantis' Lair is shown on Map #1.

The Ship

Konami's vessel is imbued with dark Tainted energies, allowing it to glide across the waters of the Shadowlands at her mental command, without any visible motive force. Anyone able to sense Taint will be uncomfortable near the boat, and jade will corrupt at five times the normal rate while on board. Pouches of jade powder will be reduced to black, useless sludge within a few minutes.

The boat's wooden planking is covered in gray-black slimy mold, and sodden coils of rope and tangled nets full of rotting fish cover the deck. Innumerable foul-looking purple-black crabs scuttle over the ship, feasting on anything organic which they can grasp in their pinchers. Even if the PCs cannot sense Taint, they will pick up a powerful sense of menace and hostility.

PCs who examine the kanji on the front bow can figure them out with a roll of **Calligraphy/Perception** at TN 15. They name the ship as the "Swift Bird." PCs who roll **Heraldry/Intelligence** at TN 25, **History/Intelligence** at TN 20, **Commerce/Intelligence** at TN 25, or **Law/Intelligence** at TN 20 can recall the story of Konami, a Mantis pirate from over a century ago, whose ship fled south toward the Shadowlands after she was repudiated by her Clan. (A Mantis Clan PC can recall this story with a **Simple Intelligence** roll at TN20.)

Although the ship appears to be abandoned, any PC who climbs aboard and begins poking around will discover that it is not without defenses: the foul blue-gray crabs will begin scuttling out of corners, snapping at any exposed flesh with their sharp pincers. PCs on the ship will take 1k1 damage per round, unless they are wearing heavy armor (which will repel the crab's tiny claws).

The tiny crabs can be smashed easily enough, but there are several hundred of them. Burning the ship would dispose of them easily enough, but in the Shadowlands,

where wood does not burn properly, only the mightiest of Fire spells will do the trick. Perhaps more importantly, any attempt to do serious damage to the ship will be noticed by Konami (who has an unnatural link to the vessel), and she will dispatch one of the Fallen Sisters to investigate (see "The Sisters' House" below).

Courtyard

Inside the gates to the ruined castle, a muddy courtyard sprouts sickly, unnatural plant-life. Pale, swollen tubers poke out of the soil, and the yellow grass seems to writhe and shift as though caressed by winds which only it can feel. The layout of the place is an unnatural parody of a Rokugani garden, complete with raked gravel paths (made from crushed human bone) and a "koi pond" (containing the pallid, swollen corpses of dead fish). One walkway leads across the courtyard to the entrance of the main castle, while the other winds around a corner to eventually reach the residence of the Fallen Sisters.

Once the PCs reach here, they will be able to see that the smoke they noticed earlier is coming from a crude chimney projecting from the central structure. This is the smoke of the furnace in the Chamber of Pain (see below).

The Sisters' House

Tucked in between the castle and the outer wall is the squat remains of a guard tower. The upper floors of the tower have collapsed, and been replaced by a thatching made from something dark and matted, perhaps dead grass. A gap in the front of the tower's ground floor is covered by a curtain of dirty green silk. A glittery yellow-green light flickers behind the curtain.

This place is the lair of two Mantis sisters, Misa and Yumi, who fell to the Taint three years ago. (They are described in the appendix, with their statistics.) At any given time, it is 50% likely that one of the sisters is here, relaxing or conversing with their brother (see below), while the other is assisting their mistress Konami in the Chamber of Pain (see below). If neither sister is here, they will both be in the Chamber of Pain.

If the PCs enter through the curtain, they will find a large chamber arrayed like the personal quarters of a pair of elegant court ladies – silken hangings, soft futons, cosmetics tables with high mirrors, and so forth. Light comes from tall, pale candles which burn endlessly with an unnatural green flame, the wax never melting. This eerily elegant scene is made horrible by

the realization that the thatched roof overhead is actually matted human hair over a latticework of human bones, mostly arm bones and ribs. Several skulls look down on the room with dark, hollow eye-sockets. Hanging from the center of the ceiling is the head of a human male, well-preserved other than the pallor of death.

The preserved head is that of the sisters' brother, Yamato, for whom they both held an unnatural desire. It is animate, and will "wake up" shortly after the PCs enter the chamber. It will immediately begin shrieking an alarm, attracting both sisters within five rounds. It can be destroyed easily enough (it has 5 Wounds), and has no abilities other than shouting for help.

The sisters' chamber contains nothing else useful to the PCs, although bold explorers can uncover many unpleasant details, such as cosmetics made from human fat, disgusting love poetry written to the unfortunate Yamato, and preserved bits and pieces of his body.

Antechamber

Inside the castle's gaping main entrance is a large open chamber. The ceiling is full of gaps and flaws, allowing pallid light to filter down inside. The floor is of uneven stone, covered with bits and pieces of wreckage, and scattered with bones and bits of rotten flesh. A foul stench hangs in the air. Ahead, a dark archway leads to an unlit corridor – sounds of pain, and faint red light, emerge from that direction. To the left, a smaller archway leads to another chamber lit with many candles. To the right, masses of fallen rubble and ancient, half-rotted ceiling beams choke the chamber.

If the PCs managed to keep Wh'ezir with them up to this point, he will go skittering off to the right, whimpering in a low voice, "Over here, over here, they not see-see if we go here." He will crawl into a niche in the massive pile of rubble, squeaking for the PCs to follow.

Only PCs with the Small disadvantage will be able to follow Wh'ezir. If they do, they will find a gap in the wall through which they can worm forward and peer into the Chamber of Pain. This is how Wh'ezir discovered who was being held prisoner in this place. The opening is not large enough to crawl through (it is about six inches across), but the PCs can use it to scout what is waiting for them.

Shrine to the Ninth Kami

The archway to the left leads into a high, narrow chamber – formerly a stairwell in the castle – whose

walls are stained with smoke and dried blood. Scores of candles burn along the walls, their greasy wax bubbling and melting with unpleasant odors, their flames sputtering sparks of green-yellow. In the center of the chamber is an altar of black obsidian, with heavy iron manacles to allow a sacrificial victim to be spread-eagled across it. The altar is covered in dried blood, and the room stinks of blood, death, and the foul wax of the candles.

This place is a shrine to Fu Leng, and is deeply evil and Tainted. It is impossible to cast normal spells in here – any attempt at spell-casting will be answered by a *kansen* (evil spirit) which offers to fulfill the spell in return for a few points of Taint.

If the PCs spend any significant amount of time here, or make any effort to desecrate this place, they will be sensed by Konami, who will dispatch one of the Sisters to investigate.

The Chamber of Pain

The dark corridor leads down an uneven slope into a vast chamber with low vaulted roofs supported by thick pillars – this was once the main basement of the ancient castle. The place is lit in flickering red by a great furnace against the far wall, an unnatural Tainted fire burning within. Various torture tools, such as whips, branding irons, and various blades and needles, are racked on an iron stand next to the furnace.

Chained from the floor and ceiling in front of the furnace is Hida Kisada: a huge, muscular man, obviously older than the typical samurai but still horrendously powerful. His body is covered in fresh scars and burns. His left arm has been removed and a writhing, greenish-gray tentacle, covered in suckers and claws, is grafted on in its place. His right eye is also gone, leaving a scorched empty socket.

Konami the Mantis (see her description in the appendix) will be here when the PCs arrive, clad only in a translucent green garment that swirls around her like a cloud. Her fearsome Accursed Kusarigama is hanging from the wall behind her. She is torturing Kisada, trying to make him give in and accept his new arm and his new role as a servant of the Dark Lord. Although Kisada cannot avoid the occasional groan or bellow of pain, he remains defiant.

At least one of the Sisters will always be here with her. 50% of the time, both sisters will be here (unless Konami dispatched one of them to investigate intruders). If one sister is absent, but the PCs did not

already dispose of her, she will arrive four rounds after any fight begins.

PCs who have played the adventure *Dark Eyes on the Wall* have met Kisada before. They can recognize him now with a roll of **Simple Intelligence** at TN 15 (his extended torture has made him difficult to recognize). Other PCs can recognize the Great Bear with a roll of **Lore: Crab/Intelligence** at TN 20, or **Heraldry/Intelligence** at TN 25.

PCs who played the adventure *Duty on the Wall* can recognize Konami as the Shadowlands commander who led the attack against their sector.

Battle with Konami

Presumably, the PCs will act to rescue Kisada. Konami will be furious at the PCs for interrupting her work, and both she and the Sisters will attack the PCs with all the strength at their disposal. Being sadistic as well as evil, they will attempt to disable and capture the PCs, so that they can amuse themselves by torturing them slowly into submission.

As mentioned, if one of the Sisters is absent when the PCs arrive (and the PCs did not dispose of her earlier), she will arrive after four rounds of combat. Remember the Sisters' joint dance/attack maneuver (see their stats in the Appendix), which they will certainly use if both are present.

Clever PCs may recognize that Konami is somewhat dependent on her weapon – without it, she is a far less fearsome opponent. However, the Sisters are both adept at fighting with improvised weapons or bare hands, and will do their best to assist their mistress (and to recover her weapon, if the PCs disarm her).

Kisada is in no condition to fight, even if freed, but will do his best to cheer the PCs on, roaring encouragement and shouting curses at the Tainted foes.

Needless to say, if Wh'ezir is still around at this point, he will flee the moment a fight begins.

Conclusion

Once the corrupted Mantis are defeated, Hida Kisada will demand that the PCs free him. Paranoid PCs are free to test him with jade – he is indeed Tainted, although not as badly as might be expected. Once free, Kisada will collapse to the floor (he is too weak to stand) and flops his unnatural tentacle out on the stone. “Cut it off,” he roars. “Now!”

Cutting off the tentacle must be done at the shoulder in order to be successful. If the tentacle is cut farther down, it spurts gray ichor, but immediately begins healing and regenerating itself, while Kisada howls in agony. If it is cut at the shoulder, however, clean red blood spurts out, while the tentacle flops and writhes and finally withers, cut off from its source of nutrition.

In order to keep Kisada from bleeding to death after the tentacle is removed, the PCs will need to either roll **Medicine/Intelligence** at TN 20 or cast a strong healing spell (*Regrow the Wound* or *Peace of the Kami*). *Path to Inner Peace* will not work (it cannot close a bleeding artery), and the kiho *Chi Projection* will also fail (for the same reason).

If Kisada can be saved, and given some food and water, after a few hours he will recover enough strength to be able to hobble around. He immediately demands to be taken back to the Empire. “I have been betrayed! We have all been betrayed! Kuni Yori – I trusted him, and he sold us out to Fu Leng!” He spits on the floor. “My place has been taken by a creature of the Shadowlands, one of the akutenshi – the evil angels. One so powerful it makes this foul thing,” he gestures at Konami's corpse, “look like a plaything. It wears my form, and leads my samurai to their doom. We must go back to the Empire, and stop it!”

- Without the tentacle, much of Kisada's Taint is gone, enough that jade now barely singses him. PCs who possess the Tears of Lady Doji can use one of the tears to remove the last of his Taint.
- Kisada acknowledges that he is Tainted and crippled, but is determined to return to the Empire, confront his doppelganger, and save his Clan from destruction.
- If need be, Kisada will humble himself to beg the PCs for help, confessing that his own ambitions blinded him to what was happening to Kuni Yori. His experiences here have taught him his own weaknesses.
- Kisada will also forgive any Crab “rebels,” and asks them what has become of his two “rebel” children, Sukune and O-Ushi. He will clearly be shaken by the news that Sukune is dead, and fights down tears for a moment. He already knows of the terrible fate which has befallen his eldest son, Yakamo – Konami taunted him with a visit from Yakamo months ago.

The Return Trip

Although the wounded Kisada will slow the PCs somewhat, they will be able to make it back to Shinsei's Last Hope with time to spare. The reason for this is straightforward enough: soon after they leave the lair of the corrupted Mantis, they encounter a large pack of ratlings, led by a bushi named Rik'Tchik'Tchick. The ratling bushi bows to the PCs. "Wh'ezir tell-tell us you coming. We shows you way back to man-man place." If any of the PCs played A Mantis and His Rat, the ratling bushi remembers them, and greets them happily. "Rik'Tchick'Tchick happy see you still-still alive. Is long time since we make strange men-men blow up in swamp, yes?"

Assuming the PCs did not dawdle during their trip into the Shadowlands, they will arrive back in Shinsei's Last Hope with plenty of time to spare. Shuzomura and the "Victory" are still waiting, and can carry the PCs, Kisada, Mizuko, and the Brotherhood's relics safely back to the Empire.

If the PCs used and safely returned the two Brotherhood artifacts (the bo and the shobo), and rescued Kisada, the Brotherhood of Shinsei will agree to let them keep the items. The jingasa, however, must remain with the Brotherhood – Kuon is waiting for it.

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:	2 XP
Good role-playing:	+1 XP
PCs defeat the Oni no Gekido:	+1 XP
PCs rescue Hida Kisada:	+1 XP

Total Possible Experience: 5 XP

Honor

Crab PCs gain +1 Honor for rescuing Hida Kisada. Mantis PCs gain +1 Honor for disposing of Konami and her two minions.

Glory

None intrinsically awarded for the adventure.

Other Awards/Penalties

PCs can potentially acquire the Shobo of Kaze and the Bo of Hido (certed items), if they impress the monks and successfully rescue Hida Kisada.

Appendix #1: NPCs

Yoritomo Shuzomura, Captain of the “Victory”

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Mantis Bushi 3

Honor/Glory: 0.4/5.4

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Commerce 4, Courtier 2, Etiquette 3, Defense 4, Investigation 4, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Nofujutsu 5, Sailing 6, Sincerity 5, Stealth 5.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Crafty, Heartless, Quick, Storm Legion/Obligation (Kolai).

Equipment: Clothing, pair of kama (0k2).

Vistan, retired witch-hunter

FIRE 1 Intelligence 4	AIR 1 Awareness 4
EARTH 1 Willpower 4	WATER 1 Perception 4
VOID 4	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Kuni Witch-Hunter 2/Monk 2

Witch-Hunter Rank One: Two attacks per round against Tainted foes.

Witch-Hunter Rank Two: Sense Taint by rolling **Shadowlands Lore/Awareness**.

Honor/Glory: 2.7/2.0

Skills: Athletics 3, Bojutsu 6, Defense 4, Herbalism 3, History 4, Hunting 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 2, Lore (Bloodspeaker Cult) 7, Lore (Shadowlands) 3, Medicine 5, Meditation 4, Shintao 5, Stealth 3, Theology 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Clear Thinker/Gaijin Name

Equipment: Monk's robes, bo staff.

Typical Hida Bushi

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

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

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 1.5/1.0

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Iaijutsu 1, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu (Archery) 3, Lore (Shadowlands) 3, Stealth 1, Tsubojutsu 4, Wrestling 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Strength of the Earth (rank 2)/Brash.

Equipment: Kimono, heavy armor, daisho set, tetsubo, yari, bow with 20 arrows.

Mizuko, Monk of Amaterasu

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Monk 2

Honor/Glory: 3.5/2.0

Skills: Athletics 3, Bojutsu 4, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fasting 2, Defense 3, Jiu-jutsu 4, Meditation 4, Shintao 5, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 3.

Kiho: *Heart of Stone* (spend a Void point to reduce all damage dice above 10 down to 10), *Self no Self* (Meditate for 5 minutes to regain all Void points).

Advantages/Disadvantages: Ally (Kuon, the returned Shinsei)/Ascetic

Equipment: Clothing, bo staff (2k2).

Wh'ezir, ratling visionary, former sycophant of Rik'Tchik'Tchik

FIRE 2	AIR 3
Agility 3	Reflexes 6
EARTH 3	WATER 2
	Perception 3
VOID 1	

TN to be Hit: 30

School/Rank: None

Carapace Armor: 5

Skills: Dodge 5 (**Contested Agility Roll** versus attacker), Nezumi Sincerity 3, Pick Pockets 4, Scavenge 3, Set Snares 3, Stealth 5.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Inner Gift (visions and insane insights), Paranoid Git (Automatically dodges the first successful strike by an opponent, if he sees it coming), Skitter (avoid any traps or snares)/Bad Reputation (insane), Crippled Leg, Hyperactive, Missing Eye.

Wound Ranks: 10: +5; 20: +10; 30: Dead.

Hida Kisada, Champion of the Crab

FIRE 1 (4)	AIR 1 (3)
Intelligence 5	Awareness 3
EARTH 6 (8)	WATER 3
Willpower 9	(Strength 5)
VOID 4	

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 4.5 (drops to 1.5 after false arm is removed)

TN to be Hit: 5 (15)

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 5

Honor/Glory: 3.4/9.0

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 9, Defense 9, Heraldry 2, History 4, Hunting 5, Intimidation 7, Jiu-jutsu (kobo) 10, Kenjutsu 7, Law 3, Lore (Shadowlands) 10, Tetsubo (specialized weapon skill) 5, Tsubojutsu 10, Wrestling 8.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Crab Hands, Clear Thinker, Large, Magic Resistance (rank 3), Social Position (Clan Champion), Strength of the Earth (rank 3)/Missing Eye (right), Missing Limb (left arm), Shadowlands Taint.

Equipment: None.

Notes: Kisada's current stats reflect his experience of months of unending torture. If he is given rest and food, or healed with a powerful spell, his stats will rise to the parenthesized values.

Appendix #2: Low-End Bad Guy Stats

Oni no Gekido

FIRE 4/6/2	AIR 3/4/2
EARTH 3/5/2	WATER 3/5/2

TN to be Hit: 15/20/10

Attacks: 4k4/6k6/3k2

Damage: 3k3/5k3/2k2

Carapace Armor: 3/7/None

Wounds: 30: +5; 40: +10; 50: +15; 80: Dead.

Special Abilities: Fear (normal 2, Rage 4). Rage ability: Oni no Gekido normally uses the first set of stats listed. However, after it has rolled a total of five explosions on its dice, it Rages for 1-10 rounds. While in Rage, it uses the second set of stats. After the Rage ends, it is Exhausted (the third set of stats) for another 1-10 rounds, after which it returns to its “base” stats at the explosion count for Rage begins again.

Zombies

FIRE 1	AIR 0
EARTH 0 Stamina 3	WATER 1 Strength 3

TN to be Hit: 10 (5 without light armor)

Attacks: 1k1

Damage: 3k1 (bare hands)

Carapace: 7

Wounds: 60: Dead.

Special Abilities: Zombies take half damage from slashing weapons and one-quarter damage from crushing weapons, rounded down. They are not affected by lost limbs, which will continue to slither after the zombie. If they are decapitated, they die instantly.

Goblin Sneak

FIRE 2 Agility 3	AIR 2 Reflexes 3
EARTH 2	WATER 1 Perception 2

TN to be Hit: 15

Attacks: 3k3

Damage: 2k2 (knife)

Wounds: 10: +10; 20: Dead.

Skills: Sleight of Hand 5, Stealth 4.

Special Abilities:

Goblin Stealth: The sneak has an uncanny knack for blending into darkness and shadow. As long as there is any darkness for him to hide in, PCs must succeed at a Contested roll of **Hunting/Perception** or **Investigation/Perception** against his **Stealth/Agility** in order to spot him.

Assassination: If the goblin strikes an unprepared opponent (such as one who cannot see him due to his stealth abilities), he may gain a Kept die on damage for every two Raises he calls.

The Fallen Sisters

The sisters are identical twins, each a beautiful young woman with long hair and a delicate courtier's build. They wear simple clothing which reveals a great deal of their lithe and flexible bodies.

When the sisters are together, they are able to perform a sort of dance/martial arts attack. The sisters stand back to back and whirl around in a complex pattern which makes a point of showing off their physical charms to best advantage. During this maneuver, the sisters may combine their Reflexes to determine their TN to be Hit, and are considered to be Assisting each other on any Bugei skills which they use (allowing them to add together their skill ranks for each roll). Furthermore, they gain a Free Raise to their attack rolls against any PC with a disadvantage that creates vulnerability to seduction or desire, such as Lechery, Frail Mind, or Compulsion: Geisha.

The dance/attack maneuver can be disrupted by forcing the sisters apart, or by taunting or enraging them in a suitable fashion (GM's judgment whether it succeeds).

Misa, Corrupted Mantis

FIRE 2 Agility 3	AIR 2
EARTH 2	WATER 2

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 4.4

TN to be Hit: 10

School/Rank: *Mantis 1* (use peasant weapons, ignore balance penalties, fight with any improvised weapon as though with Skill rank 1)

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Commerce 3, Dance 4, Defense 3, Intimidation 4, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Nofujutsu 3, Sailing 3, Seduction 3.

Wounds: 36: Dead.

Advantages: Dangerous Beauty

Special Abilities: Partial Invulnerability (take half damage from any attack which is not jade, crystal, obsidian, or magic), Undead Strength (no Wound penalties).

Equipment: Clothing, pair of kama (0k2).

Yumi, Corrupted Mantis

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

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 4.4

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: *Mantis 1* (use peasant weapons, ignore balance penalties, fight with any improvised weapon as though with Skill rank 1)

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Commerce 3, Dance 4, Defense 4, Intimidation 4, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Music 4, Nofujutsu 3, Sailing 3, Seduction 3.

Wounds: 36: Dead.

Advantages: Dangerous Beauty

Special Abilities: Lesser Invulnerability (takes only half damage from any attack which is not jade, crystal, obsidian, or magic), Undead Strength (no Wound penalties).

Equipment: Clothing, pair of kama (0k2).

Konami, akutenshi (evil angel), former Mantis

Konami is a beautiful and physically perfect woman, the only flaw in her form being an open scar on her left wrist which pulses with the glowing blood of Fu Leng. Her perfect face is usually set in an expression of seductive desire or exultant bloodlust. Her clothing is diaphanous and swirls around her like a cloud without impeding her movements.

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

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 5.5

TN to be Hit: 25

School Rank: Shadowlands 3

Skills: Athletics 6, Commerce 4, Etiquette 3, Jiujutsu 5, Kenjutsu 4, Nofujutsu (peasant weapons) 6, Sailing 5, Seduction 5, Sincerity 3, Stealth 6.

Wounds: 72: Dead.

Special Abilities: Command the Taint (contested Willpower to control any creature with the Taint, but target gets two Free Raises if Taint is their lowest trait), Invulnerable (takes only 1 wound from any attack which is not jade, crystal, obsidian, or magic), Shapechanging, Superior Speed (two attacks per round, and adds +5 to Initiative rolls), Undead Strength (no Wound penalties).

Equipment: Accursed Kusari-Gama (1k2 peasant weapon which reduces armor by 5 and inflicts 1 point of Taint any time one of its damage dice explode).

Appendix #3: High-End Bad Guy Stats

Oni no Gekido

FIRE 5/7/3	AIR 4/5/2
EARTH 4/6/2	WATER 3/7/2

TN to be Hit: 20/25/10

Attacks: 5k5/7k7/3k2

Damage: 3k3/7k5/3k2

Carapace Armor: 3/8/None

Wounds: 40: +5; 50: +10; 60: +15; 100: Dead.

Special Abilities: Fear (normal 2, Rage 4). Rage ability: Oni no Gekido normally uses the first set of stats listed. However, after it has rolled a total of five explosions on its dice, it Rages for 1-10 rounds. While in Rage, it uses the second set of stats. After the Rage ends, it is Exhausted (the third set of stats) for another 1-10 rounds, after which it returns to its “base” stats at the explosion count for Rage begins again.

Zombies

FIRE 1	AIR 0
EARTH 0 Stamina 3	WATER 1 Strength 3

TN to be Hit: 10 (5 without light armor)

Attacks: 1k1

Damage: 3k1 (bare hands)

Carapace: 7

Wounds: 60: Dead.

Special Abilities: Zombies take half damage from slashing weapons and one-quarter damage from crushing weapons, rounded down. They are not affected by lost limbs, which will continue to slither after the zombie. If they are decapitated, they die instantly.

Goblin Sneak

FIRE 2 Agility 3	AIR 2 Reflexes 4
EARTH 2	WATER 1 Perception 2

TN to be Hit: 20

Attacks: 3k3

Damage: 3k2 (knife)

Wounds: 10: +10; 20: Dead.

Skills: Sleight of Hand 6, Stealth 5.

Special Abilities:

Goblin Stealth: The sneak has an uncanny knack for blending into darkness and shadow. As long as there is any darkness for him to hide in, PCs must succeed at a Contested roll of **Hunting/Perception** or **Investigation/Perception** against his **Stealth/Agility** in order to spot him.

Assassination: If the goblin strikes an unprepared opponent (such as one who cannot see him due to his stealth abilities), he may gain a Kept die on damage for every two Raises he calls.

The Fallen Sisters

The sisters are identical twins, each a beautiful young woman with long hair and a delicate courtier's build. They wear simple clothing which reveals a great deal of their lithe and flexible bodies.

When the sisters are together, they are able to perform a sort of dance/martial arts attack. The sisters stand back to back and whirl around in a complex pattern which makes a point of showing off their physical charms to best advantage. During this maneuver, the sisters may combine their Reflexes to determine their TN to be Hit, and are considered to be Assisting each other on any Bugei skills which they use (allowing them to add together their skill ranks for each roll). Furthermore, they gain a Free Raise to their attack rolls against any PC with a disadvantage that creates vulnerability to seduction or desire, such as Lechery, Frail Mind, or Compulsion: Geisha.

The dance/attack maneuver can be disrupted by forcing the sisters apart, or by taunting or enraging them in a suitable fashion (GM's judgment whether it succeeds).

Misa, Corrupted Mantis

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

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 4.4

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: *Mantis 1* (use peasant weapons, ignore balance penalties, fight with any improvised weapon as though with Skill rank 1)

Mantis 2 (may spend 6 Wounds to make a Full Attack without the normal TN penalties)

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Commerce 3, Dance 4, Defense 3, Intimidation 4, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Nofujutsu 4, Sailing 3, Seduction 3.

Wounds: 54: Dead.

Advantages: Dangerous Beauty

Special Abilities: Invulnerable (takes only 1 wound from any attack which is not jade, crystal, obsidian, or magic), Power of Blood (spend 6 Wounds to duplicate the effects of a Void point), Undead Strength (no Wound penalties).

Equipment: Clothing, pair of kama (0k2).

Yumi, Corrupted Mantis

FIRE 3	AIR 2 Reflexes 3
EARTH 3	WATER 2

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 4.4

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: *Mantis 1* (use peasant weapons, ignore balance penalties, fight with any improvised weapon as though with Skill rank 1)

Mantis 2 (may spend 6 Wounds to make a Full Attack without the normal TN penalties)

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Commerce 3, Dance 4, Defense 4, Intimidation 4, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Music 4, Nofujutsu 4, Sailing 3, Seduction 3.

Wounds: 54: Dead.

Advantages: Dangerous Beauty

Special Abilities: Invulnerable (takes only 1 wound from any attack which is not jade, crystal, obsidian, or magic), Power of Blood (spend 6 Wounds to duplicate the effects of a Void point), Undead Strength (no Wound penalties).

Equipment: Clothing, pair of kama (0k2).

Konami, akutenshi (evil angel), former Mantis

Konami is a beautiful and physically perfect woman, the only flaw in her form being an open scar on her left wrist which pulses with the glowing blood of Fu Leng. Her perfect face is usually set in an expression of seductive desire or exultant bloodlust. Her clothing is diaphanous and swirls around her like a cloud without impeding her movements.

FIRE 4	AIR 4
Agility 5	Reflexes 6
EARTH 5	WATER 3

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 6.5

TN to be Hit: 30

School Rank: Maho-Bujin 3

Rank One: *Carve the Crimson Road*. Konami gains a number of additional attacks per round equal to the highest Honor rank among her opponents.

Rank Two: *Corruption Rewards*. Konami can use the Wounds inflicted on her last strike as her Initiative total for the next round.

Rank Three: *Devourer of Purity*. Konami will heal a number of Wound Ranks (10 Wounds per rank) equal to the Honor rank of any opponent she brings to Down, Out, or Dead.

Skills: Athletics 6, Commerce 4, Etiquette 3, Jujutsu 5, Kenjutsu 4, Nofujutsu (peasant weapons) 7, Sailing 5, Seduction 5, Sincerity 3, Stealth 6.

Wounds: 108: Dead.

Special Abilities: Command the Taint (contested Willpower to control any creature with the Taint, but target gets two Free Raises if Taint is their lowest trait), Flight (moves at Air x 10 yards per round), Invulnerable (takes only 1 wound from any attack which is not jade, crystal, obsidian, or magic), Shapechanging, Undead Strength (no Wound penalties).

Equipment: Accursed Kusari-Gama (2k2 peasant weapon which slices through and ignores armor, and inflicts 1 point of Taint any time one of its damage dice explode).

Map #1: Lair of the Fallen Mantis

