

Time to Pay the Price

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

Part Five of Shadow's Path

by Rob Hobart

Reports of trouble in the Phoenix Clan's capital draw you to Kyuden Isawa. Can you save the Elemental Council from an evil more terrible than anything seen before?

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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 Mid-Rank adventure. This means that only Rank 2 through 4 Characters should be allowed to play. This adventure was not written with Rank 5 characters in mind and cannot anticipate all that these characters may bring to the table. Rank 1 characters can play if they wish, but should be warned in advance that they are facing a high likelihood of death or worse.

This is a SHADOWLANDS adventure, and as such represents a higher-than-normal threat of death or Taint for the characters who play it. Courtiers and other non-combat characters will be especially threatened by this adventure. Players should be warned of this in advance.

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

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

Low End Party (most/all characters Rank Two or less):

- Reduce the TNs for skill and Trait checks by 5.
- Shiba Tsukune does not have her Maho-Bujin technique.
- Tadaka has Reflexes 5, Fire of 4, and Earth of 6 (12 Wounds per rank).
- The Nameless One has Fire 3, Air 5, and Awareness 6.
- Goju Tomo has Earth of 3, Reflexes of 4 (TN 20 to be Hit), and Water of 5.
- Goju Uona does not have Greater Blessing of the Dark One (she has only 36 Wounds).

High End Party (majority of characters are Rank Four):

- The Nameless One, Goju Tomo, and Goju Uona take half damage from jade and anti-Taint magic.
- Shiba Tsukune has Agility 4 and Undead Strength (no Wound penalties).

Adventure Summary and Background

The PCs are approached by a representative of Empress Kaede (formerly Isawa Kaede). She has heard of problems in her old home territory, ever since her father Isawa Ujina returned from his long absence (shortly after her last visit home, prior to the Chrysanthemum Festival and her marriage). Kaede wants to find out what is happening, but her duties as Empress prevent her from leaving the capital city. When she tries to use the power of the Void to commune with her home, she sees only darkness and silence. Now she turns to the PCs for help.

The truth is fearsome indeed. Isawa Ujina succumbed to the power of the Living Darkness which had infested him for almost twenty years. Returning to Phoenix lands as the Nameless One, he spread its corruption through the Isawa family, weakening the soul of his son Isawa Tadaka, Elemental Master of Earth. Tadaka in turn succumbed to the Taint which he had gained in years of researching the Shadowlands.

These two fallen individuals, one now a slave to Fu Leng and the other a servant of the Living Darkness, are destroying the Phoenix Clan, sacrificing its people and corrupting its land. Tadaka is now the Dark Master of Earth, and he and his nameless father are preparing to sacrifice the Clan Champion, Shiba Ujimitsu, an act which will doom the future of the Phoenix Clan. If the PCs do not take decisive and heroic action, all the

northern Empire may become a domain of darkness, Taint, and nameless fear.

Introduction

The scenario begins in the Imperial capital, Otosan Uchi, on the twenty-second day of the month of the Goat – nearly two months after the Chrysanthemum Festival, and four weeks after the funeral of Bayushi Shoji. The PCs are in the city to witness the confirmation of a new family name for the Mantis Clan.

This is a major event – the Mantis have been without a name for centuries – and representatives from all the Clans are here to witness it.

Not all PCs may be here for that specific reason – some may have other business in the capital. Crab and Unicorn PCs are probably seeking aid for their faction in their respective civil wars, and ronin PCs are, as always, looking for work.

An important note: Phoenix Clan PCs are assumed to have been away from their own lands for at least a month, and are thus unaware of the disaster which is overwhelming their Clan. Most likely, they have been fighting in the Dragon-Phoenix war, or maneuvering in court to gain support for their side in that conflict.

As Otosan Uchi approaches the one-year anniversary of the terrible earthquake that took the life of the last Emperor, the city is a beehive of energy, construction, and repairs. Giant wooden frameworks rise on the foundations of the old Hantei and Otomo palaces, and the western bridge across the River of the Sun has finally been repaired. The wharves are crowded with ships flying the colors of the Crane and Mantis, bringing wealth and supplies to speed the work.

But a sense of unease lurks over the city as well, and not merely from the bitter memories of last year. War still rages between the Dragon and Phoenix, the fragile Lion-Crane truce hangs by a thread, civil war still tears apart the Unicorn and Crab Clans, and the Imperial Legions have marched west to chastise the snake-men of the Shinomen Forest. Anxious gossip fills the streets, tea houses, and restaurants of the capital city.

For today, though, such concerns can be set aside. A magnificent kobune floats up the River of the Sun, driven by the rhythmic stroke of many oars. The massive square sail displays the mon of the Mantis Clan, but above it waves a golden pennant with the chrysanthemum mon of the Imperial house. On the foredeck stands the imposing form of Yoritomo,

Champion of the Mantis Clan, here to receive the Emperor's blessing for the restoration of his family name. The Son of Storms is an impressive figure indeed, resplendent in armor of green and silver-blue, the twin kama of his Clan thrust through his belt next to his katana.

The PCs witness this event from somewhere on the bank of the River of the Sun (most likely either the Imperial Parade Grounds, or one of the two bridges). It may be assumed that they are all in the same area and are free to interact with each other. Allow the PCs the opportunity to role-play, introduce themselves, and react to the scene which ensues.

The ship pulls up to the shore in the shadow of the Emperor's Forbidden City, and Yoritomo bows deeply toward the mighty walls which shelter the Son of Heaven. The Emperor does not deign to appear in person, but in his stead a man in the gold and brown of the Seppun family appears atop the walls. "People of Rokugan!" shouts Seppun Akihita, "I shall soon depart this city to serve as bodyguard to Otomo Onatsu, niece of our beloved Emperor! But before I undertake that honorable task, I have one other duty to the Imperial House: to deliver the words of the Emperor to his most faithful servant, Yoritomo, lord of the Mantis Clan!"

"Lord Yoritomo! The Emperor is well-pleased with your actions, which have shown a true loyalty to the Imperial throne which is all too often lacking in these troubled times! While other Clans fight among themselves, or succumb to false ambition, you have renounced such madness and hewn to your oaths to the Blessed Hantei! In recognition of your loyal service, the Emperor is pleased to grant you the right to bestow your name upon the most select of your followers! Let all witness this and give thanks for the wisdom of the Divine Hantei!"

Yoritomo bows while the bushi on his ship split the skies with cheers. "Banzai!" they roar, three times shouting their exultance.

News and Gossip

After the announcement is completed, Yoritomo goes into the Imperial City to spend the night as a guest, while his ship rows back down the river to moor itself at one of the piers in the outer city. The bushi of its crew spend the night visiting the inns, gambling dens, and geisha houses of the city, celebrating their lord's success.

The PCs will be free to mill about and speak with the crowd after the announcement. In their immediate vicinity will be many samurai and courtiers of the major Clans, especially the Crane, Scorpion, Dragon, and Lion. The following gossip can be picked up in conversation.

- The Lion Clan has dispatched a large military force, under the command of Matsu Agetoki, to intervene in the Crab Civil War. The latest reports (several weeks old) have them crossing from Sparrow lands into the northern Crab territories.
- The acting Mirumoto daimyo, Mirumoto Yukihera, recently drove back the Lion forces attacking the Dragonfly territories. Yukihera was aided by a large ronin force led by none other than Toturi the Black, the fallen Akodo. Since then, the Setsuban truce has brought a pause in the fighting, and there are rumors that Toturi may be looking for work elsewhere.
- Mirumoto Daini, younger brother of the missing daimyo Mirumoto Hitomi, returned to Dragon lands a few months ago and has been urging the other Dragon daimyo to abandon Yukihera.
- Recently, the funeral of Bayushi Shoji, lord of the Scorpion Clan, was interrupted by a catastrophe of some sort. Rumor has it that an undead monster attacked the proceedings. Thankfully, Shoji's son and heir, Bayushi Dairu, was spared.
- A disgraceful incident involving a Crane daimyo, Doji Takashi, has raised the spectre that the Lion-Crane war might resume next spring. Rumor has it that the Crane are urgently maneuvering in the courts to prevent this.
- Over the course of the day, rumors begin spreading that the Imperial Legions have suffered a terrible defeat in the Shinomen Forest. There is no solid confirmation of this as yet, but stories circulate with increasing frequency as the day goes on. Some stories claim that messages have arrived from shugenja who accompanied the Legions, while others say that a courier arrived in the city this morning.

The Empress' Letter

Once the PCs have had a chance to establish themselves, listen to gossip, and generally prepare themselves, they receive a message:

A well-dressed servant bows before you, lowering his head while holding out a scroll. “Honorable samurai. This letter is for you, if you please.”

PCs can clearly see the chrysanthemum mon, the symbol of the Imperial family, on the letter. The letter is from Kakita Torikage, the Imperial Chancellor, and requests that the PCs attend an “important meeting” in the Forbidden City. He does not state any reason, other than to say that the PCs have a chance to serve the Empire.

PCs who are uncouth enough to refuse the Chancellor’s request are committing a grievous breach of etiquette, and suffer the loss of 3 points of Honor and 5 points of Glory. They are also out of the adventure.

The Forbidden City

The letters will grant the PCs access to the Forbidden City. The Imperial Guards at the gates politely ask the PCs to leave their weapons (and scrolls, if they are shugenja) in their care. They will be very well-mannered about this, but absolutely inflexible – the PCs will not be allowed in while carrying weapons. The guards will not say why they are being so adamant, and the PCs will again have to choose whether to obey and continue, or refuse and drop out of the adventure. PCs who sneak in weapons (hidden in their clothing, etc) are disobeying the orders of the Imperial Guard, and lose 2 points of Honor.

Once the PCs are inside, Kaede will meet them in the guest-house area:

Within the mighty walls of the Forbidden City, a large garden area is home to the guest houses of the seven Great Clans: magnificent residences which would be the centerpieces of lesser cities, but here are merely side-notes to the Imperial Palaces. Courtiers in elegant dress walk the winding paths and cross the small arched bridges between the guest-houses, enjoying the perfectly maintained gardens and sharing gossip behind their fans. They drift aside from your path as a servant leads you to one particular bridge, a low wooden structure above a koi pond. Waiting for you there is a slim, dark-skinned woman in a splendid kimono, its colors and patterns blending the Phoenix and the Otomo. She smiles at you in welcome, and you realize you are in the presence of Otomo Kaede, once the Elemental Acolyte of Void, now the Empress of Rokugan.

Kaede may have met some of the PCs before, if they played the adventure *Fist of the Earth*. She will greet

those PCs first, then the rest of the party, speaking each of their names without being introduced. She is a beautiful and charming woman, with a gentle and honorable soul, and her face is accustomed to smiling. However, any PC rolling **Simple Awareness** at TN 20 can tell she is troubled by something.

Kaede will make some brief and friendly small-talk, expressing the hopes of the Emperor for peace and prosperity, and downplaying the recent string of bad news. Once such topics are exhausted, or the PCs ask why she has called for them, she proceeds:

“Some of you may know that my father, the former Master of Void, vanished from the Phoenix lands almost a year ago. Shortly after my marriage to the Emperor, I received word from one of my fellow students of the Void that my father had finally returned. I was delighted by this news, and looked forward to learning where his journey had taken him and what he had learned. But since then, no word has come from the Phoenix lands. In the last half-month, not even couriers or letters. In the last few days, I have tried to speak to my father through the Void, in the way of our school, but he does not answer... and the other Acolytes of the Void do not answer either. I sense only... a darkness, where they should be.”

“As the Empress, my place is here, at the Emperor’s side. But I must know what evil is growing in the Phoenix lands... for only evil could bring such silence to the path of Void.”

Kaede wishes the PCs to travel to Kyuden Isawa, learn what has happened, and if possible speak with her father. With Clan PCs she couches this as a request for a favor, not an order, and assures them of her “personal gratitude” if they can help her. If any of the PCs are ronin, she will promise to cover their expenses for the trip and offers them a home in the Phoenix Clan in exchange for their help.

Some PCs may ask why Kaede is not calling on the new Jade Champion to deal with this problem. She explains thusly: “The honored Kitsuo Okura is traveling south to the Asahina temples, to consult with them on using their wisdom to strengthen the battle against maho. He will not be back for many weeks.”

Assuming the PCs are willing to help, Kaede can offer the following additional information:

- Her father, Isawa Ujina, was stricken by a dark and evil power before she was born, a power which

also took the life of her mother Isawa Ninube. Ujina resisted the evil power all his life, and it did not prevent him from remarrying and fathering two sons, Isawa Tadaka (the Master of Earth) and Isawa Tomo (the Master of Water).

- The evil within Ujina twisted and warped his body, but never touched his soul. Kaede will react with horror and disbelief to the suggestion that her father might have fallen to this corruption.
- Kaede does not know what the power was which corrupted her father, although it was not Taint. If any PC has knowledge of the Living Darkness, and suggests this as the culprit, Kaede will nod gravely. “It may be so. I cannot say with certainty, for my father guarded his privacy and struggled against his inner darkness alone. He told me once that it was his own burden to bear, since it had been born from his own sins.”
- In the last three days, Kaede has made several attempts to contact her father through the Void, but all have failed. Yesterday, she tried to contact the other Acolytes of the Void in Isawa lands. That failed as well, a truly alarming incident which prompted her to seek help.
- If a PC makes a **Manipulation/Awareness** or **Courtier/Awareness** roll at TN 25, or a successful **Contested Awareness** roll against Kaede, he can tell she is hiding something about her recent attempts to contact her father. If the PCs ask (politely and respectfully) whether there is anything she has not told them, she hesitates a moment, then confesses: “The morning I tried to contact my father, I was awakened by a terrible dream, in which dark fire consumed Kyuden Isawa and all within it. I do not believe I have the gift of prophecy... but the dream seemed such a terrible omen that I felt compelled to contact my father at once.”
- Kaede will not speak of any other matters in the Empire (such as the Dragon-Phoenix war), stating that those things are concerns for the Emperor.

Special Note: The Status of Hantei the 39th

It is possible that some PCs may be aware that Hantei the 39th, Kaede’s husband, is corrupted by the Living Darkness. Some of them may even be uncouth enough to speak to her about this at this time. If so, Kaede’s expression does not change except for the mildest

frown. “Such matters are best not spoken of,” she says quietly. If the PCs push the issue, she remarks, “Samurai-san, can you think of one better-suited than I to protect the Emperor from evil?”

Preparations and Departure

Assuming the PCs agree to help the Empress, she supplies them with travel papers signed with her own hand, and arranges supplies and mounts (fine Rokugani ponies, +1 Horsemanship skill to their riders) for those who need them. She urges the PCs to make haste, since she would like to know more by the time of the Bon Festival.

From the Imperial Capital, a two-day journey will take the PCs north, past the Castle of the Emerald Champion, to the foot of the Treacherous Pass, the main land route through the Mountains of Regret to Phoenix lands.

Part One: To Phoenix Lands

It takes three days to cross the Treacherous Pass. The road is winding and narrow, often hugging the edges of mountains or delving through narrow clefts in the rock, and frequently only wide enough for a pair of men or a single horse.

There is an old story of a merchant who died on the road, and some say the pass is still haunted by his ghost (**History/Intelligence** at TN 20 to remember this tale). Whether that is true or not, there is no denying that the wind which howls through the pass is chill and its sound is full of menace, even in late summer.

There are no villages or inns in the pass, and the Phoenix have built roadhouses every half-day’s travel to accommodate travelers. These are small unmanned buildings containing fire-pits, futons, blankets, rice, and other basic supplies, usually also with a well and cistern for water.

PCs who have played other recent adventures may be wary of ambushes on the road, but there will be no attacks or threats. However, PCs with Shadow Corruption will experience disturbing, eerie dreams – dreams which they cannot clearly remember after waking.

The City of Remembrance

On the far side of the Treacherous Pass is the City of Remembrance (Toshi no Omoidoso), a bustling

metropolis and trade center, home to over 3,000 people. The city hosts a shrine to the memory of Matsu Hitomi, among the most famous tragic heroines of Rokugan, and is also a major trade hub for this part of the Empire, with roads running not only north toward the heart of Phoenix lands, but also west toward the Lion and Dragon territories.

Although Toshi no Omoidoso lies in Shiba lands, it is traditionally ruled by an Isawa, and the current governor is Isawa Hitsukawa, an aging and peaceful shugenja of Air. PCs may have met him in adventures such as *Kuro's Fire*.

When the PCs arrive, the city is in a state of ferment. Over the previous six days, peasant refugees have been trickling into the city along the Emperor's Road from the north (toward Shiro Shiba). The refugees are frightened and deliver conflicting stories, but all agree that some kind of catastrophe has befallen both Kyuden Isawa and Shiro Shiba. If the PCs speak with the refugees, or ask the locals what they are saying, they can learn the following:

- A great smoke and noise came from the north, toward Kyuden Isawa, eight days ago. Ashes fell from the sky.
- Some days after that, monsters and evil spirits started to attack at night. Many samurai and peasants died. Others simply disappeared, leaving nothing behind.
- The Phoenix samurai and shugenja tried to fight the evil things, and ordered the peasants not to run. But many samurai died, and some of the peasants ran anyway.
- The peasants have many different versions of these "monsters" and "evil spirits." It is clear that most of them never saw the things themselves and are simply repeating stories they heard from others. The stories include horrible flying things with wings like bats, moths, or falcons; walking corpses; shape-shifting demons with red eyes and claws; invisible demons which rend people apart in midday; things of stone which rise out of the earth; and things of shifting blackness with no real form at all. PCs may recognize (or think they recognize) some of these stories, which should give them pause before they venture farther north.

If the PCs stop at the governor's residence (as is proper for visiting samurai), they will be granted an audience with Hitsukawa after a two-hour wait.

Isawa Hitsukawa is a serious and thoughtful older man, approaching the age of retirement. He is a Water shugenja, and has led a life of pacifism and contemplation up until now. PCs may have met him in previous adventures, notable Kuro's Fire.

Hitsukawa is clearly out of his depth with this situation, having no experience at dealing with the Shadowlands (let alone the Living Darkness). He has dispatched two scouting parties up the road toward Shiro Shiba, but so far neither has returned. Given his limited resources, he has not been able to send any more troops, and has been trying to deliver messages by magic (*Whispering Winds*, etc). He has received only one reply, a garbled message which said something about "under siege" and "shadows in the night."

Hitsukawa is deeply worried about what has happened, and will feel somewhat conflicted about the PCs' mission – he is happy that the PCs will be investigating, but worried that they may be facing the same uncertain fate as his own scouting parties. As a result, while he will not actively discourage the PCs from traveling on, he will offer them many sincere wishes and prayers for their safety and success. He will also supply them with anything they might require in the way of mundane supplies and equipment.

Journey to Shiro Shiba

From the City of Remembrance, it is eight days up the Emperor's Road to Shiro Shiba. This route goes through prosperous farmlands, with many small- to medium-sized villages (the PCs pass through two or three villages a day) and the occasional samurai's residence or small castle. The Shiba family rules these lands, but at present most of their bushi are in the west, fighting the Dragon – the PCs will encounter only a few samurai.

The people here have heard the same stories, and every village has one or two refugees who have stopped there for shelter. The general tone among the common folk is extremely tense and fearful, with many believing that some terrible curse has befallen the Phoenix Clan. A few of them claim to have seen monsters stalking the fields at night, although no such stories are confirmed by any samurai. The descriptions of these monsters vary from one account to the next (it will be impossible for the PCs to draw any conclusions from them).

The handfuls of samurai in this area are likewise tense and anxious, although they do a better job of hiding it. Some of them have sent couriers or scouts north to

learn what is happening, but none have returned. Needless to say, they will wish the PCs the best of luck, and ask them to bring back news if they can.

The Fallen Lands

On the sixth day of travel, the PCs will pass within a mile of Isawa Mori, the vast forest which covers much of the central Phoenix territory. A drifting fog shrouds the edges of the forest, and PCs can roll **Lore: Phoenix** or **History** (with the **Intelligence** trait) at TN 15 to recall the story of Mori Kage Toshi (Forest Shadow's City), the city which was cursed generations ago and fell into ruin.

From this point forward, all villages which the PCs encounter are seemingly abandoned, empty of all life except for scattered livestock and the occasional stray dog. The interiors of village huts mostly look as though the residents departed days ago in the middle of day-to-day life, leaving meals to spoil in pots and fires to slowly burn themselves out. A few huts instead look as though the residents barricaded themselves inside – some of these are empty and untouched, while others have smashed-in roofs and shattered walls.

Occasionally, the PCs will find the remains of a dead body, apparently a peasant, lying in the village streets or out in the fields. These bodies have been dead for several days and are in awful condition, their flesh torn and shredded. A **Hunting/Intelligence** roll at TN 15 suggests they have been fed upon by carrion-eating birds, although no such avians are visible now.

The PCs will have to spend the night either in one of these abandoned villages, or camping outdoors. Although no attack will be made against them, any PC with Shadow Corruption or with more than half a rank of Shadowlands Taint will experience dark, disturbing dreams each night. Furthermore, each night the PCs will hear or see evidence that something is terribly wrong with these lands:

- The PCs hear distant moans or screams, too far away to make out clearly.
- On another night, the PCs hear the flapping of many wings, high up in the sky. Small winged shapes can be faintly seen against the moon and stars, but it is impossible to identify them. Any PC who can sense Taint will feel uneasy.
- If the PCs are staying in a hut or other building, they hear something scratching on the outside wall. If they go out to investigate, nothing is to be found.

- The morning after one of these incidents, the PCs find a freshly-dead severed human hand near their campsite. It appears to have been bitten or torn off. There is no trail or other sign of how it came to be here.

Spellcasting Problems

Once the PCs enter this region, shugenja will discover that it is becoming difficult to contact the elemental spirits of the area. The spirits seem distant and reluctant to answer, almost as though their connection to the physical world is growing weaker. All spellcasting will be at a +5 TN penalty, except for *maho* spells, which perform normally.

PCs who roll **Lore: Shugenja/Intelligence** at TN 20, or **Lore: Shadowlands/Intelligence** at TN 15, recognize this as a milder form of the problem which confronts spellcasters in the Shadowlands.

If a PC *Communes* with the elements here, trying to learn what is wrong, the information gained will be confused and fragmentary. The kamis know that something has gone wrong, and that they are losing their connection with the land, but they are not sure quite way. More powerful spirits (those summoned with four or more Raises) will recognize that the source of the problem is somewhere to the north.

Part Two: Shiro Shiba Under Siege

On the afternoon of the eighth day, the PCs come within sight of Shiro Shiba, the seat of the Shiba family.

Ahead of you, the slanting afternoon sunlight gilds the outlines of Shiro Shiba, the seat of the Phoenix bushi family. The castle is famed as an impenetrable maze that will swallow and defeat any attacker, and you can see that the reputation is not ill-deserved: the walls of the castle sprawl and coil in strange and unpredictable patterns, with gates and towers in odd places. As you approach, however, you see something odd: the large village which surrounds the castle appears to be abandoned. Huts sit dark and empty, shutters open, and a mangy-looking dog trots through the empty streets.

The village is indeed abandoned... at least during the day. At night, it is stalked by Tainted Goju.

There will be no sign of life until the PCs approach the irregular, zig-zagging walls of the castle – at which point an arrow will fly out and land at their feet. “Halt and name yourselves!” booms a voice from the walls.

The Shiba have been under siege by corrupted monsters and Goju, every night for seven days. They are understandably a little paranoid. The PCs will have to identify themselves and approach carefully in order to gain access to the castle without getting an arrow in the stomach.

Once they prove themselves, the PCs will be led into the castle, carefully watched by weary-looking Shiba bushi. They will demand that the PCs give up their weapons and spell-scrolls before being allowed in to speak with their acting leader, Shiba Tsumenitsu.

Inside the maze-like interlayered walls of Shiro Shiba, hundreds of commoners, obviously refugees, are packed into the main courtyards. Tents and improvised shelters fill much of the grounds, and you can smell rice-porridge from the pots that bubble over several cook-fires. The people here seem to be a cross-section of commoners, including peasants, laborers, artisans and merchants – you even see some eta, packed into one corner of the courtyard and isolated from the rest. Everyone looks tired and dirty and frightened. The wails of children drift up from the tents.

The samurai who escort you into the castle itself look only slightly better than the commoners under their care. Their features are drawn with exhaustion and suppressed fear, and some of them stumble with weariness as they march.

You are led into a large chamber on an upper floor of the castle. The windows of the room have been sealed with heavy oaken beams, but the chamber is well-lit by numerous lanterns and candles. The man waiting for you is dressed in a fine kimono of Phoenix orange and red, but his face is haggard, and his swords are thrust through his belt rather than being left to one side. He seems to be in his mid-twenties, and has the muscular build of a skilled swordsman. He regards you anxiously, his eyes darting from one of you to the next.

Some PCs may have met Shiba Tsumenitsu before, in the adventures *Ancestral Dictate* or *Soul of Akodo*. They will be shocked by the changes in him. Tsumenitsu was once a prideful and arrogant man, but his confidence has failed – first weakened by his humiliating defeat in the Emerald Tournament, and

now shattered by this terrible supernatural catastrophe. He will do his best to maintain face and project an aura of authority and confidence, but anyone who beats him on a **Contested Awareness** roll can tell that he is actually on the brink of terror and despair.

Shiba Tsumenitsu will for the most part be quite cooperative with the PCs – since they are here on Kaede’s behalf, he perceives them as holding out hope for salvation. However, if any of them are Dragon or Unicorn Clan bushi, Tsumenitsu will be more hostile and prickly, taking quick offense at anything which could be seen as insulting or threatening. He will be especially hostile toward Dragon, since his Clan is at war with theirs. Tsumenitsu may actually express blame toward the Dragon Clan for the current situation: “If our troops were not on the border dealing with your Clan’s aggression, perhaps this situation could have been solved already.”

Irregardless of whether he is cooperative or hostile, Tsumenitsu can share the following information:

- At dawn seventeen days ago, there was a great thunder from the north, and many saw a cloud of smoke and ash rising up on the horizon, where Kyuden Isawa lies. (This was one day before Kaede tried to contact her father.) A large troop of bushi was immediately sent north to investigate, led by Shiba Ujimitsu himself, the Clan Champion.
- Ujimitsu and his men have not returned. Follow-up forces sent after him have not done so either. Shugenja who have tried to contact him magically have failed.
- In the first several days after the explosion, many peasants fled south from Kyuden Isawa. They offered wild tales of “monsters in the night” and people being carried off to awful fates by samurai. However, over the last five days the flow of refugees has slowed to nothing.
- Seven nights ago, the castle came under attack by shadowy assassins who slipped over the walls, murdering guards and slaughtering courtiers in the castle. Tsumenitsu and the rest of the garrison managed to rally and drive them off, but not without grievous loss.
- The next morning, the village outside the castle was empty. No sign of the inhabitants has been found, except for a few mangled bodies.

- Since then, the castle has been attacked every night – sometimes by the same black-clad assassins, sometimes by shape-shifters who pretend to be fellow Phoenix. The attackers seem to be able to cross the highest walls. The garrison has been hard-pressed to deal with these threats, and its limited number of shugenja has been stretched especially thin.

Tsumenitsu's Attitude

The Phoenix daimyo does not have any ideas on what to do – he is simply hoping to hold out long enough for this threat, whatever it is, to end. He is in a state of fear and mild paranoia, and is not really making much contribution to the castle's defense – that is in the hands of Shiba Tetsu, Captain of the Shiba House Guard. If the PCs ask for details about the attacks, or how the Shiba are defending themselves, Tsumenitsu will refer them to the Captain (see "Other Investigations: Shiba Tetsu" below).

If the PCs ask Tsumenitsu for guidance or suggestions, he will clearly be at a bit of a loss – he was secretly hoping the PCs were here to save the day, and will be somewhat disconcerted to learn this is untrue. He will finally mumble something about needing to learn the fate of the Clan Champion, since without him the Shiba are leaderless.

Confrontation?

If any PCs take offense at Tsumenitsu, or insult him seriously, he may "break" and lose his face, screaming at the PCs to get out of his chambers and never return. If the PCs knuckle under and leave, he will later calm down and allow his underlings to speak with the PCs further (providing any additional information which the PCs may have missed), although he will not speak with the PCs again in person.

If a PC responds belligerently, or tries to shame Tsumenitsu for his loss of face, the daimyo will either expel them from the castle (if their Glory is less than 5.0), or challenge them to a duel (if they are Glory 5.0 or higher). It will be up to the PCs to try to get out of this situation as best they can – a lethal duel could leave the castle leaderless, but if a PC loses a non-lethal duel, they will be expelled as above, ending any chance of help from the garrison.

Other Investigations: Guard Captain Shiba Tetsu

If the PCs have offended Tsumenitsu but manage to avoid being expelled from the castle, their later

discussions will be with the Captain of the Guard, Shiba Tetsu. Tetsu will also meet with them if they ask to meet the local military commander, if they request to speak with the garrison, or if they seek information and assistance for traveling north to Kyuden Isawa. (Tsumenitsu will not actively assist such an effort himself.)

The Captain of the Shiba House Guard meets you on the walls of the castle, where he is touring the defenses and speaking with his bushi. He is an older man, in his early forties, his hair turning gray at the temples, with a stern face but a kindly light to his eyes. He bows to you politely. "If you would, samuraisamas, please accompany me. I must continue my rounds."

Tetsu will always speak with the PCs while he is busy doing something to strengthen the castle's defenses – buoying the spirits of his men, reviewing supplies and equipment, listening to reports, rushing to respond to an attack, and so forth. The PCs should get an impression of tireless energy and dedication whenever they meet with him. It is clear that Tetsu, not Tsumenitsu, is the heart of Shiro Shiba's defense.

Tetsu can share the following information:

- He can recount the same recent events as Tsumenitsu, but can provide more details on the attacks against Shiro Shiba. He describes the night-time assassins as "man-shaped demons, masquerading as ninja." He claims they are faceless and bleed black slime. PCs who are familiar with the Shadow, or who have skills such as **Lore: Ninja**, will notice differences between these attacks and those Goju they have studied before – most Goju bleed black smoke.
- Tetsu will express very strongly the hope that the PCs can find out what has happened to Shiba Ujimitsu and Kyuden Isawa. He will find hope in the fact that the PCs made it to Shiro Shiba unmolested. "Perhaps our mistake has been to send such large parties. A few samurai, moving quickly, may be able to escape notice and learn much." Although he cannot spare any troops, he will aid the PCs any other way he can, including offering jade powder and a crystal weapon (see "Moving On?" below).

Other Investigations: Shugenja

There are only three shugenja left in the castle – four others have died since the assault began. The three

men, all in their mid-to-late twenties, are named Isawa Chunigo, Isawa Kamasawa, and Isawa Ikari. All three are exhausted and drained by many days of strain and struggle, but they will do their best to help the PCs, and will clearly light up a bit when they learn the PCs were sent by Isawa Kaede.

- All of their attempts to magically contact Ujimitsu or the Elemental Council (via spells such as *Whispering Wind*) have ended in failure. None of them are Void Acolytes, so their options for long-distance communication are limited.
- The shugenja can report (or confirm, for shugenja PCs) that spirits in the area seem strangely muted, and do not answer easily when summoned. The shugenja will claim that this effect started before the disaster, but has gotten much worse since then.
- They have noticed that jade magic burns the dark creatures who attack at night. From this, they conclude that these are some sort of Shadowlands creature. They do not know anything about the Shadow, and will dismiss any such stories from the PCs as “superstitious nonsense.”

Other Investigations: Refugees

PCs can also speak with the peasant refugees who are crowded inside the castle walls. These fearful souls can share the following information:

- The great thunder in the north was caused by some sort of explosion in Kyuden Isawa. Ashes and rocks rained down for miles. A few peasants claim to have seen a great black tower rising up within the city, in the place where the Isawa Palace once stood.
- A day or two after the blast, Phoenix samurai came from the castle. They were different from the way they had been before – they were harsh and cruel, and killed any peasant who so much as irritated them. They gathered the other samurai and doshin (armed peasants) from the villages and then went away. They said they needed them to rebuild the damage in Kyuden Isawa, but they never came back.
- After that, peasants started disappearing. “They would go into their hut to sleep at night, and in the morning they would be gone, as though they had never been!” Sometimes, body parts or mangled corpses would appear later on. Other times, no sign was ever found at all.

- Within a few days, monsters and ghosts began to stalk the streets at night. Soon, no peasant dared step outside in the dark hours. Those who did vanished, or were found slain and half-devoured the next day.

If any of the PCs make a concerted effort to be sympathetic with the peasants and listen carefully to their stories, they will find one young man named Koru who nerved himself to go to Kyuden Isawa on his own. He offers the following story: “The city lies under dark clouds, and a great tower rises in the center where the palace once stood. Dead bodies hang from the walls. I only stepped to the gates of the city, samurai-sama, and when I saw what had become of the place I fled. I gathered my family and we came here, to the Shiba.”

Staying the Night

If (as is most likely) the PCs spend one or more nights in the castle, they will be able to witness one of the attacks which Tsumenitsu described.

- PCs who are sleeping in the castle can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20 to be awakened by distant shouts and sounds of combat.
- PCs who decide to join the Phoenix in standing watch overnight can roll **Hunting/Perception** at TN 10 or **Simple Perception** at TN 15. With a success, they spot several dark human-like shapes scuttling over the castle walls, moving up and down vertical surfaces as easily as they run along the ground.

Regardless, if the PCs investigate, they will find it a nightmarish experience. The sinister assassins, who are never seen clearly, scuttle through the castle complex, often running along walls and ceilings. Peasant refugees are slain almost casually, solely to sow chaos and terror within the castle. The Phoenix guards, pursuing the shadowy enemies, several times run into nasty ambushes, and four or five bushi perish over the course of the night.

These strange attackers are Goju, but are also heavily Tainted, and have lost some of the gifts of the Shadow in exchange for those of Fu Leng. They retain a minimal sense of self, but it is twisted and maddened by the Taint. Many of them were once Phoenix samurai, and as a result they know the castle quite well.

If the PCs join the hunt, they will share the general frustration of the guards. With a **Simple Perception**

roll at TN 20, they get a close enough glimpse to see that the black figures are faceless, and that their skin is an unpleasant gray-black. Eventually the attackers will retreat from the castle, leaving behind one last dead Phoenix guard, lying next to a severed black human-like arm that leaks dark, stinking ichor. Similar ichor is smeared on the dead guard's sword. No other sign of the attackers will be found.

The PCs may be able to come up with a clever way of getting closer to the attackers, most likely through the use of magic. In such case, the PCs in question will be in danger, since these creatures are amalgams of Goju and Shadowlands monsters. Their stats are listed at the end of the module.

- If a PC has a crystal weapon, or shines a light through a crystal at the assassins, the creatures will immediately flee at inhuman speed. Light through a crystal will not actually damage them, but it causes them fear and pain.
- PCs who are able to detect Taint will be able to sense the presence of Taint in these creatures, and in the severed limb they leave behind. Anti-Taint magic will do full damage to them.

Moving On?

What do the PCs do with the information they have? The sensible route might seem to be to return to Otosan Uchi and inform the Empress of the disaster which has befallen the Phoenix Clan. Such a choice is not an inherently invalid or dishonorable one, but if the PCs take it, the adventure is over... and Shiba Ujimitsu will perish, ending the line of Shiba Champions.

Brave and bold PCs, however, will decide to investigate what is happening at Kyuden Isawa and what has become of the Phoenix Champion. Captain Shiba Tetsu will certainly express hope for the PCs to do this, and even Tsumenitsu will offer some half-hearted suggestions in this vein.

The Shiba cannot offer the PCs any direct help – they have all they can handle holding on to their city. However, they can give the PCs some material aid: food and water, and mounts (sturdy Rokugani ponies, +1 Horsemanship) for any PC who might need them.

If the PCs have impressed Shiba Tetsu favorably, he will also offer them some additional aid: he will scrounge up two pouches of jade powder for the PCs. If any one PC has especially impressed him as a courageous, selfless, and honorable warrior, he will

offer that PC the use of a crystal-bladed naginata. The weapon is not awakened, but it is made of pure crystal and will do full damage to all supernatural creatures (and double damage to those with the mark of Shadow).

Part Three: Into the Heart of Darkness

It is normally three days of travel from Shiro Shiba to Kyuden Isawa. The land here is – or rather, was – bountiful and heavily populated, with villages every few miles. However, these lands have now fallen under the sway of darkness.

As the PCs advance northward, they will pass a series of villages, some of modest size, others large enough to be home to a thousand or more people. Most of these communities are completely abandoned and empty (except for the occasional corpse), much like the villages the PCs have encountered up to this time. However, a few of the villages still have some inhabitants:

As you pass through the village center, you are startled to see a few thin, hollow-eyed faces staring at you from the doors and windows of the huts. The moment they realize you have spotted them, they pull back out of sight.

If the PCs merely call out or wait, they will see nothing further. They will have to aggressively go into the huts and search for these peasants, who will try to flee or hide, squealing in terror. They lack the strength or courage to get away from determined PCs, and once caught, will collapse to the ground, sobbing and wailing, clearly expecting death (or worse).

If the PCs are harsh or cruel, the peasants will become hysterical, shrieking and struggling madly, trying to run for their lives. In this case the PCs will be unable to get any information from them.

If the PCs are calm and self-controlled – or better yet, kind and gentle – the peasants will eventually realize that they are real samurai and not monsters, and will begin weeping with relief.

These peasants can tell roughly the same story as the refugees at Shiro Shiba. However, they can supplement this with additional information:

- Samurai come through the area sometimes, every three or four days. They look like Phoenix, but

they are cruel and brutal. Anyone they find is either killed or taken away, never to be seen again. The peasants have learned to hide from them.

- At night, the ghosts of missing villagers stalk the streets. The peasants hide inside their huts and wait for dawn, praying to the Fortunes to protect them. Sometimes they hear screams in the night, and when morning comes, another family is gone.
- There are flying things too, the villagers hear them sometimes, but never see them.
- None of these peasants have visited Kyuden Isawa, but a few of them have sneaked close enough to see it from a distance. “It is all darkness and shadows now, samurai, and there are bodies hanging from the walls. A great tower looks down on it all. It is a terrible place. Do not go there, or you will not return!”
- Many of these peasants are mildly Tainted, if the PCs test for it.

Night in the Fallen Lands

The PCs will have to spend at least two nights in these lands on their way north. These will be alarming and dangerous nights – smart PCs will hole up inside a building, or find a defensible location such as a gully or a grove of trees. Camping in open ground, out-of-doors, will be dangerous.

The Hunters: The lands of the Phoenix are stalked by the same dark Tainted Goju who struck at Shiro Shiba. These twisted beings stalk the increasingly empty lands, seeking victims to drag back to Kyuden Isawa for sacrifice. Each night, have all of the PCs roll **Simple Void**. The TN is 10 if they are indoors, 15 if they are outdoors but under cover, and 20 if they are outdoors without cover.

If three or more of the PCs fail the roll, the party will be attacked by four of these Tainted Goju. The things will strike by surprise on the first round of combat, popping out of the shadows with lethal speed, unless the PC(s) on watch can make a **Contested Roll of Investigation/Perception, Stealth/Perception, or Hunting/Perception** against the Goju’s **Stealth/Agility**.

The Tainted Goju will fight to the death. They make no noises except for faint hissing and growling noises. When wounded or slain, they bleed a thick, oily black substance which smells foul.

“Ghosts”: Many peasants in the Phoenix lands have succumbed to the Taint and the horrors of the Living Darkness, becoming mindless drones which wander through the land in packs. On the second night the PCs spend in these lands, one of these crowds will pass near them: a shuffling horde of black-skinned faceless peasant-shapes, still dressed in their old clothing, some of them clutching the tools they carried in life. The things stumble about, hands groping blindly, occasionally uttering eerie, tormented moans.

PCs who stay hidden indoors or under cover will be safe from these tormented wanderers. If the PCs are out in the open, however, the peasant-things will notice them and begin moving toward them, reaching out with clutching hands and moaning in loneliness and mindless wrath.

These things, like the Goju, are corrupted by both Shadow and Taint. They are not sufficiently controlled by either force to do more than wander about and feed upon those living things luckless enough to fall into their clutching fingers. Both jade and crystal will drive them away, as will large displays of deadly magic – otherwise, they will continue to sluggishly pursue their prey until daylight drives them into torpid hiding.

These packs of “ghosts” each contain several dozen individuals, so PCs who are foolish enough to stand and fight are likely to perish. However, they are also slow and near-mindless, so the PCs should find it relatively easy to flee and hide.

Carrion Clouds: The night skies over the Phoenix lands are roamed by vast flocks of Tainted carrion birds who roost in the Iron Citadel. These creatures will not attack any living creature, but will descend swiftly out of the dark skies to feast upon the dead, whether those dead be PCs or Tainted foes.

These creatures appear to be bloated, oversized crows with bulging eyes and slimy feathers. Their dark gray beaks are long and cruelly hooked, and they tear at dead flesh with fiendish relish. If threatened or attacked, they retreat, but only momentarily, while shrieking and cawing at the PCs. The moment the PCs leave, the carrion-eaters return to their vile feast.

The Taint: If any PCs have the ability to detect Taint, they will begin feeling edgy and uneasy as they move north. The feelings will grow worse with each day the PCs draw closer to Kyuden Isawa.

The Shadow: PCs with Shadow Corruption will continue to have disturbing, terrifying dreams as they move north. The dreams will become darker and more frightening each night. On the second (and any subsequent) nights, these PCs will have a specific dream-vision, described in Handout #1.

Part Four: Kyuden Isawa, the Iron Citadel

The early afternoon light seems weak and pale, barely able to penetrate the thick gray clouds which swirl around the sky above you. Ahead, you can see the fortified city of the Phoenix Clan's greatest family, rising from the middle of a flat plain covered in fields of grain and rice. The plants in those fields have withered and turned an ugly brown-black. The walls of the city itself seem dark as well, and you can see small ragged shapes dangling from the battlements – bodies. No sentries are visible on the walls above those grisly decorations. The mighty gates of Kyuden Isawa gape open and unguarded.

But the strangest and most terrifying sight is what lies within those walls. Where the beautiful tower of the Isawa Palace once rose eight stories into the sky, now there is a strange, grotesque tower, far taller, colored a dark reddish-black and sporting ugly spikes and hornlike protrusions at every corner. You can see a cloud of winged shapes swirling around the top of the dark tower, which seems almost to reach the gray clouds above.

This area is deeply Tainted – while here, the PCs are under the same effects as if they were in the Shadowlands.

Shadowlands Effects of the Fallen City

Kyuden Isawa has been deeply Tainted by the foul energies unleashed by the Nameless One and Isawa Tadaka. As a result, inside the city the following special conditions apply:

- Wounds will not heal naturally. Curative magic (such as *Path to Inner Peace*) 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 5 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 still possible to perform a Tea Ceremony here, if the PCs can find a safe place to do so and have a tea set.
- Unless the PCs have acquired pieces of jade (which are not part of a jade weapon), they will be vulnerable to the Taint. They must roll **Simple Earth** for each day and each night they spend unprotected in Kyuden Isawa. 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.

Inside the City: Confronting the Iron Guard

The city seems to be empty, the buildings dark, windows and doors staring into the streets like black, hollow eyes. Ash drifts through the streets, and fragments of shattered stone lie everywhere. Fresh human bones, showing the marks of teeth and beaks, also litter the streets – some of them still with bits of rotten flesh attached.

Somewhere in the distance, the PCs hear an ululating scream. Clouds of the foul Tainted carrion birds circle endlessly and silently around the massive iron tower which has replaced the Isawa palace.

Then the PCs hear the tramp of feet, many feet, approaching them from ahead. It is clearly the sound of marching troops, and will round the next street-corner within moments. At that instant, a voice babbles at the PCs from a side-street: “**Quickly, over here, quickly, before they see you!**”

If the PCs look for the source of the voice, they will spot a frazzled, filthy, unkempt man with long tangled hair, a missing eye, cracked fingernails and yellow teeth, dressed in the tattered rags of a Phoenix kimono. He is squatting in the shadows of a narrow side-alley, beckoning frantically with both hands. This is Asako Oyo, a demented *henshin* (Elemental riddler).

- If the PCs go with Oyo, he will scuttle away down the alley, leading them to his hiding place at the

Inn of Dry Water. See “Asako Oyo’s Hideout” below.

- If the PCs do not immediately either hide or follow Oyo, the scene continues as follows:

Around the corner ahead of you comes a large group of bushi, dressed in the orange armor of the Phoenix Clan. Their faces are pale beneath their armored helmets, and the banners which flutter and snap above them seem wrong in some way. At the sight of you they halt abruptly – then one of them shouts an order, and the blades of yari gleam in the pale light as they are lowered to ready positions.

A PC who rolls **Heraldry/Perception** at TN 15 can see that the Phoenix mon on the banners has been twisted and changed – the kanji for “Tetsu” (“Iron”) has been worked into the mon, and a strange new symbol has been placed above the Phoenix itself. A PC with **Shadowlands Lore** of 5 or higher, or who has played the adventures *Duty on the Wall* or *Dark Eyes on the Wall*, will recognize the new symbol as that of Fu Leng.

The PCs are facing the Iron Guard – the fallen remains of the Isawa House Guard. These Tainted bushi number fifteen, and are led by a pale, beautiful young woman with the insignia of a *chui* (lieutenant) on her back-banner. Her gray, waxy face is set in lines of cruelty, malice, and arrogance. PCs can roll **Lore: Phoenix Clan**, **Lore: Bushido**, or any similar skill (such as **Lore: Bushi** or **Lore: Shiba**) with **Intelligence** at TN 15 to recognize her as Shiba Tsukune, a prominent Phoenix bushi and the sometime yojimbo of Isawa Tadaka, the Elemental Master of Earth. Any PC who can detect Taint will sense that she and her soldiers are deeply Tainted, and those who have sensitivity to spirits or ghosts will know that something is dreadfully wrong with her (she is undead).

If the PCs do not immediately flee or attack, Tsukune will step forward, her posture arrogant and hostile. “Who walks in the streets of the Iron Citadel?: she shouts. “Only servants of the New Masters are allowed here!”

If the PCs express defiance or hostility, Tsukune and her troops will immediately attack. These are very tough opponents, and a party which is not extremely powerful and well-equipped will probably lose. Oyo will lurk around, watching the fight from the shadows, and if the PCs retreat he will again call out and urge them to follow him.

If the PCs try to role-play out the situation, they will have to convince these Tainted bushi that they are fellow followers of the “New Masters.” This will require skillful role-play, since Tsukune and her followers retain their intellect and self-will (albeit perverted by the Taint).

- If the PCs play dumb, asking what has happened, inquiring after the Isawa council, and so forth, Tsukune will loudly proclaim that “the New Masters have overthrown the corrupt rule of the so-called Elemental Council” and demands the PCs immediately acknowledge the new rulers of the Phoenix Clan. If the PCs hesitate, temporize, or refuse, she will quickly fly into a rage and order her troops to attack.
- If the PCs try to bluff their way through by claiming to be fellow servants of the “New Masters,” Tsukune will question them aggressively and thoroughly. The PCs’ best chance will be to claim they are “new recruits” from elsewhere in Phoenix lands, come to offer their fealty to the Iron Citadel. Any other approach will quickly collapse, since the PCs will not know the identities of the “New Masters.”
- If the PCs role-play skillfully, the GM can allow them to make rolls with **Sincerity/Awareness** (or another suitable social skill) at TN 25 to convince Tsukune. Otherwise she will condemn them as “deceivers and traitors” and order her troops to attack.

If the PCs fight, the Iron Guard will battle to the death, completely without fear. Tsukune herself is undead, and knows that if she is slain, she will eventually be brought back again by her lover and master Tadaka.

In the unlikely event that the PCs manage to defeat the Guard, Asako Oyo will scuttle out into the street, staring around in wonder and urging the PCs to follow him. “More will come soon, yes. We must go now!”

If the PCs ignored Oyo but hid from the Guard, the Tainted troops will march past, departing the city to “patrol” the surrounding territory. Once they are gone Oyo will immediately come out of hiding and tries to convince the PCs to follow him. “We must hide, quick, before they return!” he babbles. “I have a place, a secret place, yes, come *now*!”

Asako Oyo and His Hideout

Asako Oyo is a crazed henshin who found the secret path to immortality on his own, without guidance from the Asako council, and was driven mad by the discovery. His hair is a tangled mess, his beard has grown out into a wild hedge, his nails are broken and filthy, and his one good eye rolls wildly as he speaks. He often babbles or rants uncontrollably. However, he possesses an instinctive cunning that has stood him in good stead since the disaster fell upon the Phoenix Clan a few short weeks ago. Currently, he is sheltering several injured Phoenix in a secret hiding place within the city. Given the chance, he will lead the PCs there, dodging through narrow alleys and back streets to throw off any pursuit.

If the PCs are fleeing the Iron Guard, they will be able to escape if they follow Oyo's lead closely.

Oyo will finally lead the PCs into a half-wrecked building, the Inn of Dry Water. A sign lies in the street in front of the Inn, showing a picture of an upside-down water-pitcher. Oyo hurries inside and scuttles down a crooked ladder into the building's root-cellar. From there, he leads the PCs through a collapsed wall into another chamber – the bottom of an ancient well, silted up long ago. The top of the well is covered with old boards, leaving only a few narrow cracks through which light filters down.

The Survivors

The three Phoenix in the shelter, a scribe, a bushi, and a shugenja, are all seriously injured. They blink and look up with faint flickers of hope in their eyes as the PCs arrive. Oyo shuffles about, offering them bits of food from the pockets of his kimono, and swigs of water from a wooden jug.

The three Phoenix survivors comprise the following individuals:

- **Shiba Hojitsu** – a grizzled older man, in his early forties, thin and with a slight pot-belly. His left leg is broken, wrapped in an improvised splint. Hojitsu is a scribe, and was working in the Phoenix libraries when the disaster struck. The experience has left him broken in mind and spirit, and the PCs will have to speak gently and carefully to coax out his story (see “Hojitsu's Story” in Appendix #2).
- **Shiba Osagi** – A small, delicate young woman with piercing eyes and hair trimmed short. She is a bushi and an Emerald Magistrate, but normally so gentle and refined in her behavior that she has

often been mistaken for a harmless courtier. Now her pretty features are distorted by a thick blood-stained bandage which covers the left side of her face (including her left eye) and circles her head. She speaks in a heavy, thick voice, and her movements are weak and clumsy, but she will try to sit up and speak when the PCs arrive, especially if she recognizes any of them. (PCs may have met her in adventures such as *Spiritual Presence* and *Fate of a Hantei*.) Her story is recounted in Appendix #2 (“Osagi's Story”).

- **Isawa Taeruko** – A young shugenja-ko of the Earth Tensai school, cousin and student to Isawa Tadaka himself. Taeruko has several serious wounds – she has been bludgeoned and stabbed twice in the torso, one arm is broken and tied against her chest, and her left foot has been crudely amputated. She is feverish and very weak, but will stir to consciousness when the PCs approach. Her voice is soft and raspy with congestion and fever. Taeruko was in the chambers of the Elemental Council when the disaster occurred, and can recount what happened (see “Taeruko's Story” in Appendix #2).

Speaking with Taeruko

After Taeruko tells her story (see Appendix #2), she will go on to say more. *“I have been using my power as best I can, samurai-sama, as much as I dare. Our lord Shiba Ujimitsu-sama, the Clan Champion, was captured by the foul ones within that Tower some days ago. He is held there now, a prisoner. This much I have been able to learn from those spirits of Earth who remain uncorrupted. Tadaka... the things which were Tadaka and his father, they make sacrifices every day. Soon I fear Ujimitsu-sama will be slain as well, his blood given to the Dark One.”*

Taeruko knows only a little more, but she is convinced from the limited information the spirits have given her that Ujimitsu is held high in the tower, close to the summit.

If any of the PCs are members of the Phoenix Clan, Taeruko will ask to speak with them privately. To such PCs, she will confide her deepest fear: *“The spirit of Lord Shiba has been passed down from one Clan Champion to the next for a thousand years. I fear... I fear, if Ujimitsu perishes here, it may break the line of Shiba. It will be the final doom of the Phoenix Clan.”*

Taeruko will urge any Phoenix PCs to try to rescue Ujimitsu before it is too late. She will be more hesitant to

seek the help of those from outside her Clan, but will gladly accept it if it is offered.

Consulting the Spirits

Shugenja PCs may wish to *Commune* with the local spirits in the same way as Taeruko. Due to the corruption of the area, this will be difficult. Getting an Earth or Air spirit which can provide any useful information will require four Raises (as well as overcoming the +10 TN penalty). There are no Fire or Water spirits in the area which can help. If the PCs can contact friendly spirits, they will confirm that Shiba Ujimitsu was taken into the Iron Citadel, and is still alive somewhere inside. If the PCs ask where, the spirits say he is “deep within, close to the sky.”

Helping the Survivors

The PCs may want to help these Phoenix, perhaps to recruit their help for a foray into the Iron Citadel. Shiba Hojitsu cannot help the PCs (his mind is broken, and he has no useful skills), but Osagi and, potentially, Taeruko can be allies to the PCs if they are healed.

Shiba Osagi is at the +20 Wound rank, and can be restored by casting *Regrow the Wound*. Casting *Path to Inner Peace* will also restore her to function, but it will not actually heal her wound – she will remain at a +5 TN penalty to all her actions, due to dizziness and the damage to one of her eyes. Medicine rolls will not be able to help her, other than to make her more comfortable.

Isawa Taeruko is in much worse shape – she is currently at the Down level. Although the PCs may be able to restore her with *Regrow the Wound* or *Path to Inner Peace*, they will still need to deal with her broken arm, missing left foot, and fever.

The arm has been splinted properly (by Oyo) and can be restored with *Regrow the Wound*. The fever can be treated with *Jurojin's Touch*. If the PCs have a medical kit, a **Medicine/Intelligence** or **Herbalism/Intelligence** roll at TN 20 will administer medicines to reduce her fever. (Herbalism will not work without a medical kit, since safe, un-Tainted ingredients are not available.) Barring that, she will be at +10 to all actions due to fever and dizziness.

There is no way to cure her missing foot – she will need to be carried or provided with crutches, which will slow her movement correspondingly. Needless to say, if her broken arm is not cured, she cannot use crutches.

Hojitsu and Osagi are both very mildly Tainted, but not enough to burn from jade. Taeruko and Oyo are Taint-free.

These individuals have very little equipment – Osagi has her daisho, but otherwise they carry only the clothes on their backs. Taeruko will be limited to casting those spells she knows Innately.

Part Five: Into the Iron Citadel

If the PCs have paid attention to this point (and not gotten themselves killed), they will realize that the only hope for the future of the Phoenix Clan is to go into the Iron Citadel and rescue Shiba Ujimitsu. Some PCs may find this too daunting a task, and choose instead to retreat – perhaps not the most honorable course, but certainly an understandable one, under the circumstances.

Those who choose the path of courage and heroism will have to find a way into the Iron Citadel. Marching up to the front door and demanding entry is an option, but not the wisest one (if they try it, see “The Front Door” below).

If the PCs make their plans obvious, Asako Oyo will volunteer that he knows hidden routes into the Iron Citadel. *“It is still the same place, like the old one, just twisted, twisted like my mind, heh heh. But many things are still the same. I know, yes I do, all the little ways, in and out.”* He trails off in childish babbling, playing with his fingers as he tries to count all the secret routes he knows. Oyo will not enter the Citadel himself, but he will guide the PCs to one of his entrances if they ask nicely.

Some PCs may think of asking spirits for a way into the Iron Citadel. By casting *Commune* (Earth, Air, or Water) with five or more Raises, the PCs can find a spirit which knows Oyo’s secret route into the Citadel dungeons.

The Front Door

If the PCs decide to approach the main (only) gate of the Iron Citadel, whether to assault it or simply scout it, they see the following:

Where once stood a great door leading into the seat of the Isawa family, now the reddish-black iron surface of the great citadel is interrupted by a mighty portal of dark stone. The edges of the door are carved with

patterns of spikes and serpentine shapes, and the lintel is carved to resemble the teeth and glaring eyes of a monster. Torches flicker from sconces on either side. To the left of the gate stands a mighty bronze gong with a hammer. Four pale bushi in the colors of the Phoenix Clan stand guard before the gates, naginata in their hands.

The PCs cannot get closer than forty feet (the distance to the closest building) without stepping into the open. A running PC can traverse that distance in one round of running, but will not be able to attack that round. (And will be at a +5 TN penalty to attack on the next round.)

If the PCs approach, the Tainted bushi will immediately level their weapons and demand that the PCs surrender or die. One of them will also snatch up the hammer to ring the gong. In order to get into the Citadel undetected, the PCs will have to figure out a way to defeat these bushi without letting them ring the gong. There are a number of ways to do this, such as casting *Quiescence of Air* on the area, or using archery to shoot the arms of anyone reaching for the gong-hammer.

If the gong is sounded, reinforcements (eight more Tainted bushi) will arrive from inside the gate in four rounds. Another ten bushi will arrive six rounds after that.

If the PCs did not slay Shiba Tsukune earlier, and if they have waited at least three hours before approaching the Citadel, she will accompany the second group of reinforcements. Otherwise she will still be out on patrol (unless it is midnight, in which case she is at the top of the tower participating in the sacrificial ritual).

Alternatively, the PCs may try to bluff their way into the castle by claiming to be fellow servants of the Dark Masters. This will be a difficult trick to pull off, but not impossible. The GM must adjudicate any such efforts which the PCs might make, based on their role-playing, and call for skill rolls as appropriate.

The Secret Entrance

If the PCs take Oyo's offer of a secret route (or find it themselves by speaking with the spirits), their route will take them to a foul, stagnant drainage ditch which snakes through the middle of the city, often passing beneath the corners and edges of buildings. Within this ditch, the PCs will not be visible to the city's inhabitants so long as they stay low to the ground.

Eventually, the ditch passes beneath the Iron Citadel, becoming a tunnel. Within this tunnel, the PCs will be facing complete darkness unless they provide themselves with a light source (Asako Oyo finds his way forward by feel).

Well underneath the Citadel, the tunnel gives access to a slimy, foul slanting passage which leads up into the privies in the Citadel's basement. PCs who endure this vile passageway must roll **Simple Willpower** to avoid being violently sick (lose 1 point of Glory). PCs of especially refined sensibilities will have to make a **Simple Willpower** roll at TN 15 simply to force themselves to climb up the tunnel.

If Asako Oyo guided the PCs here, he will under no circumstances ascend this tunnel, and retreats with whines and curses if the PCs try to persuade him.

Once the PCs go up this passage, they will emerge into a privy in the basement of the Iron Citadel. The room is lit by a single candle. A sliding black iron door leads into the main basement area (see "Inside the Iron Citadel," below).

Inside the Iron Citadel: The Corruption of the Void

The fall of the Nameless One, formerly the Master of Void, has introduced the Living Darkness into the Void itself, threatening to unmake the very Elements themselves and destroy the underlying fabric of the universe. Even the Celestial Heavens are not safe if Void is corrupted. As a result, within the Iron Citadel the power of the Void is weakened.

Any PC who calls upon a Void point within the Iron Citadel must make an immediate **Simple Void** roll at TN 10. If the roll is failed, the Void point has no effect. If the roll succeeds, the Void point functions normally.

Inside the Iron Citadel: The Interior

The Iron Citadel is constructed from a mixture of dark, rusted iron (covered in ripples, grooves, and corroded flakes) and crudely chiseled black stone (possibly basalt). Some doors are "traditional" Rokugani sliding doors, but constructed of iron; others are heavy swinging doors, like the front gates. Lanterns are spaced occasionally throughout the Citadel, offering just enough illumination to get around, while still leaving much of the castle in deep shadow. Sound echoes oddly in the Citadel, and the PCs sometimes

hear voices, whispers, or laughter that seems to have no source.

The floor-plans of the Citadel's main floor and of the top level of its tower are shown in Appendix #3: Maps.

The Iron Citadel's main **basement** is a large chamber at the bottom of the spiral staircase. It is mainly a storage area, piled with bales and barrels of food and drink, and there is a well in one corner. The basement is lit by a pair of lanterns hanging near the stairs. Faint light also spills through an archway leading to the adjacent dungeon.

All the food and water here is mildly Tainted, and anyone who partakes of it must roll Simple Earth at TN 10 to avoid getting a point of Taint. The entire chamber is overrun with bloated, Tainted rats, feasting on the supplies, who will nip and squeak menacingly at the PCs.

PCs who enter the Citadel through the secret tunnel will come out of the privy room into this basement area.

The **dungeon**, adjacent to the basement, is where most prisoners are kept before being taken up to the temple or the tower for sacrifice. The walls of this place are lined by iron-barred cages, and light comes from a single lantern hanging from the center of the ceiling. A total of eighteen terrified, broken prisoners are kept here, all of them peasants and commoners. The prisoners are watched and occasionally tortured by a twisted, unclean being which was once the palace torturer, Gokuro. Now he has been Tainted and marked by the Living Darkness, twisting him into a hunched, misshapen being with long, filthy nails and swollen eyes. He is incapable of combat and will cower away pathetically from any PCs who threaten him.

Neither the prisoners nor the torturer know very much, but both can report (in their own ways) that sacrifices are performed in the temple on the main floor and in a special room on the top level of the tower. The torturer Gokuro also knows that "an important Phoenix samurai" is held prisoner on the top of the tower, awaiting a "special" sacrifice.

Given the opportunity, the more hale among the prisoners will flee the Citadel. None of them have the skills (or the courage) to help the PCs directly.

On the main floor, the two large **barracks rooms** house the Tainted bushi of the Iron Guard. Each barracks has facilities for thirty bushi, but at the

moment, most of them are out patrolling the Phoenix lands, collecting victims for their Tainted lords. Besides the four bushi guarding the doors, there are eighteen other bushi currently residing in the barracks, plus two more at the top of the tower (see below). Their equipment is kept in the adjacent **Armory** rooms.

There are also **empty barracks** on the main floor which are intended for additional "recruits" later on.

The castle is maintained and served by several dozen enslaved commoners, who live in the **servants' quarters** on the main level, and work in the nearby **kitchen** and **dining hall**, as well as performing janitorial work in the rest of the castle. These miserable, terrified people are all Tainted (at least half a Rank or more), and trapped here as much by their own despair as by the power of their lords. If they encounter the PCs they will most likely simply flee, bleating in terror, or drop to the ground in quivering heaps. A PC who calms one of them down can learn some basic information:

- Most prisoners are kept in the basement, but there is a samurai held in the top of the tower. They don't know who he is, although he is dressed as a Phoenix.
- The "two masters" live in the top of the tower. They sacrifice prisoners there periodically. Other prisoners are sacrificed in the temple, during ceremonies every night.
- The servants describe the "two masters" as follows: one is misshapen and wears heavy robes, and the other is powerful and cruel, and wears a silk mask over his face.

The **temple** room is a large chamber where the Tainted bushi dedicate themselves to their new lord Fu Leng, the Ninth Kami. The room is a mockery of a traditional Rokugani temple, with the statue of the Fortune replaced by a huge, ghastly carving of Fu Leng. A blood-soaked altar of obsidian stands before it. The room is lit by dozens of black, greasy-looking candles. Ceremonies are normally held here every evening, and if the PCs enter the Citadel at that time, most of the bushi (and Shiba Tsukune) will be in the temple conducting worship.

Adjacent to the temple is a chamber of **holding cells** where prisoners are brought up and held in chains until it is time for a sacrifice.

Shiba Tsukune's quarters are located close to the temple. This room is designed to resemble a samurai's living quarters, complete with armor rack, daisho rack, a closet of garments, etc. There is no bed or futon, however – as an undead being Tsukune has no need for sleep. A shoji screen with a full-size painting of Isawa Tadaka in his new, Tainted form stands in one corner.

If the PCs enter the Citadel within three hours of arriving in the city, Tsukune will be out patrolling. After that time she will be either in this room training or meditating, in the temple leading a ceremony, or upstairs helping Tadaka to sacrifice Shiba Ujimitsu.

The Iron Citadel's **central tower** is arranged as a series of rooms surrounding a spiral staircase. This staircase, fifteen feet wide, curves smoothly from the dungeons below all the way to the topmost level where the Dark Masters lair, winding around a hollow stone shaft at the center of the tower. The shaft is open at the top (in the sacrificial chamber) and is apparently bottomless – perhaps it plunges all the way to Jigoku. (Other than the sacrificial chamber, there is no access to this cylinder except by breaking through its wall.)

The **rooms** in the tower have heavy iron doors. These are spaced periodically along the outer wall of the staircase. These chambers are empty, but are clearly intended to be living quarters for future followers of the Dark Masters. Each has a narrow window which looks out on the city below. (The windows are wide enough for someone to squeeze through.)

Part Six: The Top of the Iron Citadel Tower

If the PCs ascend the central staircase of the Iron Citadel all the way to the top, they will emerge into the chambers of the Dark Masters, 400 feet above ground. This area is the domain of Isawa Tadaka and the Nameless One, along with their strongest servants, and is extremely dangerous.

Two Tainted bushi of the Iron Guard are posted on this level, one at each of the two locations marked "Guard" on the map.

The level is also the domain of two elite Tainted Goju, Goju Uona and Goju Tomo, created from two of the former Elemental Masters. These creatures retain some fragments of their old magical power, along with pathetic remnants of their former identities, but are wholly subordinate to the Nameless One. (Full

descriptions of these lost souls are found with their statistics in Appendix #1.)

Normally, Tomo lurks in the shadows near the ceiling of the Nameless One's chambers, while Uona dwells in the prison-chamber where Ujimitsu is kept. Both of them will come forth to investigate if there are sounds of extensive combat on this level, or if summoned by a mental command from the Nameless One.

Most of the doors on this level are of the "traditional" sliding type, although they (and the walls) are of cold rusty iron instead of wood and paper.

The Nameless One's Chambers

These two rooms distantly resemble the bedchambers of a high-ranking daimyo, but are unsettlingly bare, free of all decorations and furnishings, and completely unlit. If the PCs bring in light, the walls, floor, and ceiling here seem oddly gray and blank, in contrast to the heavy, dark, rusty iron which is found elsewhere. This place is intensely corrupted by the Living Darkness, and the PCs are in great danger here – after even a round or two spent in this place, they will begin sensing whispers and movement at the edge of their notice, and will begin feeling phantom impressions of hands grasping at them. After three rounds, the Nameless One and Goju Tomo will manifest out of the darkness and prepare to destroy these foolish intruders.

Due to the intense power of the Living Darkness in this area, Void points cannot be spent within these two rooms, and any Void rolls made to resist gaining Shadow Points are at a +5 TN penalty.

Isawa Tadaka's Chambers

The two rooms which make up Tadaka's quarters are a startling opposite to those of the Nameless One – they are well-lit and garishly furnished with luxurious cushions, futons, silk hangings, and so forth. Shoji screens display explicit paintings of deeds of cruelty and dark debauchery. Heady incense fills the air. A small brazier warms several bottles of sake. Next to the brazier, a raw, crudely-butchered human body is stretched across a low wooden table. Next to it are bloodstained knives, plates, and chopsticks. If the PCs come here in stealth, prior to the sacrifice of Ujimitsu, they may well encounter Tadaka in the midst of an unholy feast. Late at night, his undead lover Shiba Tsukune joins him here for even more disgusting revelry.

Tadaka keeps his weapons and scrolls here, along with a writing desk, paper and ink, and other items clearly meant as a dark parody of a ruling daimyo's quarters. Among the scrolls are several maho documents, including a Black Scroll (the Iron Citadel).

A single narrow window opens out onto the city below, and bloated carrion birds wait outside, eagerly hoping for table scraps.

The Cell

The door to this area is heavy and solid, and swings on hinges rather than sliding.

As you step into this chamber, you immediately become aware of stifling heat. A small iron stove sits to your left, glowing cherry-red, and you can see the handles of several pokers or branding irons sticking out of it. Other instruments of torture rest on a low table nearby.

In front of you, lit by the red glow from the stove, is a large iron cage which fills most of the room. A heavy lock closes it, and within you can see a low cot. Lying on the cot is a strong, handsome, athletic man in his late thirties or early forties, his hair bound in a samurai topknot. Burn scars cover his bare torso, and his forearms are twisted by obvious fractures. Nevertheless, his eyes are sharp and clear as he sits up and looks at you. "Beware," he says quickly, "one of them is here, in the darkness!"

This is Shiba Ujimitsu, and he is trying to warn the PCs about his jailor and torturer, Goju Uona. (Uona will be lurking in the shadows unless she was already dispatched to attack the PCs.) Ujimitsu will help the PCs in any way he can, but his capabilities are limited – he is at the +20 Wound rank, and his jailors have broken his forearms and cut his hamstrings.

The iron stove is fueled by a furious, raging fire kansen (evil spirit) and remains continually red-hot.

The cage is held shut with a heavy lock. Goju Uona, Isawa Tadaka, and the Nameless One all carry keys to the lock. If the PCs do not get one of the keys, the lock can be picked with an appropriate tool and a **Locksmith/Intelligence** roll at TN 15, or broken with a heavy weapon (tetsubo, ono, dai tsuchi) and a **Simple Strength** roll at TN 20. Alternatively, the bars can be bent enough to squeeze through with an **Athletics/Strength** roll at TN 25 or **Simple Strength** at TN 35. Magic could also be used in creative ways to open the cage.

Shiba Ujimitsu has been held prisoner and tortured for some time, and has been deliberately crippled to prevent him from escaping. Nevertheless, his spirit remains unbroken, and if the PCs come into his chamber he will do his best to help them free him.

Ujimitsu will also tell them that his ancestral blades are being held in a room nearby (the Dark Library, below). "Normally, my sword Ofushikai cannot be kept from my hand, but the power in this place is like nothing I have ever seen before. And at present I am not fit to wield a blade." If the PCs do retrieve the blades (or have done so already), Ujimitsu will offer them temporarily to any Phoenix PC capable of wielding a blade. Absent that, he will offer them to any other PC with Honor of 4.0 or better.

The Dark Library

This single large chamber is lined with heavy iron shelves, packed with scrolls. Torches burn in the corners, and there are several thin high windows (with noisy carrion birds outside).

Most of these scrolls are from the old Phoenix libraries, and are kept here while Tadaka and the Living Darkness plunder them for knowledge. PCs who examine the scrolls will discover that many of them are fading, as though the writing is being slowly leached out of the paper.

Mixed in with these normal papers are many scrolls of *maho* spells and other such forbidden knowledge, some of it taken from the secret records of the Phoenix, some of it brought from elsewhere. These scrolls are not fading. Some of them are written on preserved human skin.

In the back of the Library, built into the floor, is a sword-stand made of obsidian. Resting upon it are the mightiest trophies of the Iron Citadel: the sheathed blades of the Phoenix Clan, taken from Shiba Ujimitsu when he was captured. A faint nimbus of sickly blue-black light shimmers around them, protecting them from Ujimitsu's influence.

A PC with two or more Ranks of Shadowlands Taint, or four Shadow Points, can freely reach into the shimmering field to take the swords – but must immediately roll to see if s/he becomes more corrupted.

Tainted PCs must roll **Simple Earth** at TN 15 to avoid getting another point of Taint, and Shadow corrupted PCs must roll **Simple Void** at TN 10 to avoid getting

another Shadow Point. (If a PC has both forms of corruption, s/he must make both rolls.)

A less-corrupted PC can also reach into the shimmering field, but suffers 2k1 damage as the unholy energies burn his/her flesh. If the PC has any Taint or Shadow Corruption, the PC must roll as above to see if the corruption increases.

A completely pure PC (no corruption of any kind) takes 3k2 damage but suffers no other effect.

The foul magic protecting the sword can be dispelled with a *Jade Strike* or *Evil Ward*, or by blessing the place with purifying magic such as *Benevolent Protection of Shinsei*. Alternatively, PCs might be able to use other spells (such as *Call Upon the Wind*) to remove the swords from the stand. Finally, truly crude PCs could smash the stand with a heavy weapon (tetsubo, dai tsuchi, etc) and an **Athletics/Strength** roll at TN 30.

If the sword-stand is smashed, PCs could potentially use the chunks of obsidian as weapons (perhaps by strapping them onto a tetsubo or dai tsuchi, or using them as improvised brass knuckles). Obsidian is a divine substance and will do full damage to any creature, regardless of immunities.

The Sacrificial Chamber

Two heavy sliding doors lead into this large hexagonal windowless chamber, lit by torches set into iron sconces in each wall. On one side of the chamber is a large circular pit – the entrance to the bottomless shaft which descends the center of the tower.

The floor in the center of the chamber is inscribed with a mystical circle of kanji, invoking the powers of Fu Leng and Jigoku. (These can be recognized as *maho* symbols with a **Lore: Maho** or **Lore: Shadowlands** roll, **Intelligence** trait, at TN 10.) Iron chains with heavy manacles are placed at four points around the circle, allowing a victim to be chained down spread-eagled. The floor is deeply stained and rusted with old blood, and bloated flies float silently through the air.

On either side of the sacrificial circle are large thrones of black stone. During ceremonies, Tadaka and the Nameless One sit on these thrones.

Part Seven: Rescuing Ujimitsu and Escaping

If the PCs find the Phoenix Clan Champion, he is in very bad condition. His Wounds are at the +20 rank, and he has been hamstrung and his forearms broken. The severed hamstrings cannot be cured, even if the PCs have *Regrow the Wound* – the damage is permanent. The arms can be broken and reset – this will require a **Medicine/Strength** roll at TN 10 to break them safely, followed by a **Medicine/Intelligence** roll at TN 15 to reset them. (If the initial “break” roll was failed, the roll to reset the bones is TN 25.) The bones can then be knitted with *Regrow the Wound*. (*Path to Inner Peace* will reduce Wound penalties but cannot heal broken bones.)

If the PCs can manage to heal Ujimitsu’s arms, he will try to fight – he cannot move on his own (his legs are useless), but can strike at anyone within arm’s reach at a +10 TN penalty. Otherwise, he will have to rely on the PCs. Regardless, he will have to be carried around by the PCs if they want to move him – this will require either **Athletics/Strength** at TN 10, **Simple Strength** at TN 15, or a suitable spell.

Combat Atop the Tower

The two Tainted bushi guards will try to shout an alarm if they detect intruders. If they succeed, or if any significant noise is made while fighting them, this will alert the Dark Masters (unless the ritual to sacrifice Ujimitsu is underway – see “The Sacrificial Ceremony” below).

Once Tadaka and the Nameless One know there are intruders in the tower, they will spend two rounds preparing for combat. Tadaka will fetch his scrolls and casts *Obsidian Armor* on himself. The Nameless One will cast *Obsidian Armor* and *Way of Deception*.

While they are doing this, they will send forth their two special Goju (Tomo and Uona) to investigate and attack. The Goju will join any fight after one round.

If the PCs manage to keep quiet until they encounter Goju Uona, the Nameless One will be immediately alerted and both Dark Masters will begin preparing as above. If the PCs instead encounter one of the Masters directly, that Master will fight them without preparations while the other spends two rounds getting ready as above. (The Goju will join the fight after one round regardless.)

If Shiba Tsukune is alive and in the castle (meaning the PCs are here more than three hours after they arrived in the city), Tadaka will also mentally summon her from the lower level. Tsukune will take ten rounds to ascend the staircase to this level, and will bring four Tainted bushi with her. If she is absent or dead, no reinforcements will come.

The Sacrificial Ceremony

The Nameless One and Isawa Tadaka will attempt to sacrifice Shiba Ujimitsu at midnight on the first night after the PCs arrive at Kyuden Isawa. Since it will be early afternoon when the PCs first arrive at the city, this will give them a chance to rescue Ujimitsu beforehand.

If the PCs do wait too long, the ritual will commence. Goju Uona and Goju Tomo will drag Ujimitsu into the sacrificial chamber and chain him to the floor, just as the PCs may have seen in their dreams. Tadaka and the Nameless One will conduct a ritual chant lasting about an hour, while the two Tainted Goju and Shiba Tsukune (if alive) watch and accompany the chant from the shadows. During this time, these villains will be too intent on their activities to notice anything outside the chamber, so PCs who fight their way in will be able to reach this room without alerting them.

If the PCs intervene, the villains will immediately halt their ceremony and attack – there will always be time to kill Ujimitsu later. Freeing Ujimitsu from his chains will require either getting the keys from Goju Uona, picking the lock (**Locksmith/Agility** at TN 25), breaking the chains (30 points of damage from a cutting weapon, 45 from a bludgeoning weapon), or pulling them free from the stone (**Athletics/Strength** at TN 35 for each chain). Magic can also work, if applied intelligently. (For example, using *The Penetrating Drop* to weaken the chains.)

If the PCs do not interrupt the ceremony, the Nameless One will eventually plunge his dagger into Ujimitsu's heart, extinguishing the line of Shiba Champions.

Ujimitsu's Sacrifice

If the PCs get into a situation where it seems impossible to rescue Ujimitsu, he will ask them to help him end his life honorably. "So long as I die a samurai, and not a victim in their foul ritual, the future of the Shiba will be protected," he explains quietly. He is quite fearless, and smiles gently if any of the PCs seem frightened or distraught. "Take my Clan's swords back to Shiro Shiba, so that they can be given over to my successor."

If Ujimitsu's arms have been healed, he will wish to perform the ritual of seppuku if there is time, asking an honorable PC (preferably a Phoenix) to serve as his second. If his arms are still broken, but he is free of chains, he will again make the same request, but makes only a token stab at his stomach with his crippled arms – his second will have to do the actual killing.

If these options are not available (no time, or Ujimitsu is chained up and immobile), the Shiba Champion simply bows and asks the PCs to take his head.

Escape!

If the PCs decide to leave the level without sounding the alarm (such as if they rescue the swords but don't find Ujimitsu), they will be able to get out the same way they came in with no problem.

If the PCs flee this level after the alarm is sounded (with or without Ujimitsu), they will quite likely encounter Shiba Tsukune and her four bushi on the way down. They will have to either fight their way past Tsukune, hide in one of the tower chambers until she passes them, or escape out of one of the windows. The tower is 400 feet high, but PCs could still potentially use rope to escape if they are low enough (or they could use it to move between windows on different levels). Flying magic could also be very effective. Truly desperate PCs could try to climb down the exterior of the tower (**Athletics/Agility** at TN 15 for every twenty feet of climbing, or **Mountaineering/Agility** at TN 10), or even leap down to a lower window (**Athletics/Agility** at TN 20).

If Tsukune is dead, or the PCs already encountered her during the ceremony, they will not have to fight their way past anyone on the stairs. Note, however, that the bushi on the ground floor are probably still there, and will form an obstacle to PCs who want to flee out the front door.

Creative PCs could also escape down the shaft at the center of the staircase, although climbing there will be more difficult due to the smooth walls (TN 25). They would have to find a way to smash through the walls which surround the shaft (an appropriate spell, or inflict 50 points of damage with a bludgeoning weapon), since it has no openings.

The GM should reward players who figure out clever or creative ways to get out of the Iron Citadel.

Tsukune is Freed?

If the PCs manage to slay Isawa Tadaka, the hold of the Taint over Shiba Tsukune's mind will be momentarily broken. If she is near the PCs, they will see her face wrench and twist in horror, and she will cast her sword away and fall to her knees, wailing and raking her fingers across the pallid, undead flesh of her face. Any PC can choose to take her head at this point, and she will not resist (she is TN 5 to be hit, and only two Raises will be needed to behead her). Absent that, she will eventually rise and stagger away into the Citadel, wailing in horror.

If Tsukune is elsewhere (downstairs or on patrol) when this happens, she will never be seen again.

Fall of the Iron Tower

If the PCs manage to kill both Isawa Tadaka and the Nameless One (difficult, but it can be done), the power of the Iron Citadel, created with their magic and blood, will be broken. All Shadowlands Taint effects immediately end (Void effects remain in place, however). The entire tower begins to shudder and quake, massive shards of rusty iron flaking off the walls, and Tainted bushi and Goju alike flee wailing in terror and despair.

If mobile PCs flee immediately (no more than 1-2 rounds of hesitation) and at top speed, heading straight down the stairs to the front door, they will be able to get out in time. Magic can also get them out safely (flying out windows, etc).

In order to carry out Ujimitsu or Taeruko (or any disabled PCs) fast enough, hale PCs will need to roll **Athletics/Strength** at TN 20. Carrying a second disabled person will raise the TN to 35. One other PC can assist on such a roll. (No more than two people can combine the effort of carrying someone.)

If these rolls are failed, and the PCs cannot find a way to get the victims out with magic, they will face a painful choice: abandon the cripples or die themselves. Ujimitsu, given the chance, will urge the PCs to abandon him and carry his swords out to the next Shiba Champion.

As you stagger out of the Iron Citadel, the massive structure shudders one last time, and then collapses, actually falling in upon itself in a cloud of iron fragments and swirling black dust. The clouds of foul carrion birds shriek in terror and fury as they too are drawn inward, and you see that the entire horrible mass is being sucked whirling into some sort of

unholy pit. For a brief moment you have a glimpse of a place utterly foul, a realm of darkness and cruelty and death, drawing the ruins of the Iron Citadel back into itself. You have no doubt that you have been cursed with a brief glimpse of Jigoku itself.

Then, as the last of the Citadels' foulness is drawn out of this world, the gap in reality shudders, convulses, and closes.

The air clears, and the clouds drift free of the sky overhead. Once more, the lands of the Phoenix are pure.

Conclusion

The exact outcome of this module will vary widely, depending on what the PCs accomplished:

Ujimitsu is Sacrificed

If Shiba Ujimitsu was sacrificed, regardless of any other outcome, the line of the Shiba Champions is broken and the future of the Phoenix Clan is grim indeed. Even if the PCs subsequently manage to slay the two Dark Masters and break the power of the Iron Citadel, the Phoenix Clan will never be the same again.

The Clan will be gripped with despair and the PCs will be remembered for their failure.

If the PCs still managed to destroy the Citadel and/or to bring out the Ancestral Swords, their loss of Honor and Glory will be much less, but the Clan's prospects will still look bleak. The PCs are not given any reward by the Phoenix (no certs).

Ujimitsu is Rescued

If the PCs rescue Ujimitsu, he will still be a cripple, but the line of the Shiba Champions will be safe. The PCs will have his personal gratitude and will be praised as heroes throughout the courts of the Empire.

If the Iron Citadel survived, Ujimitsu will reorganize the strength of the Phoenix Clan (withdrawing all their armies from the border with the Dragon Clan) to destroy it.

The Phoenix Clan will reward the PCs with the Blessing of the Phoenix (cert). In addition, if the PCs saved the Phoenix Ancestral Blades, they will be offered the chance to touch their own blades to those legendary weapons, awakening them (cert).

Ujimitsu Dies Honorably

If Ujimitsu died honorably, the Soul of Shiba will immediately choose a new vessel from the ranks of the Clan. The future of the Clan will be safe, and the PCs will be remembered as heroes. Again, all PCs will be rewarded with the Blessing of the Phoenix (cert), and if the PCs saved the Phoenix Ancestral Blades, they will be offered the chance to awaken their own weapons (cert).

A PC Becomes the Champion

If Ujimitsu dies honorably, and any PC is a Shiba family bushi or yojimbo with Honor of 4.0 or higher, that PC will briefly feel the Soul of Shiba touch upon him. Take the player aside and ask him if he is willing to accept the Soul of Shiba. (This will mean retiring the character as soon as the adventure is over.) If the PC does wish to do so, s/he must make an immediate **Honor Test** at TN 25. Failure means their soul is found unworthy (and they lose a rank of Honor).

Only one character can accept the Soul of Shiba. If the Honor Test is successful, the PC gains the following effects for the remainder of the adventure:

- His/her Void Ring increases by two.
- All other Rings increase by one.
- S/he gains +1 rank to all bugei skills.
- Great Destiny.
- If the Phoenix Ancestral Katana has been freed from the Dark Library, the character can summon it into his/her hand at will.

At the end of the adventure, the character retires and becomes an NPC. The players gains a bonus of 40 additional character points for a new character.

Status of Swords and Gear

If the PCs were offered any jade powder or a crystal weapon while at Shiro Shiba, they will be expected to return these items when the adventure is finished. Failure to do so will be a major breach of honor, entailing a loss of a half-rank of Honor and Glory for the PCs in question (a full rank for Phoenix PCs, and PCs with Honor of 4.0 or higher).

If the PCs rescue the Phoenix Ancestral Swords but fail to return them, they will all lose a full rank of Honor (two ranks for Phoenix PCs) and two ranks of Glory. Any Clan PC reduced to zero Glory by this will become a ronin. Needless to say, the PCs will not get any rewards from the Phoenix Clan under these circumstances.

Any ronin PC reduced to zero points of Glory by either of these penalties will be killed by the Phoenix Clan (no escape).

Finally, there is a Black Scroll in the chambers of Isawa Tadaka. If the PCs acquire it, they will have to decide what to do with it. Returning it to either the Phoenix or the Scorpion Clan would be the “normal” choice, but some PCs may decide they cannot trust others with the scroll. Keeping the Black Scroll for this reason costs 2 points of Honor. Keeping it for other reasons (e.g, lust for power) costs 6 points of Honor.

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

Experience Points

Playing through the adventure:	1 XP
Good role-playing:	+1 XP
PCs prevent Shiba Ujimitsu from being sacrificed:	+1 XP
PCs rescue the Phoenix Ancestral Swords:	+1 XP
PCs kill Tadaka:	+1 XP
PCs kill the Nameless One:	+1 XP

Total Possible Experience: 6 XP

Honor

Phoenix PCs who save Shiba Ujimitsu gain +3 points of Honor. All other PCs gain +2 points of Honor. If they cannot rescue Ujimitsu, but he is able to die honorably, the awards are reduced by one (+2/+1).

If the PCs save the Ancestral Swords of the Phoenix, they gain +1 Honor (+2 for Phoenix Clan PCs).

If the PCs learn what is going to happen to Ujimitsu, but fail to save him from being sacrificed, they lose 5 points of Honor (a full Rank for Phoenix PCs).

Glory

If the PCs rescue Ujimitsu, or help him die honorably, they gain +2 points of Glory (+4 points for Phoenix Clan PCs).

If the PCs save the Ancestral Swords of the Phoenix, they gain +2 Glory (+4 points for Phoenix).

If the PCs learn what is going to happen to Ujimitsu, but fail to save him from being sacrificed, they lose five points of Glory (a full Rank for Phoenix Clan PCs).

If a ronin PC helped to rescue Ujimitsu and save the Ancestral Swords, the Phoenix will offer that ronin a place in their Clan.

Other Awards/Penalties

PCs who rescue Ujimitsu, or helped him die honorably, they receive the Blessing of the Phoenix (cert).

If the PCs also saved the Ancestral Swords, they get additional rewards. Shugenja PCs will be given the cert for the spell Energy Reversal. Other PCs will be offered the chance to touch their weapons to the Ancestral Swords, causing their own weapons to be awakened. (Both these benefits are certified as well.)

Appendix #1: NPCs and Monsters

Hantei (Isawa) Kaede, Empress of Rokugan, Acolyte of Void

FIRE 2 Intelligence 3	AIR 4
EARTH 3	WATER 4 Perception 5
VOID 7	

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Isawa Ishiken 4

Honor/Glory: 4.7/6.2

Skills: Advanced Medicine 3, Calligraphy 3, Etiquette 4, History 8, Kagaku 3, Lore (Dragon Clan) 3, Lore (Shugenja) 8, Lore (Void) 10, Meditation 10, Research 6, Shintao 10, Spell Research 7, Tea Ceremony 5, Theology 5

Spells: All Void spells, plus any other spells which the GM sees fit to give her.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Chosen by the Oracle (Void), Clear Thinker, Great Destiny, Ishikendo/Dark Secret (her birth), Soft-Hearted.

Shiba Tsumenitsu, fearful Phoenix Daimyo

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

TN to be Hit: 25 (32 in armor)

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 4

Honor/Glory: 2.4/6.8

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 5, History 3, Iaijutsu 7, Jiu-jutsu (hand-to-hand) 3, Kenjutsu 6, Law 3, Lore (iai-jutsu) 3, Manipulation 4, Oratory 2, Poetry 3, Rhetoric 4, Shintao 4, Sincerity 6.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Matsu family, Shiba family), Gentry, Kharmic Tie (Mirumoto Sanbe), Luck (rank 1), Social Position (daimyo)/Cowardice, Jealousy (swordsmanship), Proud, Nemesis (Mirumoto Sanbe), Sworn Enemy (Mirumoto Sanbe).

Equipment: Fine kimono, fine light armor, fine daisho set.

Shiba Tetsu, Commander of the Shiba House Guard

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

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

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 3

Honor/Glory: 3.5/5.3

Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 6, Meditation 3, Naginata 2, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3.

Equipment: Daisho set, light armor.

Generic Phoenix Samurai

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

TN to be Hit: 15 (20 with Light Armor)

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 2.5/1.3

Skills: Archery 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 1, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Meditation 2, Naginata 3, Shintao 2, Sincerity 1, Tea Ceremony 1.

Equipment: Daisho set, light armor, bow with 20 arrows, naginata.

Asako Oyo, Insane Phoenix Henshin

FIRE 3 Intelligence 5	AIR 4 Awareness 6
EARTH 3 Willpower 4	WATER 4 Perception 7
VOID 5	

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Asako Henshin 5

Honor/Glory: 2.8/1.0

Skills: Bard 2, Bojutsu 3, Calligraphy 6, Defense 4, Herbalism 4, History 3, Investigation 2, Jiu-jutsu 3,

Kenjutsu 2, Lore (elements) 10, Medicine 3, Meditation 8, Shintao 6, Theology 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Higher Purpose/Bad Reputation (insane), Missing Eye, Enlightened Madness, Forbidden Knowledge.

Equipment: Kimono.

Shiba Hojitsu, Wounded Scribe

FIRE 1 Intelligence 3	AIR 2
EARTH 2	WATER 1 Perception 3
VOID 2	

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 0.6

TN to be Hit: 10

School/Rank: None

Honor/Glory: 3.5/1.6

Skills: Calligraphy 5, Courtier 5, Etiquette 4, Law 2, Meditation 2, Research 5, Shintao 4, Sincerity 2, Theology 4.

Equipment: Kimono.

Shiba Osagi, Phoenix samurai-ko, Emerald Magistrate

When the PCs find her, Osagi is at the +20 Wound rank and is suffering from a head wound (an additional +5 to all actions due to dizziness and blocked vision).

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

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 0.3

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 2

Honor/Glory: 3.5/3.6

Skills: Archery 4, Courtier 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 3, Law 4, Meditation 4, Naginata 2, Shintao 3, Sincerity 5, Tea Ceremony 3.

Equipment: Daisho set, kimono.

Isawa Taeruko, Phoenix shugenja-ko, Acolyte of Earth

When the PCs first meet Taeruko, she is at the Down wound rank, and is suffering from a broken arm, a missing left foot, and a fever (caused by infection).

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

TN to be Hit: 10

School/Rank: Isawa Tensai (Earth) 4

Honor/Glory: 4.2/5.8

Skills: Athletics 3, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Defense 2, Investigation 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 2, Lore (shugenja) 5, Medicine 3, Meditation 5, Research 3, Shintao 4, Sincerity 3, Spell Research 4, Spellcraft 5, Tantojutsu 3, Theology 2.

Spells (only Innate spells are listed): *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Earth 1) *Jade Strike*, (Earth 2) (Earth 3) *Strength of the Crow*, (Earth 4) *Tomb of Jade*, (Fire 1) *Fury of Osano-Wo*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Aligned to the Elements (Earth), Sensei (Idawa Tadaka)/Contrary.

Equipment: Kimono.

Shiba Ujimitsu, Crippled Champion of the Phoenix Clan

Ujimitsu is at the +20 Wound rank, and is hamstrung – he cannot move on his own. His forearms are broken. If they are healed, he can fight anyone within reach, but is at a +10 TN penalty due to his immobile legs.

FIRE 4	AIR 6
EARTH 5	WATER 3 Perception 5
VOID 5	

TN to be Hit: 15 (halved due to being constantly prone)

School/Rank: Shiba bushi 3, Shiba yojimbo 2

Honor/Glory: 4.3/8.3

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 5, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu 5, Manipulation 2, Meditation 5, Naginata 4, Shintao 4, Tea Ceremony 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Ancestors (Shiba), Irreproachable, Soul of Shiba/Dark Secret, Small.

Equipment: None (hakama pants).

“Ghosts,” Tainted/Shadow Corrupted Villagers

FIRE 1	AIR 1 Reflexes 2
EARTH 1	WATER 1

	Strength 2
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Shadowlands Taint Rank: 1.2

TN to be Hit: 10

Attacks: 3k1

Damage: Fists 2k1. Damage listed includes Strength.

Wounds: 16: Dead.

Special Abilities: Fear 1.

Tainted Goju, Corrupted Minions of the Nameless One

FIRE 2	AIR 2 Reflexes 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 1.6

TN to be Hit: 15

Attacks: 4k2

Damage: Knives (4k1). Damage listed includes Strength.

Wounds: 24: Dead.

Skills: Stealth 5

Shadow Abilities: Partial Shadow Invulnerability (take normal damage from jade and other anti-Taint attacks, double damage from crystal attacks, and half damage from all other attacks). They can walk on walls and ceilings as easily as floors.

Iron Guard, Tainted Phoenix Bushi

FIRE 2	AIR 2 Reflexes 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 2.1

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

Wounds: 15: +5; 30: +10; 40: Down; 45: Out; 50: Dead.

School/Rank: Shadowlands 1

Skills: Archery 3, Defense 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Naginata 3, Yarijutsu 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Shadowlands Taint

Shadowlands Gifts: Blessing of the Dark One (+1 Wound per rank), Unnatural Toughness (reduced Wound penalties).

Equipment: Daisho set, light armor, bow with 20 standard arrows, naginata (1k3) or yari (1k2).

Goju Tomo, former Master of Water

The former brother of Isawa Tadaka is now a black, gleaming Goju, his body smooth and hairless. He moves with unnatural fluidity, as though his body is simply a man-shaped bag filled with black water. His face still bears a superficial resemblance to his old features, and he always smiles widely. He never speaks or makes a sound.

FIRE 3	AIR 3 Reflexes 5
EARTH 4	WATER 6

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 3.4

TN to be Hit: 25

Attacks: 4k3 (fist)

Damage: Fist 6k1 (includes Strength).

Wounds: 24: +5; 48: +10; 72: Dead.

Skills: Athletics 5, Hand-to-Hand 4, Stealth 6, Wrestling 3.

Shadow Abilities: Partial Shadow Invulnerability (he takes normal damage from jade and other anti-Taint attacks, double damage from crystal attacks, and half damage from all other attacks).

Tomo can walk on walls and ceilings as easily as floors. He can also morph his body fluidly to squeeze through small openings or narrow spaces.

Shadowlands Gifts: Fear 3.

Goju Uona, Former Master of Air

Goju Uona still retains her original physical form, but her flesh is a dull, matte black. She no longer wears clothing. Her fingers and toes have elongated, and she walks across walls and ceilings on them. Her long hair hangs loosely around her face, shrouding her features... which are vague and soft, as though made from warm wax. She speaks in what is recognizably her own voice, usually in a whisper, and still retains the ability to cast a few of her old spells.

FIRE 4	AIR 4
EARTH 2	WATER 3

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 3.4

TN to be Hit: 20

Attacks: Tanto 4k4, Yari of Air 5k4

Damage: Tanto 5k1, Yari of Air 6k3 (includes Strength).

Wounds: 54: Dead.

Skills: Athletics 3, Lore: Maho 3, Stealth 4, Tantojutsu 4, Yarijutsu

Spells (casts as a Rank 3 Air shugenja, all spells Innate): (Air 1) *Quiescence of Air*, *Tempest of Air*, *Yari of Air*, (Air 2) *Call Upon the Wind*, (Air 3) *Essence of Air*, (Fire 1) *Extinguish*, (Fire 2) *Fires From Within*, (Maho 2) *No Pure Breaths*.

Equipment: Tanto, keys to cells.

Shadow Abilities: Partial Shadow Invulnerability (she takes normal damage from jade and other anti-Taint attacks, double damage from crystal attacks, and half damage from all other attacks).

Uona can walk on walls and ceilings as easily as floors.

Shadowlands Gifts: Fear 2.

Corrupted Blood – all her elemental spells are fulfilled by *kansen*, not *kami*, and she suffers no Shadowlands TN penalties when casting. If she runs out of spells, she can cast normal spells like *maho* (by spilling blood).

Greater Blessing of the Dark One (+2 Wounds per rank).

Undead Strength (no wound penalties).

Shiba Tsukune, Captain of the Iron Guard

Tsukune still retains her beauty, but it is now a horrible thing – her pallid, waxy, undead flesh is forever perfect. Her eyes are slightly glazed and her skin is cold and clammy to the touch. Nevertheless, she moves with the same speed, grace, and power which she possessed in life, and can still use one of her old school techniques (Akodo rank one).

FIRE 2 Agility 3	AIR 3
EARTH 5	WATER 3

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 6.2

TN to be Hit: 15 (22 in fine light armor)

Wounds: 20: +3; 30: +6; 40: +10; 50: +15; 60: +20; 90: Dead.

School Rank: Akodo bushi 2 (can use Rank One technique)/Shiba bushi 3 (cannot use techniques)/Maho-Bujin 1

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

Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 3, Defense 7, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 2, Lore (Shugenja) 8, Meditation 4, Naginata 6, Seduction 3, Yarijutsu 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Dangerous Beauty, Multiple Schools/Shadowlands Taint, True Love (Isawa Tadaka)

Equipment: Fine light armor (+2 to TN), fine katana (3k2 damage), wakizashi, naginata.

Shadowlands Gifts: Fear 2.

Invulnerability (1 point of damage from normal weapons, full damage from jade, crystal, obsidian, and magic).

Undead (does not need to eat or sleep, does not have “Down” or “Out” Wound ranks).

The Nameless One, Dark Master of Shadow (formerly Isawa Ujina, Master of Void)

The Nameless One has a bipedal, vaguely human body, but it is grotesquely deformed and mutated, with a swollen, lumpy torso, grayish-brown hairless flesh, and a distorted face with one eye swollen to gigantic proportions. His right arm is missing. He usually swaths himself in heavy gray robes to conceal his form.

FIRE 4	AIR 6 Awareness 8
EARTH 3	WATER 4

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 4.4

TN to be Hit: 30

Attacks: 4k4 (tanto)

Damage: Tanto 6k1 (includes Strength).

Wounds: 27: +5; 54: Dead.

Skills: Lore (Maho) 5, Lore (Shugenja) 6, Stealth 5, Tantojutsu 4.

Spells (casts as Rank 5 shugenja): (Air 1) *Tempest of Air*, *Way of Deception*, (Earth 1) *Force of Will*, *Know the Ground*, (Fire 1) *Fury of Osano-Wo*, (Water 1) *Castle of Water*, (Maho 1) *Legacy of the Dark One*, *Pain*, (Maho 2) *No Pure Breaths*, *Mists of Fear*, (Maho 3) *Obsidian Armor*.

Equipment: Robes, tanto (2k1), keys to cells.

Shadow Abilities: Partial Shadow Invulnerability (he takes normal damage from jade and other anti-Taint attacks, double damage from crystal attacks, and half damage from all other attacks).

The Nameless One seems to glide through space without actually moving his legs. He can pass through solid walls as easily as through air.

Shadow-Bolt: Once per hour, the Nameless One can throw a bolt of pure Shadow-stuff which detonate inside the target's body. The target must roll Simple Void at TN 20. Success means the target takes 1k1 damage. Failure means the target takes 4k2 damage.

If the target has Shadow Corruption, s/he must also make another Void roll at TN 15 or gain another Shadow Point.

Shadowlands Gifts: Fear 3.

Greater Corrupted Blood – all his elemental spells are fulfilled by *kansen*, not *kami*, and he suffers no Shadowlands TN penalties when casting. Also, he can cast *maho* spells without spilling blood.

Isawa Tadaka, Dark Master of Earth

Tadaka still bears a superficial resemblance to his old form – a strong, muscular young man dressed in a hakama and gi, with a black silk mask covering the lower half of his face. However, his eyes are bestial and glow with a yellow-orange light, and thick pulsing veins of black corruption criss-cross his skin. If the mask is ever pulled away, it reveals that his mouth is now full of long, razor-sharp teeth.

FIRE 5	AIR 4
	Reflexes 6
EARTH 7	WATER 4
	Strength 5

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 8.5

TN to be Hit: 30

Wounds: 28: +3; 42: +6; 56: +10; 70: +15; 84: +20; 98: Down; 112: Out; 126: Dead.

School Rank: Isawa Tensai (earth) 5, Shadowlands 3.

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 5, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 6, Lore (Maho) 6, Lore (Shadowlands) 5, Spell Research 5.

Spells: (Earth 1) *Earth's Stagnation*, *Force of Will* (innate), *Jade Strike* (innate), *Know the Ground*, (Earth 2) *Armor of Earth* (innate), *Tremor*, (Earth 3) *Slash of the Lion* (innate), (Earth 4) *Tomb of Jade*, *Wall of Earth*, (Fire 1) *Katana of Fire* (innate), *Wings of Fire*, (Fire 2) *Inferno's Tooth*, (Water 1) *Reversal of Fortunes*, *Path to Inner Peace* (innate), (Maho 1) *Pain*, (Maho 3) *Corruption of the Earth* (innate), *Obsidian Armor*, *Tomb of Earth* (innate).

Equipment: Hakama and gi, straw hat, katana, scroll satchel.

Shadowlands Gifts: Invulnerability (1 point of damage from normal weapons, full damage from jade, crystal, obsidian, and magic).

Corrupted Blood – all his elemental spells are fulfilled by *kansen*, not *kami*, and he suffers no Shadowlands TN penalties when casting.

Unholy Vision – cannot be blinded by darkness, smoke, etc.

Maho Spells

Maho spells are cast by rolling dice equal to the caster's skill in **Lore: Maho**, and keeping dice equal to the caster's **Earth** ring. The TN to cast the spell is equal to (5 x Mastery Rank) and the caster must spill Wounds in blood (their own or another's) equal to twice the spell's Mastery level. The caster gains a number of points of Taint equal to the difference between the TN and the actual roll.

Casting time is equal to the spell's Mastery level in rounds. This can be reduced with Raises, just like normal magic.

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

Corruption of the Earth

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: 4 rounds

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

Effect: This spell causes the earth within three feet of the target to turn to mud and swallow them up at the rate of two feet per Action. PCs trying to escape must roll **Simple Earth** at TN 15 to move three feet. Each attempt to move (whether successful or not) requires a **Simple Water** roll at TN 10 to avoid sinking an additional foot into the mud. Pulling free of the mud requires a **Simple Earth** roll at a TN of 5 times the number of feet the victim has sunk into the mud.

Legacy of the Dark One

Mastery Rank: 1

Duration: 10 Rounds

Raises: Increased penalty (one Rank per two Raises)

Effect: The caster calls on the Dark Lord's power to obfuscate the target's relationship with the universe itself. For the duration of the spell, the target's Void Ring is considered to be one Rank lower.

Mists of Fear

Mastery Rank: 2

Duration: 5 Rounds

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

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

No Pure Breaths

Master Rank: 2 (spell's TN is Target's Earth x 5)

Duration: Instantaneous

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

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

Obsidian Armor

Base TN: 15

Casting Time: 3 Actions

Duration: 10 Rounds

Mastery Level/Wounds Required: 6

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

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

Pain

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 1 Round

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

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

Tomb of Earth

Mastery Level: 3 (TN is Target's Air x 5)

Duration: Variable

Mastery Level/Wounds Required: 6

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

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

Appendix #2: NPC Stories

Hojitsu's Story

"I... I was in the libraries, in the Isawa Palace. Studying, reading through the ancient scrolls. I had heard the news, of course, that the Master of Void had returned. Who could not have heard? It was all the talk in the Palace. But I was in the library, yes, the library, researching, that was all. Minding my own affairs. And then..."

He clutches his head and shivers. "It was like an earthquake, the worst earthquake! The stone jumped and crumbled and everyone was screaming, and it sounded like thunder," his voice rises in pitch, "I can't abide thunder, it makes my head hurt, and then everything was falling and my leg wouldn't work anymore!"

"The man found me, this man." He points at Oyo. "He dug me out, out of the rocks. Brought me here. It's so dark here, my leg hurts, and I still hear the thunder, it won't go away!"

Osagi's Story

I was formerly assigned to Dragon lands, fulfilling my duties to the office of the Emerald Champion, but after the war began the Mirumoto expelled me from their territory. In the absence of new orders, I returned to my own lands. Lord Ujimitsu-sama sent me here to Kyuden Isawa to assist the local magistrate, Isawa Yoru."

"I did not see the Master of Void return, but news of his arrival spread quickly the next day. The weather... turned dark, and I remember that I felt unwell, as though I were a little feverish." She frowns. "I remember Yoru-sama seemed unwell also, and short of temper, which was unusual for him."

"It happened... without warning, samurai-sama. The tower seemed to explode, with a sound like a mighty thunderclap. By the time I turned around and looked up, the sky was full of smoke and ash and great chunks of stone raining down. A new tower, the one that stands there now, rose out of the wreckage, *grew* from it like some foul perversion of a Phoenix. I saw no more than that, for something struck my head – probably one of the falling rocks. When I awoke I was here."

Taeruko's Story

"I am an Acolyte of Earth, and have trained under Isawa Tadaka, the Master of that element. I have been privileged to receive his personal instruction, and sometimes to attend the meetings of the Elemental Council with other promising Acolytes. I was... considered a student of great promise."

"Isawa Tadaka-sama has spent many years traveling to the Shadowlands, seeking out Akuma no Oni in order to avenge the fall of his ancestor Isawa Akuma. There are those who have suggested that Tadaka-sama became Tainted on those journeys. I always dismissed such stories. Always." She falls silent for a moment, her face working.

"We received word that Tadaka-sama's father, Isawa Ujina-sama, the Master of Void, had returned. This was great news, for Ujina-sama had been absent since last summer. There were those who suggested that he would not return, that whatever power had poisoned and twisted his body had finally claimed him. It was a grave time for him to be absent, for the Council saw many signs that Fu Leng's power was rising and that his long-prophecied return was imminent. I have heard... rumors... that some on the Council even suggested opening certain... scrolls... in order to learn more of their foe, but Isawa Kaede-sama and others spoke against this."

"When we heard that Isawa Ujina-sama had returned, and wished to address the Council, Acolytes and all, we were greatly relieved. It seemed... we thought that he must have learned something of great import, and would... would surely provide the guidance we needed." Taeruko falls silent for a time, and has to physically gather herself and take a deep breath before continuing.

“Everyone was there, the Elemental Masters and their finest apprentices. Only lady Kaede-sama, the Empress, was absent. The Master of Void came before us... but he was far worse than before. His body was so misshapen beneath his robes that I was not sure, at first, that it could be human. He reached out with a hand, and I saw it was black as pitch, as though tar ran in his veins instead of blood. His voice... was like metal dragged across stone, ragged and painful to hear. I... I cannot remember what he said. It seemed as though I was in a dream, or a nightmare, as he spoke. I saw some of the Masters stand and call upon their magic, but others seemed stunned or half-asleep, as I felt myself to be.”

“A darkness seemed to flow out of the Master of Void, like a tide of befouled water, but when it touched my skin it burned like fire. That awoke me, and I tried to find my way out of the darkness. I... I crawled, on my hands and knees, seeking the door. In the darkness I heard voices, people I knew to be dead. I heard the Elemental Council shouting, and some of them screaming and laughing. And then...”

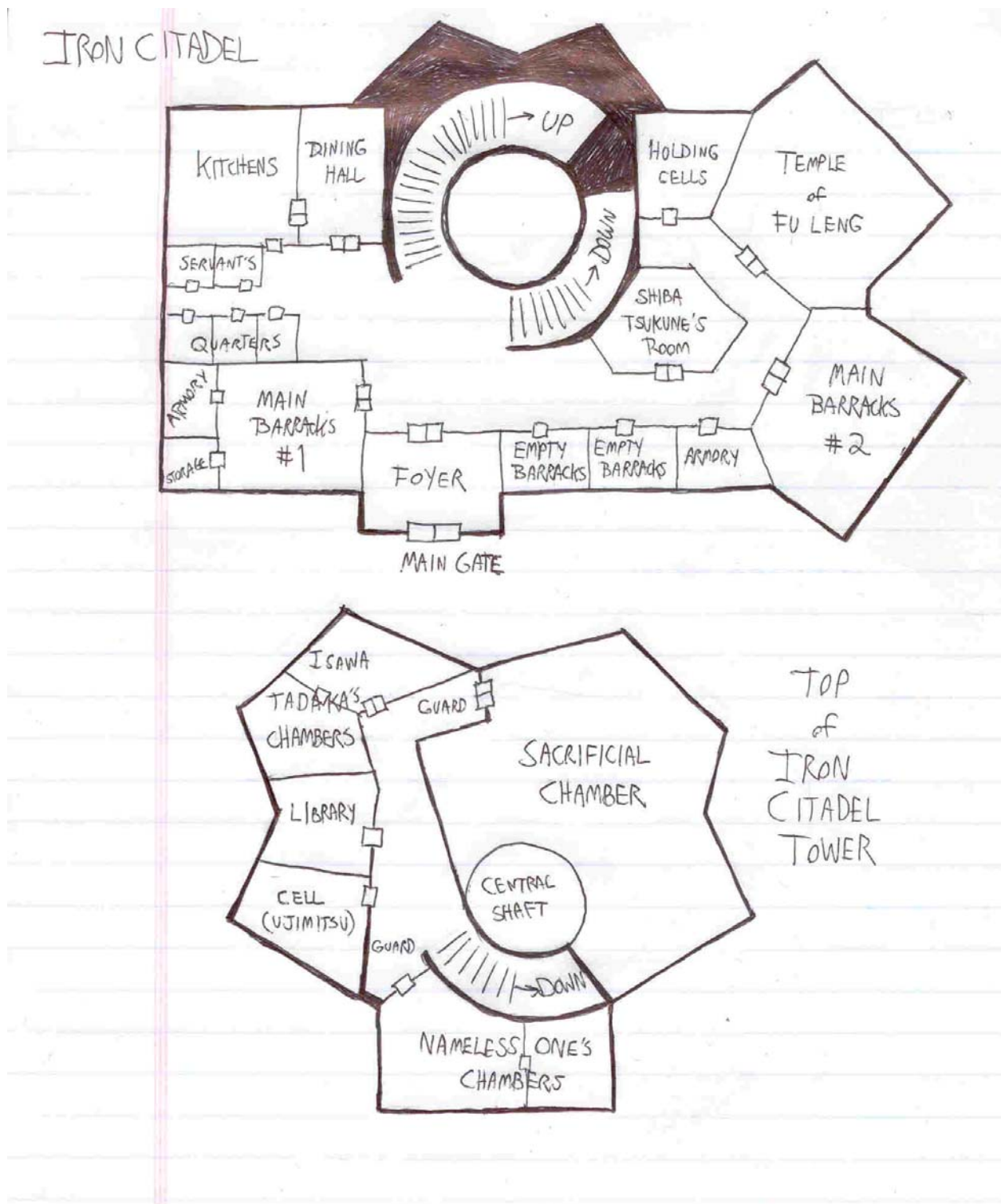
She chokes back a sob. “I heard Tadaka-sama laughing. He was mad, and in the darkness I saw his power flare like the sun, and saw that he was twisted and misshapen like his father had been. Opposing him was Isawa Tsuke, the Master of Fire. Tsuke-sama gathered his power like a tsunami, and roared at all of us to flee. By his light I found the stairs and fled down them...”

“The explosion was like a blow from the very fist of Osano-Wo himself. The castle came apart around me and I was battered through the air like a leaf. But I felt it, in that instant – felt Tsuke-sama’s life snuffed out by the power he had called.”

“It was not enough. Not enough. In that moment, suspended between life and death, I felt Tadaka-sama as well, and felt the Taint consuming all that remained of his soul. And I felt something else... something where the Master of Void should have been. A great darkness, spreading like spilling ink, filling the light and purity of the Void.”

She is silent for a long time, then finally points at Asako Oyo. “This man, Asako Oyo, found me in the ruins. The Fallen samurai of the castle were searching for me, to bring me back before my former master. Oyo saved me.”

Appendix #3: Map of the Iron Citadel



Appendix #4: The Ancestral Sword of the Phoenix Clan

If the PCs manage to get into the Dark Library on the upper levels, they may be able to retrieve Shiba Ujimitsu's daisho set.

His wakizashi is a minor nemuranai – a 2k2 wakizashi which awards +1 die in Kenjutsu and can affect Invulnerable foes (including Shadow Corrupted foes).

His katana is, of course, Ofushikai, the Ancestral Katana of the Phoenix Clan. It is a delicately encrusted work of steel and pearl, created by the first Shiba's wife, Tsamaru, as a gift for her husband on the day of their son's birth. The sword shines with a strange light, and it often appears as if water is flowing down its exquisite blade.

Statistically, Ofushikai is a 3k3 katana which awards +2 dice in the Kenjutsu skill. It is an unbreakable nemuranai and does full damage to any foe, regardless of their normal immunities.

When wielded by the Phoenix Clan Champion (only) the sword gains additional powers: its wielder can survive under water without the need to breath, and can summon the sword from any distance (it immediately appears in his hand). By spending a Void point, the wielder can stop all combat within a 20' radius for a number of rounds equal to his Honor rank (no one within that space will be able to attack or cast offensive spells).

Player Handout #1: The Dream

You see a chamber of darkness, the floor an irregular pitted surface, lit by flickering torches. In the center of the chamber, a human shape slumps on a chair. It is swathed in heavy overlapping cloths, colored a dark reddish-orange color. In front of it, chained to the floor, is a man. He appears to be a strong, muscular man in his late thirties or early forties, his hair tied in a samurai topknot. His ankles and wrists are clasped in heavy iron manacles, holding him spread-eagled. His dirty hakama pants are Phoenix orange. Scars of torture cover his bare skin.

The cloaked figure lurches up and forward, moving with jerking, awkward motions, like a cripple. A twisted, misshapen hand, skin black and gleaming, emerges from a sleeve, clutching a razor-sharp knife. The thing lifts the knife over the prone man, and as it does so its hood falls back just slightly, letting you see a horribly misshapen face, one eye bulging out like a rotten fruit while the other is nearly invisible within folds of swollen, blackened flesh. Thick lips skin back from yellow, crooked teeth as the thing begins to chant in a deep, guttural voice. Other voices join the chant, although you cannot make out their source.

The man on the floor flexes and strains against the chains which bind him, but to no avail. His face, however, shows no fear... only a great sadness, as the knife plunges down.