

The Way of Deception

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

by Rob Hobart

While on your first trip to the Imperial Capital, you are asked to look into the disappearance of a Unicorn magistrate. What secrets lie behind this crime, and why are so many people interested?

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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 TOURNAMENT SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

This adventure is an Introductory Rank adventure. This means that only Rank 1 Characters should be allowed to play. This adventure was not written with Rank 2 or higher 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.

Adventure Summary and Background

Two months ago, during the Chrysanthemum Festival, a Unicorn magistrate named Shinjo Usema disappeared from his post at Mura Kita Chushin, the northern Hub Village of the Imperial capital, Otosan Uchi. The traumatic events which subsequently shook the capital – the dreadful earthquake which took the life of the Hantei Emperor, the Emerald Champion, and many others besides – largely derailed any investigation of the incident. However, one meddlesome Scorpion, an Emerald Magistrate named Shosuro Tajiki, has grown curious about this peculiar crime and the equally peculiar silence which surrounds it. He suspects there may be a connection to his investigations into a number of other mysterious events. In order to find out more, Tajiki will enlist the aid of a group of young and inexperienced samurai (the player characters), thereby keeping himself in the background.

The truth of the matter is far more complicated and dangerous than it may at first appear. Shinjo Usema was actually a Kolat, a member of the secret conspiracy seeking to overturn the Celestial Order, and his death was the result of another group of samurai investigators disrupting one of his Kolat operations. The PCs will find themselves encountering a variety of helpers and obstacles as they struggle to unravel this mystery and figure out who is really deceiving who.

What Actually Happened

An aging merchant named Uso, who involved himself in many criminal enterprises, was smuggling Unicorn diamonds. The Kolat's criminal arm wished to take control of this lucrative trade, but Uso proved tougher than they thought and rebuffed their efforts. Usema, the local chief Kolat agent, kidnapped Uso's beloved daughter Kyoumi, hoping to use her as leverage to force the old man to heel.

Uso's plight came to the attention of Yasuki Taka, daimyo of the Crab merchant family of the Yasuki, with whom he had made profitable contacts in the past. Taka is a high-ranking Kolat himself, but hates the organization and runs secret operations against it. He realized this might be a chance to recruit a new agent in his secret struggle against the Kolat conspiracy. Taka used a false story to enlist a small group of samurai to look into the disappearance of Uso's daughter. He told these samurai that the girl had been kidnapped by a local yakuza gang, the Stooping Hawks.

After investigating, the samurai tracked the girl to a cave where the Kolat was holding her. They attacked the cave by surprise and succeeded not only in rescuing the girl but also in killing everyone else at the cave – including Shinjo Usema. The Kolat, of course, subsequently moved in to dispose of the bodies and prevent any evidence of the truth from getting out.

Afterward, the investigating samurai attempted to learn more, and carefully concealed the evidence they had uncovered in the cave (various ciphered documents and other clues). This material was left in the hands of the Stooping Hawks, a local yakuza gang which was itself opposed to the Kolat.

Both the Kolat and Yasuki Taka wanted the investigation to fade from view. Taka, having achieved his goals, used his influence to have the investigating samurai assigned elsewhere. The local governor, Ikoma Kyumo, was under Kolat blackmail, and obligingly failed to investigate the disappearance of his magistrate. The subsequent disasters in Ootosan Uchi,

including the death of the Emerald Champion, made it easier to sweep a single disappearance under the tatami mat.

The fly in the ointment is Shosuro Tajiki. An observant and inquisitive agent of the Scorpion, as well as an Emerald Magistrate in his own right, Tajiki has been noticing a pattern of many strange crimes and other incidents across the Empire, which are often falsely blamed on the Scorpion Clan. He has decided to begin a private investigation into the matter, using his position as Emerald Magistrate to support his activities.

With the Emerald Champion dead and no replacement named as yet, Tajiki has free reign to use his office as he sees fit.

Tajiki learned about Shinjo Usema's disappearance from a report sent in to the capital by one of Usema's assistants, Kitsuki Danjuro. Now he seeks disposable cat's-paws to look into the case.

Notes on Running This Scenario

This is an Introductory scenario and is intended to acquaint the PCs with some of the "basics" about Rokugan – current events, social customs, the lives of commoners and criminals, and the rules of evidence in criminal investigations. It is actually quite unlikely that the PCs will be able to accumulate the evidence to "prove" anything under Rokugani law, and they may come to realize that the "crime" they are investigating is not a crime at all.

There are many different clues and paths of investigation which the PCs can follow once they reach Mura Kita Chushin. The major points of investigation (Uso, the Stooping Hawks, etc) have been grouped into separate sections, but there is also a "Miscellaneous" section near the end of the module which serves as a grab-bag of many different minor plot threads. The GM should read this module carefully and be familiar with all these clues before running the players through it. This will ensure that the adventure runs smoothly and with a minimum of anxious GM page-flipping.

Note on Chronology

For those who may be wondering where "Way of Deception" falls in the official chronology of the Heroes of Rokugan campaign, it takes place just after the beginning of "In Time of War."

Introduction

The early winter sun shines down bravely on the splendid courtyard of Kyuden Seppun, the home of

the Emperor's faithful bodyguards. You have been honored to accompany your daimyo here to pay homage to the new Emperor, Hantei Sotorii, Hantei the 39th. The young Emperor ascended to the Emerald Throne just last month, following the tragic earthquake which struck the Imperial capital, taking the lives of his father and many other samurai and commoners.

Kyuden Seppun is a huge, sprawling complex of gardens, dojos, and guest houses, surrounding a splendid four-story castle. Samurai from many clans, and even a few ronin, have gathered in one of the main courtyards of the complex. Many family daimyo are present, including Kakita Kaiten of the Crane Clan, Ide Tadaji of the Unicorn, and Isawa Kaede, the Phoenix Clan's Acolyte of the Void. The Champions of the Lion and Crane, Matsu Tsuko and Doji Hoturi, are also present, representing the Emperor's Right and Left Hands. You feel awed to be in the presence of so many great names of the Empire, and cannot help but wonder whether someday your own humble daimyo, or even you yourself, might stand in a similar place of honor.

Several hours go by as the samurai circulate and speak together quietly. The time seems to pass in a dream. Finally a silence falls as the doors of Kyuden Seppun open. The young Emperor comes forth, moving at a slow, regal pace, his golden kimono shining brightly in the thin winter light. The crowd ripples like a field of flowers before the breeze as everyone bows low to the Son of Heaven.

As the PCs straighten up after the bow, have them all roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20. Any PCs who succeed will hear a low, growling voice muttering behind them: "Doesn't matter how many pretty clothes they wrap around him, we know there's maggots inside." If the PCs look back to see who spoke, they see a burly Crab bushi, dressed in a plain but good-quality kimono and wearing a well-worn daisho set. This is Hida Shingata, a mid-ranking Crab daimyo (Glory 5.8). If any PC tries to accuse him of insulting the Emperor, he will coldly deny it. Shingata significantly outranks the PCs, and their word is useless against his. If they push the issue too hard, they will lose 1-2 points of Glory for disrupting the court.

After this incident, the rest of the court proceeds without incident. The Emperor seats himself and the various daimyo and samurai present themselves, offering short speeches and pledges of loyalty, reciting poems, and presenting petitions for the favor of the Shining Prince. Each of the Clan PCs will accompany

their daimyo to a brief meeting with the Emperor, and each such PC will be allowed to bow before the throne and deliver a few words. A PC who manages to do something noteworthy (such as reciting a poem composed by the player) should be rewarded with 1 point of Glory. Conversely, a PC who does or says something foolish, crude, or offensive should lose 3-5 points of Glory.

Ronin PCs are not allowed to address the Emperor, and must content themselves with merely being in his presence.

Eventually the court concludes, and the Emperor rises and walks slowly back into the Seppun palace. At this point, the Clan PCs will be released by their lords. A typical comment will be something along these lines: "I will remain here as a guest of the Seppun. There are no further duties here for you, so you may stay at the village inn tonight and depart tomorrow. I trust this has been an edifying experience for you."

Ronin PCs are assumed to be staying at the Inn already, and will need to return there once the court concludes.

Part One: The Inn of the Shining Mempo

The Inn of the Shining Mempo is a large, two-story building located near the center of the sizable village which serves Kyuden Seppun. A gold-painted mask of a smiling face hangs above the door, making it easy to spot. It is a fine-quality inn with an elegant garden surrounding the front and one side. A large bathhouse and an even larger stable in the back provide for the needs of the many guests. The inn has rooms for over fifty people.

As you enter the Inn, a polite servant steps forward and opens a weapons closet for you to deposit your swords. Looking past him into the well-appointed common room, you can see a number of samurai and a few ronin, as well as some wealthy-looking commoners tucked discreetly in back corners. Many of the guests nod or bow politely to you as you enter.

There is a large assortment of NPCs here, and the PCs will have an opportunity to interact with them, learn some of the current events in Rokugan, and perhaps indulge in some intrigue and Clan rivalries.

The following NPCs will be present at the Inn. The GM should feel free to improvise other minor NPCs as

seems appropriate to match the nature and composition of the party.

Otomo Hiroshi: Hiroshi is a spare, slim man with a small goatee and a traditional samurai topknot. He is handsome in a rather plain way. Hiroshi is an Imperial historian, well-acquainted with current events in the Empire, and will happily gossip with anyone on almost any topic (although he shies away from discussing the horrors of the Shadowlands). Hiroshi was on the Imperial barge when it capsized during the tragic earthquake last month, and was one of those who towed the Emperor's body to shore – he will show deep and genuine grief when discussing the death of Hantei the 38th.

Togashi (Goju) Zato: Zato is a large, tubby man, muscular and athletic despite his bulk (think of the Asian martial-arts star Sammo Hung). He has the shaven head of a monk and is dressed in a simple hakama and gi of Dragon green. PCs who look at him closely will notice an impressive tattoo of the ocean on his broad chest.

Zato is a glutton, always eating and drinking, and will frequently ask others at his table whether they are going to finish their meals. He makes constant jokes and is always shaking with laughter. Whenever he pauses in his meals, he wonders whether it is time for a nap. However, any PC who rolls **Lore: Dragon Clan/Intelligence** at TN 15 will remember that the Ocean tattoo makes one free of the need to eat, drink, or sleep. If they mention this to Zato, or comment on his gluttony, he will smile broadly and remark, “Really? I never realized. Are you going to finish that? Oh ho ho!”

Zato is actually a Goju, one of the minions of the Shadow, also known as the Living Darkness or Lying Darkness, a sinister entropic force which seeks to unmake the entire universe. He will not normally reveal his true nature. However, if any PC has Shadow Corruption from a previous module, has a Scorpion Shadow Brand, or has any Lore skill associated with the Shadow, that PC must roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20. With a success, they see Zato's face momentarily shift and slide like soft wax. The image lasts only a moment, and the PC is not sure whether it was real.

Zato has no role in this scenario and is here only to provide an interesting (and creepy) role-playing experience.

Shinjo Taneka: A slim Unicorn man in early middle age, dressed as a bushi. A **Heraldry/Perception** roll at TN 10 will notice that he wears the insignia of a Unicorn clan magistrate. Taneka is a driven man, obsessed with annihilating the illegal opium trade. He is angry and bitter at the failure of the recent attempt by his Clan and the Lion to condemn the Scorpion Clan for opium smuggling. (See “Gossip” below.) Taneka regards Scorpions as little better than criminals, although he will be careful not to say this in their hearing. He watches Shosuro Tajiki carefully throughout the evening. Given the chance, Taneka will vent his frustrations to sympathetic ears (fellow Unicorns, PCs obviously hostile to the Scorpion, etc).

Kakita Geinin: This man is an elegant Crane with long white hair, a handsome face, and a smooth, cultured voice. He is a famed Crane poet and playwright (Glory 3.8). Geinin is always splendidly and perfectly attired, moves with precision and grace, and is constantly accompanied by a servant with a writing table and supplies, in case inspiration strikes. Geinin comes across as charming and talkative, if a bit arrogant, and is especially friendly to PCs from other “civilized” Clans like the Phoenix and Scorpion. He will flirt subtly with any attractive female PCs (more for entertainment than out of any serious intentions).

Isawa Hitsukawa, enlightened Air shugenja: This is a quiet, elegant older man, approaching the age of retirement. He is an Air shugenja with a deep interest in the spirits and Fortunes, and is also quite learned in the Tao of Shinsei. Hitsukawa is largely free of emotional problems or attachments – indeed, he is halfway to being a monk already. PCs who have played the adventures *Proposal of Peace* or *Kuro's Fire* may have encountered him before, although he will be reluctant to speak about the events of *Kuro's Fire* – one of the tests there shook him badly. Given the chance, he will prefer to discuss the current problems between his Clan and the Dragon, and the need for both sides to swallow their pride and accept an honorable and peaceful compromise. “Sadly, opinion on this is far from universal, even within my own Clan. Some of the Acolytes of Fire, for example, are much in favor of teaching the Mirumoto a lesson in humility upon the battlefield.”

Ronin, Takuhito: This short, slightly heavy-set man is dressed in a plain but good-quality kimono without any symbol or mon. Takuhito is a ronin and a representative of the City of the Rich Frog, an independent city located between the territories of the Lion and the Unicorn clans. The two Clans have so far agreed to keep the city neutral (although both sent

magistrates into the city to investigate the opium trade), and Takuhito is here to keep an eye on the Imperial Court and make sure the agreement holds. He is a charming and friendly man who plays the role of a humble ronin working for others. In actuality, he is a member of the Kaeru, the ronin “family” which rules the City of the Rich Frog. He is an excellent judge of character and will be careful only to speak with PCs who might be favorable to ronin. He carefully avoids speaking with Shinjo Taneka.

Shosuro Tajiki: Tajiki is a Scorpion assassin and an Emerald Magistrate, a useful combination for the Scorpion Clan. He is a smiling, handsome young man in his early twenties, and wears a minimal silk mask which shows off his charming features. Tajiki is the gateway to the rest of the adventure – he will observe the PCs carefully for a while, holding aloof from conversation, before approaching them as outlined below.

Gossip

The following section outlines the primary topics of conversation at the Inn. The GM should insert these bits of news, speculation, and rumor into conversations with the NPCs, as seems appropriate.

- The young Emperor, Hantei Sotorii, is only 14, the youngest man ever to sit on the Emerald Throne is his own right (without a regent). A year and a half ago, while his father still lived and reigned, he was kidnapped and held for a month by the Bloodspeaker Cult. Rumors persist that he may have been Tainted during that time, although no one has dared speak such to his face.
- The young Emperor has announced that he is going to marry Isawa Kaede, the Phoenix Clan Acolyte of the Void, next spring. This choice has surprised and disheartened the Crane Clan – all the previous Hantei Empresses were Cranes.
- The Lion Clan Champion, Akodo Toturi, dishonored himself during the Battle of Toshi Ranbo last summer. (He was discovered lounging with a geisha while his armies battled the Crane.) Toturi has become ronin, and the entire Akodo family has given up its name out of shame at his actions. Nobody knows where he is now – rumors have placed him all over the Empire.
- Meanwhile, the Lion-Crane war continues to rage, even into the snows of winter. The Lion took back the city of Toshi Ranbo late in the summer, and

everyone expected the war to pause after the seasons turned toward winter. However, the Lion have continued their advance, driving toward the last Crane stronghold in the north, the Kintani Valley. The new Lion champion, Matsu Tsuko, has sworn that she will conquer the valley before spring.

- A few weeks ago, the Lion and Unicorn Clans attempted to accuse the Scorpion of controlling the illegal opium trade. They planned to present several witnesses to the Emperor. However, all of the witnesses disappeared, died, or were dishonored. The Lion were forced to withdraw their accusations, but rumor has it that they still plan to attack the Scorpion Clan in the spring.
- Bayushi Kachiko, the wife of the Scorpion Clan Champion, was badly burned during the earthquake which struck the Imperial City. She has since been in seclusion in Scorpion lands. Rumor has it that she has been horribly scarred by her injuries. If so, this is a great tragedy, for Kachiko was widely known as one of the most beautiful women in the Empire.
- The Crab Clan has invited many samurai to Winter Court this year, an unusual move for them – usually they prefer to ignore the custom of Winter Court, since the monsters of the Shadowlands do not pause their attacks for the winter.
- The Phoenix Clan Elemental Council is agitating for the restoration of the old office of Jade Champion, which has been allowed to lapse over the centuries. Meanwhile, the Shiba family, the bushi of the Phoenix, seem to be drifting toward war with the Mirumoto bushi family of the neighboring Dragon Clan.
- The Emerald Champion and the Imperial Chancellor both died during the earthquake which took the old Emperor’s life. Several Clans are maneuvering to place their own candidates into these offices.

Tajiki Approaches the PCs

At some point after the PCs have had a chance to role-play and pick up some of the gossip, Shosuro Tajiki will approach them and introduce himself with a bow and a smile.

“Greetings, honored samurai. I am Shosuro Tajiki, a humble magistrate in the service of our blessed

Emperor and the Emerald Champion. A few matters have arisen which require my attention, and I wonder if you might be able to assist me. You have completed your own duties here, yes?"

Assuming the PCs show at least some interest, Tajiki will explain further:

"As you may know, the Imperial capital of Otosan Uchi is served by four Hub Villages, each almost a city in its own right. Since these cities are Imperial possessions, outside the territory of any Clan, the Emperor appoints magistrates to keep the peace and maintain the laws in their streets. Recently, the magistrate of Mura Kita Chushin, the Northern Hub Village, seems to have disappeared. At least his yoriki (assistants) have reported that he has vanished. This seems a most serious matter, does it not?" Tajiki waits for agreement before continuing. *"With all the chaos and tragedy which has afflicted the Empire recently, it seems that this incident has gone all but unnoticed. I would wish to investigate it myself, but I have too many other duties as an Emerald Magistrate. Tomorrow I will be departing for the Imperial Capital to investigate several other cases. However, I do not wish to leave this matter untouched. Would you be willing to investigate on my behalf?"*

If any of the PCs are ronin, Tajiki will offer to hire them for 3 koku.

Players who have played the adventure *In Time of War* may have performed a similar task for Shosuro Tajiki. He will remember those PCs and will draw them aside, quietly informing them that this case concerns the same secret threat which they dealt with the last time they worked on his behalf. He suggests they keep this matter secret from the other PCs – "What is not known cannot be revealed."

Any PC who rolls **Law/Intelligence** at TN 5 will know that Tajiki, as an Emerald Magistrate, has the power to demand cooperation and requisition troops in any situation in which he has jurisdiction. The PCs can still refuse to help if they wish. However, refusing the requests of an Emerald Magistrate is a very questionable act, and could cost the PCs both Honor and Glory. And of course, if they refuse, there will be no adventure!

If the PCs Agree

Assuming the PCs agree to help, Tajiki will give them paperwork appointing them as his yoriki (assistants) for the duration of their investigation, and travel papers

authorizing them to visit the Northern Hub Village. He can also share the following additional information with them:

- The name of the missing magistrate is Shinjo Usema. He is a Unicorn, as his name implies, and has been the magistrate of Mura Kita Chushin for four years. "His appointment was political – some exchange of favors between the Crane and the Unicorn, I believe. Still, there have been no public complaints about his competence."
- Tajiki claims to have learned about Usema's disappearance from a letter sent by Usema's chief yoriki, Kitsuki Danjuro. Danjuro sent the letter to the Emerald Champion several weeks ago, and Tajiki recently read it while he and other Emerald Magistrates were meeting to review their current situation (namely, how they should act while there is no Emerald Champion).
- According to the letter (Tajiki does not have it with him), Usema vanished during the Chrysanthemum Festival at the end of last summer, about a month before the earthquake which shattered the Imperial city. At first Danjuro thought his master might have suddenly departed to report to the Emerald Champion; it was not until some time had passed that he realized something was wrong.
- Tajiki has never met Shinjo Usema himself. "Those Unicorns I have spoken with have described him as an honorable and dedicated man." Tajiki will not indicate whether or not he believes those descriptions.

If any of the PCs make a successful **Contested Awareness** roll against Shosuro Tajiki, they will suspect that he is not telling the whole truth about the case and why he is asking for help. Tajiki will never admit this, however. If the PCs are persistently suspicious, or make accusations, he will become acidly angry, using his rank and social position to berate the PCs. "I had thought you honorable samurai who would be glad to help an Emerald Magistrate solve a crime. I see I was mistaken." The PCs will have to apologize (and perhaps make a **Sincerity/Awareness** roll at TN 10) in order to mollify Tajiki. Otherwise he will withdraw his request for help and the adventure will be over.

Assuming this can be avoided, Tajiki will issue final orders. "Once you have completed your investigation, come to the Imperial Capital and leave word for me at the Blue Chrysanthemum Dojo." (PCs who roll **Lore:**

Bushido/Intelligence or **Lore: Crane/Intelligence** at TN 10, or **Simple Intelligence** at TN 15, recognize the Blue Chrysanthemum as one of the two dojos which train Emerald Magistrates.) With that, he thanks the PCs for their help and wishes them good luck before retiring for the evening. Wise PCs will do the same.

Information the PCs Can Learn

If the PCs decide to find out more on their own before setting out on their mission, they can learn the following clues (by asking the right questions and making a few skill rolls):

- *Shosuro Tajiki*: Any Scorpion Clan PCs can roll **Simple Intelligence** at TN 10, and any other PCs can roll **Lore: Scorpion Clan/Intelligence** at TN 15, to know something about this Scorpion. He is a promising young bushi who is known to be a protégé of Bayushi Kachiko, the wife of the Clan Champion. He was appointed an Emerald Magistrate three years ago, after distinguishing himself in a tournament held at the castle of the Emerald Champion, and has spent the time since then traveling around the Empire, performing various tasks for his Clan and his office. He is unmarried, and has a reputation as a mild womanizer.
- *Shinjo Usema*: Any Unicorn PC can roll **Simple Intelligence** at TN 10 to have heard something about Shinjo Usema. Other PCs can roll **Lore: Unicorn Clan**, **Lore: Emerald Magistrates**, or **Law** (all with the **Intelligence** trait) at TN 15 to know something about him. Usema was a Unicorn Clan magistrate who distinguished himself in action against bandits and opium smugglers. He was elevated to Emerald Magistrate six years ago in recognition of his action in breaking up a cartel smuggling illegal gaijin goods in from the Burning Sands. He was assigned as the magistrate of the Northern Hub Village four years ago. He is married, to a fellow Unicorn; his wife lives in Unicorn lands, looking after his household and property.

If the PCs Refuse to Help

If any of the PCs refuse to assist Shosuro Tajiki, he will frown. “I see I have misjudged you, samurai,” he remarks softly. “I had thought you to be an honorable servant of our beloved Emperor. I regret my error.” If the PC(s) immediately apologize, Tajiki will relent. Otherwise, the adventure is over for those PCs.

Refusing a request for assistance from an Emerald Magistrate costs 1-3 points of Glory and 1-5 points of Honor, at the discretion of the GM, depending on the PC’s background and current Honor/Glory rank.

Part Two: To Mura Kita Chushin, the Northern Hub Village

When the PCs arise the next morning, they will find several Rokugani ponies waiting outside – enough for all the PCs who do not have mounts of their own. The stableboy who accompanies them explains that “the honored Scorpion samurai” hired the mounts for his yoriki.

With the help of their mounts, the PCs will be able to make the trip to the Northern Hub Village in a single day, arriving in the early evening. The trip is uneventful, for this close to the capital the Imperial roads are well-patrolled. The PCs pass much merchant traffic on the road, and meet many other traveling samurai (along with the occasional wandering monk). They are stopped several times by patrols of Imperial legionnaires (mostly a mixture of Lion bushi and Seppun guardsmen), but are always quickly and politely waved on after presenting their travel papers.

The sky is darkening from blue to purple, the western horizon turning golden-orange with the setting of Mother Sun, when you arrive at the gates of Mura Kita Chushin, the Northern Hub Village of Otosan Uchi. The so-called “village” is actually a prosperous small city, probably home to 4,000 people or more. Traffic on the roads is heavy, as merchants and samurai alike flow in and out of one of the four major trade links between the Imperial capital and the rest of Rokugan. You wait in line for almost an hour, and the light is dimming into twilight, before the guards at the gate finally review your travel papers and wave you inside.

Inside the gates, a dozen or more young peasants call out, offering their services as guides.

The PCs can hire a guide for two copper zeni a day. All of the guides are energetic and reasonably honest, and scrape out a living by showing strangers (samurai or merchants) around the city. A few brief descriptions of different possible guides follow – the GM should pick whichever one seems to make for the most interesting role-playing:

1. Chuko, a 12-year-old boy. Chuko's mother is sick, and his father, a carpenter, died last year in a fire. He will be a helpful and diligent guide, trying to earn the PC's favor so that he can get more money for his mother.
2. Gorobei, teenager. Gorobei is an ambitious fellow hoping for a chance to become an ashigaru and win glory on the battlefield. He serves as a guide to keep himself fed until some likely samurai recruiter spots him.
3. Soku, young man. Soku is a former farmer who lost his left hand in an accident with a scythe. He has a wife and daughter, and another child on the way. He will be a serious and consciences guide, and is always careful not to give offense. He will not discuss his own life unless a PC asks him.
4. Chommei, old man. A grizzled man in his fifties with lots of worldly wisdom. Chommei's son is a poor day-laborer, and he works as a guide to help provide for the grandchildren.
5. Akunai, boyish and beardless young man. Akunai is actually a teenaged girl who ran away from home rather than be sold as a geisha. She is skilled at her imposture and the PCs will not see through it unless they pay close attention to her and make a **Contested Perception** roll against her **Acting/Awareness** (4k2).

It should be noted that samurai do not often interact with commoners. Depending on their personalities, background, and Clans, many of the PCs may ignore their guide's personality and simply treat him (or her) as a useful tool. However, PCs who go to the trouble of treating their guide well and earning his trust will find the scenario easier – the guide will volunteer information, and can supply useful clues such as the location and name of the Hooting Owl rock formation.

The guide (whichever one the PCs choose) will lead them to a good Inn, the Bountiful Harvest, where they can stay, bathe, and rest. Once the PCs begin investigating (either tonight or tomorrow) the guide will take them wherever they need to go.

The PCs are on their own, and can investigate as they see fit. Given the information they have, they will probably start out either by reporting to the local governor, or by seeking the Magistrate's Office. An

Etiquette/Intelligence roll at TN 10 will remind the PCs that it is proper for visiting investigators to present themselves to the local authority.

Both the governor's residence and the magistrate's office are located near the center of the town, and any guide (or simply asking locals) can take the PCs there.

Part Three: The Governor's Residence

The governor of Mura Kita Chushin, Ikoma Kyumo, resides in a large, fine-quality house, of heavy wooden construction and with a peaked roof more like that of a castle. The building and grounds are surrounded by a high stone wall. Two bushi in Lion colors stand guard before the main gate, and will politely but firmly stop the PCs and ask their business. Assuming the PCs tell the truth (or at least present a plausible lie), a servant will come out and take their chops (signatures). He then leads them inside, to a small but well-appointed audience room, and leaves them there. Other servants will offer tea.

The PCs will be allowed to wait for a good hour before the Governor deigns to see them (they are far lower than he is in rank).

The doors to the room finally slide open and the Governor enters, followed by a pair of servants and a scribe who sets up a writing desk. Governor Ikoma Kyumo is a slim, dapper man in a fine gold-and-brown kimono. He smiles politely as he seats himself and acknowledges your bows. "What can I do for the servants of one of our Emerald Magistrates?"

Ikoma Kyumo is a high-ranking Lion courtier, appointed to his position by the previous Emperor in recognition of his unquestionable loyalty and honor. (And in return for various political favors.) PCs who roll **Courtier/Intelligence** (or a suitable **Lore** skill) at TN 10 will know that the governors of the Hub Villages, and of the various districts of Otosan Uchi itself, are all appointed by the Emperor.

Kyumo puts on the appearance of an honorable, dedicated man with a friendly demeanor. He shows no Clan prejudices except for a polite distance toward Cranes and Scorpions. He will profess to be delighted that someone is finally looking into the disappearance of his magistrate, and promises full and complete cooperation. Depending on what questions the PCs ask, he can provide some or all of the following information:

- He learned of Shinjo Usema's disappearance from one of Usema's assistants, Kitsuki Danjuro. "I ordered him to notify the Emerald Champion, of course. But the matter seems to have been forgotten until now. Well, that is understandable, I suppose, in light of recent events."
- He claims to know little about what Usema was doing before he vanished. "I believe he had several open cases. Opium smuggling, of course. I think he was looking into one of the local yakuza gangs in connection to that. And the usual murders and such – commoners and ronin are prone to such barbarity, and must be policed strictly."
- Kyumo will describe Usema as an "honorable and dedicated man, of middle years, starting to go gray with the stress of his duties." He will scoff at any suggestions that the man was doing anything improper. If the PCs present any evidence of Usema's true nature (the coded papers kept by the Stooping Hawks, for example) he will pretend to be shocked and horrified. He attempts to take control of the evidence, promising to pass it on to superiors in the Lion Clan and the Imperial capital. The PCs can refuse if they wish – they are working for an Emerald Magistrate, and that takes precedence.
- If the PCs ask who has been handling things since Usema's disappearance, Kyumo will explain that Usema's two assistants have been "doing their best to uphold the Emperor's law." He identifies them as Kitsuki Danjuro ("a dedicated, honorable young bushi") and a wave-man ("don't recall his name"). Kyumo is not sure whether they are still pursuing any of Usema's old cases.

The Truth

Ikoma Kyumo is being blackmailed by the Kolat (for certain dishonorable private vices). Beneath his practiced façade he is worried about the PCs and suspicious of their motives, especially once they reveal why they are here. He will be careful not to reveal this openly, however. In order to see through Kyumo's skilled performance, the PCs will have to make a successful **Contested Awareness** roll against his **Acting/Awareness** of 4k3.

If the PCs are foolish enough to accuse Kyumo openly, call him a liar, or anything else, he will furiously throw them out of his residence and expel them from Mura Kita Chushin. If the PCs are ronin, he may even have

them executed for their insolence (unless a Clan PC pleads eloquently for mercy). Kyumo is Glory 5.8 – the lowly PCs have no way of responding to such actions.

Consequences

If the PCs speak with the governor and tell him why they are here (to investigate the disappearance of Shinjo Usema), he will immediately send a warning to his local Kolat contact, Yukima of the Peach House. Soon thereafter, the PCs will begin to be tailed by a Kolat agent. See "The Tail" below.

Part Four: The Magistrate's Office

Shinjo Usema's residence is a modest-sized but fine-quality house, adjacent to the larger residence of the city Governor. The small garden in front of the house displays many items and statues of exotic foreign design, a legacy of Usema's Clan.

A polite servant asks your business and takes your chops, then leads you inside to a waiting room. After a few minutes, two men enter. One is dressed in the green-and-gold colors of the Dragon Clan, while the other is a well-dressed ronin. They both bow politely.

The Dragon will identify himself as Kitsuki Danjuro, "yoriki to the honored Shinjo Usema," and names his companion as "Furishi, an honorable wave-man also in the service of Usema-san." Danjuro will take the lead in any discussion, but it will be noted that he often defers to Furishi on matters pertaining to local conditions (e.g. anything to do with who lives in the city, where they are, and so forth). The two will politely ask the PCs why they are here.

Kitsuki Danjuro is an earnest, dedicated young man who has no idea of Usema's true nature. He got his appointment here on the basis of political connections, and despite his family name, is not actually trained in any of the famous Kitsuki investigative techniques. Nevertheless, he takes his duty as a magistrate's assistant seriously, and has even tried to carry on with some of Usema's cases since his disappearance. He knows little or nothing about the town, and relies on Furishi to supply most of his information.

Furishi is a Kolat, and was Usema's apprentice within the organization. Now he takes orders from Yukima the geisha, at the Peach House. Furishi is a relatively new recruit to the organization, and rather nervous

about his master's disappearance. The arrival of the PCs will alarm him. Although he will do his best not to let anything slip, a **Contested Awareness** roll against his Awareness of 2 will detect his emotions and perceive that he has things to hide. After the PCs visit here, Furishi will go to the Peach House and report to Yukima. Thereafter, a Kolat agent to follow the PCs, if he was not doing so already (see "The Tail" below).

Furishi is the weak link in the local Kolat organization, and clever PCs who suspect him may be able to "break" him. See "Confronting Furishi" in the "Conclusions" section at the end of the adventure.

What the Yoriki Know

Once the PCs have explained why they are here, the two yoriki will cooperate fully. Danjuro in particular will be clearly relieved that someone is looking into the disappearance of his superior. Furishi will feign a similar relief, although PCs who beat him on **Contested Awareness** can tell he is faking it and actually doesn't want them looking into things.

In any case, the yoriki can supply the following information.

- They will both describe Shinjo Usema as an honorable and dedicated man, in his mid-thirties, with graying hair, easily-tanned skin, and a hawk-like nose. His family was in Unicorn lands, and he was clearly married more to his duty than to his wife.
- On the day he disappeared, Shinjo Usema did not do or say anything unusual. He simply said he had some important private business and rode away, never to return. He had gone on such sudden trips several times in the past, but always returned by the end of the day. Danjuro will remark that "Usema-san was... IS a man of some rank, and no doubt has many other duties besides those here." This time, however, he did not return.
- When Usema first failed to return, Danjuro was worried, but thought that perhaps his master had departed to report to the Emerald Champion (all Imperial magistrates must make such reports periodically). When Usema still did not return or send word for over a week, Danjuro decided something had gone wrong, reported to the Governor, and dispatched a letter to the Emerald Champion. "Sadly, my letter would have reached the capital around the time of that terrible earthquake..." If a PC specifically asks whether

Governor Ikoma Kyumo told him to send the letter, Danjuro thinks for a moment, then says, "No, I believe I suggested it, and he assented."

- If the PCs ask whether Usema kept any kind of personal journal, the yoriki say he did not (at least not that they know about). He did maintain detailed official records of his cases. He also wrote many letters, both personal and official ("a busy correspondent" as Danjuro describes him). The PCs can review all such documents if they wish (see "Records and Papers" below).
- If the PCs ask about Usema's open cases at the time of his disappearance, Danjuro will list them off, although he relies on Furishi for some of the details. The open investigations included opium smuggling, the Stooping Hawks yakuza, a pair of murders, and questionable trading practices by the merchant Uso. All of these cases are still open – the yoriki have been concentrating on upholding the law, and have not had much time to spare for other matters.
- **Opium Smuggling.** This was a constant open case, driven by pressure from Shinjo Usema's superiors in the Unicorn Clan, who hate opium addiction. The investigation usually focused on the local yakuza gang, the Stooping Hawks, but also targeted the Scorpion Clan. Usema was never able to find any evidence connecting the Scorpion to opium.
- **The Stooping Hawks.** Furishi describes these fellows as an "otokodate (ronin brotherhood) gone bad," and says they are aggressive, ruthless, and dangerous, a scourge on Mura Kita Chushin. Danjuro concurs that "it was Usema-sama's fondest hope to root out and crush this filthy organization." Besides opium smuggling and distribution, the Stooping Hawks are also suspected of loan sharking, protection rackets, extortion, murder, and prostitution. Usema made several arrests of Stooping Hawk members, but they never provided him with enough material to go after the heart of the organization. He did identify a gambling house called the Blue Lotus as their principle center of operations, and had Furishi stake it out on several occasions. Eventually, however, Furishi was "blown" and had to stop. In any case, Usema was unable to shut down the organization, nor could he identify or arrest the Stooping Hawk leadership.

- **The Murders.** These were a pair of ronin, Komaku and Sota, who were found in a ditch in the lower-class district known as Ash Alley (due to its proximity to the *eta* district crematoriums). The ronin were discovered on the morning before Usema vanished, and the investigation had barely begun. The two men were slain with swordblows, and in the brief time he looked at the case, Usema suspected they were most likely robbed and murdered by other wave men. Danjuro will mention that since Usema's disappearance, he has managed to identify the ronin as working for a slimy merchant named Uso, who was also the subject of an investigation. (This revelation will come as a surprise to Furishi, who knows this case has Kolat connections and was hoping it would be forgotten.)
- **Uso the Merchant.** Danjuro describes Uso as a "merchant of great wealth but questionable morals, even by the standards of such creatures." Usema was looking into rumors that Uso was smuggling diamonds from the Burning Sands, in violation of the prohibition against trade with *gaijin* (foreigners). Usema found no evidence to prove the case, but kept the investigation open and continued to look into it on a regular basis. Danjuro expresses a little surprise as this persistence, and mentions his own suspicion that the accusation was probably planted by one of Uso's commercial rivals. "These merchants will not hesitate to cheat and lie in furtherance of their dishonorable commerce."
- If any of the PCs have been to visit the merchant Uso, and learned about his daughter's kidnapping, they may ask the yoriki about that. Both yoriki will deny any knowledge of such a case, and claim that Usema would certainly have told them of something like that, especially since it involved the hated Stopping Hawks. Danjuro is being truthful about this, of course, but Furishi is lying – he knows all about the truth of the kidnapping.

Records and Papers

If the PCs ask, they can review Usema's records of his various criminal investigations. This will require a couple of hours and a roll with either **Research/Intelligence**, **Law/Intelligence**, or **Calligraphy/Intelligence** at TN 10. A success will extract the following additional information:

- **The Stopping Hawks:** There is also a large file of witness reports from questioning various

commoners and ronin about the Stopping Hawks. Several of these witnesses allege that the gambling house known as the Blue Lotus is the headquarters of the gang. They also accuse the Hawks of a variety of crimes, including opium distribution, protection rackets, and murder.

- There are three interrogation reports from questioning (torture) of alleged members of the yakuza gang, two commoners and one ronin. All three had tattoos of hawks on their backs. They refused to name other members of the gang, even under torture. They did confess to various crimes (murder, drug smuggling, etc.), but refused to admit they did such things under orders from any larger organization. All three were put to death.
- There are several transcriptions of reports from Furishi about his surveillance of the Blue Lotus gambling house. He suspected strongly that the place was actually an opium den, and saw several people abusing the drug, but was unable to catch anyone actually buying or selling it. He did identify the three yakuza members who were later arrested (see above). The last report records that, "regretfully, some of the regulars seem to have become suspicious of my visits. I believe I can no longer productively observe this place."
- **Uso the Merchant:** There is an extensive file on Uso and his business practices. Uso specializes in shipping goods in from Unicorn and Mantis lands, and deals in jewelry and many exotic goods as well as bulk products such as silk, spices, and food. He often skirts the line of Imperial law regarding import of *gaijin* items (such things are allowed as "curiosities" but not in large quantities), but has never been caught in violation.
- Uso is listed as having no specific patron in the samurai caste – instead he relies on loose support from many wealthy customers in Otsan Uchi. Anyone who rolls **Commerce/Intelligence** at TN 10 will know this is unusual – most merchants attach themselves to a single samurai nobleman to protect and promote their trade.
- There is nothing anywhere in the papers about any kidnapping or other mystery associated with Uso.
- **Other Information:** There are many other crime reports in the files, including murders, disappearances, rapes, brawls and street fights, drug abuse, public drunkenness, and so forth. PCs

looking for blackmail material will find much of interest here.

The Tail

At some point a few game-hours after the PCs either (a) tell Governor Ikoma Kyumo why they are here, or (b) speak with Shinjo Usema's assistants, a Kolat agent will begin tailing them, trying to learn who they are and what they are up to. This person (use the "Kolats ninja" stats) will appear to be a nondescript commoner, and is adept at Hisomu, the art of "hiding in plain sight" in urban environments. In order to notice him, the PCs must normally roll **Simple Perception** against his **Hisomu/Awareness**. They may make one roll per day to realize they are being followed.

If the PCs are suspicious enough to deliberately look for a tail, they can instead opt to roll **Investigation/Perception**, **Nazodo/Perception**, or **Hunting/Perception** against the ninja's **Hisomu/Awareness**.

Smart PCs will avoid letting the Kolat know they have spotted him. In such a case, they may be able to turn the tables and trail the Kolat back to his headquarters (the Peach House). This will require defeating the Kolat's **Simple Perception** with a **Stealth/Awareness**, **Hunting/Awareness**, or **Hisomu/Awareness** roll. If the Kolat spots his tail, or if the PCs make it obvious they have noticed him (e.g. turning around, pointing, trying to approach him, etc), he will fade away into the crowd. A new Kolat ninja will be assigned later to resume surveillance on the PCs.

Part Four: Uso the Merchant

Uso is also the key to the investigation. He knows much of the truth about what happened, and if the PCs ask him the right questions, he will put them on the correct trail. One thing Uso does not know, however, is that the Stooping Hawks are also enemies of the Kolat. In fact, he regards them as enemies, and is unwittingly helping the Kolat by blaming the Hawks for his troubles.

If the PCs go in search of Uso, they can soon learn (from their guides, from Usema's yoriki, or from his investigation papers) that the merchant resides in a fine house on the edge of the town, and maintains a large warehouse in the Merchant District. During the day, Uso is in his office at the warehouse – in the evenings, he is at his residence. Regardless of where the PCs

visit him, he will immediately make time to meet with them – he is a lowly merchant, after all, and does not dare keep mighty samurai waiting.

If the PCs visit the warehouse:

Uso's warehouse is a huge vaulted wooden structure, packed with bales and crates of trade goods. A tough-looking ronin stands guard outside, and nods politely as you enter. A simpering commoner servant leads you to the back of the warehouse. In a small windowless room lit by a single yellow lamp, a short, balding, pot-bellied man, clearly over fifty years of age, sits in front of a wide desk covered in papers. A large abacus, mounted in a wooden frame, sits to one side of the desk. On the other side is a tall wooden scroll-shelf, its narrow compartments stuffed with papers and scrolls. The old man turns toward you and breaks into an ingratiating smile, bowing low over skinny, grasping fingers. "How may I help you, noble samurai?"

Uso will assume the PCs are here on business until they explain otherwise. Any PC who rolls **Heraldry/Perception** at TN 10 will notice a small Yasuki mon on Uso's garments, marking him as a vassal of that family.

If the PCs visit Uso's house:

The walls which surround the merchant's house are tall and well-built, and two tough-looking ronin stand guard outside. They nod politely and ask your business.

Once the PCs explain why they are here, a servant will come out and guide them into the house:

A fine garden, better than many you have seen in samurai dwellings, gives way to a beautiful house, its floors polished to a high sheen and splendid artwork hanging on the walls. The merchant awaits you in a dining room, sitting at a kotatsu, a low table with heavy quilts hanging off the sides to warm the feet. He is a short, balding, pot-bellied man, clearly over fifty years of age, with skinny, grasping fingers. A lovely young woman sits behind him in the place for a wife. A pretty girl of about ten years sits behind both of them.

Uso smiles ingratiatingly as he gestures for a servant to hurry forward with tea and sake. "Welcome to my humble home! My family and I are honored. To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit, samurai-sama?"

Uso will introduce his wife as Yuka (“a fresh flower to comfort me in my declining years”) and his daughter (“the fruit of my first wife, so tragically taken from me many years ago”) as Kyoumi. Neither woman will speak unless spoken to, although it will be obvious that the young girl is anxious and fearful (especially if the PCs mention anything connected with Shinjo Usema or the kidnapping). It is something of a breach of etiquette to speak without permission to a woman in the presence of her husband and/or father.

Again, any PC who rolls **Heraldry/Perception** at TN 10 will notice a small Yasuki mon on Uso’s garments, marking him as a vassal of that family.

Uso’s Character

Uso is, for the most part, a quintessential merchant – greedy, cowardly, scheming, and clever. Compared to samurai, he is lowly indeed, and will bow and scrape in a nauseating fashion. He promises to help the PCs any way he can, babbles about how honored his home/business is by their visit, and so forth. Highly honorable or traditional PCs (such as Lion, Crane, or Phoenix) should find his company especially unpleasant.

Despite his unctuous exterior, Uso will try to avoid being completely truthful with the PCs. He is now a servant of Yasuki Taka, and has promised to keep the circumstances surrounding the recent crimes secret. The PCs will have to show both persistence and a real interest in learning the truth in order to convince Uso to give them some real clues. PCs who make a **Contested Awareness** roll against Uso’s Awareness of 3 while speaking with him will realize that he is hiding and concealing a great deal. If they interview him at his house, they will also notice that he is very anxious and protective about his daughter.

Uso will constantly watch the PCs and gauge their reactions during conversation. He is a very perceptive man and adept at “reading” samurai (his life and livelihood depend on it). If he judges them to be unimaginative, foolish, or stiff-necked, he will relentlessly stonewall them, offering the minimum information necessary to satisfy them. Above all, he will do his best to tell them as little as possible about his daughter’s kidnapping, and will never confess the truth about Shinjo Usema.

If, on the other hand, Uso judges the PCs to be the sort who might be able to pursue difficult investigations through to uncomfortable truths, he will become

somewhat more cooperative. In particular, he may volunteer some of the information about his daughter’s kidnapping, hoping that the PCs will be able to follow those clues through. He will not confess the real truth about Shinjo Usema unless the PCs have already “solved” the case and then return and speak with him again (see “Uso Tells the Truth” below).

Remember that Uso now has the protection of Yasuki Taka, the daimyo of the Yasuki family of the Crab Clan. If the PCs become suspicious or hostile toward Uso and question him more sharply, or accuse or threaten him, he will subtly draw attention to the fact that he serves a powerful and influential daimyo of a major samurai family. PCs who threaten or hurt him are, indirectly, doing the same to Yasuki Taka.

Any PC who rolls **Lore: Crab Clan/Intelligence** at TN 10, **Commerce/Intelligence** at TN 15, or **Simple Intelligence** at TN 20 will recognize the name of Yasuki Taka as the daimyo of the Yasuki family of the Crab Clan – a man of great wealth and influence.

What Uso Will Say

If the PCs ask about *Shinjo Usema*, Uso will smoothly lie, praising the man as an “honorable and virtuous samurai, and an able magistrate.” He will express concern about Usema’s status and urges the PCs to learn the truth of what has happened.

If the PCs discuss *Usema’s investigations of Uso*, the merchant will try to shrug it off as “a minor matter, some rival of mine made false accusations. Usema-san soon recognized the truth.” If the PCs persist (mentioning that Usema kept the investigation active, for example), Uso will claim to be confused and hurt. “I cannot imagine why the honorable Usema-san would have thought so little of me,” he whimpers.

If the PCs ask about *Uso’s patrons*, or about *Yasuki Taka*, he will smile and explain that “the honorable Taka-sama” has recently seen fit to name him as one of his retainers. “I am hardly deserving of such a great honor.” If the PCs ask when this happened (perhaps mentioning the discrepancy with Shinjo Usema’s records), Uso explains that this is “quite a recent development,” having occurred less than six weeks ago.

If the PCs ask about *Uso’s daughter*, or mention that he seems quite protective of her, Uso will lose his normal greasy manner as he waxes eloquent about his “perfect little flower, the only treasure left of my lovely first wife.” (She died in childbirth, and Kyoumi is all he has

to remember her.) If the PCs have learned anything at all about her disappearance/kidnapping, and mention it to him, he will be clearly alarmed, and if at home, begs the PCs not to say more. “You’ll upset my delicate flower, please, samurai, I beg of you.”

If the PCs ask about **the two murdered ronin**, Komaku and Sota, Uso will confess that they used to work for him. He hired them at the Crimson Mask, an inn frequented by “wave-men in search of work.” Uso claims that they (and another ronin, a woman named Izumi) ran away “the moment I needed them,” proving their untrustworthiness. He seems untroubled by their deaths, suggesting (in indirect language) that they got what they deserved. Uso will not voluntarily connect their disappearance/murder to the kidnapping of his daughter, unless the PCs have already learned about that incident.

If the PCs ask about **the Stooping Hawks**, Uso affects horror. He describes them in the worst possible terms, as vicious criminals who run protection rackets. “They’ve tried to work their extortions against me, but without success, I can assure you.” If the PCs ask where they are, he says they operate out of the slums next to the *eta* district, although he couldn’t say exactly where. “Respectable businessmen don’t go to such places.” He will attempt to dismiss anything the Hawks say as “lies and nonsense.”

If the PCs have already learned about **the kidnapping of Uso’s daughter** (from his servants, public gossip, the Stooping Hawks, etc), they can ask Uso about it. He will at first try to pretend that nothing ever happened, and if he is at home, will insist that his wife and daughter leave the room before he speaks further. Uso will reluctantly “admit” that his daughter was kidnapped by the Stooping Hawks yakuza, who left a note behind demanding that he pay them protection money. “I went straight to the magistrate, of course, and gave the note to him.” His daughter was returned three days later, left unconscious outside his door in the early morning. He claims to have assumed that Shinjo Usema either rescued her or cowed the yakuza into releasing her.

If the PCs question Uso carefully about the timing of this event, they will realize that his daughter was kidnapped two days before Usema vanished, and returned the day after the magistrate disappeared. Uso will affect complete surprise and horror at this revelation. “Heavens! I pray to the blessed Fortunes that the brave Usema-sama did not die in the cause of freeing my daughter.”

If the PCs ask for **details on the kidnapping**, Uso explains that the villains “stole my daughter from my home while I was at work. My new wife Yuka was with me – I confess I enjoy the company of a young woman again, after so many years. The first I knew was when I returned to find my ronin guards missing, my servants slaughtered, my daughter gone, and that awful note lying on the floor.” If Uso is being cooperative, he will name the three ronin as Komaku, Sota, and Izumi, all hired at the Crimson Mask. He will also mention that no-one in the neighborhood heard any noise: “The villains must have had a shugenja working for them, to dampen the noise.”

Uso Tells the Truth

Uso knows that Shinjo Usema was a Kolat who arranged the kidnapping of his daughter in order to force him into joining the Kolat’s financial network. He will not confess any of this unless the PCs come to him after learning at least part of the truth from other sources (the Hooting Owl, the ciphered papers kept by the Stooping Hawks, etc.). The PCs will have to be honest and forthright about what they know in order to gain Uso’s complete trust.

Once Uso decides to be honest, he will explain the following:

- Shinjo Usema was investigating him in order to pressure him into joining a criminal conspiracy, one to which Usema himself belonged.
- There was no kidnapping note. After his daughter was taken, Shinjo Usema visited Uso and warned him that he must submit and cooperate if he wanted to see his precious child again.
- “I do not know who is was who arranged it, but two days after my daughter vanished, a group of samurai came to investigate. A group of Crab and Unicorn bushi, men I had never seen before. They asked me many questions, and then went elsewhere. I think they spoke with the Stooping Hawks also. The next morning they returned with my daughter, and warned me not to ask what had happened to her... or to Shinjo Usema.”
- If the PCs ask for details on this “criminal conspiracy,” Uso will smile and tap his nose while remarking, “The knots of lawgivers are triumphant.” A PC who rolls **Cipher/Intelligence** at TN 10, **Nazado/Intelligence** at TN 10, **Poetry/Intelligence** at TN 15, or **Simple**

Intelligence at TN 20 will figure out the meaning: Kolat.

- Uso will never admit to the involvement of Yasuki Taka in his daughter's rescue. If the PCs press him about the sudden appearance of these mysterious samurai "investigators," he shrugs. "I suppose my enemies have their own enemies. Are you not their enemies as well?"

Kyoumi the Daughter

If the PCs can arrange to interview Kyoumi alone (this will require visiting her at home while Uso is at his warehouse, since Uso will never give his permission), they will find her to be a pretty, timid, soft-spoken girl who is easily frightened or intimidated. She will try to maintain the pretense that there was no kidnapping, but a convincing verbal appeal and a **Sincerity/Awareness, Manipulation/Awareness,** or **Intimidation/Willpower** roll at TN 15 will "break" her into admitting it.

Once "cracked," Uso's daughter will tell at least some of the truth, although she will try not to let slip too much. She will explain that "the woman ronin who was guarding us went mad, and killed everyone, the other ronin and the servants, everyone." She says the woman (Izumi) was helped by a "grubby, skinny man, a shugenja, he kept pulling out a pipe and smoking something that smelled bad." There was also another man, a "samurai," who blindfolded her and carried her off. She will try not to say who this man was (it was Shinjo Usema), but persistent questioning will probably cause her to slip up and describe him as "the Unicorn." After that it will not be difficult to pressure her into admitting that the "Unicorn" was actually Shinjo Usema.

She explains that the "Unicorn" took her to a cave, where she was chained up. Then a group of five samurai, two Crab and three Unicorn ("good Unicorns, not like him"), came and rescued her. They slew the "bad Unicorn" and some other men in the cave. They also took "a bunch of papers, writing, I tried to peek at it but I couldn't read it." Then they brought her home to her father. "I promised I wouldn't say anything, samurai, I promised. I won't be punished for telling, will I?"

- If the PCs ask where the cave was, Kyoumi isn't sure (geography is not a strong suit with her) – it was outside the town, in the woods. One of the samurai who rescued her called it "the Hooting Owl."

- If the PCs ask about what happened to the papers, Kyoumi says the samurai argued a lot about what to do with them. "The Crab wanted to take them to somebody they trusted, and the Unicorn wanted to take them somewhere else, and they couldn't decide which could really be trusted. So they finally decided to take them to the Hawks. I don't think they could have meant the Stooping Hawks, though – father says they're evil criminals, not to be trusted."

- Kyoumi does not know what happened to the samurai who rescued her. The last time she saw them was when they brought her to her father's house. They still had the papers at that time.

Questioning Uso's Ronin

Uso has a total of five ronin working for him. During the day, two guard his house (and Kyoumi) while one protects the warehouse. At night, two ronin guard the warehouse and two watch his house.

All of these ronin are competent, high-quality swordsmen, mostly former Clan samurai, hand-picked by Yasuki Taka to watch over his newest vassal. They all have at least some distant knowledge of the Kolat, but know better than to blab about it to strange investigators. They will, however, freely admit that they have only recently begun working for Uso. "His old ronin weren't very reliable, I hear. Cheap sell-swords, hired at the Crimson Mask. You won't find anyone there who will keep true to their patron."

Questioning Uso's Servants and Workers

If any of the PCs lower themselves to speak with Uso's servants, or with his employees at the warehouse, these lowly commoners will do their best to lie and uphold their master's story. However, they are fearful people who do not have the direct protection of a samurai lord, and will be easy to intimidate or trick into telling the truth. Also, some of them are greedy enough to betray their master for a small bribe (at least one silver bu).

A smart PC may ask how long these folk have worked for Uso. Most of the warehouse employees have worked for him for years, but the house servants are all new, hired in the last couple of months. They claim to not know what happened to their predecessors, but are clearly frightened about that topic. Persistent questions will quickly bring them to admit fearful rumors that all the previous servants died, slaughtered by criminals. If

a PC can make a **Simple Willpower** roll at TN 20 (or **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 10), one of the servants will babble something about how “that was when Master Uso’s daughter went missing. I heard his own hired ronin disappeared rather than fight whoever took her.”

If the PCs question the warehouse employees about Uso’s relations with Shinjo Usema, they will confess that the magistrate often harassed their master. Again, if a PC can make a **Simple Willpower** roll at TN 20 (or **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 10), one of the workers will babble something about how “maybe that’s why Master Uso never reported anything when his daughter was kidnapped.”

If the PCs pursue these leads, or if they independently start to ask questions about the disappearance of Uso’s daughter, the warehouse workers will reluctantly explain that Kyoumi disappeared about two months ago, on the same day that the previous house servants were murdered. (Careful questioning will establish the time – two days before Shinjo Usema vanished.) The servants assume the kidnappers were Stooping Hawk yakuza, since that is what Uso has told them. “I suppose the yakuza wanted to leave no witnesses. It was very strange, samurai-sama, Uso-san lives in a crowded neighborhood, and yet no one heard or saw anything. And the ronin guards simply disappeared – there was only a great bloodstain in the street.”

Investigating at the House

If the PCs should become suspicious of events at Uso’s house (e.g. learning about the kidnapping or the disappearance of his ronin), they may decide to conduct an investigation there. If Uso has a bad impression of the PCs, he will be very reluctant to give them permission to search his house – he will plead privacy, claim that it would be disturbing his family, point out that since his daughter has been returned the case is “closed,” and so forth. If he thinks well of the PCs he will be more open to the idea, although he still makes a few token protests for form’s sake. Regardless, if the PCs press their authority he will have no choice but to back down – they are acting as yoriki to an Emerald Magistrate, after all, and he is a mere merchant.

- There is one physical clue which the PCs can find if they search the house and grounds carefully and make an **Investigation/Perception** roll at TN 15 (or **Simple Perception** at TN 25). Tossed in one corner is a crumpled piece of rice paper printed with a flower pattern on one side. Clinging to the inside of the paper are a few fragments of a dark

brown substance. A **Medicine/Intelligence** roll at TN 10, **Poison/Intelligence** at TN 15, or **Herbalism/Intelligence** at TN 10 will identify it as opium.

The other clues at the house can be found by having a shugenja cast *Commune* to speak with the local elemental spirits. If none of the PCs are aware that this is possible, they can roll **Law/Intelligence** or **Lore: Shugenja/Intelligence** at TN 10 to remember that, although spirits are not legal evidence, shugenja frequently use information from spirits to tell them where to pursue their investigations.

- There are no Fire spirits in the area which remember the incident from two months ago. There are Water spirits in the house garden, but they only know what happened inside the garden. For full information, the PCs will have to rely on Air and Earth spirits.
- The Water spirits, if invoked, will show a soundless image of three people coming in through the gate. One of them is a man in Unicorn colors, whose appearance matches the descriptions of Shinjo Usema (a man in his thirties with graying hair and a hawk-shaped nose). The second is a skinny, balding man in tattered clothes without a mon, and carrying a scroll in his hand (obviously a shugenja). The third is a woman, a ronin with long lank hair and wild eyes, clutching a bloodstained katana. At a gesture from the Unicorn, the woman lurches forward (her movements forced and awkward) and into the house, killing the servants she encounters. The other two follow her in, the shugenja muttering and gesturing as he casts some kind of spell. After a few minutes they return, the Unicorn carrying a bound-and-gagged girl over his shoulder. The ronin woman is even more bloodstained and crazed-looking. All three go out the gates and vanish.
- Air and Earth spirits will respond verbally to questions. They will describe the sequence of events as follows: three people, two men and a woman (ronin), were standing guard outside the house. A man in Unicorn colors and a ragged man without weapons approached. The Unicorn said something, and suddenly the ronin woman turned on her comrades and slew them. Meanwhile the ragged man was invoking the Air spirits. (The Air spirits themselves can explain that the man “wanted us to dampen the noises they made, twist the air so that others would not hear them.” **Spellcraft/Intelligence** or **Lore:**

Shugenja/Intelligence at TN 10 identifies this as the spell *Quiescence of Air*.)

- The three went inside, the woman slaughtering the servants at the command of the Unicorn. They seized the girl and carried her out of the house. The shugenja stopped to smoke a pipe halfway through, which made the Unicorn angry. Then the Unicorn and the shugenja went off on their own, leaving the ronin woman standing behind. After a few minutes she suddenly screamed and ran off in a different direction.

Part Five: The Stooping Hawks

The Hawks are a powerful group of independent yakuza, based in Mura Kita Chushin but with outlying groups in the other Hub Villages and even in Otosan Uchi itself. They are dimly aware of the existence of the Kolat, and have tried to avoid treading on the toes of that powerful conspiracy. Nevertheless, they maintain their independence, which is displeasing to the Kolat and especially to Kouta, the Kolat Master in charge of criminal matters. At her orders, Shinjo Usema maintained an ongoing investigation of the Stooping Hawks, harassing them and pressuring them to submit to Kolat domination.

Now that the PCs are here snooping into Usema's disappearance, the Kolat will be happy if the Hawks can "take the fall." However, unknown to the Kolat, the Hawks have one trump card – they are the guardians of the clues which the previous group of samurai recovered.

If the PCs decide to look into the Hawks themselves, Usema's records will show that the Blue Lotus gambling house is the best place to start. Some PCs, however, may decide to take other approaches:

- Ronin PCs, or other PCs who possess skills such as **Kuenai** (commoner etiquette), may try to make semi-friendly contacts with the Stooping Hawks. This will require spending some time asking around the local commoner population, and either rolling **Kuenai/Awareness** at TN 15 or spending at least one koku in bribes. With a success, the Stooping Hawks will arrange a meeting at a public place (see "Meeting and Talking" below).
- Some PCs may decide to arrest and interrogate one or more of the Hawks, perhaps even staging a "raid" against the Blue Lotus. Although this may

seem like the proper approach (especially to highly Honorable PCs), it is actually very counterproductive, since it will earn the unrelenting enmity of these yakuza. Any prisoners will refuse to talk about their brotherhood (much as occurred earlier with Usema's investigations). Any raid will have to be conducted by the PCs alone (neither the governor nor Usema's yoriki will be willing to spare resources for such a doubtful enterprise) and will face fierce opposition from more than two dozen tough yakuza thugs – the PCs will be lucky to get out with their lives.

The Blue Lotus

The Blue Lotus can be located either by asking Usema's yoriki, reading his records, or simply asking around the local commoners/ronin and either rolling **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 10 or dropping a couple of bu in bribes.

The Blue Lotus is located in a dirty side-street in the merchant district. It is low-roofed and unimpressive, but as you approach, you realize it is actually quite a large structure, probably encompassing half a city block. A small signboard hangs over the window, showing a crude drawing of a die-cup spilling a roll.

If the PCs approach at night, there will be a small yellow paper lantern hanging over the sign, barely illuminating it. Day or night, a Stooping Hawks yakuza thug will be slouching in the alleyway by the door. He watches the PCs carefully, with suspicion and hostility written across his face, but makes no move to stop them if they enter. If the PCs speak to him, he answers as briefly and uninformatively as possible.

The interior of the Blue Lotus is almost always the same, regardless of the hour. Only in the early morning does the place subside into an exhausted stupor. The rest of the time, the scene is as follows:

Inside the door, you enter a long, low room whose floor is covered in filthy, ragged tatami mats. Commoners, ronin, and a few grubby-looking samurai are sprawled all around the room, some sitting at low tables, others slouched on the floor, a few obviously asleep, or at least unconscious. The air is full of smoke, heavy with the odors of tobacco and opium. Bedraggled-looking serving girls carry trays of sake and food around the room. The rattle and clatter of dice and the clink of money resounds on every side. Toward the back of the room, a tall, hulking man stands behind a low wooden counter, watching everyone.

The man behind the counter is Sumai, a ronin employed as a bouncer by the Stooping Hawks. He keeps a heavy tetsubo ready to hand behind the counter, and is not afraid to use it. He seldom speaks in more than monosyllables and grunts.

The room will fall silent whenever Clan PCs enter (ronin PCs will be treated like a normal part of the clientele). The PCs will be the subject of hard, hostile stares from almost everyone in the room, except the serving girls. After a few moments, assuming the PCs do not start a fight, everyone turns back to their games, drinks, and opium. At that point, the proprietor of the Blue Lotus, Kamu, will step forward.

Kamu, Manager of the Blue Lotus

Kamu is a short, smiling fellow with no front teeth, who speaks in a soft lisp. He will welcome the PCs to the Blue Lotus, and asks what he can provide for them. “Perhaps a chance to toss the dice, seek the Fortunes and Winds? Or simply a drink?” If the PCs are ronin, Crab bushi, or Moto (and seem suitably seedy) he will also offer the chance to “chase the Dragon” – indulge in opium.

Kamu wants no trouble from the PCs, and if faced with belligerence will do his best to calm things down and soothe ruffled feathers. However, he knows he has the protection of the Stooping Hawks. There are plenty of yakuza thugs in the room and even more in the back rooms of the Lotus (more than two dozen all told). If the PCs are relentlessly aggressive and threatening, Kamu will make a small signal and the PCs will suddenly be surrounded by large numbers of glowering yakuza, all of them clutching knives or jo staffs (clubs). PCs who still refuse to back down will be beaten into unconsciousness, then soaked with sake and dumped in an alleyway, making it appear that they were involved in a drunken brawl (-2 points of Glory to all PCs thus victimized). The yakuza will do their best not to actually kill the PCs – that would draw unwanted retaliation – but they may forget themselves if the PCs persist in fighting “for real.”

If the PCs avoid this sort of trouble, how much help Kamu offers them will depend on their approach. If they seem like stiff-necked honorable types, he will be uncooperative, claiming ignorance on every topic. If they seem more practical and flexible (or if they make it very clear that their real interest is finding Shinjo Usema, not condemning the Stooping Hawks), Kamu may decide to be more helpful. He is able to share the following information:

- He normally claims not to know anything about the Stooping Hawks. However, if the PCs seem acceptably diplomatic, he will offer to arrange a meeting with them (“through friends of friends, you understand”).
- If the PCs ask about opium, Kamu will deny all knowledge unless the PCs speaking to him are all ronin and/or suitably disreputable (Scorpions, crude Crabs, etc). In that case he will offer to supply them with whatever they need. If they show him the paper from Uso’s house, he will be able to identify it by the flower pattern. “That was last season’s shipment, this season has bamboo leaves on the paper. Hmmm... mostly, we just sell it here, but some customers like to take it home with them.”
- If the PCs ask about a skinny, balding shugenja who uses opium, Kamu will pretend to think about it for a time, then grudgingly mentions a “pathetic ronin named Saitoh. A down-on-his luck fellow, has bad nightmares. Says the opium helps him sleep. Comes in here every couple of nights.”

If the PCs hang around the Blue Lotus for more than a few hours, they can meet Saitoh when he comes in for his next “fix.”

Meeting and Talking

If the PCs arrange a friendly meeting with the Stooping Hawks (either on their own, or through Kamu), the meeting will be held at lunchtime in a public tea house, the Tasty Cup. (A picture out front shows a teacup with a bite-sized chunk missing from the rim.) The “tott-san” (old man) of the Stooping Hawks, Chieh, will hobble in on a cane and sit down at the PCs’ table. Ten yakuza thugs will be present at the teahouse as “customers,” ready to swoop in and rescue their boss if things go awry.

Chieh is a short, plump old man with painful knee-joints and a weak, raspy voice. His eyes are sharp and clear, however, and he still has almost all his teeth. He smiles always and laughs frequently – if he stops smiling, bad things are about to happen. Chieh is not particularly respectful of samurai, but knows better than to flaunt this in their face. He sips at a cup of tea and nibbles on rice candy while he listens to whatever the PCs have to say.

What Chieh decides to tell the PCs depends entirely on how they approach him. PCs who are rude or

aggressive will get nothing from him. Those who show him some basic courtesy, respect his age and position, and above all show a willingness not to automatically assume that “yakuza = guilty” will be much more likely to get help from him. Chieh knows he has a potential trump card in the form of the Kolat papers which the previous investigators left in his care, and he will be careful to play that card for the greatest possible benefit.

Chieh can potentially share the following information:

- Chieh knows about the kidnapping of Uso’s daughter, but will laugh at any suggestion that the Hawks were involved. “The magistrate was already breathing down our necks. Why would we want to give him more reason to strike at us? Besides, Uso is no saint – he has his own operations. Smuggling, that sort of thing. I imagine there are those who would like to get their hands on his trade networks... but not us. We have our own business, and it is thriving already, thank you.”
- The Hawks know full well what Shinjo Usema really was, and Chieh will enjoy springing this on the PCs. “Oh, he’s as crooked as a tree-root. Not his own man, no, and not ours either, or Uso’s. Probably enlisted by someone else, someone mightier. A Scorpion, maybe, or worse.” He sips thoughtfully at his tea. “Things in the underworld are more complicated than you might think, samurai.”
- The Hawks also know that Furishi is a Kolat. Chieh may drop hints that Furishi is not to be trusted – “these wave-men, who knows who they’re *really* working for?”
- If the PCs demand to know who Usema was working for, or drop hints that they know he was involved in the kidnapping, Chieh will tell them to go to the Blue Lotus. “There’s a shugenja who hangs out there, Saitoh, who may know something about your little problem.”
- If the PCs ask about the previous group of investigators, Chieh smiles. “I couldn’t tell you if they’re alive or dead, now. Those who meddle in these sorts of things seldom live long, unless they are very good at keeping secrets. But yes, they realized we were not involved.”

Getting the Papers

If the PCs make it clear that they already know Usema is a villain, or if they discuss visiting the Hooting Owl (and especially mention that something might have been entrusted to “the Hawks”), Chieh may decide to trust them. It will help (a lot) if the PCs make it clear that they have no interest in persecuting the Stooping Hawks. In this case, Chieh will lean close and ask, “What would you do, samurai, if you had certain... evidence... which showed the existence of a secret conspiracy? A conspiracy spanning the whole Empire, greater than any single Clan? What would you do with that, samurai?”

If the PCs say they would present the evidence to high authorities (Clan Champions, the Emperor, the Emerald Champion), Chieh will mentally dismiss them as fools, and ends the conversation. In order to convince Chieh to give them the papers, the PCs must show a distrust for blind obedience to higher authority. Anything which suggests a healthy level of paranoia will be acceptable. Mentioning Shosuro Tajiki can either help or hurt the PCs, depending on how they word things. (Emphasizing that he is a Scorpion as well as an Emerald Magistrate will be a good idea.)

There is no die-roll here – this is a pure role-playing exercise, and the GM must judge whether the PCs convince Chieh or not. He cannot be threatened or intimidated into giving up the papers, and he does not revere bushido, the Celestial Order, Shinsei, or any of the other beliefs which the PCs hold dear.

If Chieh does decide to help the PCs, he will remark that “there may be a gift for you tomorrow.” The next day, a messenger boy will deliver a large bundle to the PCs’ rooms at the inn. The bundle contains several dozen scrolls and letters, all written in a complex cipher. PCs who can get samples of Shinjo Usema’s writing (from his records at the Magistrate’s Office, for example) can match his hand to many of these papers with a **Calligraphy/Intelligence** roll at TN 10.

Part Six: Miscellaneous Clues and Evidence

There are a number of secondary clues, side-investigations, and other paths which the PCs may follow in the course of tracking down the truth (or failing to do so). These are collected here.

Rumors and Gossip

Smart PCs may think to simply “ask around” and try to pick up gossip about Shinjo Usema, Uso the merchant, or the Stooping Hawks.

Seeking information among the city’s Clan samurai will require visiting a few inns, teahouses, and other samurai hangouts. PCs who make such an effort can roll **Courtier/Awareness** or **Manipulation/Awareness** at TN 10, or **Simple Awareness** at TN 15, to gain the following information:

- **Shinjo Usema:** an honorable and dedicated man, perhaps a little too dedicated for his own good. Common opinion is divided as to whether the Scorpion or the Stooping Hawks are responsible for his disappearance.
- **Uso:** most Clan samurai know nothing about this man, although Crab will be aware that he is now a vassal of the Yasuki family.
- **The Stooping Hawks:** Less reputable samurai (such as Crabs and Scorpions) know that the Hawks run opium smuggling and distribution in addition to their other crimes, and that the Blue Lotus is an opium den as well as a gambling house.

The ronin of the city can provide a slightly different mix of information, and skill rolls are not needed if the PCs are willing to spend 3-5 bu in bribes.

- **Shinjo Usema:** most ronin know nothing about the man except that he was tough on opium.
- **Uso:** Ronin know about Uso as a man who used to be a good employer, visiting the Crimson Mask regularly to hire wave-men. Since the Yasuki started backing him last month, however, he has started bringing in new ronin from out of the city.
- **The murdered ronin:** Komaku and Sota were hirelings of Uso. Another former hireling, a woman called Izumi, can still be found at the Crimson Mask, although word is that she is now a hopeless drunkard.
- **The opium paper from Uso’s house:** Any ronin can identify this as paper used to wrap opium. They can also reveal that the best place to get opium, locally, is the Blue Lotus gambling house.
- **A skinny, bald shugenja:** If PCs ask around about the shugenja who helped with the kidnapping,

some ronin will recognize him as Saitoh, an “opium fiend” who visits the Blue Lotus regularly.

Commoners are actually the most useful source of information, although many PCs may have trouble lowering themselves to speak to such folk. The PCs’ guide can provide all of this information, if the PCs think to ask him (or her):

- Many commoners have heard rumors that Uso’s daughter was kidnapped two months ago, but then returned. Word on the street is that the Stooping Hawks were responsible. All folk agree that the old man dotes on his daughter.
- It is widely rumored that all of Uso’s household servants were murdered when his daughter was taken. His ronin guards also were killed, or perhaps disappeared – accounts differ.
- The Stooping Hawks are a powerful yakuza gang which runs many criminal enterprises. Even the magistrate was unable to break them. Some folk suspect the Hawks were involved in his disappearance. The gang’s headquarters is rumored to be the Blue Lotus gambling house, which is also an opium den.
- Any commoner can identify the paper from Uso’s house as an opium wrapper. They can also reveal (reluctantly) that the best place to get opium, locally, is the Blue Lotus.
- Commoners know where to find a “skinny, bald ronin shugenja” (Saitoh, at the Blue Lotus) and a decrepit female ronin named Izumi (at the Inn of the Crimson Mask).
- Any commoner can identify the “Hooting Owl” as a rock formation outside the town.

Saitoh, ronin shugenja

Saitoh is the shugenja who helped perform the kidnapping at Uso’s house. The PCs may be able to track him down through the scrap of opium-wrapper he left behind, or by asking around (at the Blue Lotus or elsewhere) for a ronin shugenja matching his description. Chieh, the boss of the Stooping Hawks, may also direct the PCs his way. Clever PCs may be able to come up with still other ways of tracking him down, especially if they saw Water spirit visions of him.

If the PCs hang out at the Blue Lotus for a few hours, they will eventually run into Saitoh as he skulks in looking for his next hit. He is a thin, stoop-shouldered man with a few strands of graying hair clinging to his scalp. He speaks in an unpleasant whine, and always fingers his opium pipe, even when he isn't smoking. Saitoh is a weakling and will not make more than a token effort to flee from the PCs.

Saitoh was once a Phoenix, but when he stumbled onto the Kolat, they hooked him on opium, ruined him, and made him their servant. He won't cooperate with the PCs unless they give him opium. Physical threats don't shake him – "you can't imagine what could happen to me. Death would be a blessing." Guilt over the dishonor of participating in the kidnapping, however, might work – he once had a little sister.

If the PCs "crack" Saitoh, he tells them as little as he can. "I work for people, sometimes. They hooked me, you see." He holds up his opium pipe. "So I have no choice. No choices anymore." He will admit to participating in the kidnapping, and to the involvement of Shinjo Usema. "Yes, of course. He gave me my orders, and he takes orders from someone else. It goes up and up, a great pyramid. Nobody even knows who's on the top."

Saitoh knows very little about the previous group of investigators (they dealt with Izumi, not him). "They're probably dead now, or else ruined like me. That's what happens, to those who meddle. You should get out now, while you still can." If the PCs are insistent about wanting more information, he will hem and haw and finally, grudgingly, tells them to look for a cave below the Hooting Owl. "It's a rock formation outside the village. Be careful, there may still be guards. And for the Kami's sake, don't ever let anyone know you got this from me!"

The Crimson Mask

If the PCs seek out the Inn of the Crimson Mask, they find a rather seedy dive with a sign resembling a kabuki mask, painted red (but faded to almost brown). It is a grubby, disreputable place favored by down-on-their-luck ronin, and the PCs will be subjected to many furtive glances and soft-voiced comments when they visit. There is no weapons closet here – the innkeeper Fujita, a ronin himself, relies on his own formidable skill and reputation to keep the peace inside his inn.

If the PCs ask here about Uso, or the murdered ronin Komaku and Sota, they will quickly be able to learn all the clues listed earlier in the "Gossip" section

(including the commoner material – about half the customers are commoners).

If they ask anything about other employees of Use's, or mention Izumi at all, Fujita the innkeeper will growl that "one of Uso's old hirelings" is in the stables, sleeping off a drunk. "Useless filthy woman," he mutters, "Can't even let her in the Inn anymore. I have my standards."

Izumi the Wave-Woman

Izumi is in the stables, curled up in the dirty straw, whimpering and moaning while she sucks on a half-empty sake bottle. She is a lean, pale woman with a horse-like face and lank long hair (currently plastered to her scalp with sweat). Her armor and clothing are tattered and soiled, her swords (tossed in one corner of the stable) spotted with rust. Her eyes are bloodshot and dark-ringed as she stares blearily at the PCs.

(PCs who happen to have previously played the adventures *Arrows From the Woods* or *To Do What We Must* may have met Izumi before. They will know her as a gloomy coward, but have never seen her in this lowly a condition.)

Izumi was brainwashed by the Kolat years ago, in the dungeon beneath their temple. Shinjo Usema activated her subconscious "programming" and used it to perform the kidnapping and murders. Since then, Izumi has been wandering the city in a daze, unable to tell whether she is awake or trapped in an endless nightmare.

Izumi will not be able to speak coherently with the PCs, and will beg for drink ("sake, sake") in a repellant whine. Patient and strong-stomached PCs may be able to get some useful information out of her:

- Izumi suffers frequent flashbacks to her time in the Kolat dungeon. She will babble incoherently about "the pit," "the one-eyed man, speaks to me, cuts me open like a butcher, climbs into my head," and so forth.
- If asked about the kidnapping, Izumi remembers a poem. "Words, cutting into my head like knives!" She also remembers killing her friends. "The man, the one in the purple. He knew me, knew what was inside me. He knew!"
- If asked where the girl was taken, she answers: "To the House of Stone. A smaller one, but

like the big one. Near the owl, the hooting owl. Hoot, hoot!”

- If asked about the previous investigators, Izumi remembers them vaguely. “Questions, they asked questions, always, always. Climbing into my head. I told them, seek the owl, the owl!”
- She recognizes any PCs who played the two previous adventures in which she has appeared. Izumi’s demented mind now associates them with “the ones, the secrets,” and she will be afraid of them. The PCs can use this fear to help interrogate her, if they are clever.

Given the chance, Izumi will run away, although she will not be able to outdistance any determined pursuer. If the PCs try to get her to lead them to the “hooting owl” she will become frantic, crying “no, no,” falling down in hysterical fits, foaming at the mouth, and so forth. If they push her too far, she will have a sudden brain embolism and die, blood pouring from her ears.

The Peach House

The Peach House is a respectable and successful local geisha house, located on the edge of the merchant district, close to the samurai residences at the heart of Mura Kita Chushin. Three other geisha houses, of varying levels of prestige and success, share the same street, and at night this place is a wonderland of colored lanterns, laughter, music, and beauty. During the day, it is silent and quiet except for a few servants out shopping or cleaning up.

The okasan (madam) of the Peach House is Yukima, an elegant, well-preserved woman in her early forties. She is the ranking Kolat authority in Mura Kita Chushin, and both Furishi and Ikoma Kyumo report to her (Furishi willingly, Kyumo unwillingly). She keeps over a dozen Kolat ninja in her house, in the guise of servants, girls, and bouncers.

It is unlikely that the PCs will ever realize the importance of the Peach House. If they decide (for whatever reason) to follow either Furishi or Ikoma Kyumo, they may notice both of them visiting this place. Also, if they manage to turn the tables on their Kolat tail, they could trace him back here.

Regardless, the PCs will not find it easy to enter the Peach House – geisha houses traditionally demand that new customers get invitations from current customers,

or from the madam. (Both Ikoma Kyumo and Kitsuki Danjuro can provide invitations, if the PCs ask for them.) Alternatively, the PCs can use their status as yoriki (assistants) to an Emerald Magistrate to insist on interviewing the madam.

Yukima will put on a flawless act, insisting that Kyumo and/or Furishi are merely “honorable customers” and reminding the PCs that it would be wrong of her to violate their privacy. “Here in the Floating World is the only place that a samurai can take off his mask and be merely a man. If I betrayed their confidences, why, I would be just as wrong as you would be if you disobeyed your lord.” She will claim complete ignorance about any Kolat spies which the PCs trailed back to the geisha house. If PCs insist on searching the house for such persons, Yukima will protest at some length, and makes sure that all her customers know who it is that is interrupting their privacy. Regardless, the PCs will not be able to find anything incriminating – the Kolat are far too skilled at covering their tracks. The house will have to be literally torn apart to find the secret chambers it contains.

See “Confronting the Kolat” under “Conclusions” if the PCs are foolish enough to try to arrest Yukima.

Part Seven: The Hooting Owl

Three miles outside Mura Kita Chushin, a large rocky bluff juts out of a patch of woods, clearly visible from the main Imperial road. The top of the bluff, when seen in profile, bears a distinct resemblance to the head of an owl.

If the PCs hear the name “Hooting Owl,” they can ask around and learn that it is the local nickname for this rock formation.

In order to find the small cave-mouth hidden at the base of the Hooting Owl, the PCs will have to roll **Hunting/Perception** at TN 10, **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15, or **Simple Perception** at TN 20 (or cast the spell *By the Light of Lord Moon*). A success discovers the cave mouth, cunningly concealed behind brush and heaped boulders. A **Mountaineering/Intelligence** or **Engineering/Intelligence** roll at TN 10, **Hunting/Intelligence** roll at TN 15, or **Simple Intelligence** at TN 20 can determine that the boulders have been moved recently – within the last two months.

If the Kolat were following the PCs at any point earlier during the adventure, when they find the cave have any shugenja PCs roll **Spellcraft/Water** at TN 15. With a success, the shugenja suspect someone is using Water spirits in the area. (Water is the element of scrying.) This can serve as a warning that the PCs may soon be attacked.

Inside the cave is a long, low chamber, natural but with obvious signs that it has been widened and smoothed by human hands. There is a pool of cold, clear water in one corner – a natural spring. In one corner, a heavy iron ring is set into the wall. There is nothing else readily visible.

If the PCs search the cave for clues, they can make a roll with **Investigation/Perception**, and discover things according to the TN they hit:

- A TN 10 notices that the floor has scuff and drag marks on it, showing where heavy objects were dragged out of the cave – probably furniture and/or crates or chests.
- A PC who makes TN 15 will notice a few crude kanji scratched into the wall next to the iron ring. They make the name “Kyoumi” – Uso’s daughter.
- TN 20 notices some very faint dark stains on the floor of the cave – old dried blood.

The spell *By the Light of Lord Moon* will also discover these clues. Much more useful information (albeit not legally admissible) can be found in and around the cave by *Communing* with the spirits and asking them what happened here. There are abundant Earth and Air spirits in the area, and Water spirits in the pool inside the cave.

If the PCs *Commune* with spirits inside of the cave, they can get the following information, either as verbal descriptions (Earth or Air) or soundless images (Water), depending on what questions they ask:

- A group of men visited the cave regularly. One of them dressed in “colors of the evening sky” (purple) and carried a sword. The others were dressed in plainer clothing – some of them carried swords, others had clubs or knives. They kept a table here, and chests, and often wrote on papers. Sometimes they would bring other people here, men or women, and keep them chained to the wall for a while before taking them away elsewhere.

- The last person they brought to the cave was Kyoumi (a “small woman” to the Earth spirits, a “girl child” to the Air spirits). A day after they brought her, a group of five men burst into the cave. (Air spirits can describe them as wearing the colors of “stone and evening sky,” gray and purple.) They slew all the men in the cave, then freed the girl. They argued for a time among themselves, then took both the girl and all the papers and left the cave.
- If the PCs watch what happened in the image of the Water spirits, they will see that the five attackers were Crab and Unicorn samurai. After freeing Kyoumi they argued for some time over what to do with the evidence they had found. PCs with the Read Lips advantage can figure out what they are saying – other PCs can do it by rolling **Simple Intelligence** at TN 20. They were not sure what to do with the evidence they had found – the Crab wanted to take it to “Taka-san,” while the Unicorn favored delivering it to another Emerald Magistrate. Each group mistrusted the other’s proposal. Finally they agreed to leave the papers with “the Hawks” until they could figure out who to trust.
- Later, another group of men (described like the earlier ones as commoners with a mixture of weapons) came to the cave. They searched it and took all the papers that were left. They also took the dead bodies and the furniture.

The Attack

Unless the PCs somehow managed to avoid the attention of the Kolat (not speaking to either the governor or Furishi), the Kolat will have been monitoring them, both with spies and magic. Once the PCs reach the cave, Yukima decides things are getting too dangerous, and sends in her Kolat ninja to dispose of the PCs.

The ninja will approach the cave stealthily, hoping to ambush the PCs as they emerge. If any PCs are standing guard outside, they can make a Contested roll of their **Investigation/Perception**, **Nazado/Perception**, **Hunting/Perception**, or **Simple Perception** against the ninja’s **Stealth/Awareness**. PCs who are specifying that they are very alert, or who are using magic to help with their lookout, get one or two Free Raises (GM’s discretion).

If none of the PCs stay outside to stand guard, the PCs inside the cave can make the Contested Roll, but the ninja get a Free Raise.

The ninja will always wait until all of the PCs are outside the cave before attacking, springing out of the underbrush with knives drawn. If all of the PCs failed to defeat the ninja on the Contested Roll, the party is caught by surprise – the ninja all get a free attack, striking the PCs at TNs of 5+Armor.

The ninja fight to the death, without mercy. It is impossible to take them alive – if they are reduced to Down or Out, they will fall on their own knives, killing themselves.

The total number of ninja will be equal to the total number of PCs, plus one.

Conclusion

It is quite possible that the PCs will be unable to solve this case, and will be forced to return to Shosuro Tajiki and confess failure. They are dealing with the Kolat, after all, which is one of the most powerful and well-protected conspiracies in Rokugan.

If the PCs do figure out at least some of what happened, they will have to decide with to do with their evidence. They may wish to conclude their investigation with accusations and arrests, but this will prove more difficult and dangerous than they may realize.

Confronting Furishi

The ronin Furishi is the one real weak link in the local Kolat conspiracy. He is a relatively new recruit, and has been quite nervous ever since the murder of his sensei, Shinjo Usema, by the mysterious group of samurai who visited two months ago. Also, as a ronin, he lacks many of the legal and social protections which Clan samurai would have.

If the PCs confront Furishi, he will at first try to bluff and bluster his way out, naming the PCs outrageous liars, calling on Kitsuki Danjuro to testify to his honor, threatening a duel, and so forth. This is all basically a bluff – Furishi does not have a daimyo backing him, and cannot stop the PCs from arresting him. Given the chance, he will try to slip away and flee, running to the Peach House in the hope of protection.

- If Furishi makes it to the Peach House, he will simply disappear. Yukima has him murdered,

and his body is hustled off to the eta crematoriums, never to be seen again. PCs who have studied Furishi closely might be able to track down his body with the spell Ties That Bind, but will not be able to learn anything more – the Kolat covers its tracks carefully this time, even to the point of purging any elemental spirits which might witness Furishi's death.

If the PCs do manage to arrest/catch Furishi, how much they can learn from him depends on what they do with him.

- If they hand him over to the governor's torturer for questioning, he will die under interrogation. ("Sudden heart failure, samurai-san – I am very sorry.")
- If they interrogate Furishi themselves, they will have to defeat him with a **Contested Willpower** roll in order to "break" him. Alternatively, dishonorable PC might use Torture themselves, requiring a **Torture/Awareness** roll at TN 15 to crack Furishi's resistance.
- If they try to take Furishi to Shosuro Tajiki for judgment, the Kolat will ambush them along the way with six more ninja. These ninja will attempt to kill Furishi, then flee. If the PCs get Furishi through this alive, Tajiki will arrange to have him questioned by a reliable torturer.

If Furishi breaks, he confesses to belonging to the secret Kolat conspiracy. He identifies Shinjo Usema as his old sensei within the Kolat, and lists off all of Usema's crimes and activities. He will try, however, to avoid identifying Yukima as the local Kolat chief – instead he will try to pin that title on the Governor. PCs will have to see through Furishi's bluff (beat him on **Contested Awareness**) in order to get him to name Yukima as the real "boss."

If Shosuro Tajiki gets Furishi's confession, he will pursue the rest of the case himself. (He plans to spy on Yukima and learn more from her activities.) If the PCs themselves try to arrest Yukima, see "Confronting the Kolat," below.

Confronting the Governor

Some PCs may suspect that governor Ikoma Kyumo is involved, especially if they translate Usema's

documents or “crack” Furishi. However, any attempt to accuse or arrest the Governor will be disastrous. None of the PCs have the rank or authority to arrest a man of Ikoma Kyumo’s rank, and their only witnesses are ronin and commoners, whose word is useless against Kyumo. The documents from the Stooping Hawks are also nearly useless, since the PCs have only a yakuza’s word on where they came from, and any translation is tentative at best.

The governor will call the PCs “filthy lying dogs, tools of Scorpions” and have them thrown out of the city. If any of the PCs are ronin, he may have them executed. He will also try to confiscate any evidence the PCs have (documents, etc), although the PCs can avert this if they stand their ground on their status as yoriki to an Emerald Magistrate. Regardless, the PCs will not be able to do anything further within the bounds of Mura Kita Chushin, at least not without risking execution.

Confronting the Kolat

The PCs may come to realize that the Peach House is the local headquarters of the Kolat. Smart PCs will avoid a confrontation and head off to report to Shosuro Tajiki... but not all PCs are smart.

If the PCs attempt to arrest Yukima, she will go quietly, while dispatching messages to the governor. Ikoma Kyumo will soon arrive with an escort of Lion bushi, demanding that the PCs release “an innocent woman, who runs an honorable and respectable house.” The Governor will not allow the PCs to hold Yukima, dismissing whatever evidence the PCs present as “ridiculous nonsense.” The PCs, as yoriki but not magistrates themselves, do not have the authority to countermand him. After this incident, the Governor will probably have the PCs expelled from Mura Kita Chushin for “harassing innocent citizens.”

If the PCs attempt to stage some kind of violent “raid” and assault the Peach House (perhaps in hope of capturing documents or finding hidden rooms), how Yukima reacts will depend on whether the PCs are alone or not. If they come with help (troops, Kitsuki Danjuro), she will cooperate, counting on the Governor to bail her out (which he will). If the PCs come alone, Yukima will simply try to have them killed. She is a formidable ninja in her own right, and there are sixteen other normal Kolat ninja in the Peach House. The PCs will be lucky to make it out alive.

In the unlikely event that the PCs manage to assault the Peach House and slay all of its defenders, they will be

able to find several secret rooms and recover a large cache of documents in Kolat cipher.

Deciphering the Papers

If the PCs recovered the papers from the Stooping Hawks, they may try to figure out the elaborate code in which they are written. This will be a task almost certainly beyond them, since the code was created by the masters of the Kolat. However, the PCs are welcomed to try.

Successful decoding will require three successive **Cipher/Intelligence** or **Nazado/Intelligence** rolls at TN 20, 25, and 30. (**Investigation/Intelligence** can also work, but at +5 on the TN.) Each roll represents eight hours of intensive study. If any of these three rolls fail, that PC must start over again from the first roll. Each PC attempting to break the code must roll separately. No PC may attempt to break the code more than three times in a month.

If the PCs do break the code, they manage a partial, tentative translation. It shows that Shinjo Usema was part of a far-ranging organization with connections across the entire Empire, and identifies Furishi as his apprentice within the organization. It outlines his operations against the Stooping Hawks and Uso on behalf of that organization, including the kidnapping of Uso’s daughter. It names Governor Ikoma Kyumo as a “useful servant” of the organization. It also suggests that Usema was relatively low-ranking in the conspiracy, and received his orders from a higher-up within the Hub Village – a higher-up who, in turn, reported to “the Masters.”

Reporting to Shosuro Tajiki

This is the wisest course of action, and one which the PCs should undertake regardless, even if they tried one of the other options listed above.

Tajiki will listen carefully to everything the PCs say, and will ask questions to clarify anything that seems confused and to root out any deceptions. (He is quite adept at seeing through liars, since he is an excellent liar himself.) He will be especially interested in Furishi, and in any papers or documents the PCs may have (whether or not they have been translated). He will demand that the PCs hand over both Furishi and the papers into his care. If any of the PCs balk, Tajiki will invoke his status as an Emerald Magistrate. “You were investigating this matter on my behalf, samurai-san. It was my authority, not yours, which retrieved these vital clues.”

If the PCs do present Tajiki with at least some evidence pointing to some sort of larger conspiracy (and especially if they give him Furishi or the documents), he will be quite pleased, and praises their skill and dedication. “I will be sure and pass on your names as being worthy and honorable samurai, deserving of reward.”

Some weeks after, one PC (chosen randomly) will be honored with an appointment as an Emerald Magistrate.

If the PCs visited the Hooting Owl, found the Kolat papers, or forced a confession from Furishi, they all gain the disadvantage **Minor Enemy: Kolat**.

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 learned what happened to Shinjo Usema:	1 XP
PCs retrieved the papers from the Stooping Hawks:	1 XP
Total Possible Experience:	4 XP

Honor

There is no “inherent” Honor award for this adventure, although individual PCs may perform actions which merit Honor awards or deductions.

Glory

PCs who successfully solve at least part of the case (by learning what happened to Shinjo Usema) will be praised in court by Shosuro Tajiki. Such PCs earn +1 Glory.

PCs who say or do something impressive before the Emperor gain +1 point of Glory. PCs who do something foolish or embarrassing lose 3-5 points of Glory.

Other Awards/Penalties

If the PCs managed to bring at least some evidence of Kolat involvement back to Shosuro Tajiki, he will pull strings to have one of them named as an Emerald Magistrate. Choose the PCs randomly, and award them the **Emerald Magistrate** cert.

GM's Aid: NPCs

Shosuro Tajiki, Scorpion assassin and Emerald Magistrate

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

School/Rank: Shosuro Shinobi 3

Honor/Glory: 0.4/3.7

Skills: Acting 6, Archery 6, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 5, Explosives 3, Horsemanship 4, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 4, Law 3, Medicine 4, Ninjutsu (shuriken) 5, Poetry 3, Poison 4, Seduction 6, Sincerity 5, Stealth 6

Advantages/Disadvantages: Apparent Honor (2), Dangerous Beauty, Heartless, Shadow Brand (1), Social Position (Emerald Magistrate)/Dark Secret (Shosuro assassin), Sworn Enemies (many).

Equipment: Kimono, light armor, daisho set, poisoned shuriken (in hidden pouch), puzzle box (contains poisons and personal journal), sash of an Emerald Magistrate.

Furishi, ronin yoriki and apprentice Kolat

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

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

School/Rank: None (true ronin)

Honor/Glory: 0.2/1.7

Skills: Athletics 4, Cipher 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Hisomu 2, Hunting 3, Investigation 4, Jiu-jutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kuenai 4, Law 3, Sincerity 3, Stealth 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolat), Apparent Honor (2), Social Position (yoriki to Emerald Magistrate)/Dark Secret (Kolat).

Equipment: Kimono, light armor, daisho set, badge of office.

Typical Stooping Hawk yakuza thug

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

	Strength 2
VOID 1	

TN to be Hit: 10

School/Rank: None (commoners)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Athletics 2, Craft (various) 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Intimidation 3, Nofujutsu (peasant weapons) 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Stooping Hawks gang)/Bad Reputation (yakuza), Social Disadvantage (heimin).

Equipment: Clothing, club (0k2) or knife (2k1)

Sumai, bouncer at the Blue Lotus

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

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Hida bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 0.8/0.5

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Kenjutsu 3, Kuenai 3, Jiu-jutsu 3, Stealth 2, Tsubojutsu 4, Wrestling 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Stooping Hawks gang), Large, Strength of the Earth (rank one)/Social Disadvantage (ronin)

Equipment: Kimono, tetsubo (1k3). Daisho set and Crab heavy armor kept in storage.

Saitoh, fallen shugenja

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: None (ronin shugenja, Insight Rank two)

Honor/Glory: 0.4/0.6

Skills: Athletics 2, Calligraphy 3, Commerce 2, Defense 1, Etiquette 2, Gambling 2, Kuenai 2, Meditation 2, Research 3, Sincerity 2, Spellcraft 4, Stealth 3, Tantojutsu 4, Theology 3.

Spells: *Sense, Commune, Summon*, (Air 1) *Cloak of Night*, *Quiescence of Air*, *Way of Deception*, (Air 2)

Mists of Illusion, (Water 1) *Castle of Water*, *Reversal of Fortunes*, (Earth 1) *Force of Will*.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Innate Ability (Quiescence of Air), Patron (Kolats)/Compulsion (opium), Dark Secret (Kolats pawn), Social Disadvantage (ronin).

Equipment: Kimono and traveling pack (poor quality), opium pipe, scroll satchel, tanto (1k1, poor quality), 2 koku in purse.

Yukima, kolat geisha madam

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

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Kolats Assassin (Insight Rank Three)

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

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting 6, Athletics 4, Calligraphy 5, Cipher 6, Courtier 3, Dance 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 6, Jiu-jitsu (hand-to-hand) 5, Kuenai 4, Manipulation 5, Meditation 4, Music 6, Poetry 4, Poison 5, Seduction 7, Sincerity 6, Stealth 4, Tea Ceremony 5, Theology 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (Kolats), Blackmail (many, including governor Ikoma Kyumo), Cadence, Clear Thinker, Dangerous Beauty, Heartless, Perfect Balance, Precise Memory, Read Lips, Social Position (geisha madam), Wealth/Dark Secret (Kolats), Social Disadvantage (hinin).

Equipment: Various fine clothing. Yukima always wears two very sharp steel hairpins (0k2) with which she can attack using the Jiu-jitsu skill. The needles contain hollow centers holding single doses of lethal poison (inflicting an additional 4k4 damage on their first hit).

Standard Kolats Ninja

FIRE 2	AIR 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2
VOID 1	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: None

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Athletics 4, Cipher 2, Climbing 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Hisomu 4, Jiu-jitsu (hand-to-hand) 4, Kuenai 3, Locksmith 3, Poison 4, Stealth 4, Tantojutsu 4.

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

Equipment: Commoner clothing, sharp tanto (2k2).