

Twisted Forest

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

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The Imperial Legions have marched on Shinomen Forest, to bring the wrath of the Emperor against the snake-men infesting that place. An honorable mission... that may prove to be your last.

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

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

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

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

GM's Information

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

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

Since this adventure features several physical and combat challenges, 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 new/inexperienced):

- At the GM's discretion, lower the TNs for skill and trait/ring rolls by 5.
- Decrease the number of Naga warriors in the two Balash encounters by two.

High End Party (most/all characters Rank Two):

- Increase the number of Naga warriors in the two Balash encounters by one.

Adventure Summary and Background

The Emperor Hantei the 39th is possessed by the power of the Living Darkness, and far gone down the path of becoming a Goju (a faceless servant of Shadow). His true nature is invisible to men... but the Naga ambassador, the Dashmar, perceived it at once, its evil laid bare to him by the power of the Akasha. For screeching the truth in the Imperial Court, the Dashmar was executed, and the other Naga diplomats were imprisoned by the order of the Hantei. Immediately after, the Emperor ordered the Imperial Legions to march on the Shinomen Forest, to punish the insults and presumption of the Naga.

Such a major military movement requires support from the Clans of Rokugan, and samurai from across the Empire have joined the march on the Shinomen in order to win Glory and serve the Son of Heaven. (Or, in the case of ronin, to earn a few koku and perhaps a chance to join a Clan.) The PCs are assumed to be part of this wave of recruits, joining the march on the homelands of the Naga.

Of course, as the possessed Emperor well understands, this attack is doomed – all it can do is wreck both sides, leaving Naga and Empire alike weaker before the impending onslaught of Fu Leng and the Living Darkness. The PCs will find themselves caught in the aftermath of a catastrophic defeat within the borders of the Shinomen, facing a simple but deadly challenge: survival.

The PCs will be lost in an alien and hostile environment, surrounded by dangerous and deadly foes. They will have to work together and set aside Clan rivalries in order to survive and escape.

Note on Experienced PCs

It is possible that some of the PCs may have played the adventure *Tao of the Naga*, in which case they are likely well aware that the Naga are not an evil race and the Dashmar may have had good reason for attacking the Hantei Emperor. It can be assumed that these PCs are here due to necessity (the orders of their daimyo) rather than choice. Such PCs will doubtless be feeling deeply conflicted at being ordered to attack the Naga, a race who could be allies if things were different. So much the better – moral conflict is intrinsic to Rokugan.

It is also possible that some PCs may be secretly aware of the Emperor's true nature. Such PCs should be reminded that the strict rules of Rokugani society allow them little room to maneuver. No matter why the Dashmar attacked the Divine Hantei, his act still constituted an unforgivable crime by the standards of the Rokugani legal and social system, and the Imperial Legions are honor-bound to avenge it.

Player's Introduction

It is the 3rd day of the month of the Goat (August), nearly a month after the Chrysanthemum Festival, and the Legions have finally reached the edge of the Shinomen Forest:

The setting sun gilds the tangled dark green treetops of the Shinomen Forest, which broods on the horizon like some great slumbering beast. Weeks of hard marching has brought the Imperial Legions to within a mile of the dreaded forest, and tomorrow they will enter it, to deliver the Emperor's justice against the foul snake-men, the so-called "Naga," who inhabit the place.

For now, however, battle lies in the future. This evening the Legions make camp, setting their tents in orderly rows, watering and grazing the horses, and lighting fires to cook the evening meal of rice and beans. Alert sentries patrol the edges of the camp, but the rest of the force has a chance to rest after many days' grueling march.

The PCs are assumed to have been assigned, along with other such samurai "volunteers," as reinforcements to several of the regular Legion battalions. After several weeks' hard marching, this is their chance to make each others' acquaintance, and that of other fellow-soldiers, before the battle. Have each player introduce and describe their character. Once that is done, they will have a chance to interact with some NPCs in their unit.

Matsu Yushiro – This grizzled gunso (sergeant) is a thick-bodied, muscular man in his late thirties, a veteran of many wars and battles. (Glory 4.8.) He has a slightly fatherly attitude toward the young soldiers around him, but hides it behind a gruff tone of authority and scathing judgments on lower-ranking samurai. (If very impressed with someone, he might remark, "You might make a proper bushi someday, after a decade or two of training... if you don't get yourself gloriously dead first.")

Yushiro knows nothing about the Naga, but is careful to never display his ignorance, since that might damage

morale. If anyone asks questions about fighting the Naga, he will say something like, “Just follow your training and obey your officers. A snake-man dies like anyone else when you cut him open.”

Yushiro has no larger political opinions on events in the Empire, but has a veteran Lion soldier’s contempt for Cranes and Scorpions, who (in his view) try to talk and cheat their way through life rather than fighting honestly. He will not say anything that might compromise battlefield performance, but will make his opinion known nonetheless.

If anyone tries to challenge him, he will laugh it off. “This isn’t the Imperial Court, samurai. There’s no place, no time for that nonsense on a real battlefield.” Likewise, if any PCs try to start duels with others (over insults from Matsu Amiko, for example), Yushiro will intervene. “Such games are not permitted now. Wait until we return to the capital. Perhaps your blood will run less hot then.”

Matsu Amiko – A fiery and aggressive young Lion samurai-ko, very much the Matsu cliché, Amiko wears her long black hair in a maiden’s foxtail and always walks in a combat stance, ready for action. She is intensely proud of having earned an appointment to the Imperial Legions, and is determined to win honor and glory on the battlefield. She has no real combat experience, having completed her gempukku just before the Lion-Crane truce, and is more than a little upset at having missed the war. She will make comments such as, “If only the weak-kneed Cranes had fought a little longer, I could have tested my blade on them instead of on these filthy snake-men. But we must go where the Emperor commands.”

Amiko speaks her mind bluntly, and will not hesitate to exchange insult for insult, although she lacks the courtly skills to win a battle of wits. If she feels she is being outmaneuvered or made a fool of, her preferred response will be to reach for her sword and issue a challenge. However, as an honorable Lion she also respects her superiors, and will defer to the orders of those of higher station (including Yushiro).

Ikoma Sansho – PCs who have played the adventures *Evil Feeds Upon Itself* or *Fist of the Earth* may have met this brash, loud-voiced Ikoma bard, a brawler and storyteller who is a throwback to his family’s rough-and-ready founder. He is here on his own, not as part of the Legions, and keeps the troops’ spirits up with boisterous tales of courage and adventure. He also enjoys wrestling, and will offer a

match to any PCs who want one (especially PCs who may have defeated him in a previous adventure).

Daidoji Rikumura – A calm, precise, dedicated young man. Rikumura belongs to the newly formed Fists of the Emperor legion, an Imperial Legion composed of mixed Lion and Crane troops, which was formed as part of the peace treaty which ended the recent Lion-Crane war. The Legion is commanded by Ijiasu, a former Akodo of formidable skill, with a Crane named Doji Isaku as his deputy. (PCs who roll **History/Intelligence** at TN 15 or **Lore: Crane/Intelligence** at TN 10 will know that Isaku’s father, the daimyo of Toshi Ranbo, died when the city fell to the Lion last year.)

Daidoji Rikumura is an honorable and skilled samurai, and in recognition of the peace treaty and the new Legion will take great pains to be polite to any Lion present (PCs or NPCs), even if they insult or provoke him. However, any PC who beats him on a Contested Awareness roll can tell that he is actually made very angry by such offenses, and would dearly like to challenge such uncouth Lions to a duel.

Fujiko, embittered ronin – This woman is fairly well-kept as ronin go, with clean clothing, well-combed hair and a daisho set which has obviously been lovingly cared-for. She is also a bitter and hateful woman, consumed with a personal vendetta against the Dragon Clan. Her father, a ronin named Toyaka, was casually slain by an arrogant Dragon shugenja who accused him, falsely, of stealing. Fujiko has sworn to slay a hundred Dragon to avenge her father. She is a bitter, unpleasant woman, totally consumed with her quest for vengeance, and will behave with cold aloofness or ill-disguised loathing toward anyone not directly associated with her quest. She dislikes courtiers intensely, and also has little time for those who value form above skill. Only fellow ronin and sworn enemies of the Dragon Clan will get a positive response from her. If any of the PCs are Dragons (and especially if any of them are Agasha) she will seek a lethal duel (although Matsu Yushiro will force it to be delayed).

Fujiko is here simply to earn koku. She views this battle as no different than any other in which she has fought, and does not particularly care who the Naga are or why the Legions are attacking them.

Toku, friendly ronin – This young man, little more than an ashigaru who lucked into a set of swords, is traveling the Empire in search of his fortune, hoping against hope to be accepted as a “true samurai” and a worthy man. He is friendly and generous in nature, and

will chat just as easily with Clan samurai as with the peasants who carry supplies for the army. His sense of humor, while excellent, is a bit rough, and he may inadvertently offend those of more delicate sensibilities. Given his questionable station, he will have little choice but to back down and apologize if anyone takes real insult at his words or presence.

Toku is an idealistic young man in search of a leader and a cause. He regards this mission as a holy quest on behalf of the Son of Heaven, and a chance to prove himself a true samurai. He will be upset and more than a little heartbroken if any PCs suggest that attacking the Naga is wrong.

Players who are familiar with the “canon” L5R timeline will, of course, recognize Toku as one of its most famous heroes.

Ending the Scene

After the PCs have had sufficient chance to role-play with each other and their fellow soldiers, night falls, and the army turns in to sleep. The PCs return to their separate units, wishing each other luck... and the adventure moves forward three days.

Part 1: Catastrophe

Before beginning this scene, the GM should check the PCs’ character sheets to see whether any of them suffer from Disadvantages (or Advantages) which would compel them to stand and fight to the bitter end, even in a hopeless situation. Obvious examples would include Overconfident, Death Trance, Deathseeker, some forms of Driven, characters belonging to the Crab berserker school, and so forth.

PCs who suffer from these sorts of character compulsions start the adventure having suffered 3k2 Wounds (the damage should not be enough to put them into Down or lower). Their experience is as follows:

Arms leaden with exhaustion, you stagger through the clinging brush and between the massive trees of the Shinomen forest. Your mind is filled with the images of the day’s fighting.

For three days the Legions advanced, through a forest that was eerily quiet and seemingly empty. Then, in an instant, you were surrounded by inhuman hissing, the snap of bowstrings, and a tumult of agonizing death screams. The huge snake-like Naga appeared from everywhere, dropping from trees, springing up from the undergrowth, sometimes literally coming

from nowhere in a burst of white light. Your unit tried to hold the flank, but the Naga slithered through the lines without regard for order or formation, and their arrows struck again and again with pitiless accuracy. There seemed to be no end to them. Not even an hour into the battle, the commanders called for retreat.

You and a few others attempted to hold the line for the rest of the Legion to withdraw. But there was nothing to hold. The Naga did not march with the precision of a Lion army. They did not charge with the fearsome cries of the Unicorn Battle Maidens. They were simply everywhere at once, fighting with perfect harmony and coordination even when they could not see each other. Soon you found yourself alone, holding a non-existent line. In the rush to catch the rest of the retreating Legion, the Naga seemingly overlooked you, and the battle left you behind without a chance to die honorably.

Now, stumbling forward, you find yourself in a small grove. A few other battered and weary samurai are here as well.

PCs who would be willing to retreat when ordered suffer less initial damage (1k1, no more than 15 Wounds total). Their experience of the battle is slightly different:

The beauty of the lush green forest, the untold history which lies behind it... such things are of no meaning to you now. Sweat drips in your eyes as you draw deep breaths, exhausted by your spring through the twisted, uneven jungle ground. Distant sounds of combat still drift through the woods, but you aren’t being followed at the moment.

For three days the Legions advanced, through a forest that was eerily quiet and seemingly empty. Then, in an instant, you were surrounded by inhuman hissing, the snap of bowstrings, and a tumult of agonizing death screams. The huge snake-like Naga appeared from everywhere, dropping from trees, springing up from the undergrowth, sometimes literally coming from nowhere in a burst of white light. Your unit tried to hold the flank, but the Naga slithered through the lines without regard for order or formation, and their arrows struck again and again with pitiless accuracy. There seemed to be no end to them. Not even an hour into the battle, the commanders called for retreat.

The retreat quickly became a rout. The Naga moved with uncanny speed and silence, their arrows striking

with fearful accuracy, tearing apart the samurai ranks. Within a very short time you were no longer part of a unit at all, but simply a lone survivor trying to escape.

Now, after fleeing for the better part of an hour, you find yourself in a calm groove. A small stream trickles refreshing water through the lush grass. The sounds of battle have faded to dim echoes... and a few other battered and weary samurai are here as well.

Now, it is up to the PCs to figure out what to do next. They should immediately realize that it will take at least three days to get out of the forest even if they go back exactly the way they came. Furthermore, due to being scattered through the forest after the battle, they are not confident of being able to retrace their steps (the dense trees reduce visibility and block sight of the sky, making it very difficult to gauge direction). Unless one of the PCs has the advantage **Absolute Direction**, they are going to have a very tough time.

Even worse, the PCs are also desperately short on food. Peasant laborers carried the supplies for the Legions, and the samurai typically carried only a couple of rice-balls for the march. Thankfully, the PCs do have water-skins (which can be refilled in the stream).

The PCs will have to decide for themselves what to do now – there is no higher authority to direct them. Presumably, most PCs will want to escape the Shinomen Forest and report back to the Empire on the catastrophe which has just occurred.

Part 2: Trudging Home

The shortest route out of the forest will take three full days. However, to find that absolute shortest path, one of the PCs will have to have the advantage **Way of the Land: Shinomen Forest** (vanishingly unlikely).

Slightly more likely is that the PCs have the **Absolute Direction** advantage. In this case, they can at least determine compass directions, and will know that going either north, northeast, east, or southeast will get them out of the forest.

- If the PCs go north or northeast, it will take five days for them to reach the edge of the forest.
- If they go east or southeast, it will take six days.
- If the PCs go any other direction, they will be moving deeper into the forest. PCs who have played *Tao of the Naga* may think this is a good

idea – they should be reminded that they are part of an army which just attacked the Naga on their home ground.

If (as is most likely) the PCs have none of these advantages, they will have to try to backtrack the trail of the Legions through the forest. This will be more difficult than it might seem, since the troops have been scattered and there are many tracks going the wrong way (not to mention snake-like Naga tracks everywhere, confusing things). In order to make progress, the PCs will have to make a **Hunting/Perception** roll at TN 15 each day. **Investigation** or **Nazado** can be used as Related Skills (TN is 10 higher and no explosions). PCs cannot assist each other with this roll.

A total of five days will be needed to get out of the forest this way. (Travel is slowed by the need to seek for tracks.) The **Hunting** roll must be made successfully each day. If nobody makes the roll, that day is wasted (the PCs make no progress).

Using Magic

If the PCs have shugenja in their ranks, they may decide to use the *Commune* spell to ask the Kami for guidance. However, any attempt to summon spirits within the forest will encounter some unusual obstacles. The kami in Shinomen have not been invoked by shugenja in a long time. It will take a significant number of Raises to summon a kami who is both knowledgeable and cooperative enough to know how to get out of the forest. Earth and Air spirits will require four Raises, and Water spirits will require five Raises. There are no fire kami in the forest who know the way out.

Each successful *Commune* spell will count as a successful **Hunting** roll, moving the PCs one day closer to the edge of the forest.

Alternatively, PCs may try to come up with more creative uses of magic. Some ideas will work better than others, but the GM should try to reward creativity. A few examples follow:

- PCs might use the spell *The Tie That Binds* to detect the location of a familiar object which they left behind. Unfortunately, the base range of this spell is only a mile, and each Raise adds only one more mile. The PCs are over thirty miles inside the forest, so they will not be able to detect anything they left back in the Empire.

- A clever PC may think to use *Ties That Bind* to try to locate one of the NPCs they spoke with at the start of the adventure. Seeking Daidoji Rikumura or Ikoma Sansho will require five Raises, and will show the direction that the Fists of the Emperor Legion is retreating (consider this the equivalent of a successful **Hunting** roll). Fujiko can be located with two Raises, but moving toward her will not help the PCs escape (it will, however, trigger the appropriate encounter listed in Part 3, “Encounters in the Forest”). None of the other NPCs can be detected.
- Spells such as *The Horse’s Nose* can be used to try to scent the path of the Legions. This will give the PCs a +5 bonus on their **Hunting** rolls that day.
- Spells which allow communication with animals (such as *Nature’s Touch*) can be used to ask for directions from snakes, tree-squirrels, frogs, and other such wildlife. This will count as a successful **Hunting** roll for that day.

Food and Water

At the start of the adventure, the PCs have empty waterskins and no food (they ate their marching rations before entering the battle). They can refill their waterskins immediately, at the stream in the clearing, but otherwise they will have to scrounge.

Full waterskins will last one day. A PC who rations his water carefully can stretch it for two days, but this will require a **Simple Willpower** roll at TN 15. In order to find additional water, PCs will have to make a **Hunting/Perception** roll at TN 10 or **Simple Perception** at TN 20. Alternatively, a PC with the Luck advantage can expend a rank of it to automatically find water. Finally, a shugenja can use *Summon Water* to create enough water for one person for one day (each Raise adds the same amount).

Getting food will be more problematic, since most samurai (except for Unicorn) are reluctant to eat red meat. A **Hunting/Awareness** roll at TN 15, or **Herbalism/Perception** at TN 10, will locate enough non-red-meat food to feed two PCs (or one PC for two days). Each PC can make only one such roll per day (no assists).

If a PC decides to eat red meat, the TN of the **Hunting** roll will drop to 10, and a successful roll will feed three PCs (or one PC for three days). **Herbalism** cannot be substituted for this roll. PCs who eat red meat will lose

2 points each of Honor and Glory (unless they are Unicorn).

PCs can use magic to assist their foraging efforts. Casting *The Horse’s Nose* on a hunting/foraging PC will add a Free Raise (+5) to their roll. Using *Nature’s Touch* to attract/relax an animal before killing it will also add a Free Raise to a **Hunting** roll, although it might cost a point of Honor for a soft-hearted PC. Other spells could also be useful, at the GM’s discretion.

A PC can make the food “stretch” by rolling **Simple Willpower** at TN 15. This will allow the PC to go exactly one day without suffering a penalty for no food. This can only be done once over the course of the adventure, unless the PC is Ascetic (in which case it can be done twice).

The PCs may be able to scrounge additional food from some of their encounters in the forest, depending on how those turn out.

Effects of Starvation/Dehydration

At the end of the first day that a PC goes without water, s/he must roll **Simple Stamina** at TN 10. Each subsequent day increases the TN by 5. A failed roll results in a cumulative +5 TN penalty to all physical rolls. Mental/magical actions are penalized at 5 less. (So after one failed roll, the penalty is +5 physical/0 mental, after two it is +10 physical/+5 mental, etc.)

A PC who gets food but not water, or water but no food, must make the same rolls. However, the TN on the first day is 5 instead of 10.

If a PC gets neither water nor food, the TN on the first day goes up to 15.

If a PC’s TN penalties from starvation/dehydration reach +25, the PC is too weak to walk, and must be carried. Carrying another PC for a day will require a **Simple Stamina** roll at TN 20 (TN 25 if the PC is Large, 15 if the PC is Small). If the PCs create a sledge, stretcher, or similar improvement (which will require a half-day’s work), the TN is only 10 (15/5).

If a PC gets both food and water on the same day, the penalties immediately end, and resume from the base levels if the PC goes short again later.

Part 3: Encounters in the Forest

Every day spent within the forest has the potential for encounters – especially with the Naga. Obviously, getting out of the forest as quickly as possible should be the goal of the PCs, since the longer they are there, the more danger they will face.

There are two sets of encounters listed in this section. The first set are labeled “Minor Encounters” while the second is “Major Encounters.” The GM should select one Minor encounter and one Major encounter for each day the PCs spend in the Shinomen Forest. A few of the encounters are “generic” and can be re-used as needed.

In general, the intention is that these encounters challenge the PCs, not punish them. If the PCs get clobbered by a Naga attack one day, the encounters on the next day should probably be non-combat ones.

Minor Encounter One: Naga Hunters

This encounter can occur more than once, if the GM desires. The PCs run afoul of a small Naga hunting band (three Asp warriors) which is seeking out human stragglers. The hunters are few in number, but stealthy and aggressive. They will try to ambush the PCs.

Have each of the PCs make a **Contested** roll of **Hunting/Perception** or **Investigation/Perception** against the Nagas’ **Conceal/Awareness**. If at least one PC makes the roll, they notice a few small warning signs – a snake-like hiss of breath, the rasp of arrow against bow – and can roll for Initiative normally. If none of the PCs notice the ambush, the Naga get a free “surprise round,” firing a volley of arrows against PCs who are TN 5+Armor to be hit.

Once combat is joined, two of the Naga will slither forward and engage the PCs with spears, while the other one will hang back firing arrows. These Naga are angry at humans, and quite brave, but not suicidal – they will retreat if they are clearly losing the fight.

Some of the PCs may try to parlay with the Naga. These efforts will fail. These Asp are part of the Balash’s anti-human faction, and regard humans as nothing more than dangerous animals which must be exterminated.

Minor Encounter Two: Fujiko

Fujiko, the embittered ronin-ko, is wandering through the forest, trying to stay alive. She lacks the wilderness survival skills she needs to make it out on her own, and is desperately looking for someone to help her. She will notice the PCs from a distance and approaches them cautiously, sword at the ready.

How Fujiko interacts with the PCs will depend in part on how they have interacted with her before (in the Introduction, or in the adventure *Scorpion’s Sting*), and in part on whether any of them are Dragon Clan. She knows she should try to team up with the PCs to survive, but her personality and drives will get in the way.

If Fujiko quarreled with any of the PCs earlier, she will find it very difficult to swallow her pride and anger and cooperate with them. She will find it especially difficult to keep her temper with PCs who are arrogant, supercilious, or who come across as pampered courtiers. Needless to say, she will also be prone to losing her temper around Dragon Clan PCs, and may well “snap” and challenge them to duels. Finally, Fujiko’s lack of wilderness skills may become a problem, since she will feel humiliated by her inability to contribute to survival efforts.

Smart PCs will do their best to soothe tempers and keep Fujiko with them – she is a formidable bushi, and in case of a fight will help their cause considerably. She may be a liability if the PCs attempt negotiations with the Naga – she fears them, and covers her fear with anger and aggression.

Minor Encounter Three: Matsu Amiko

This encounter should take place after the PCs have been traveling for at least a day.

Ahead of you, you hear a faint moan, almost a sigh. Stepping through the underbrush, you see an armored samurai-ko sitting slumped against a tree. Several arrows pierce her flesh, and a Naga spear is thrust through her stomach, pinning her to the tree-trunk. Dark, thick blood coats her lower body and has soaked into the earth beneath her. Her head moves slightly, turning toward you, and you see that her pale face is beaded with sweat, her eyes glassy with fever.

If the PCs spoke with Matsu Amiko at all during the Introduction, they will recognize her, and she will

know their names. Otherwise they will only vaguely recall her as a soldier in the Legions.

Amiko has been here for over a day, slowly dying. Her wounds are septic, and she is in the grip of a blazing fever. She will drift in and out of lucidity while speaking with the PCs, and sometimes confuses them for her sensei or her parents. She wants to die honorably, and to be remembered as a true samurai and a true Lion; she is terrified of dying alone and without honor, and keeps clamping down on her own screams of agony, allowing only small whimpers to emerge.

Some PCs may decide to try to treat her wounds. She is beyond help from **Medicine** or **Herbalism**, and will refuse opium (if a PC has it). The spell *Path to Inner Peace* will ease her pain, allowing her more lucidity, but cannot heal her injuries. *Regrow the Wound* will cure her wounds, but not the septic infection. Only if the PCs have both *Regrow the Wound* and *Hands of Jurojin* will they be able to cure her (in which case she will swear lifelong gratitude and accompanies them for the remainder of the adventure).

If (as is most likely) the PCs cannot cure Amiko, she will eventually beg them to take her head, letting her die with honor. “I am a Lion,” she whispers softly. “Take my tale to the Hall of Ancestors, so that my name and deeds are remembered.”

It is up to the PCs how they deal with this. If they cannot cure her, the honorable path is to end her life, but some soft-hearted PCs may find this difficult. Some may even try to take Amiko with them, in hope of keeping her alive until they can cure her – this will condemn her to die in shameful agony within a day. If they leave her behind, she will meet the same fate. PCs should suffer an Honor loss for either of these actions.

Minor Encounter Four: Poisonous Serpent

The Shinomen Forest is home to many real snakes as well as Naga. One of them, a poisonous viper, is coiled up in a hollow in the ground. An incautious PC may step on it.

Have all the PCs roll **Simple Void**. The PC with the lowest roll is the one who finds the snake in his/her path. Have that PC roll **Simple Awareness** at TN 15. If the PC makes the roll, s/he spots the snake in time and can avoid it. If the roll is failed, the PC steps on the snake, which immediately tries to bite. The snake’s bite attack rolls 4k2, and the PC is TN 5+Armor to be hit.

If a PC is bitten, the snake’s poison inflicts 4k3 damage. However, this damage is not applied all at once, but over a period of time – one fourth of the damage is immediate, and one-fourth kicks in every two hours until, after six hours, the total damage applies (and the PC dies, if the damage was fatal).

The later damage can be averted if the PC can be treated for poisoning. This will require either a **Poison/Intelligence** roll at TN 10 or a **Medicine/Intelligence** roll at TN 15 (if the PCs do not have a Medical Kit, the TNs for both rolls are 5 higher). Alternatively, the poison can also be treated with **Herbalism/Intelligence** at TN 15, which does not require a medical kit. Finally, the spell *Path to Inner Peace* can ease the effects of the poison (healing wounds), and *Hands of Jurojin* can purge the poison from the body. *Regrow the Wound* will not work (there is no wound).

A poisoned PC (whether treated or not) will be feverish and suffers shooting pains and blurred vision. Irregardless of other Wound penalties, the PC will have an additional +5 TN penalty to all actions for the next 24 hours, and cannot recover Void or naturally heal any Wounds during that time. If the poison is purged with *Hands of Jurojin*, these effects end.

The snake will flee as soon as it delivers its bite (whether it hits or not). Vengeful PCs can kill it if they wish.

Minor Encounter Five: The Abomination

Abominations are Naga which have suffered mutations while in their eggs. The Naga will not kill such poor creatures, instead releasing them into the forest to make their own way. Sometimes they manage to survive long enough to earn acceptance back into Naga society.

The PCs will encounter one of these abominations. This particular one, the Askur, managed to earn its way back into Naga society for a time, and even picked up some Rokugani speech, but then began suffering from a growing mental instability. The Askur began to hear voices other than the Akasha, and grew erratic and violent. The other Naga were reluctant to kill one of their own, and decided to keep him restrained until the Vedics of the Pale Eye could pass judgment on him. In the meantime, the Cobra jaklas sometimes visit him, trying to understand the source of the strange voice he hears.

Ahead of you, you hear an angry hissing noise, and the clink of metal. Looking between the trees, you see a strange-looking Naga, its head and torso oddly misshapen. The back of its skull is swollen and bulbous, while its body seems to be twisted slightly off-center. It is bound around the waist and wrists by copper chains, which run to a ring set in a large stone. The Naga coils and thrashes back and forth, hissing and muttering in its own speech, and tugging at the chains.

If the PCs leave the Askur alone, they can travel on unmolested. If they approach, the abomination will go very still for a moment, then speaks to the PCs in clumsy, halting Rokugani. He will name himself and attempt to convince the PCs to free him.

Although the Askur is insane, he is still connected to the Akasha. He knows about the recent battle, and has felt the deaths of many of his Naga brothers through that mental link. He will try to use the war to his advantage, claiming that he was imprisoned here for opposing the war with the “hu-mans.” He tells the PCs that he likes humans and wants to help them, but the Balash and the other Naga leaders would not listen to him. He promises to lead the PCs out of the forest if they set him free.

The Askur is lying – he wants to kill the PCs. The PCs can try to test him sincerity by making a **Contested Awareness** roll against him. Although they have no frame of reference for “reading” a Naga’s behavior, the abomination is too mentally unstable to be really convincing, so neither side gets any Free Raises. Advantages and techniques such as Clear Thinker and the Kitsuki Method will not help, however, since the PCs are dealing with a non-human being.

If the PCs do not free the Askur, it will hiss and snarl at them furiously, straining against its chains and promising to “kill hu-mans, kill!” Truly ruthless PCs can kill the abomination while it is chained up – however, this will ruin their chances of a friendly meeting with the forest spirits (see Major Encounter Two, below).

If the PCs do free the Askur, the abomination immediately flees into the forest, moving very fast. If the PCs pursue, they must roll **Contested Athletics/Agility** against the abomination’s **Athletics/Agility** – the Naga gets two Free Raises due to being familiar with the forest.

If the abomination escapes, it is 50% likely to simply disappear and never return. Otherwise, after a short time it will find a weapon (a spear abandoned by a slain Naga) and then return, attacking the PCs with homicidal fury. It will fight to the death. If the PCs have promised the forest spirits not to kill any Naga, the spirits will not consider this combat to violate the promise – the abomination is insane, and the PCs cannot be blamed for defending themselves.

Major Encounter One: The Balash Attacks

The Balash is one of the most prominent and aggressive of the Naga warriors, a ferocious combatant who hates and despises humans. (PCs who have played *Tao of the Naga* may have met him before.) He leads a large unit of Naga and participated gleefully in the fighting which broke the Legions.

The Balash’s unit will begin shadowing the PCs in late afternoon, watching and waiting for an opportune moment to strike. PCs who make a **Contested** roll of **Hunting/Perception** or **Investigation/Perception** against the Balash’s **Conceal/Awareness** can notice signs that they are being stalked (tracks, moving brush, etc) which should warn them to be alert for attack. If the PCs try to turn the tables and attack their stalkers, the Naga will pull back and wait awhile before resuming pursuit.

The Naga will wait until the PCs camp for the night before attacking. (Presumably the PCs will set watches – otherwise they will all be attacked by surprise.) If the PCs noticed they were being stalked, those on watch will be at their normal TNs to be hit when the Naga attack. If the PCs did not notice, those on watch will get one last chance to roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20 to notice the Naga right before they strike – otherwise, they will be surprised on the opening round of combat, making their TN to be hit (5+Armor).

There are a total of six Naga – the Balash and five Asp warriors. Four of the Asp will open the attack by sliding out of the trees and firing arrows at whichever PCs are on watch. (The PCs will not be able to respond unless they have missile weapons ready.) On round two, all six Naga will slither in to attack with melee weapons (spears and swords).

If any of the PCs have played *Tao of the Naga*, they may have developed an enmity with the Balash. He will remember this, and will concentrate his attacks against those PCs.

The Balash, for all his hatred of “huuu-mans,” is not suicidal and will immediately retreat if he is seriously wounded (+15 or higher Wound Rank) or if three or more of his warriors are knocked out of the fight. PCs can try to pursue him by making **Contested Athletics/Agility** rolls, but the Nagas’ familiarity with the forest will give them all a Free Raise on such rolls.

If the Balash and his companions are unable to escape a losing combat, they will fight to the death, hissing defiance and hatred at the PCs in a garble of Rokugani and their own language.

Major Encounter Two: The Forest Spirits

In addition to the Naga, the Shinomen Forest is also home to many Hengayokai – shape-shifting animal spirits. Two of these, a fox (kitsune) and a hare (usagi), become interested in the PCs and quietly observe their travel out of the forest. For each day of travel, have the PCs make **Simple Awareness** rolls at TN 15. With a success, a PC develops the conviction they are being followed, although they will not be able to notice anyone.

If the PCs decide to check for tracks, they can roll **Hunting/Perception** at TN 10 (or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 20) to find the spirits’ animal-like tracks behind them. These will not appear strange or threatening to the PCs, e.g. the GM should say something like: *You see the tracks you would expect in the forest, foxes, hares, deer, and so forth.* However, if the PCs spot the tracks again at a later time or on a subsequent day, they can roll **Simple Intelligence** at TN 20 to realize that the exact same fox and hare tracks are there every time.

The animal spirits will not willingly approach the until at least two days have passed. Prior to that time, if the PCs attempt to chase or confront them, they will flee. Attempts to set traps or snares will likewise fail – the hengayokai are as smart as the PCs, and can shape-shift and use other magics.

After two days, the hengayokai may decide to approach the PCs. This will depend on the PCs’ personalities and behavior. The spirits do not trust angry or aggressive humans (such as PCs with the Brash disadvantage, Honor below 1.0, or who cut down trees and kill animals for no good reason). Calm, friendly, enlightened, and cheerful humans will meet with their approval. Likewise, if the PCs were violent and temperamental in their attempts to catch the hengayokai, the spirits will stay away – whereas, PCs

who treated the situation in a humorous or playful fashion will get a more favorable attitude.

If there are any PCs in the party with spirit ancestry (such as pure-blooded Kitsu, or Fox Clan PCs with the ancestors Osusuki and Akomachi), the hengayokai will approach one day earlier.

As you are walking through the forest, you realize that a pair of unblinking green eyes is looking at you from the underbrush. The ruddy fur of a fox is just visible, crouched behind the foliage.

If the PCs do not react with immediate hostility, the fox spirit will cautiously creep forward from the brush. A moment later, a hare will hop out of the brush to stand next to him. The hare, which also has green eyes, seems quite unperturbed by the presence of the fox, and indeed huddles closer to the fox as though for protection.

Assuming the PCs do not attack (and preferably, make some kind of neutral or friendly overture), the hengayokai will reveal themselves:

The fox and hare look at each other and seem to nod, an oddly human gesture. Then both begin to shimmer with a soft green light. A moment later, with no apparent transition, two human forms stand before you – one is a beautiful woman with long reddish-black hair, wearing a flowing green dress, while the other appears to be a ruddy-cheeked athletic young man in a simple gi. Both of them have luminous green eyes.

The hengayokai will speak to the PCs in Rokugani; their voices are pure and beautiful. They prefer to speak to those with spiritual connections, such as Kitsu, Fox Clan PCs, ise zumi, and shugenja (except fire shugenja, who make them nervous). They also are drawn to PCs of great moral purity (Honor 4.0 or better). The woman (the Fox) is the more friendly of the two, curious about the PCs and mildly flirtatious with any handsome males. The man (the Hare) is more cautious and distrustful, wanting to know why the PCs are in *his* forest, and continually wrinkling his nose at them distastefully.

If any PC has a Rank or more of Taint, the Hare will detect it, and will draw away from that PC, muttering to the Fox. Simple Perception at TN 10 can overhear his words: *“That one stinks, it has the reek of Jigoku.”* He can also detect Shadow corruption, but cannot understand it, and will draw closer to such PCs, sniffing at them curiously. If they ask why, he

explains: ***“Your scent is wrong. Too faint. Like part of you is not there.”***

In general, the two spirits will want to know why the PCs are here fighting the Naga. “This is the Naga’s home,” the Fox explains placidly. “Why have you attacked them? They are an ancient people, and have lived here since long before your Empire appeared. They are wise and powerful, enemies of Jigoku.”

The spirits do not really understand human government, and may inadvertently give offense as a result. For example, if the PCs cite the orders of the Emperor to justify their attack, the Hare will remark: “This Emperor is no wiser than any other human. Why do you listen when he tells you to do foolish things?”

The spirits can tell if the PCs lie to them, and will not approve. If the PCs become angry and berate or attack them (for example, due to their insulting the Emperor), the spirits will simply shift to animal form and vanish into the forest, never to be seen again.

If, on the other hand, the PCs are honest and don’t pick a fight, the Fox will be favorably impressed, and will want to help them. (She will also want to help the PCs if some of them charm her by returning her flirtations.)

The Hare will disagree (“They are foolish and destructive creatures”), but the Fox will prevail unless the PCs interrupt and put their feet in their mouths.

The Fox will ask the PCs to promise not to kill any more of the Naga. Again, she will know if they lie, and will sadly depart from such PCs. If the PCs do make an honest promise, she will prevail on the Hare to offer them a small acorn. He will explain its use thusly: ***“Whenever you are uncertain of your direction, toss this acorn in the air, and when it lands, travel in the direction which it points.”*** PCs who use the acorn are considered to automatically succeed in their **Hunting** rolls to find the correct route out.

If any of the PCs are badly injured, the Fox will be sympathetic, and asks to help. If the PCs agree, the Fox places her hands upon the wounds. Her touch is gentle and soothing, and the pain of the wounds fades. In game terms, the PC(s) benefit from the effects of *Path to Inner Peace*, and heal 12 Wounds each.

If the PCs are short of supplies, the two spirits can also lead them to a spring to refill their waterskins. If the PCs need food, the spirits will be somewhat at a loss, since they eat like animals (grass, small prey, etc). The Fox will offer to bring the PCs some freshly-caught

squirrels, if they desire it. (It is up to the PCs how to respond to this offer of fresh red meat.)

After this encounter, the spirits will not be seen again, but the PCs will still occasionally get the sense that someone is following them. If the PCs give an honest promise not to attack the Naga, and then later break that promise, the spirits will be angry and will Curse those PCs (see the end of the module for details of the curse).

Major Encounter Three: The False Legionnaire

This encounter will occur in the middle of the day, preferably on the last day before the PCs reach the edge of the forest. Have all the PCs roll **Simple Perception** at TN 10. Success means they hear something moving in the forest ahead of them.

Walking cautiously between the trees, sword drawn, is a bushi in the colors of the Lion. He has clearly been lost in the forest for some time: his gold-dyed hair is dirty and matted, and his armor and clothing is covered in dirt and twigs, as though he has been sleeping on the ground. Two broken-off arrow shafts stick out of his armor. He wears the insignia of a chui (lieutenant).

The bushi, Yokuan, is a former Akodo – a PC who rolls **Heraldry/Perception** at TN 10 will notice that he bears the Akodo school mon over his right breast, but on the left breast is the mon of the Lion Clan rather than a family mon.

He is also a Goju, a minion of the Living Darkness – his soul has been weakened by festering anger over the fate of the Akodo family, and during the moment of defeat by the Naga he finally gave in to the Shadow’s power. Since then, the new-made Goju has been hiding, looking for an opportunity to strike at the hated Naga. The PCs are its opportunity.

Yokuan will claim that he was separated from his unit in the chaos of battle, and has been trying to make his way back to them ever since. He will also claim that a day ago, he came across a Naga camp, and has been circling outward from them, hoping to find other samurai to help him attack it. He will encourage the PCs to assist him in such an attack, arguing that this is their chance to pay back these “honorless beasts” for the Legions’ defeat.

Goju Yokuan is, like all creatures of Shadow, a skilled deceiver and manipulator. He will not hesitate to invoke the PCs’ duty to the Hantei Emperor, their duty

to him as a higher-ranking officer (chui), the memory of comrades fallen in battle, the need to avenge the defeat of the Legions, and so forth. He will tailor his words to the personalities of the PCs – for example, if the PCs seem meek and easily bullied, he will shout at them, demanding that they “fight like samurai.” Conversely, if they are cautious and self-sufficient types, he will point out that the Naga camp is probably the source of the attacks they have faced, and eliminating it will make their escape easier.

If any of the PCs mention their encounter with the forest spirits and/or their promise not to attack the Naga, Yokuan will be contemptuous. ***“Forest spirits? Such creatures are malicious deceivers. How many tales have we heard of people tricked and harmed by the mischief of foxes and tanuki? Would you take the word of such creatures over the command of the Emperor?”***

If Fujiko is with the PCs, she will be reluctant to attack, arguing that they should instead try to get out of the forest and find the surviving Legions. Yokuan will dismiss her as a “cowardly ronin,” and Fujiko will be visibly angered but does not challenge him (the Shadow is confusing her thoughts).

If Matsu Amiko is with the PCs, she will readily agree to the attack, and will join Yokuan in berating any PCs who argue against it.

If the PCs refuse to help him attack, Yokuan will browbeat them, calling them honorless cowards, and generally try to overawe and humiliate them into accompanying him. At the same time, the Shadow will be influencing the PCs’ minds, trying to pressure them into agreeing. The PCs must make **Contested Willpower** rolls against Goju Yokuan. (If any PCs have Shadow Corruption, Yokuan gets a number of Free Raises against them equal to their number of Shadow Points.) If the PCs fail, they will find themselves agreeing to help him after all. If all of them succeed, however, their vision will momentarily blur, and then Yokuan is gone, never to return.

If the PCs agree to attack the Naga, Yokuan will lead them on a long, winding path through the forest, reaching the Naga camp after about two hours:

Ahead of you, through the trees, you can just make out the shape of what appear to be strange tents or pavilions, made of an unfamiliar cloth. Snake-like humanoid forms slither between them. You can see that some of them are clearly injured, bright greenish blood leaking from wounds. Among them moves a

larger Naga which looks truly monstrous, its body covered in thick reddish-green scales and its head swollen into a huge hood-like shape.

Yokuan will whisper that the Naga here seem to be resting before going forth to attack again. In truth, this is a gathering-place for wounded Naga, and the Cobra Vedic (called the Shath’skith) is caring for them.

If the PCs attack, all eleven of the Asp warrior Naga here are badly wounded, at the +15 Wound Rank. The Cobra is unhurt, but lacks combat ability. The PCs will find it easy (if lacking in Honor) to slaughter these wounded Naga, much to the delight of Yokuan. The Naga hiss and wail at the false Lion, and the Cobra (which speaks some Rokugani) snarls “the Foul, *the Foul*,” at him. Yokuan will claim to have no idea what they mean. However, have the PCs make **Simple Perception** rolls at TN 20 to notice that Yokuan does not seem to bleed from the Naga arrows which strike him (none of the Naga here have crystal weapons).

If the PCs realize they are facing a hospital, and hesitate to attack, Yokuan will berate them, demeaning their courage and reminding them that the Naga are alien creatures, not samurai, and are not entitled to the protections of bushido. If the PCs continue to hesitate, he will grow louder and more aggressive, deliberately making noise in order to draw the attention of the Naga. Soon enough, the Naga will notice the sounds and prepare for combat, although they will not leave their camp to attack – they are too badly wounded to do so. Yokuan will try to use their preparations to goad the PCs into attacking.

If the PCs relentlessly refuse to fight, or it at any point the PCs realize that Yokuan is not what he seems, his face will suddenly slide and shift like something made of wax. Then he steps backward into the shadow of a large tree and vanishes, leaving behind only a mocking laugh.

If this happens right before or during the attack on the Naga camp, it may be possible for the PCs to parlay successfully with the Naga. The Cobra Shath’skith speaks some broken Rokugani and will ask the PCs why they attacked the Shinomen and why they were in the company of “the Foul.” (He cannot explain what the Foul is, except that it is evil and destructive, and that Yokuan was part of it.) He will also warn any PCs who have substantial Shadow Corruption (3 or more Shadow Points) or Shadowlands Taint (a rank or more) that “the Foul isss in you, will take you soon.”

If the PCs mention the forest spirits to the Cobra, it will recognize the description. “Sssacred ssspiritss, from other realmsss of Atman. You call them... hengayokai, yesss.” It will chide the PCs if they broke their promise to the spirits.

If the PCs make a favorable impression on the Cobra (it will help if they emphasize that they only desire to leave the forest), it will give them a small pale yellow pearl. “Give thissss to my people, they help you leave ussss.” If they make an exceptionally good impression, he may also treat their wounds with his Medicine skill, although this will require that the party behave truly exceptionally.

Major Encounter Four: The Balash Returns

If the PCs did not kill the Balash in their first encounter with him (as is most likely), he will return with a larger group of Naga warriors to attack them again. This should preferably take place on the morning of the day that the PCs are due to escape the forest.

This time there will be no attempt at a stealthy approach – the PCs will clearly hear the sounds of several large serpentine bodies hurtling through the trees toward them. They will have one round to prepare (stringing bows, readying scrolls, etc) before the Naga burst through the trees to attack.

The Balash is accompanied this time by eight Asp warriors. Four of the warriors will hold at distance of twenty feet and use their bows, while the Balash and the other four will engage in melee.

Some of the PCs may be reluctant to fight due to having made a promise to the forest spirits, or may be able to present the Naga with the Cobra’s pearl.

- If the PCs try to negotiate, surrender, resist nonviolently, or otherwise hold to their promise to the forest spirits, the Asp warriors will quickly notice and will refrain from attacking those PCs. The Balash, however, will continue to attack. If all of the PCs are not fighting back, the other Asp will act to restrain the Balash, holding his arms until the Akasha (the Naga collective soul) can calm his anger. The PCs will be free to go, and the other Asp will nod respectfully and give the namaste gesture, while the Balash rages in fury.
- If the PCs present the Cobra’s pearl, the Balash will hiss in fury and strike the pearl away. The other warriors, however, will pick it up and will

draw back, watching the PCs warily. The Balash will try to urge the warriors to attack, and will also try to provoke the PCs into resuming the battle. If that fails, he will withdraw, snarling in fury, and the PCs will be free to go.

If the PCs cannot break off the fight in this way, the Naga will continue to attack relentlessly until either six of the warriors fall, or the Balash and four of the warriors fall. At that point they will withdraw. If some of the PCs flee the fight, the Balash will let them go, remaining behind to kill those PCs who cannot escape. The Naga will not take prisoners.

Part 4: The Fists of the Emperor

As you push past a clinging barrier of brush and shrubs, your eyes are suddenly dazzled by bright sunshine. You have reached the edge of the forest, and for the first time in uncounted days, the light of Mother Sun shines on you uninterrupted. A cool breeze blows across the Plains of Thunder and seems to caress your faces, welcoming you back.

You have little time to celebrate, however, for the sounds of battle reach your ears. Ahead of you, out on the Plains, you can see the ragged outlines of a large military force, flying the banners of the Fists of the Emperor – one of the Imperial Legions. A horde of Naga are assailing it, slithering forward from seemingly every direction of the compass. Their arrows rain down on the Legion endlessly, sending flickering shadows across the sunny sky.

The PCs have three choices at this point:

- (1) Avoid the battle and return to the Empire on their own. This will mean abandoning their fellow Rokugani to an uncertain fate, an act which should cost them Honor and possibly Glory.
- (2) Join the battle. This will mean risking the Battle Table, although if the PCs are still trying to keep their promise to the spirits, they can avoid the worst of the fight. It should be noted that now that the PCs are outside of the forest, they are no longer under the observation of the spirits, and can break their promise without suffering the Curse (although they still might lose Honor).

- (3) Try to intervene and force a truce between the rival armies. This is probably the most difficult option, but the one with the greatest potential reward.

Option 1: Flight

If the PCs decide to simply avoid the battle and return home, they will be facing five more days of travel across the Plains of Thunder. There will be no direct physical danger, but the PCs will still have to worry about collecting food and water.

Game is scarce on the Plains, and water is even more so. The TNs for finding food are increased by 5, and the TN for finding water is increased by 10. However, thunderstorms are frequent on the Plains. Roll 2k2 each day the PCs traverse the Plains – on a roll of 14 or higher, a thunderstorm occurs. If the PCs are clever, they should be able to refill their waterskins during the storm.

Option 2: Battle

If the PCs enter the Battle, they immediately move onto the Battle Table (L5R GM's Guide, page 239). The table functions as normal, but ignoring the Glory awards. "Duel" results mean a one-on-one challenge with an Asp warrior. "Heroic Opportunities" should be taken from the standard list in the GM's Guide.

In order to rejoin the Legion, the PCs will have to spend at least one round of Battle on the Heavily Engaged column. Otherwise they will be cut off by the Naga and will have to make their way home alone (see Option 1 above).

Some PCs may attempt to work their way through the battle without actually fighting (in order to keep the promise to the spirits). Such PCs may double the amount the **Defense+Reflexes** total which they deduct from their Battle Table damage. Any Heroic Opportunities they get will be of a non-aggressive sort (e.g. carrying out wounded men, etc). If they get "Duel" results, their Naga foe will lose interest if they stay on Full Defense (or run away) for more than a couple of rounds.

If a PC holds up the Cobra's pearl, the Naga will avoid attacking that PC (unless the PC attacks them). The PC will still suffer occasional "collateral damage" but will not be in serious danger. Deduct two dice from any damage which the PC takes on the Battle Table, and ignore any "Duel" results. Heroic Opportunities should be limited to non-aggressive ones as explained above.

It may be noted that both Daidoji Rikumura and Ikoma Sansho have made it back with this Legion. The GM can arrange a dramatic battlefield reunion with one or both of these NPCs.

The battle lasts a total of four Battle Rounds. At the end of that time, the Fists of the Emperor manage to break contact and conduct a safe retreat toward the Empire.

Option 3: Peacemaker

In order to force a truce, the PCs will have to convince one of the commanders (either the Naga Shahadet or the Lion general Ijiasu) to request it.

Getting to Ijiasu will require that the PC survive two rounds at Heavily Engaged (Ijiasu is in the thick of the battle). The PC will then have to deliver an eloquent and effective appeal to the Lion, and roll **Sincerity/Awareness** or **Diplomacy/Willpower** at TN 20. The GM can award one or two Free Raises for an exceptionally well role-played appeal. If successful, Ijiasu will call for his troops to fall back, and sends the PC(s) out to negotiate.

The PCs will not be able to speak with the Shahadet unless they have the Cobra pearl. In that case, they will need to survive two rounds of Heavily Engaged in order to reach the Naga commander. Some PCs may have met the Shahadet (a huge golden-scaled Naga warrior) in the adventure Tao of the Naga, and if they made a positive impression there, he will listen to them and call for a momentary cease-fire. If the PCs have not met the Shahadet before, or if they made a bad impression in Tao of the Naga, they will have to make a good speech and roll **Sincerity/Awareness** or **Diplomacy/Willpower** at TN 25. Again, the GM can award one or two Free Raises for good role-playing.

Either way, once a momentary cease-fire is achieved, the PCs will have to cross between the lines and appeal to the opposing commander. This will require another well role-played appeal and a **Sincerity/Awareness** or **Diplomacy/Willpower** roll at TN 25. Once again, good role-playing earns one or two Free Raises.

In general, the most effective appeals will be ones pointing out the futility of further battle and slaughter now that the Legions have been driven from the forest. Appealing to the Naga to recognize the greater threat from the Foul will work well, and reminding Ijiasu that he has a duty to keep his Legion intact for the future protection of the Empire will also work well. Finally, certain types of Advantages can be very helpful in these

negotiations, such as Ear of the Emperor, belonging to the Imperial Families, Benten's Blessing, and some Allies (such as Lion Clan).

If the PCs do succeed in convincing both sides to a truce, the Naga will withdraw to the forest. If the PCs still have the Cobra's pearl, the Shahadet will touch it, awakening a faint yellow-blue light from within. "This iss our thanksss to you, peacemaker," he says. The Legion withdraws unmolested toward the Empire.

If the PCs fail, the battle resumes. The PCs must decide whether to flee (option 1) or stay with the Legion for the remaining rounds of Battle (option 2).

Return to the Empire

One way or the other, the PCs should (hopefully) survive their harrowing ordeal and make it back to the lands of the Emperor.

The Fists of the Emperor is the only Legion to make it out of the Shinomen Forest intact. Many individual soldiers from the other Legions manage to escape back to the Empire, but the Legions themselves are destroyed as military formations. The wrath of the Naga seems to be satisfied... for now.

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

Surviving the adventure: 3 XP
Good role-playing: 1 XP
PCs make a truce at the final battle: 1 XP

Total Possible Experience: 5 XP

Honor

PCs who fail to offer Matsu Amiko an honorable death should lose 1-3 points of Honor, depending on their exact actions and decisions.

PCs who willfully break their promise to the forest spirits will lose a number of points of Honor equal to their Honor Rank. Scorpion PCs lose half that (rounded down).

Glory

PCs who survive the adventure and return to the Empire are recognized for their courage and perseverance, and gain +1 point of Glory.

PCs who fight in the final battle earn 1 point of Glory for each Heroic Opportunity they perform.

Other Awards/Penalties

If the PCs get the Cobra's pearl, and then broker a truce between Ijiasu and the Shahadet, the pearl will be awakened. One PC gets the cert for **The Shahadet's Pearl**.

If the PCs break their promise to the forest spirits inside the bounds of the Shinomen, all such PCs get the cert for the **Curse of the Kitsune**.

NPCs and Creatures

Matsu Akotsu, Lion Gunso (sergeant)

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

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

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 2

Honor/Glory: 3.2/5.3

Skills: Athletics 3, Bard 2, Battle 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 1, History 2, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu (Archery) 3, Lore (Lion Clan) 3, Sincerity 3, Yarijutsu 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Position (Gunso)/Bad Reputation (loudmouth)

Equipment: Daisho set, light armor, kimono.

Matsu Amiko, Courageous Young Samurai-ko

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

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

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 3.5/1.0

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, History 2, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu (Archery) 3, Lore (Lion Clan) 2, Sincerity 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Idealistic

Equipment: Daisho, light armor, bow with 20 arrows, kimono.

Typical Lion Legionnaire (interchangeable)

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

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

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 1 or Akodo Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 3.5/1.0

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu (Archery) 3, Lore (Lion Clan) 2, Sincerity 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Death Trance/Brash

Equipment: Daisho (fine katana, +1 skill die), light armor, bow with 20 arrows, kimono.

Ikoma Sansho, boisterous Ikoma storyteller

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

School/Rank: Ikoma bard 2

Honor/Glory: 2.9/3.1

TN to be Hit: 15

Skills: Athletics 5, Bard 9, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand 5, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Ancestors, Lion Clan) 6, Poetry 3, Sincerity 6, Wrestling 8

Advantages/Disadvantages: Hands of Stone, Quick, Strength of the Earth (rank 2)/Bad Reputation (brawler)

Equipment: Daisho set, no-dachi, traveling kimono

Daidoji Rikumura, skilled Crane bushi

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

Wounds = (Earth+2) per rank [Daidoji

School]

TN to be Hit: 25 (light armor)

School/Rank: Daidoji Bodyguard 2

Honor/Glory: 2.4/2.5

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 2, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 4, Sincerity 2, Yarijutsu 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Irreproachable, Quick

Equipment: Light armor, daisho set, yari, bow with 20 arrows.

Fujiko, embittered ronin

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

TN to be Hit: 20 (25 in light armor)

School/Rank: None (true ronin)

Honor/Glory: 1.8/0.4

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 5, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu 3, Lore (Dragon Clan) 2, Sincerity 3, Stealth 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Quick, Strength of the Earth (rank 1)/Antisocial, Driven (to avenge herself on the Dragon Clan), Social Disadvantage (ronin)

Equipment: Kimono, light armor, straw hat, daisho set, 4 koku.

Toku, Heroic Peasant/Ronin

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

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

School/Rank: None (true ronin)

Honor/Glory: 2.6/0.2

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 1, Defense 2, Horsemanship 1, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 1, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 2, Kyujutsu 1, Lore (bushido) 3, Poetry 1, Shintao 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Great Destiny, Kharmic Tie (Toturi), Luck (three ranks)/Driven (to become samurai), Heimin, Idealistic.

Equipment: Light armor, katana.

Goju Yokuan, Shadow-Corrupted Lion

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

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

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 1

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Defense 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu (Archery) 2, Lore (Lion Clan) 2, Stealth 4.

Equipment: Daisho (fine katana, +1 skill die), light armor.

Wounds: 48: Dead.

Special Abilities: Shadow Invulnerability (take double damage from crystal attacks and half damage from all other attacks). Can “Shadow-walk” and move instantaneously between any two shadows within 100 feet.

The Balash, Angry Asp Warrior

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

[Wounds are treated as though Earth is 4 – benefit of Asp bloodline.]

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Naga Warrior 2

First Lesson: Drawing From the Deep. The Naga may add his Akasha ring to the total of all attack and damage rolls.

Second Lesson: The Tides of War. Add or subtract School Rank to the total of any roll on the Battle Table.

Skills: Archery 5, Athletics 4, Battle 4, Conceal 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 4, Hunting 5, Lore: Naga Ruins 3, Lore: Rokugani Culture 2, Moksha (Naga version of Shintao) 5, Rokugani Language 1, Spear 2, Stealth 4, Swordsmanship 5, Wrestling 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Acute Smell, Heart of Vengeance (humans), Heartless, Immune to Fear, Strength of the Earth (rank one), Venom (rank two), Way of the Land (Naga Ruins, Shinomen Forest), Xenophobic (one extra unkept die against non-Naga)/Brash, Cruel, Driven (“Kill all the humans!”).

Equipment: Sword (2k2), spear (2k3), bow with 40 arrows (1k2). Half the arrows are crystal-tipped.

Typical Naga Asp Warrior

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

[Wounds are treated as though Earth is 3 – benefit of Asp bloodline.]

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Naga Warrior 1

First Lesson: Drawing From the Deep. The Naga may add his Akasha ring to the total of all attack and damage rolls.

Skills: Archery 5, Athletics 3, Battle 2, Conceal 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Swordsmanship 4, Spear 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: None.

Equipment: Spear (2k3), bow with 40 arrows (1k2).

The Shath'Skith, Cobra Vedic

FIRE 2	AIR 3
Intelligence 4	Awareness 4
EARTH 3	WATER 2
	Perception 3
AKASHA 3	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Vedic 2

Rank One: The Vedic has rank one in all High skills.

Rank Two: Gains a free Inner Gift.

Skills: Advanced Medicine 6, Astronomy 2, Calligraphy (Naga) 3, Conceal 1, Defense 2, Law (Naga) 2, Lore (Medicine) 3, Medicine 5, Meditation 4, Theology (Naga) 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Inner Gifts (pain empathy, skilled healer).

Equipment: Medical kit.

The Askur, Insane Naga Abomination

FIRE 2	AIR 3
Agility 3	Reflexes 4
EARTH 3	WATER 3
Stamina 4	
AKASHA 2	

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Naga Warrior 2

First Lesson: Drawing From the Deep. The Naga may add his Akasha ring to the total of all attack and damage rolls.

Second Lesson: The Tides of War. Add or subtract School Rank to the total of any roll on the Battle Table.

Skills: Athletics 3, Conceal 4, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Hunting 3, Lore: Shinomen Forest 1, Spear 4, Swordsmanship 3, Wrestling 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Abomination (Strength of the Earth rank one), Xenophobic (one extra unkept die against non-Naga)

Equipment: Spear (2k3).

