

# **Winter Court: Kyuden Ashina**

***A 1-Round Low Rank Living Rokugan Adventure***

**by Robert Hobart**

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This is a RPGA Network adventure game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing the game (or this round of the game), but the actual playing time will be about three 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.

**Scoring the game for RPGA points:** The RPGA has three ways to score this game. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use:

1. *No-vote scoring:* The players write their names and numbers on the scoring packet grid, you fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
2. *Partial scoring:* The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the convention coordinator wants information as to how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
3. *Voting:* Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the best amongst them, or when the adventure is run in scenario format with winners and prizes. Multi-round adventures usually required advancing a smaller number of players than played the first round, so voting is required for multi-round adventures.

When using Voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities.

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.

In addition to the text of the adventure below, you will need to be familiar with the Legend of the Five Rings rulebook.

Credit Where It Is Due: this scenario is inspired by scenario hooks in Alderac Entertainment's book *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun* (AEG 1999).

## GM's Information:

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD! There are an unusually large number of NPCs in this scenario, due to the Winter Court. Read the entire scenario and the list of NPCs carefully before attempting to run the scenario.

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

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

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

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

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

It is worth repeating that this is a Winter Court adventure. As such, it contains almost no combat, and players who have brought combat machine PCs to the table are likely to be disappointed. Make this clear at the start to avoid any misunderstandings (and to give players a chance, perhaps, to choose a different character to play for this event). Also, it should be noted that for much of this adventure, there is little action of any kind, merely scenes in which the PCs can role-play and observe the events of the court. Encourage the players to role-play and not merely sit through the various scenes.

## Introduction

The PCs have been invited to attend Winter Court at Kyuden Asahina, the seat of the Crane Clan's Asahina family. Here the PCs will be able to enjoy the peace and tranquility of winter court, the occasional contest or scandal, and perhaps visit the famed Asahina libraries...

Except that this winter will prove less than tranquil. The southern Crane lands are overrun by a clan of nezumi (ratlings), who are stealing everything in sight and disrupting the harmony of the court. As the court progresses, the ratlings of the Odd-Eye Clan become more and more of a problem, until the Crane are frantic to be rid of the creatures. The problem, however, is not what it may at first appear. The ratlings are actually searching for a legendary Crane weapon, the Jade Bow, in order to defeat an Oni which has claimed their home territories in the Shadowlands. If the PCs can help them find the bow, they will be happy to take it and leave for home.

At the same time, the PCs will find themselves embroiled in a much more mundane problem: just after the New Year's festival, a Scorpion courtier named Bayushi Itamaki is murdered. Unfortunately, it seems that many of the guests at the court – Cranes included – had a motive for the crime, and the PCs will have to assist the Emerald Magistrate at the court in solving the mystery. As it happens, among the few actual witnesses to the crime are the ratlings...so the PCs may be able to solve two problems at once, if they are careful and clever.

And if not...well, at least they have enjoyed the splendid hospitality of the Crane Clan.

## Player's Introduction

*The chill winds of winter's birth drift through the gardens of Kyuden Asahina, the seat of the Crane Clan's family of peaceful shugenja. Over forty guests have gathered here, in the courtyard of the sprawling palace, for the formal beginning of the Winter Court. It is an honor to share the court with the Asahina, and each of you feels proud to have earned an invitation.*

All PCs who are members of Clans (Major or Minor) are assumed to have been invited to the Winter Court. Any Ronin PCs have been hired by the Asahina family to serve as security and yojimbo (personal bodyguards) for the duration of the Court, at the rate of 4 koku plus room and board.

*All the guests bow with a rustle of silk as the Asahina family daimyo, Asahina Tamako, steps up onto a small dais and surveys the crowd. A thin, pale, aging man with a wispy white goatee, Tamako moves*

*carefully, in visible ill health. Nevertheless, he radiates a calm, serene power which awes you. "Welcome to Kyuden Asahina," he says. His voice is soft and raspy, but nevertheless can be clearly heard even at the very back of the crowd. "I hope that your stay here will be both serene and enlightening. Our servants will see to every need you may have. In return, we ask only for the pleasure of your company. There will be contests and games to show your skills, and peaceful safety for those who would prefer to strengthen their souls. Tonight, there will be a grand banquet and dance, where you may make yourselves acquainted with those who will share your winter." He bows to the crowd, who return his bow with a ripple of gentle applause. "And finally, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the end of this winter court will see the marriage of my cousin, Asahina Kimi, to the esteemed swordsman Doji Takashi. May their lives together be long and happy." There is another round of applause as the engaged couple, a lovely shugenja maiden and a stylishly dressed Crane swordsman, rise and bow in acknowledgement.*

## The Setting: Kyuden Asahina

The palace of the Asahina family is a large, sprawling complex surrounding a ten-story castle. Although not as elaborate as Kyuden Doji, which regularly hosts the Emperor for the winter, it is still a splendid place, filled with the fine architecture and beautiful artwork that characterizes the Crane Clan. The castle itself houses Tamako and his family, as well as the famed Asahina libraries, containing the accumulated knowledge of the Asahina shugenja (including the secrets of the minor magical items, known as fetishes, which they create).

The adjacent structures, which are single story and spread for hundreds of yards away from the castle, contain guest quarters for the many attendees at the winter court, along with banquet rooms, audience halls, dojos, baths, smaller rooms suitable for study or meditation, servants' quarters, the barracks of the troops which guard the castle, and a huge complex of gardens, orchards, and koi ponds. Even in the depths of winter, this is a wondrous place. Anything the PCs want or need will be supplied by their hosts.

## Scene One: The Grand Banquet and Dance

True to Asahina Tamako's word, that evening a grand banquet is held in the main dining hall, where all the guests can gather and make each others' acquaintance. As the PCs enjoy the excellent food of the Crane cooks, they have an opportunity to role-play and introduce

themselves. It may be assumed that all the PCs are seated near each other.

*Besides your immediate neighbors, there are many other guests present at the court. The majority are of course Cranes, but you can recognize the colors and mons of every other Major Clan on at least one person. Here a charming Scorpion converses with his neighbors, while there a woman with the garments of the Dragon Clan and the tattoo of an Ise Zumi (tattooed monk) raises an eyebrow at the dour remarks of a Crab. There is even a Minor Clan guest, wearing the colors of the Dragonfly. As one might suspect, the majority of the guests are shugenja.*

Feel free to improvise any role-playing encounters that seem appropriate, using the list of NPCs for inspiration. Players may ask about members of their characters' own clans, which will provide a good vehicle for introducing various NPCs.

At some point during the dinner, a sudden shout is heard from one of the servants. Looking over, everyone sees a startled servant chasing after a diminutive, brown-furred bipedal form which is clutching a bowl of rice. The agile ratling (which can be recognized with an **Intelligence+Shadowlands Lore** or **Nezumi Lore** roll at TN 15), easily evading the frantic servants' efforts to catch it, leaps through an open doorway and vanishes into the gardens outside the banquet hall. The horrified servant abases himself, apologizing desperately for the terrible breach in etiquette. Luckily, many of the guests are laughing at the unexpected interruption, and at a gentle gesture from Asahina Tamako the servant retreats hastily from the room.

After the dinner, the crowd adjourns to an adjacent hall, where a formal dance is held. Crane musicians fill the air with gentle sounds as pairs of dancers swirl across the polished wooden floor, while the rest of the guests circulate along the edges of the room, conversing and making contacts. Again, this is an opportunity to introduce the various NPCs.

- **Asahina Ujime**, the local daimyo, will circulate with his wife **Miroe**, introducing himself and wishing the guests well. He should strike the PCs as a friendly, confident man who is well trusted by the family champion **Tamako**.
- **Kitsu Mitaka** will ask any pretty female PCs to share a dance with him (much to the displeasure of his wife).
- **Tonbo Genso** will speak with any PCs who have encountered him in previous adventures (such as Satsume's Tournament), asking what they have been doing since then, what investigations (if any) they have participated in, and so forth. He will also

make a point of introducing himself to every guest at the court – as the only Emerald Magistrate present (excepting any PC magistrates), and a member of a Minor Clan at that, he feels the need to establish his presence.

- **Bayushi Itamaki** and **Bayushi Fumi** will circulate through the entire room, introducing themselves to everyone and exhibiting charm and pleasant manners. Fumi is particularly attentive to males (PCs and NPCs) and flirts subtly with all of them.
- Most of the guests will also approach **Doji Takashi** and **Asahina Kimi** to offer their congratulations on the upcoming wedding. If any PCs do the same, the two Cranes graciously thank them for their good wishes. However, any PC rolling **Simple Awareness** (+Ichi Miru, if available) at TN 20 will be able to tell, from subtle hints in the conversation, that **Asahina Kimi** has some private reservations about the wedding. She will never admit this, of course. (She is in love with **Isawa Yoritaka**, and is saddened that she had lost any chance of marrying him.)

If the PCs ask anyone about the incident with the Ratling, they will get responses ranging from amusement to disgust. Any Crane NPCs will be aware that the ratlings have been plaguing the southern Crane lands for several months, although this is the first time they have dared to invade a major stronghold.

- **Daidoji Toki**, as Captain of the Guard for Kyuden Asahina, is especially angry and humiliated at the ratlings' growing temerity.
- The Crab guest, **Kuni Takaoka**, grumbles that the Crane don't understand ratlings: "They aren't vermin, and they aren't dangerous Tainted monsters. But try getting these delicate courtiers to understand that!" However, he freely confesses that he has no idea why the ratlings have invaded the Crane lands.

## Scene Two: Lights Over Ice

*A few weeks into the court, the weather grows much colder, and a storm of freezing rain leaves the gardens a wonderland of sparkling ice. That night, the Asahina string lanterns throughout the garden and hold a banquet outdoors, lit by the scintillation of a thousand ice facets. It is astonishingly beautiful. The guests dine at tables laid out beneath ice-fretted trees, enduring the cold for the chance to enjoy this unique setting. Clouds of steam wreath around the heads of the guests, and thick billows of vapor rise from the steaming rice, soup, vegetables, tea, and sake that are brought to the table. As the dinner progresses, some*

*guests begin offering spontaneous poems to add to the beauty of the evening.*

Not all seem to be enjoying the evening. **Asahina Ujime** seems out-of-sorts, replying with a distracted, even impolite air to any questions or remarks from other guests. His wife **Miroe** sits quietly beside him, clearly subdued and embarrassed by her husband's behavior.

- At some point during the evening, **Bayushi Itamaki** approaches and speaks briefly and politely with **Ujime**. The Crane daimyo responds with a snarl, barely masking his anger beneath the veil of necessary courtesy; his wife tries to calm him, looking worried. Itamaki smiles and drifts away.
- If any PCs ask **Ujime** the reason for his behavior, he denies any difficulties: "I am a bit unwell, that is all." His wife is silent, deferring to her husband. Anyone making a **Simple Awareness** roll at TN 20 can tell that Ujime is hiding something, is deeply upset, and that there is clearly a connection between Itamaki and his problem.
- The Scorpion courtier will deny that anything is wrong. "I merely remarked to Ujime-san that his wife was looking lovely this evening."

Later in the evening, Isawa Yoritaka rises and offers to read a poem he has been composing the last few days. It is clearly a love poem, dedicated to the anonymous woman who has captured his heart, and composed with considerable skill. Admiring applause follows the conclusion of the poem. Anyone rolling **Intelligence+Poetry** (or **Nazado**) at TN 25 realizes Yoritaka has cleverly hidden the name of his true love within the poem itself: Asahina Kimi. Revealing the name in this secret fashion is considered something of a coup by Rokugani court standards; there are admiring smiles on the faces of several in the audience (Bayushi Itamaki among them). Doji Takashi also smiles, although the expression is a bit forced – he understands the poem, but can do nothing about it publicly. Asahina Kimi does not immediately realize that she is the object of the poem (although she will figure it out later). Any PC making a **Simple Perception** roll at TN 20 also notices a look of long-suffering weariness briefly cross Shiba Kodo's face as he applauds his charge's work.

### **Scene Three: A Naughty Ratling**

*The weather warms slightly as the court enters the month of Kurayami (the month of the Ox in common usage). A troupe of Kakita actors is resident at the palace, and they take advantage of the better weather to hold an outdoor performance of Hantei's Tears, a famed Kabuki play about the courtship of the first*

*Hantei. There is sustained applause for the artistry of the Crane players. Afterward, the actors offer an extensive demonstration of the art of Mizu-Do, the "Way of Water" Crane martial art which emphasizes defense, avoidance, and taking falls. The actors flip, tumble, and bounce around the stage in graceful abandon, taking the heaviest falls without losing their graceful self-control.*

As the demonstration concludes, the guests discuss what they have witnessed. Most of those present are impressed by the actor's acrobatic skills, but some voices are raised in dissent – notably those of Kuni Takaoka and Kitsu Mitaka, who both observe (in their personal styles) that Mizu-Do is fine for "prancing on a stage" but can't possibly be useful in real combat. Several of the Cranes present take offense, and for a moment it seems there may be a duel in the offering; then Asahina Tamako intervenes. "*Let us have a scenario to settle this,*" he offers. "*I shall present this necklace of pearls, a gift to me from the Mantis Clan, to whoever shall emerge victorious.*"

The tournament is held two days later. Snow has arrived in the meantime, so the match is set in one of the larger dojos in the castle. Most of the guests are present as observers or participants. Any PCs who wish to participate may do so. NPC contestants include Doji Yuriko, Doji Takashi, Daidoji Toki, Bayushi Itamaki, Shiba Kodo, Kuni Takaoka, Kitsu Mitaka, and Agasha Yumire. The contest uses the Wrestling and Hand-to-Hand skills, and the first combatant to render their opponent helpless (by reducing them to the Down or lower Wound Ranks, stunning them, or putting them in an inescapable hold) or force them out of the ring is the winner of each match. The two Doji combatants will use Mizu-Do (described in *Way of the Crane*), and Kuni Takaoka will use the infamous Crab Kubo Ichi-kai school of martial arts. (If the GM does not have access to the *Bearers of Jade* book, which contains the rules for Kubo, simulate the Crab's more brutal style by letting him keep one extra die of damage.) The combat is meant to be non-lethal, and inflicting debilitating injuries such as broken bones is frowned upon.

If the PCs observe the crowd during the matches, they can roll **Perception+Investigation** (or **Nazodo**) to notice the following items of interest:

- On TN 20 or better, they notice that Kitsu Miyo keeps shooting glares at Bayushi Fumi, even when her husband is fighting his opponents.
- If the roll is TN 25 or more, they also spot something else. Isawa Yoritaka keeps his hands occupied during the matches by folding small origami animals, but at one point he sets one down to one side...near Asahina Kimi's feet. A few minutes later, while Doji Takashi is fighting his

match, she picks the origami up with a single deft movement and tucks it into her obi. Besides the PCs, the only one to spot the exchange is Bayushi Itamaki.

First Round Matches:

- Match #1: Doji Yuriko vs. PC (or Shiba Kodo)
- Match #2: Doji Takashi vs. PC (or Kuni Takaoka)
- Match #3: Agasha Yumire vs. Bayushi Itamaki (see “An Unfortunate Broken Bone,” below)
- Match #4: Daidoji Toki vs. PC (or Kitsu Mitaka)

If there are additional PC participants, match them against Kodo, Takaoka, or Mitaka. If the number of combatants is uneven, give one of the NPCs a bye in the first round. In the second round, the winners are pitted against each other randomly until only two remain, who face each other in a final round.

### **An Unfortunate Broken Bone**

An interesting event occurs during the match between Bayushi Itamaki and Agasha Yumire. The two grapple, and Yumire says something softly to the Scorpion as they strain against each other. Then, with a violent twist, she slams him to the floor of the dojo. There is an unpleasant snap as Itamaki’s left arm breaks, but he manages not to cry out. Yumire stands and bows, apologizing. “I am afraid I misjudged the throw,” she says quietly. “Please forgive me, Bayushi Itamaki-san.” The Scorpion smiles through his pain and hobbles away for treatment. Yumire takes her seat and waits for her next match, apparently oblivious to the soft murmurs in the room.

Any PC who rolls **Perception+Investigation** (TN 25) can overhear what Yumire said. If they have the advantage Read Lips, the TN is only 15. “My brother’s memory cries out for blood, Scorpion.”

If the PCs ask Itamaki about this, he smoothly denies everything. “Your ears must have deceived you, samurai,” he smiles. “It was an accident, nothing more.” Yumire will refuse to speak of the matter to anyone but a Dragonfly or fellow Dragon PC, in which case she will admit that she believes Itamaki to be responsible for the unexpected disgrace of her brother last year. “He was forced to commit seppuku to save our family honor, but he was innocent. That Scorpion made him the victim for his own crimes.”

### **Interlude: A Stolen Prize**

When the contest comes to an end, Asahina Tamako praises the winner and sends a servant to fetch the prize. In moments, however, the servant returns with an expression of horror. “The pearls are gone!” he cries, throwing himself at Tamako’s feet. “The window was open, snow whirling through the room! Someone must have stolen them!”

“Someone,” of course, is a ratling. A quick search of the room reveals damp ratling tracks on the floor and more in the fresh snow outside. Daidoji Toki’s face contorts in humiliated fury as she swears to hunt down the “filthy vermin” and recover the stolen items. Kuni Takaoka’s protests (“the creatures love shiny objects, a pearl is the same as a chip of quartz to them”) are brushed aside. Toki orders the palace guards to prepare for pursuit into the snowy wilderness, while asking for help from any bushi who are present as guests. Shiba Kodo, Tonbo Genso, and Doji Takashi will certainly volunteer; PCs are welcome to do so as well.

The pursuit is more of a farce than anything else. The thick snow leaves the armored samurai floundering, struggling after the tracks of the much lighter ratlings. Daidoji Toki forges grimly ahead, her face set and her eyes flashing dangerously. The trail leads out of the palace compound to a nearby clump of forest (now bare and leafless, gray branches reaching for the clouded sky). Here, it is apparent from the tracks that more ratlings were waiting for the thief. The tracks split up and head into the forest. Toki looks at the ground grimly for a time and then turns to the others. “We’ll have to split up and track down all of them to find the one with the pearls,” she growls. “I suggest two of us on each trail. Two samurai should be more than enough to handle any ambushes from these vermin.” If any PCs suggest that greater numbers might be wise, Toki sneers at their cowardice (“you think too much of these miserable creatures”) but allows them to pursue as they see fit.

There should be enough different tracks to put the PCs on their own. Following the trail in the fresh snow is easy enough, requiring merely a **Perception+Hunting** roll at TN 10 to avoid being confused. As the PCs wind through the trees, the other parties of pursuing samurai drift further and further away, their sounds muffled by the snowy landscape, until it seems the PCs are alone in the forest, following a trail without an end.

It is at this point that one of the ratling leaders, Rit’Chuk’tak, will attempt to make contact with the PCs. He will approach whichever PC seems least likely, in his canny ratling judgment, to immediately attack. Crabs will be the first choice, of course, and Cranes the last.

*You see the head of a ratling pop up from behind a snow-covered embankment a dozen paces away. The nezumi watches you carefully, clearly ready to dive out of sight at a moment’s notice. He wears tattered armor and clutches the hilt of a small sword, about the size of a wakizashi. A distinctive streak of white fur runs across his head, and his eyes are mismatched: one black, one gray. He holds up one*

*forepaw in a gesture of parley, and chitters in badly accented Rokugani: “Wait, man-man! We talk!”*

If the PCs attack, Rit’chuk’tak dives out of sight and tries to continue the parley without showing himself. If they do not immediately attack, he gestures behind him and another, smaller ratling (also with mismatched eyes) skulks up behind him, the very picture of shame and fear. Rit’chuk’tak kicks the smaller ratling. “This one stupid-stupid,” he chitters. “Go for food, come back with shiny things. Stupid Kot’tuk!” He again kicks the ratling, who flinches abjectly. “Give back now-now!”

The smaller ratling pulls the necklace of pearls from behind his back and nervously tosses it toward the PCs. It thumps into the snow in front of them. Rit’chuk’tak nods decisively. “You have shinies back now. You not kill-kill?”

Rit’chuk’tak’s goal is quite simple: he doesn’t want any of his people killed for Kot’tuk’s mistake. To convince Toki not to kill any ratlings, the PCs will have to show her the necklace, make a convincing appeal (e.g. role-play well), and roll **Awareness+Sincerity** at TN 25. Otherwise, she will insist on killing several ratlings in retaliation before returning to Kyuden Asahina.

If none of the PCs accompanied Toki, or if they refuse to parley with Rit’Chuk’tak, Toki will kill over a dozen ratlings before finally giving up and returning to the palace without the pearls. Rit’Chuk’tak will escape regardless. A humiliated Toki offers to commit seppuku, but Tamako gently refuses: “There is no fault on your head, samurai. You did everything that could be done.”

If the pearls are returned, Tamako publicly thanks both Toki and the PCs for their valiant and successful efforts, and awards the pearls to the winner of the contest.

## Scene Four: Storytelling Contest

*A fierce storm descends on the Asahina lands as the court enters the month of Kukyo, the month of the Tiger in the common usage, and the last month of the year. Even the skills of the Asahina shugenja can only slightly mitigate the storm’s ferocity. The blizzard howls through the peaceful lands, blanketing everything in white and turning the air into a blinding whirl of snowflakes. The wind moans constantly outside the walls of Kyuden Asahina, and the court turns inward, enjoying the warmth and peace within the palace.*

*One evening, after a magnificent story from the famed Doji Shizue, the daimyo suggests that the other guests show their skills at storytelling. “And since there are no Sparrows here,” he remarks, eyes*

*twinkling, “these tales should not put any of us to sleep.” There is a flurry of scandalized chuckles at the subtle jab at the Minor Clan that abandoned the Crane so many centuries ago.*

Tamako will not make this joke if there are any Sparrow Clan PCs in the scenario. The next day, many of the guests gather in one of the meeting rooms to begin the telling of stories. Tamako announces that he will offer a Kakita fetish, the White Sheaf of Grain, as prize for the best story, and that Doji Shizue herself will judge the quality of the tales. There is collective polite applause for such an honorable judge (although a look of disappointment crosses the face of Kitsu Mitaka).

If any of the PCs decide to join in the competition, have them describe their story and roll **Awareness+Bard** against the rolls of the NPC contestants. Assign a favorable modifier (+5 to +15, as seems appropriate) if the player chooses an interesting story topic or role-plays well, and a negative modifier if the PC chooses an offensive story or fails to be creative at all. (“I tell a story. How many dice?”) The ratlings have learned their lesson, and the prize for this contest is not stolen. High roll wins the contest; if a PC wins, s/he will receive the fetish.

The following NPCs offer stories. In many cases, they get interesting audience reactions, which the PCs can notice if they are paying attention to the particular NPCs in question – or if not, by rolling **Simple Perception** at TN 20.

- Asahina Yakamo offers the tale of Lady Doji’s courtship by Kakita. This goes over well with the majority-Crane audience. He rolls 4k3+5, for a total of 27.
- Doji Takashi tells the story of Akodo Asumiya, a Lion woman in the reign of Hantei the 25<sup>th</sup> who was seduced by a Scorpion and betrayed her husband. Ultimately, the daimyo of the Lion forced both husband and wife to commit seppuku. The Crane-heavy audience approves of this story, which is popular among those who wish to puncture the Lion Clan’s claims of impeccable honor. The two Kitsus, unsurprisingly, frown in disapproval. However, Asahina Kimi also seems troubled by the story, and does not join in the general Crane applause afterward. Isawa Yoritaka and his yojimbo, Kodo, also seem slightly perturbed by the story. Takashi rolls 3k2+5, for a result of 23.
- Daidoji Toki tells the story of the Battle of the Landbridge, where the friendship between the Daidoji family and the Crab Clan began. Kuni Takaoka nods approvingly, although the Asahina are unhappy with such a violent, warlike tale. She rolls 3k2, for a result of 17.

- Bayushi Fumi tells the story of Matsu Hitomi, the famed samurai-ko who betrayed her oaths for love. She tells the story well, and there is much appreciative applause, but PCs can tell that many guests are made quietly uncomfortable by the tale – notably Asahina Kimi, Doji Takashi, Isawa Yoritaka, and both of the Kitsu. She rolls 5k4, for a result of 29.
- Bayushi Itamaki tells a ghost story: a tale of the spirit of a murdered Phoenix who revealed his killer to a passing monk many years later. The murderer, confronted by the monk, broke down and confessed. Ide Rivan seems oddly disturbed by this story, and after the contest is finished she leaves her husband’s side and speaks quietly with Itamaki. After their brief conversation Rivan’s behavior changes, and she becomes much quieter and more serious. He rolls 5k5 –10 (he is unskilled) for a total of 23.
- Kitsu Mitaka tells a rousing Lion story of courage on the battlefield, recounting a valient charge during one of the Lion wars against the Scorpion. Oddly enough, Bayushi Fumi applauds the story as much as Kitsu Miyo. He tells the story magnificently and rolls 7k3, for a total of 32.
- Kuni Takaoka recount the Battle of the Cresting Wave, when the terrible Oni Lord known as the Maw nearly broke the Crab. Kuni Osaku sacrificed her life-force to stop the Shadowlands army with a raging river until the Kaiu Wall could be built. The tale is quite gruesome and explicit in its descriptions of the terrible battle, and expressions of shock and distaste cross the faces of most of the guests. Takaoka does not seem troubled by this, and indeed seems to relish their reactions. He rolls 2k2 –10 (unskilled) for a total of 5. Many Cranes shudder delicately and refuse to applaud.
- Agasha Yumire tells the story of a Crane woman, Kakita Reia, who took up the study of the sword and hunted across the Empire to avenge the murder of her brother. This story goes over especially well with the bushi in the audience (Doji Takashi, Daidoji Toki, Shiba Kodo). With a **Perception+Investigation** roll at TN 30 (or **Awareness+Ichi Miru** at TN 20), the PCs notice that Bayushi Itamaki fingers his splinted arm unconsciously during the tale. She rolls 5k4+5, for a result of 29.
- Ide Sowasora offers an exotic tale of his clan’s days in the Burning Sands. His wife Rivan seems a bit distracted, and her applause is the same indifferent effort for him as for the other storytellers. He rolls 6k4, for a result of 28.
- Tonbo Genso tells the story of his clan’s founding, the result of a complex love triangle between a

Dragon, a Phoenix, and a Lion. Since the story involves the humiliation of the Lion, the Crane enjoy it, while the two Kitsu frown. Genso, however, makes no effort to cast blame or denigrate any Clans in the story. He rolls 3k3 –5 (unskilled, but a friendly audience) for a total of 14.

## Scene Five: A Startling Dinner

A couple of weeks after the storytelling contest, the year-end fair (Toshi no Ichi) and New Year’s Festival is held. Monks from the local shrine of Jurojin, Fortune of Lengevity, come to the palace to offer prayers for the health of the Emperor and the good fortune of the Empire in the coming year. The next evening, a grand dinner is held, at which each guest is asked to make a brief speech expressing his or her wishes for the new year. Most of them are bland and pleasant speeches designed to earn applause from the audience (which is, of course, predominantly Crane). The PCs may make speeches as well, and may (if they wish) roll **Awareness+Oratory** to determine the impact of their words.

Two speeches are of particular note:

*Asahina Ujime:* The local daimyo speaks of his Clan and family’s hope that the next year will be peaceful and prosperous, free of the threat of war which has been hanging over the Empire recently. However, his speech seems to be somewhat lacking in enthusiasm, and there is a faint tremor in his words as he speaks of “friendship and harmony between all the Clans of the Empire.” With a **Simple Perception** roll at TN 20, PCs can notice his eyes keep sliding toward Bayushi Itamaki.

*Bayushi Itamaki:* The Scorpion’s speech is intensely controversial. “As all of you, I hope that the future year may be one of peace and prosperity. We of the Scorpion Clan are painfully aware of how fragile peace can be, especially when only the code of Honor serves to protect it. After all, who among us has not seen, with their own eyes, how easily Honor can be swayed by the three sins: Fear, Regret, and above all, Desire.” He smiles as his eyes track across the crowd, which is silent in its disapproval. “Why, who here could not offer a tale of a samurai brought down by such things? Friend Isawa Yoritaka-san, for example, I’m sure could offer us such a tale. Or perhaps our noble Kitsu Mitaka-san, although the Lion, I’m sure, are more free of such sins than the rest of us. Or any of the others gathered here this day. So it is incumbent upon us to seek this peace with all our strength, against such temptations.”

There is irritable murmuring from the crowd as Itamaki concludes this unconventional “speech.” Then Isawa Yoritaka rises suddenly to his feet, his face darkening with rage. “I will not have my Honor questioned by a Scorpion dog!” he shouts, while his bodyguard Kodo stands beside him with a pinched, unhappy expression. Itamaki smiles gently. “I questioned no-one’s honor, noble Phoenix,” he says unctuously. “I merely suggested you might know stories of others who have found their honor wanting. If my poor words offended you, I humbly apologize.” Yoritaka looks like he would prefer to ignore the apology, but at a few whispered words from his bodyguard he nods curtly and resumes his seat.

### **Interlude: An Inhuman Interruption**

This occurs after the incident with Itamaki, but before the speeches are finished – preferably just after a PC has finished a speech.

*Just as (PC’s name) is finishing, a door slides open with a bang and Asahina Yakamo rushes in, pale and gesticulating. “The ratlings,” he gasps, “they are in the library! All over the place!”*

Asahina Tamako leaps to his feet with a horrified expression on his face. “The scrolls! They mustn’t be allowed to harm them!” Cranes rush toward the castle, with other guests accompanying them.

The PCs are free to help – in fact, this may be their only opportunity to visit the famed Asahina libraries, unless they manage to research the Jade Bow there later.

The libraries fill the second and third floors of the castle, and as the PCs and other residents rush in they encounter a crowd of terrified servants, trying vainly to catch (or, depending on their temperament, avoid) the ratlings, which are leaping and skittering through the place. It quickly becomes apparent that the ratlings have actually invaded the storage cellars below the castle, seeking food and other goods, and are now fleeing through the libraries, pursued by troops who were guarding the basement storerooms. The ratlings scramble through the scroll-laden wooden shelves that fill the library, and everyone splits up trying to pursue them. A few of the cleverer ratlings knock over shelves or scatter armfuls of scrolls on the floor, forcing the pursuing Cranes to stop and rescue the precious documents.

It is up to the PCs how they help (if they help at all). The ratlings prove quite difficult to catch, thanks to their small size and superior agility, and are not interested in fighting – they only want to get out of the castle with the food they have stolen. This scene should basically be played for humor value, with the hapless samurai losing all dignity as they chase the slippery

ratlings around the libraries. If the PCs parleyed with Rit’Chuk’tak earlier in the scenario, they should spot him at some point. He makes a ratling shrug. “Sorry-sorry, only way out of down-below rooms!”

However, at some point while the PCs are running through the shelves of scrolls, have them roll **Perception+Investigation** at TN 25. If any of the PCs are successful, they overhear a conversation behind an adjacent shelf. The voices are recognizable as Bayushi Itamaki and Ide Rivan. Rivan is tense, angry, and frightened; Itamaki, by contrast, sounds relaxed and pleasant, in control of himself and the situation.

Rivan: “...how did you..?”

Itamaki: “Scorpions have their ways. It isn’t important how I found out. What matters is that I know.”

Rivan (sharply): “You know nothing! It wasn’t like that at all!”

Itamaki: “Oh, so? Are you trying to tell me you didn’t kill him?”

Rivan (low voice): “...no. It was an accident.”

Itamaki (laughs): “Oh, how dreadful! An accident! Which you tried to conceal from everyone, including your husband and daimyo...I wonder what they would think of this accident?”

Rivan: “Please... what do you want?”

Itamaki: “Me? I want nothing. Desire is a sin. But my clan might have need of your services at some point. After all, your husband is an important diplomat, and I’m sure he tells you about the discussions and negotiations he holds...”

Rivan (softly, sounding defeated): “...hai.”

If the PCs interrupt this conversation at any point, Itamaki and Rivan break away from each other and go their separate ways. Neither of them will admit to the true nature of their conversation, instead claiming to have been discussing the problem of the ratlings. They are lying, of course; if the PCs actually confront either of them on the nature of their conversation, they will deny everything (“You must have misheard us, noble samurai”). Rivan will be clearly shaken by the discovery that others have learned her secret, and her fear will be plain to see. Itamaki is much smoother, and only if the PCs succeed in a Contested **Perception vs. Awareness** roll will they realize that he is actually quite upset that he was overheard. “I assure you, \_\_\_\_-san, your interpretation of our conversation is entirely mistaken.”

It is possible that the PCs may decide to mention this incident to Rivan’s husband, Ide Sowasora. The cheerful Unicorn diplomat refuses to believe anything so dishonorable of his wife. “Rivan has always been the most honorable of women,” he growls, his normal friendly demeanor turning flat and cold. “Am I to believe otherwise on the word of those who have never

met her? Leave this room at once! I shall not listen to another word!” However, any PC making a **Simple Awareness** roll at TN 20 can tell that, underneath his bold facade, Sowasora is shaken by their words.

## Scene Six: A Tense Dinner

Dinner that evening is filled with hidden tension. Although some guests are their usual pleasant, well-mannered selves, others seem nervous and irritable.

- Kuni Takaoka nearly earns a challenge from Daidoji Toki with incessant joking about the skills and tenacity of the ratlings; she finally rises and stalks from the hall after a perfunctory bow to Asahina Tamako.
- The two Kitsu are cold and remote to each other, and Mitaka’s usual charm with others seems weak and forced.
- If the PCs told Ide Sowasora about the conversation they overheard, there is also severe tension between him and his wife; otherwise, Rivan alone is tense and uneasy, trying to excuse her behavior as a touch of ill health.
- Asahina Ujime has also lost the charming manners which he showed earlier in the winter, and his wife sits quietly at his side as he sullenly works his way through dinner.
- There is also visible tension between the betrothed couple, Asahina Kimi and Doji Takashi, although they put on false smiles whenever others speak to them.
- Isawa Yoritaka shoots angry glares at Bayushi Itamaki throughout the evening.

Some, of course, remain untouched by the strange tension which afflicts the court. The two Scorpions are their usual charming selves – indeed, the PCs may detect an aura of triumph about them. Other guests unaffected by the tension include Asahina Yakamo, Doji Shizue, Doji Yuriko, Tonbo Genso, and Kuni Takaoka. Agasha Yumire also seems calm, although her gaze hardens whenever she looks at Itamaki. And Asahina Tamako presides over it all with a worried frown playing beneath his whiskers.

The PCs should end this dinner feeling as though the harmony and tranquility of Winter Court has been irretrievably broken.

## Scene Seven: Murder!

*The next morning, you are awakened by the sound of servants and guards rushing through the corridors of the palace. Clearly something terrible has happened, although no one will speak of it. Before breakfast,*

*however, everyone is summoned to one of the main audience halls. Many of the guests have clearly just awakened, while others have just come from the baths. Their complaints die on their lips, however, at the sight of a grave and weary Asahina Tamako. “I have terrible news, my friends,” he announces, punctuating his remarks with coughs. “It seems that one of our fellow samurai, Baysuhi Itamaki, has been murdered in the night.” Tamako waits for the shocked murmurs to die away before he resumes. “This is a shocking crime, a breach of the safety and hospitality which my family promised to all of you. It shall not go unpunished.” He gestures to Tonbo Genso, who is listening alertly. “Although this crime would normally be investigated by my own magistrates, I wish to avoid any appearance of impropriety to the noble Scorpion. Therefore, I ask that Tonbo Genso-san, as an Emerald Magistrate, take up the question of this investigation. You may request the assistance of anyone you need, Genso-san.” The magistrate bows in acknowledgement.*

Tonbo Genso will ask at least some of the PCs to assist him in the investigation. He will certainly ask any PCs who are Emerald Magistrates, or who have earned his friendship in previous adventures (such as “Satsume’s Tournament”). He will also ask any non-Crane/non-Scorpion PCs who he has befriended during the Winter Court. Finally, Genso will accept the help of anyone who volunteers their assistance, regardless of their Clan affiliation. If the PCs need a hint in this regard, have Bayushi Fumi volunteer to help seek out the killer of her “noble cousin.”

It is intended that the PCs should take the lead in the investigation, doing most of the “leg work” and reporting their discoveries back to Genso. Do not allow Genso to solve everything for them, although he can serve as a source of clues or suggestions if the PCs are stuck. Ultimately, without the PCs’ help Genso will be unable to solve the crime.

### What Really Happened?

That night, Asahina Ujime became desperate enough to act. Using the spell Know the Shadows, he slipped through the castle to Itamaki’s room, where he stabbed the Scorpion to death. He then dismissed the elemental spirits in the room, replacing them with new ones, to prevent his crime from being detected by the numerous shugenja in the castle. After hastily (and unsuccessfully) searching for any hard evidence of the Scorpion’s blackmail against him, Ujime retreated toward his room, his hands covered with blood, panting with fear, rage, and exhaustion. Along the way, however, he encountered Daidoji Toki, who was patrolling the palace grounds in search of marauding

ratlings. Ujime was forced to detour through the palace gardens to avoid being spotted, and there lost his dagger, the murder weapon. He was too panicked to return and find it, instead proceeding to his room (awakening his wife). He wiped the blood from his hands with a silk cloth and then disposed of the cloth a few hours later by taking it with him to an early bath. He was just working up the courage to go back and seek the dagger when the murder was discovered.

Ujime does not know that there are two witnesses to his crime: the ratling Rit'Chuk'tak saw the entire deed, and Isawa Yoritaka (returning from an assignation with Asahina Kimi) spotted him skulking down the hall with bloody hands. Yoritaka investigated and found Itamaki's corpse. Pleased that this threat to his own reputation and honor had been eliminated, Yoritaka chose to do nothing, and returned to his own room. Rit'Chuk'tak is still lurking on the palace grounds, hoping to find a way to turn his knowledge to use.

### **Investigations: The Crime Scene**

Crane bushi stand guard outside Itamaki's room. They allow only Genso and those accompanying him to enter the place. If the PCs ask, the guards will mention that Bayushi Fumi came by shortly after the crime was discovered, but acting on Tamako-sama's orders they refused her entry to the room.

Itamaki's room is no different from those occupied by the other guests: a pleasant chamber with a futon, a rack for armor and sword, a closet, and a small writing table. A window (currently shut) looks out on the palace gardens. Itamaki's body lies sprawled on the futon, covered in dried blood. It is obvious that he has been stabbed to death. There are a few drops of blood spattered about the room and trailing from the body halfway to the door, suggesting that the murderer exited that way.

The PCs will need eta (the Rokugani "untouchable" class, who handle dead flesh) to search the body itself. Touching spilt blood or dead flesh is the severest taboo in Rokugan, and a PC who even considers such a disgusting act loses a point of Honor. Once eta are present, the PCs can have the body examined and searched without touching it themselves. Itamaki was wearing a simple yukata (a loose-fitting garment, simpler than a kimono, which functions like a bathrobe and/or pajamas), and there is nothing concealed on his person. He was killed with several thrusts from a blade, probably a knife judging from the size and depth of the cuts. With a **Perception+Investigation** roll at TN 20, the PCs can also notice bruising around his mouth, suggesting that someone held their hand over his mouth while stabbing him.

If the PCs decide to search the rest of the room, they find nothing of immediate interest. The writing table has a number of blank scrolls, along with the beginnings of a nondescript letter to his daimyo in Scorpion lands. The scrolls are tumbled and crumpled, stained with bloody fingerprints, showing that the murderer shuffled through them quickly. The closet contains an assortment of fine quality kimonos and other garments. They are disarrayed, a few of them bloodstained, again as though the murderer rifled through them quickly. A good-quality daisho set hangs on the weapon rack, but there is no armor (Itamaki was a courtier, after all). Genso will arrange for Itamaki's belongings to be sent home to his family once it becomes clear there are no clues to be found.

PCs who know anything at all about Scorpions, of course, will suspect that there is more here than meets the eye. They are right. Itamaki's secrets can be discovered if the PCs search the room for secret compartments and roll **Perception+Investigation** at TN 30 (if they specifically mention searching the ceiling, the TN is 25). The spell "By the Light of Lord Moon" will also work here. If the PCs succeed, they notice that one of the ceiling panels seems a little loose. Hidden above it is a large puzzle box.

A standard Rokugani technique for investigating a crime is to have a shugenja interrogate the spirits at the scene. If the PCs do not think of this, Tonbo Genso will certainly attempt it, summoning one of the palace shugenja if none of the PCs can perform the task. However, the results are disappointing: it seems that all the spirits who occupied this room have been purged and replaced by new ones, who have been here only a few hours. They can report only that "the man" was already dead when they came here. Since only a shugenja can dismiss and replace spirits in this way, this suggests that either the murderer was a shugenja, or a shugenja assisted in the crime. Tonbo Genso smiles ironically. "Well, since we are in the palace of the Crane shugenja family, that narrows it down a little, I think."

There is some information that can be gained from the spirits, if the PCs think to ask the right questions. The spirits remember that another man briefly visited the room later in the night, after they were summoned. They generally cannot describe the man except to say that he "felt powerful." However, if a shugenja takes at least two raises while Communing with the Air spirits (only) in the room, they mention that the man wore cloth "the color of sunset" (orange). The man in question was, of course, Isawa Yoritaka.

Finally, if the PCs ask about the rooms next to Itamaki's, these rooms are occupied by various generic Crane courtiers staying at the palace. None of them heard or noticed anything unusual during the night.

### **Investigations: Itamaki's Puzzle-Box**

The puzzle-box is both cleverly designed and a work of art, painted in patterns of red and black and inlaid with the Bayushi mon. It will require an **Intelligence+Investigation** roll at TN 30 (or **Intelligence+Nazodo** at TN 20) to open the box. No PC may make more than two attempts. Also, the box is trapped with a poison needle. The trap can be spotted with a **Perception+Poison** (or **Traps**) roll at TN 20, or with an appropriate spell (such as *By the Light of Lord Moon*). If the trap is not detected, whoever finally opens the box must make a **Reflexes+Defense** roll at TN 20 to avoid the poison needle. If the roll is failed, the PC takes 5k5 wounds from the virulent poison.

Within the box is a thick pile of neatly arranged scrolls, all covered in Itamaki's neat, precise writing. The scrolls are records of his activities during the winter court, and include the following information:

- Asahina Ujime: He "made contact" with Asahina Ujime and "explained the situation." Ujime seemed unwilling, at first, to cooperate, but "after I pressed the issue" he came around. The exact nature of what he is using to blackmail Ujime is never described, but there is a reference to Itamaki previously encountering Ujime in the Scorpion city of Ryoko Owari.
- Isawa Yoritaka and Asahina Kimi: "Recovered the letter from her quarters, and then confirmed with private observations. Made my first direct mention during the speeches today, and Yoritaka clearly saw my reference. Final approach will come at the end of Winter." Accompanying the notes is a love letter from Isawa Yoritaka to Asahina Kimi.
- Doji Takashi: "The truth about his wife could easily ruin him. However, such an honorable Crane might opt for seppuku rather than let himself be used by us. Best to keep this one to the wife."
- Fumi's seduction of Kitsu Mitaka: "Fumi-chan reports success with the Kitsu. These Lions are so easy to lure away from their precious Honor. His wife suspects, but all the better. Many excellent long term prospects here."
- Ide (Iuchi) Rivan: "I have confirmed that she is the one who was seen killing Matsu Takeru." Later, he approaches her and explains the situation. "She accepted the situation."
- Agasha Yumire: "I am concerned. I did not expect Agasha Sukito's sister to react in this way – Dragons are difficult to predict. Hopefully she will not lose control."

What do the PCs do with these Scorpion documents? Technically, since they were found within the puzzle-box they are the property of the Scorpion clan, but Tonbo Genso will be very reluctant to return these

dishonorable writings. He will argue that they are themselves the products of criminal activity, as well as evidence in this crime, and as such cannot be considered the legal property of the Scorpion Clan. He will agree to return the puzzle-box itself, of course.

Scorpion PCs may want to return the documents to their clan despite Genso's wishes. This will require that they either conceal the documents from Genso in the first place, or steal them back from him later. If non-Scorpion PCs learn of this, they will have to decide whether their own code of Honor demands that they stop the Scorpion. The potential for intra-party conflict exists here, and do not shrink from showing the consequences. A Scorpion's life is often unsafe, as Itamaki can attest.

### **Investigations: Questioning the NPCs**

Since personal testimony is the most important criminal evidence in Rokugan, Tonbo Genso will want to begin interviewing everyone as soon as he has examined the crime scene. It is up to the players whether their characters assist Genso in his interrogations, or speak to the NPCs later on their own. Genso will take any reasonable suggestions from the PCs regarding which NPCs to question, in what order, and so forth.

**Asahina Ujime and Asahina Miroe:** the murderer will claim to have spent the night in his quarters with his wife. Miroe will confirm his story. They are both lying, but Miroe is a much poorer liar than her husband – these events have shaken her badly. If the PCs interrogate her alone, or after uncovering other incriminating evidence (such as Yoritaka's testimony, Ujime's dagger, or the bloodstain in their room) they can probably crack her. It is up to the GM's judgment whether the PCs' approach breaks down her resolve, but in general, appealing to her Honor or family, or to her loyalty to the Emperor, will work best.

**Asahina Kimi:** Kimi claims to have spent the night alone, but she is lying. If the PCs search her room, they can find two more love letters from Isawa Yoritaka, and an obi in Phoenix orange. Confronted with this evidence, or with the letter which Itamaki stole from her, she may break down and confess – especially if she thinks Yoritaka is a suspect in the crime, in which case she will sacrifice her own honor and name to save her true love's life. She admits that Yoritaka left her room before the night was over, but insists that a man like him could not possibly have murdered Itamaki.

**Daidoji Toki:** the guard captain freely admits to having spent much of the night patrolling the palace, pursuing several ratlings who had crept onto the premises. She remembers seeing Isawa Yoritaka, Ide Rivan, and Agasha Yumire walking about the palace at various

times during the night, but did not stop to speak with them.

***Kitsu Mitaka and Kitsu Miyo:*** The two Lions both say that they spent the night in their respective quarters (as traditionalist Lions, they do not sleep in the same room). However, Mitaka is hiding something (Fumi visited him), and Miyo is hiding her own deep suspicions of her unfaithful husband. If the PCs confront Mitaka with Itamaki's papers, he will try to bluff ("Scorpion forgeries!") unless the PCs tell his wife, in which case he breaks down and confesses, then prepares to commit seppuku. However, he did not murder Itamaki and, since he did not leave his room, saw nothing useful.

***Bayushi Fumi:*** Fumi lies with perfect sincerity as she says that she spent the night in her room alone. If the PCs confront her with Itamaki's papers or Mitaka's confession, she continues to deny everything with unbreakable conviction. Fumi is a trained Scorpion courtier, and she knows that the PCs cannot "pin" anything on her without more evidence than this. Since no one saw her trip to Mitaka's room, she will never admit it. Luckily, she did not see anything useful during her nighttime walk.

***Isawa Yoritaka:*** The Phoenix shugenja at first denies everything, insisting that he spent the night in his quarters and that Kodo can confirm his story. Yoritaka will not change his story unless the PCs confront him with something that shakes his confidence – Kodo's testimony, the discovery of his letters and obi in Kimi's room, Itamaki's notes, or similar. In this case he will admit to the affair with Kimi, trying to convince the PCs to keep it a secret ("for her sake, not mine"), and will mention seeing the bloody-handed Ujime skulking through the corridors of the palace. He will not admit that he himself entered Itamaki's room unless the PCs claim to have a witness, or he feels himself in genuine danger of being accused of the crime.

***Shiba Kodo:*** Kodo is the weak link in Yoritaka's defense. He fears his master may well have committed the crime, and the cumulative effect of covering for Yoritaka's indiscretions for years has worn away at his sense of duty. If the PCs present any evidence at all that Yoritaka was not in his room last night, Kodo breaks down and quietly confesses that his master was, indeed, absent from his quarters. "He was going to visit Lady Kimi," Kodo says quietly. "As he has done several times. But when he returned, he seemed quite cheerful, far more so than usual. Almost giddy."

***Ide Sowasora and Ide Rivan:*** the Unicorns both claim to have spent the night together in their room, but again,

they are lying: Rivan actually went out for a walk around midnight, seeking to sooth her fear and unease, and ended up meditating in one of the shrines. If the PCs press her, she will confess to this, and will also claim she saw someone ("probably a man, although I am not sure") hurry through the gardens as she was returning. This is the truth. If the PCs press her about her problems with Itamaki (perhaps mentioning the conversation they overheard in the library, or the papers they found in his room), she breaks down and confesses her secret. Her husband will support her, insisting that the matter is closed. Her story of visiting the shrine can be, at least partially, confirmed by the servants.

***Agasha Yumire:*** Yumire freely admits that she was not in her room last night. "I was restless, and the spirits called to me," she explains. "I spent much of the night walking the passages, communing with the kami." She saw Yoritaka, Rivan, and Toki at various points during the night, as well as the ratlings, but did not see Ujime.

***The palace servants:*** The servants will try to keep the secrets of all the samurai, but will be easy to cow or frighten into talking. Their testimony is weakened, of course, by the fact that they are mere commoners and that they will tend to say what they think their listener wants to hear. However, they can confirm that Ide Rivan was in one of the shrines meditating, that Bayushi Fumi visited Kitsu Mitaka's quarters, that Daidoji Toki was hurrying around the castle for much of the night hunting ratlings, and that Isawa Yoritaka visited Asahina Kimi. If the PCs ask if anyone behaved oddly the morning after the murder, one of the servants can mention that Asahina Ujime took a bath at an unusually early hour. Finally, later in the morning one of the servants will discover Ujime's bloodstained silk cloth in the bath.

***The palace guards:*** These Daidoji troops can offer no assistance to the investigation save to confirm that no one entered or left the palace during the night, and that there were indeed ratlings loose on the grounds, which their captain Toki pursued for much of the night.

#### **Investigations: Physical Clues**

If the PCs search the gardens (either on their own initiative, or as a result of the statements they get from various NPCs), they can roll **Perception+Investigation** (or **Nazodo**) at TN 25 to spot the blood-stained dagger which lies beside a shrub, half-buried in the snow in which it fell. The dagger's hilt is inlaid in Crane blue. If the PCs interrogate the spirits in the dagger (it contains Earth spirits in abundance, as well as small quantities of Water and Fire spirits left from its forging), they will confirm that the dagger was used by "the Man" to kill "another man." The spirits cannot identify the "Man"

who owns the dagger. If the PCs have the spell “The Ties Which Bind,” they can trace the dagger to Ujime. If they show the dagger to Ujime, he will deny it is his. His wife, however, will be badly shaken by its discovery (she recognizes it).

If the PCs search any of the guests’ rooms for traces of blood, they have a chance to find a very faint bloodstain in Asahina Ujime’s quarters. The roll is **Perception+Investigation** (or **Nazodo**) at TN 30. The stain is faint and smudged into the floor mats, but is clearly recent blood. Ujime will claim that his wife pricked her finger while sewing, and she will confirm this, but they are lying. Miroe in particular will be nervous and unconvincing.

The only other physical clue is the bloody silk cloth, which Ujime took to the baths that morning. The Crane-blue cloth (now mostly cleansed of blood) will be discovered in the bath by a servant, who will summon Genso and/or the PCs in alarm. Again, if the PCs have the spell “The Ties Which Bind,” they can trace the cloth to Ujime. If they commune with the spirits within the cloth (Earth spirits and a few Air) they can gain a description (matching Ujime) of the man who usually used the cloth.

### **Investigations: The Ratlings Speak**

At some point while the PCs are investigating the crime, they glance through a window and see a ratling staring at them attentively. The distinctive off-white crest marks this as Rit’Chuk’tak. The ratling makes no overt or hostile move, waiting to see how the PCs react. If they are hostile or threatening, he retreats immediately (although he might later approach individual NPCs who seem more favorable, such as Crabs or Scorpions). If they are neutral or friendly, however, Rit’Chuk’tak speaks.

“You looking man-man who kill, yes?” Given an affirmative answer, the ratling grins. “Rit’Chuk’tak see, yes-yes! See man who kill, see other man who come later! Yes-yes!” The ratling cocks his head, a canny gleam in his mismatched eyes. “You help Rit’Chuk’tak, he tell you, yes-yes!”

The ratling is not about to give up his information without getting something in return – at the very least, help in locating the Jade Bow. He will explain the ratlings’ needs to the PCs: “Nasty bad-magic thing come, take our lands. We run-run, long ways. Then old shaman remembers, story of blue-blue man with gree bow, come to our lands many years ago, kill-kill lots of bad-magic! We decide, come to land of blue-blue men, find bow of green rock. Bow kill bad-magic, kill it good, yes-yes!” The ratling shakes his head mournfully. “But no can find green bow, and blue-blue men fights us all the time, kill-kill us. We needs food, steals, then they kill more. Is bad-bad.” He stares intently at the PCs. “You show us where-where green bow is, we

leaves, not bother blue-blue men anymore. And I tell you who kill, who see. Yes?”

It is up to the PCs whether to accept the ratlings’ offer. The crime can be solved without their help, although doing so is more difficult. If the PCs do decide to help the ratlings, they can roll **Intelligence+History** (TN 30) or **Intelligence+Crane Lore** (TN 20) to recall a story of a jade bow that was made hundreds of years ago by an Asahina weaponsmith. The fate of the bow is not generally known – the PCs will have to research it in the Asahina libraries.

Rit’chuk’tak’s statement: “I run-run through gardens, hide from bad-bad woman, yes? Looks in this window. Sees man in blue-blue, thick in middle, not-young. He pull out knife, stab-stab man there.” Points at futon. “Then wave hands and chant-chant. Then leaves. Later I sees him run through gardens, there-there.” Pointing across the gardens. “Then other man comes in. This man wear orange. Have...mmm...small-small here.” Taps his own chin. “He look around, smile-smile, leave again.”

### **The Asahina Libraries**

The Asahina libraries are the repository of the family’s knowledge and secrets, and gaining access to them will not be easy. The library entrances are always guarded by dedicated Crane bushi. Crane PCs will be able to enter so long as they present a reasonable explanation (Asahina PCs will not even have to do that much), but those from other Clans must present a convincing reason to a high-ranking Asahina (Tamako, Ujime, Yakamo, or possibly Kimi) and then roll **Awareness+Etiquette**. The TN of the roll should depend on how good a reason the PCs offer and how well they role-play. Actually telling the blunt truth (“we want to give a Crane ancestral item to the ratlings”) is unlikely to get a positive response (TN 30 or higher), but something close to the truth (“we think finding this item will allow us to kill the creature that drove the ratlings into these lands”) will work well with Tamako, Ujime, or Kimi (not the arrogant Yakamo). The GM must judge how the PCs handle this.

Scorpions and ronin will never be allowed into the libraries under any circumstances. Of course, it is possible to sneak into the libraries (by scaling the castle walls at night, for example) but such an act is both dishonorable and extremely dangerous. PCs who take such risks must be prepared to accept the consequences.

In any case, if the PCs are allowed into the libraries, they must roll **Intelligence +Calligraphy** at TN 25 to find the correct scroll: a life-story of Asahina Yujikoto, an artisan and weaponsmith. After his lover was killed by an oni, Yujikoto spent many years crafting the Jade Bow before traveling to the Shadowlands to destroy the creature. He killed many oni before he finally found the one which had done the

deed. Yujitoko then retired to a shrine of Bishamon, Fortune of Courage. Another roll, at TN 25, shows that the shrine in question was destroyed almost eighty years later in the great Crab-Crane War. There is no mention of the bow, but it cannot be found in any other records.

### **What if the PCs decide to go after the Bow?**

Since it is winter, travel is extremely slow and difficult. Going to the Shrine personally is an extended expedition which will remove them from the investigation of Itamaki's murder. Such PCs are considered to succeed in their quest, but do not play a part in the remaining scenario.

## **Scene Eight: Solving the Crime**

If the PCs uncover enough evidence and report to Tonbo Genso, he takes them to visit Asahina Tamako and lays out all the evidence to the daimyo. The frail Tamako seems to grow a little older as he listens to their report. The GM must adjudicate whether the PCs have found sufficient evidence to justify the arrest of Ujime. The testimony of Yoritaka and Miroe will probably be the crucial elements, since Rokugani justice regards personal testimony as the most valuable evidence. If the PCs have assembled sufficient evidence to prove Ujime's guilt, Tamako reluctantly signs an Order of Appearance for his arrest and questioning.

It is possible that the PCs may charge someone else with the crime, such as Isawa Yoritaka. In this case, the GM must weigh the strength of their arguments. If they seem sufficiently persuasive, Tonbo Genso may decide they are right and take their recommendation to Asahina Tamako. Again, Tamako will sign an Order of Appearance.

### **Arrest and Trial**

The NPC who is arrested for the crime (whether it be Ujime or someone else) will first be offered the chance to confess freely. Ujime will do so – he is broken by the realization that his crimes have been discovered. He confesses to smuggling opium into Crane lands, and to killing Itamaki to conceal his crimes. The next day, in a public trial, Genso presents both the evidence and Ujime's confession to Tamako, who sadly and reluctantly orders the daimyo's death by hanging. Ujime requests (and is granted) permission to commit seppuku to save his family's honor. A PC can offer to serve as his second, if they choose – otherwise, he will ask Daidoji Toki to fulfill that duty.

If the PCs charged someone other than Ujime, the NPC refuses to confess and is handed over to the palace torturer for interrogation. However, the NPC holds out

long enough that the torturer suggests they may be innocent. This is an opportunity for the PCs to realize they have the wrong person, release the victim, and resume the investigation (Tonbo Genso may do so on his own initiative if he feels the PCs are pursuing a personal vendetta rather than justice). If the case is pressed through regardless, the poor victim will eventually confess under duress. In this case the seppuku scene is somewhat different.

### **A Crime Unsolved**

If the PCs are unable to help Tonbo Genso in his investigation, he will eventually realize that Ujime must have committed the crime, but will be unable to offer any evidence to prove it. He meets with Asahina Tamako privately, explaining the situation, and then announces that the crime is unsolved. However, afterward he is seen speaking privately with Bayushi Fumi. A few months later, Asahina Ujime dies of apparent heart failure.

## **Scene Nine: Seppuku**

If the PCs convicted Ujime of the crime, the following scene takes place:

*The morning weather is cool and cloudy, a chill wind whistling through the Asahina gardens, as Asahina Ujime appears in his white garments. His face is gray and haggard as he kneels in the prescribed posture and reads a brief, unimpressive haiku on honor and duty. His second stands ready and quickly delivers the deathblow before Ujime can falter. You feel a sense of satisfaction as chill as the wind, knowing that the murderer has gone to his karmic reward.*

If the PCs convicted an innocent of the crime, the following scene takes place instead:

*The weather is bright and clear, the sun sparkling on the late winter morning frost which coats the gardens, as (NPC's name) appears in the prescribed white garments. After reading a brief, poignant haiku reaffirming his/her innocence, (NPC) performs the ceremony with careful precision. The second ends the suffering before (NPC) can falter. Despite the warmth of the sun, you feel a sense of cold hollowness within.*

In either case, with the crime solved, the Winter Court resumes its more usual tranquility...unless the PCs start exposing secrets.

- If the PCs kept Kimi and Yoritaka's affair a secret, the court ends a few weeks later with Kimi and Takashi's triumphant (and to all public appearances, happy) marriage.

- If they exposed the affair, things get much messier: Yoritaka commits seppuku, the marriage is cancelled, and Kimi is sold off to a geisha house. The Court ends in bitterness, sorrow, and a public embarrassment for the Crane Clan.

## Epilogue: The Gratitude of Ratlings

If the PCs helped the ratlings recover the Jade Bow, then the following scene takes place in the final days of the Winter Court, as spring is beginning to soften the weather.

*The ratling incidents have dropped off dramatically since you helped Rit'chuk'tak. One morning (PC who helped the ratlings the most) looks up and sees the familiar white-crested ratling crouching in the window. He holds a cloth-wrapped bundle in one hand and keeps the other warily on the hilt of his sword, watching for danger. "You help-help us lots," he chitters. "We have green bow now, go back, kill bad-magic and live in our homes again." He cocks his head. "You get man-man who kill?"*

The ratling seems pleased if the PC confirms that justice was done to Ujime. "Killing own kind always bad," he nods virtuously. "You man-mans do that much. Not we." He glances around one last time, then tosses the bundle to the PC. "Here. Is gratitude of Nezumi people, Odd-Eye Clan. You needs help-help, we give." The ratling hops out the window and vanishes into the Asahina gardens.

Wrapped in the bundle is a small necklace of woven grasses, from which hangs a pendant made of several bird feathers tied together around two polished rocks, one black and one gray. This is a ratling nemuranai (magical item) that has the effect of keeping its wearer free from all insects and vermin.

## Rewards for Completing the Story

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 round:	2 XP
Good role-playing:	1 XP
Helping the ratlings find the jade bow:	1 XP
Solving the murder of Bayushi Itamaki:	1 XP

Total Possible Experience:

5 XP

### Honor

- If the PCs succeeded in solving the murder of Bayushi Itamaki: +1 point of Honor (+2 points to Scorpion PCs).
- If a PC helped Tonbo Genso, but the crime went unsolved: -1 point of Honor (-2 points to Scorpion PCs).
- PCs found Bayushi Itamaki's list of secrets:
- Scorpions gain +1 Honor for keeping the list out of Genso's hands, or getting a copy to Scorpion lands.
- Non-Scorpions gain +1 Honor for getting the list out of Scorpion hands.

### Glory

- PC won the Hand-to-Hand contest: +1 point of Glory
- PC won the storytelling contest: +1 point of Glory
- PCs recovered the stolen pearls: +1 point of Glory to all PCs who helped in the recovery
- PCs helped solve the murder of Bayushi Itamaki: +2 points of Glory
- PCs exposed any of the secret affairs at court: -1 point per secret exposed (-3 points for Scorpions)
- PCs exposed Kimi and Yoritaka's affair publicly: -1 Glory to all Crane PCs

### Gifts and Rewards

- If a PC won the storytelling contest, that PC receives the certificate for the Asahina fetish: White Grain Sheaf. If the PCs helped the ratlings recover the Jade Bow, the PC who helped the ratlings most (in the GM's judgment) receives the certificate for the Ratling Necklace.

### Other Consequences

- If the PCs solved the crime, and arrested Asahina Ujime, they gain **Minor Allies: Bayushi Family**.
- If they gave the secret of the Jade Bow to the ratlings, they gain **Major Allies: Odd-Eye Clan (Nezumi)** and a free Rank 1 in Nezumi Lore.
- Ronin PCs who complete the adventure are paid 4 koku for their services.

## List of Significant NPCs

(Read this list carefully, so that the NPCs can be run smoothly during play. There are many other people at the Winter Court, but those listed here are the ones significant to the scenario. Feel free to improvise any additional NPCs – especially Cranes – who seem appropriate to the situation.)

**Asahina Tamako:** The famous Asahina family daimyo is an aging, white-haired man who is frequently in ill health, and often coughs into a silk cloth during conversation. Despite his physical frailties he is a formidable shugenja and an honorable and enlightened man who is much admired in the Crane Clan. He is proud of his cousin Asahina Kimi and is glad to be hosting her wedding at this Winter Court. Tamako should be a background figure in this scenario, a hovering presence of higher authority who comes to the fore whenever conflict or crisis threatens to spin out of control. His statistics are listed in *Way of the Crane*.

**Asahina Ujime:** The local Asahina daimyo, second in authority only to Tamako himself, Ujime appears to be a handsome, portly man of medium height. At the start of the Winter Court he is confident, well-spoken, and courteous, the picture of a good daimyo who respects his guests. However, Ujime has a secret, a very dark secret indeed: he is involved in opium smuggling. Bayushi Itamaki has learned his secret, and after Ujime realizes he is to be blackmailed, he becomes distracted, forgetful, and short-tempered. As the winter progresses and he realizes just how much he is at Itamaki's mercy, he becomes increasingly desperate, finally leading to the murder.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 20  
*School/Rank:* Asahina Shugenja 3  
*Honor/Glory:* 1.3/6.4  
*Skills:* Bard 1, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 3, Dance 2, Defense 1, Etiquette 2, Law 2, Manipulation 1, Meditation 2, Oratory 2, Rhetoric 1, Sincerity 2, Tantojutsu 1, Tea Ceremony 1  
*Spells:* (Earth) Benevolent Protection of Shinsei, Hands of Jurojin, (Water) Castle of Water, Reversal of Fortunes, Sympathetic Energies, (Fire) Amaterasu's

Blessing, (Air) Know The Shadows, Quiescence of Air, Tempest of Air, Wind's Distractions.  
*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Gentry, Social Position (daimyo)/Dark Secret (opium smuggling)  
*Equipment:* Exquisite kimono, fine tanto

**Asahina Miroe:** Ujime's wife. Miroe is a mousy, furtive little woman, trained as a courtier but lacking the gift to really shine in court. It would be easy to forget her if she were not the wife of a high-ranking daimyo. She has some inkling of her husband's secrets, but as a good wife has never betrayed them – a stance which becomes more difficult after she realizes he is a murderer.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 10  
*School/Rank:* Doji Courtier 1  
*Honor/Glory:* 2.4/5.3  
*Skills:* Calligraphy 1, Courtier 2, Dance 1, Etiquette 3, Meditation 1, Rhetoric 1, Sincerity 2, Tea Ceremony 2  
*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Social Position (daimyo's wife)/Dark Secret (suspects her husband's crimes)  
*Equipment:* Fine kimono

**Asahina Yakamo:** This elegant, refined shugenja is in many ways the prototypical arrogant, irritating Crane courtier. A slim, almost delicate man, he wears his white-dyed hair tied back in a loose ponytail and dresses only in the finest, most carefully chosen silks. He looks down on anyone who is not a Crane, especially ill-mannered Crab brutes and barbaric Unicorns. Yakamo's basic function in the scenario is that of an irritant, a constant grating background figure always ready to start a subtle argument or trade delicate insults. He can be downplayed in any game where the PCs focus on the story rather than on interacting with the guests at court.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 15

*School/Rank:* Asahina shugenja 1

*Honor/Glory:* 2.2/3.5

*Skills:* Bard 1, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Dance 1, Etiquette 2, Manipulation 2, Meditation 2, Sincerity 3, Shintao 1, Tantojutsu 1

*Spells:* 3 Air, 2 Earth, and 1 Water, as deemed appropriate by the GM.

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Precise Memory/Proud

*Equipment:* Fine kimono, tanto

**Asahina Kimi:** Tamako's cousin is a lovely young shugenja-ko, small of figure and gentle of temperament, who wears her lustrous black hair in a careful arrangement. Beneath her placid and flawless exterior, however, Kimi is a woman torn by emotion. She is scheduled to marry Doji Takashi at this winter court, a fine match with a handsome, skilled, and respected man; but she has fallen in love with Isawa Yoritaka, a visitor from the Phoenix Clan. Over the course of the winter court Kimi will fight a rapidly losing battle with her passionate feelings for Yoritaka, thereby making both of them vulnerable to Itamaki's blackmail.

FIRE 2	AIR 2
	Awareness 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2
Strength 3	Perception 3
VOID 3	

*TN to be Hit:* 10

*School/Rank:* Asahina shugenja 1

*Honor/Glory:* 2.3/4.6

*Skills:* Bard 2, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Dance 3, Etiquette 3, Meditation 2, Sincerity 3, Shintao 2, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 1

*Spells:* 3 Air, 2 Earth, and 1 Water, as deemed appropriate by the GM.

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Dangerous Beauty, Social Position (Tamako's cousin)/True Love (Isawa Yoritaka)

*Equipment:* Fine kimono

**Doji Takashi:** Kimi's betrothed is an honorable and intense man, his pale eyes stabbing deep into those who speak with him. He wears his hair in the usual Crane white-dyed ponytail. A skillful duellist, he is also a wealthy minor daimyo and a sword collector. He looks forward to his upcoming marriage to Asahina Kimi, which will advance his family and prospects, and grows increasingly angry as he realizes that Kimi has betrayed him. One of the few people at this court with no dark secrets or hidden agendas, Takashi is polite and friendly

to all, and enjoys sparring with those from other clans to test his skills.

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

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

*School/Rank:* Kakita duellist 3

*Honor/Glory:* 3.4/4.5

*Skills:* Archery 2, Bard 1, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand (Mizu-do) 2, History 2, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 2, Lore (swords) 3, Oratory 2, Poetry 2, Shintao 1, Sincerity 2

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Balance, Gentry, Social Position (minor daimyo)/Fascination (swords)

*Equipment:* Kimono, light armor (both of fine quality), daisho set (exquisite quality)

**Doji Yuriko:** A tall, athletic Crane maiden, trained as a Kakita duelist, her sharp-edged features handsome rather than the more common Crane beauty. Her white-dyed hair is bound into a thick braid running halfway down her back. Yuriko serves as Asahina Yakamo's personal champion and will answer any duels that his behavior provokes. PCs who have played *Satsume's Tournament* may remember Yuriko from there; here at the Winter Court she is less aloof than there, but her manners are still proud and haughty, and she will be unfriendly to anyone who is not a fellow Crane. Like Yakamo, she will be unimportant to the scenario unless the PCs interact heavily with the other guests.

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

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

*School/Rank:* Kakita duelist 2

*Honor/Glory:* 3.7/2.5

*Skills:* Archery 1, Courtier 1, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand (Mizu-do) 2, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 2, Law 1, Poetry 2, Sincerity 2

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Kakita Blade

*Equipment:* Fine kimono, light armor, daisho set (Kakita blade)

**Doji Shizue:** the famed Crane storyteller is here as a personal guest of Asahina Tamako, and he will tolerate

no ill to be spoken or done to her during the court. Shizue has a clubfoot, causing her to limp as she walks, but her grace and perfect manners are such that even this flaw does not harm her reputation. She is a background figure at the winter court, but one who honors the PCs by her very presence. Additional information on Shizue, and her statistics, can be found in *Way of the Crane*.

**Daidoji Toki:** A plain, rough-edged woman who wears her dark hair undyed and cropped boyishly short. PCs who have played through “Satsume’s Tournament” will recognize this polite but proud woman. She is currently serving as captain of the guards at Kyuden Asahina, and as the winter progresses she becomes increasingly frustrated with her inability to control the ratling problem. She is deeply suspicious of Scorpions and instinctively hostile to Lions, but is careful not to let such feeling jeopardize her position or honor.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 20 (light armor)  
*School/Rank:* Daidoji Bodyguard 2  
*Honor/Glory:* 3.3/3.0  
*Skills:* Archery 2, Athletics 2, Bard 1, Battle 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Hand-to-Hand 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Law 1, Medicine 1, Sincerity 2  
*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Social Position (captain of the guard, Kyuden Asahina)  
*Equipment:* Light armor, fine daisho, fine kimono

**Bayushi Itamaki:** A handsome man of medium height, his hair worn in a traditional topknot, with a membo (mask) in the form of two wooden “claws” which encircle his eyes. Itamaki is the consummate Bayushi courtier, a master of intrigue, blackmail, and manipulation carried out behind a bland smile and polite words. As the winter progresses Itamaki uncovers the secrets of most of the other guests at the court, adding them all to his extensive list of blackmail subjects. Ultimately, however, he miscalculates, and one of his targets – Ujime – grows desperate enough to murder him.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 20  
*School/Rank:* Bayushi courtier 4  
*Honor/Glory:* 1.1/3.4  
*Skills:* Athletics 1, Courtier 3, Dance 2, Etiquette 3, Forgery 2, Hand-to-Hand 2, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 1, Law 2, Oratory 2, Poetry 2, Seduction 2, Sincerity 4, Sleight-of-Hand 3, Wrestling 2  
*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Allies (many), Crafty, Blackmail (many)/Sworn Enemies (many)  
*Equipment:* Fine kimono, daisho set

**Bayushi Fumi:** The other Scorpion at the court is a shugenja-ko and an accomplished seductress, a beautiful and intelligent woman who is a master of using men’s emotions and desires against them. She works in concert with Itamaki to ferret out the secrets of the other guests and gain blackmail material against them. She also seduces Kitsu Mitaka, compromising his honor and making him her cat’s-paw for the future. After Itamaki’s murder she grows more cautious and restrains her activities for the rest of the court, while “assisting” in the investigation (her sole goal is to recover his notes).

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

*TN to be Hit:* 20  
*School/Rank:* Soshi shugenja 2  
*Honor/Glory:* 0.8/2.8  
*Skills:* Bard 1, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 3, Dance 3, Etiquette 3, Investigation 3, Law 1, Meditation 2, Poetry 1, Seduction 4, Sincerity 4, Sleight-of-Hand 2, Tea Ceremony 1, Theology 2  
*Spells:* 4 Air, 3 Water, 1 Fire and 1 Earth, chosen as the GM sees fit.  
*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Bente’s Blessing, Dangerous Beauty, Heartless  
*Equipment:* Fine kimono

**Kitsu Mitaka:** A Lion Clan historian and storyteller, trained in the Ikoma school, this 20-something young man is charming, personable, and good-looking, and

has a bad habit of subtly flirting with any pretty women in the vicinity (despite the presence of his wife, Miyo). He also takes an innocent enjoyment in his own skills at storytelling, and displays them whenever he is given a chance. Unfortunately, this winter Mitaka's flirtatious instincts will lead to his seduction by Bayushi Fumi, compromising his honor (not to mention his relationship with his wife).

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

*TN to be Hit:* 15

*School/Rank:* Ikoma Bard 2

*Honor/Glory:* 2.3/2.8

*Skills:* Bard 4, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Dance 3, Defense 1, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand 2, Heraldry 3, History 3, Iaijutsu 1, Kenjutsu 2, Law 2, Lore (Lion Clan) 3, Lore (Bushido) 2, Sincerity 2, Tea Ceremony 1

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Benten's Blessing, Weakness (Earth)/Bad Reputation (flirt)

*Equipment:* Fine kimono, daisho set

**Kitsu Miyo:** Mitaka's wife is a tall, pretty young Lion shugenja-ko who recently bore him a son. Normally shy and demure, she becomes more energetic when she notices Mitaka's flirting (which, sadly, is often) and can become quite sharp and spirited. Their relationship goes downhill badly after she realizes he has succumbed to Fumi's wiles.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 10

*School/Rank:* Kitsu shugenja 1

*Honor/Glory:* 3.4/2.6

*Skills:* Bard 1, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 1, Dance 2, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 2, History 2, Law 1, Lore (Kitsu Family) 2, Meditation 1, Sincerity 2, Tantojutsu 1, Tea Ceremony 1

*Spells:* 3 Water, 2 Fire, and 1 Air, as chosen by the GM.

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Bad Reputation (jealous)

*Equipment:* Fine kimono, tanto

**Isawa Yoritaka:** A handsome man (except for a slightly weak chin), Yoritaka is a classic Don Juan, a man who

is constantly falling passionately in love with a new woman and pursuing her regardless of cost. Since he is also a powerful shugenja and a minor Phoenix daimyo (with enough clout to be invited to the Asahina winter court), he usually manages to get away with his indiscretions. It also helps that his loyal yojimbo Kodo is always ready to cover for him. This winter, however, Yoritaka's pursuit of Asahina Kimi comes to the attention of Bayushi Itamaki, threatening him with disastrous exposure. Yoritaka is the main human witness to Itamaki's murder.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 15

*School/Rank:* Isawa shugenja 3

*Honor/Glory:* 1.6/5.7

*Skills:* Bard 1, Calligraphy 2, Dance 2, Etiquette 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Meditation 2, Oratory 2, Poetry 3, Seduction 3, Shintao 2, Theology 3

*Spells:* 4 Air, 4 Earth, 3 Fire, 1 Water, as chosen by the GM.

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Gentry, Luck (rank 1), Social Position (minor daimyo)/Compulsion (womanizing), Lechery

*Equipment:* Fine kimono

**Shiba Kodo:** Yoritaka's yojimbo is a small, precise man with a somewhat hangdog expression. Kodo takes his duty as a yojimbo very seriously, and attempts to protect his master not only from physical dangers but also from threats to his honor or reputation – a difficult task indeed, with a man like Yoritaka. As the winter goes on, Kodo only becomes more gloomy as his master's indiscretions mount.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 20 (25 with light armor)

*School/Rank:* Shiba bushi 2

*Honor/Glory:* 3.4/2.5

*Skills:* Archery 2, Dance 1, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand 2, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Meditation 2, Naginata 2, Shintao 2, Sincerity 2, Tea Ceremony 2

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Combat Reflexes, Strength of the Earth (rank 1)/Dark Secret (knows about Yoritaka's affairs)

*Equipment:* Fine kimono, light armor, daisho set

**Kuni Takaoka:** The “token Crab” of the court (the only other Crabs who may be present are PCs), Takaoka is a dour, grim man with bony limbs and thick, clumsy-looking hands. His hair is worn long and loose, giving him a somewhat wild look. He has better manners than many Crabs (which is why the Crane invited him), but still makes occasional mordant comments on the wealth and safety which the Crane enjoy, courtesy of the sacrifices of the Crab. What really makes him unpopular, however, is his determination to defend the Ratlings from the frequent accusations of “thieving vermin” which the Crane throw at them. For every report of ratlings stealing and vandalizing, Takaoka is ready with a counter-example of ratlings helping the Crab against the minions of the Shadowlands. Takaoka has no secrets, but treats Bayushi Itamaki with instinctive hostility – like all Crabs, he hates Scorpions on general principle.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 10 (15 with light armor)

*School/Rank:* Kuni shugenja 3

*Honor/Glory:* 1.7/3.8

*Skills:* Bard 1, Calligraphy 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand (Kubo) 2, Kenjutsu 2, Lore (Shadowlands) 3, Meditation 2, Shintao 1, Sincerity 1, Tantojutsu 2

*Spells:* 5 Earth, 4 Fire, 2 Water, and 1 Air, as chosen by the GM.

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Hands of Stone, Strength of the Earth (rank 2)/Bad Reputation (defender of ratlings)

*Equipment:* Kimono, light armor, wakizashi, tanto

**Ide Sowasora:** A charming, remarkably friendly man, short and swarthy of feature (the heritage of gaijin ancestors). His personable manners and perfect etiquette easily compensates for this minor fault, however. Most people at the court soon come to enjoy the company of this skilled ambassador, although Asahina Yakamo never relents on his anti-Unicorn prejudices. Sowasora likes and respects his wife Rivan – perhaps even loves her – and has no idea of her dark past.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 15

*School/Rank:* Ide Emissary 2

*Honor/Glory:* 2.7/4.0

*Skills:* Bard 2, Commerce 2, Courtier 2, Dance 1, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 2, Law 1, Lore (Crane Clan) 2, Kenjutsu 2, Poetry 2, Sincerity 3

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Bente's Blessing

*Equipment:* Fine kimono, fine daisho

**Ide Rivan:** Sowasora's wife, a shugenja born into the Iuchi family. Although this plain young shugenja-ko has a perfectly Rokugani appearance, her name is most thoroughly un-Rokugani, a consequence of her Unicorn heritage. Rivan accidentally killed a Lion samurai (Matsu Takeru) several years ago, mistaking him for a bandit who was raiding her family's holdings. Terrified of the consequences she might face, she hid the body and never revealed the truth to anyone. She believes this is a secret, but unknown to her, some of the local heimin witnessed the crime... and now Bayushi Itamaki has learned the truth.

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

*TN to be Hit:* 15

*School/Rank:* Iuchi Shugenja 1

*Honor/Glory:* 1.8/3.4

*Skills:* Calligraphy 2, Dance 1, Defense 1, Herbalism 2, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 2, Meditation 2, Shintao 2, Sincerity 1, Tantojutsu 2

*Spells:* 3 Water, 2 Fire, and 1 Earth, as chosen by the GM

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Ally (husband, Ide Sowasora)/Dark Secret (murdered Matsu Takeru), Gaijin Name

*Equipment:* Fine kimono, tanto

**Agasha Yumire:** A shugenja-ko from the enigmatic Dragon Clan, this tall and athletic woman shaves her head like a monk, revealing the tattoo of a Dragon that coils across the right side of her neck and skull. The PCs may suppose her to be an Ise Zume, but she is actually a shugenja whose grandfather was one of those

mysterious monks. Yumire is a classic Dragon, full of Shintaoist quotes and unexplained mannerisms...but she also has a much simpler motive: her brother, Agasha Sukito, was dishonored and forced to commit seppuku by Bayushi Itamaki, and she has sworn revenge.

FIRE 2 Agility 3	AIR 3 Awareness 4
EARTH 3 Strength 3	VOID 2

*TN to be Hit:* 15

*School/Rank:* Agasha Shugenja 2

*Honor/Glory:* 1.8/2.7

*Skills:* Bard 1, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 1, Defense 1, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand 3, History 2, Meditation 3, Shintao 4, Sincerity 2, Tea Ceremony 1, Theology 2

*Spells:* 3 Fire, 3 Earth, 2 Air, and 1 Water as chosen by the GM.

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Heart of Vengeance (Scorpion), Strength of the Earth (rank 2), Tattoo (Dragon)/Driven (to avenge her brother)

*Equipment:* Kimono

**Tonbo Genso:** A calm, enigmatic courtier from the Dragonfly clan, Genso usually cloaks his opinions behind a poker face and carefully indirect language. He is actually highly perceptive, his narrow dark eyes missing nothing, and was appointed an Emerald Magistrate after helping to unmask a Maho-Tsukai at a scenario a few months ago (see the scenario "Satsume's Tournament"). Genso should become acquainted with the PCs over the course of the scenario and, if possible, befriend one or more of them thereby justifying their participation in his investigation of Itamaki's murder. He will be especially likely to befriend Minor Clan PCs, PCs who are "out of place" at Kyuden Asahina, and any PCs he might have met in *Satsume's Tournament*.

FIRE 2 Intelligence 3	AIR 2 Awareness 3
EARTH 2 Willpower 3	VOID 2

*TN to be Hit:* 10

*School/Rank:* None

*Honor/Glory:* 2.8/3.5

*Skills:* Courtier 2, Etiquette 2, History 1, Iaijutsu 1, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 2, Law 3, Medicine 1, Poetry 2, Shintao 1, Sincerity 2

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Clear Thinker, Social Position (Emerald Magistrate)/Social Disadvantage (Minor Clan)

*Equipment:* Kimono, daisho set

**Rit'chuk'tak:** A bushi of the Odd-Eye Clan, Rit-Chuk-tak can be recognized by the distinctive white streak in his fur. He has dealt with humans on several occasions and actually likes them somewhat, although he prefers the simpler ways of ratlings.

FIRE 4	AIR 2
EARTH 4	VOID 2

*TN to be Hit:* 20

*Attacks:* 6k4

*Damage:* 6k2 (sword)

*Armor:* 6

*Wounds:* 10: -1; 20: -2; 30: Dead.

**Typical Ratling**

FIRE 3	AIR 1
EARTH 2	VOID 2

*TN to be Hit:* 15

*Attacks:* 4k3

*Damage:* 4k2 (spear)

*Armor:* 3

*Wounds:* 9: -1; 18: Dead.

## **GM's Summary**

Fill out this questionnaire at the end of the round for all tables that run at Winter Fantasy 2001.  
Return with the Who's-Who sheet.

**Did the PCs solve the murder?**

**If so, were they able to convict Ujime?**

**If not, did they accuse someone else?**

**If so, who?**

**Convicted?**

**Did the PCs help the ratlings find the Jade Bow?**

**If so, list the name of the PC who got the Ratling Gift:**

**Legend of the Five Rings**  
**Champions of the Emerald Empire**

**This Document Proclaims That**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Was given a**  
**Ratling Necklace**

**This necklace appears to be a pair of small, smoothly polished rocks, one black and one gray, and several feathers, all strung on a thong of woven grass. It must be worn around the neck to be effective.**

- 1. The wearer of this necklace is protected from any pests or vermin which might infest the hair (or, in the case of a ratling, fur).**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Judge Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

**RPGA Number**



**Proclamation of Honor from**  
**"Winter Court: Kvuden Ashina"**

**Legend of the Five Rings**  
**Champions of the Emerald Empire**

**This Document Proclaims That**

**Has been given a**  
**White Grain Sheaf Fetish**

**This fetish has the power to heal 2 dice of damage to one person. This person does not have to be the user of the fetish.**

**The fetish must touch the person to be Healed when its power is invoked.**



\_\_\_\_\_  
**Judge Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**RPQA Number**

**Proclamation of Honor from**  
**"Mistress Court, Kuroda, Ashino"**

# Champions of the Emerald Empire

## A Champion's Who's Who for Rokugan

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RPGA #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Champion's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clan: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Starting School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shadowlands Taint Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ronin?: \_\_\_\_\_ Servant of Fu Leng?: \_\_\_\_\_ Dead?: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RPGA #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Champion's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clan: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Starting School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shadowlands Taint Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ronin?: \_\_\_\_\_ Servant of Fu Leng?: \_\_\_\_\_ Dead?: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RPGA #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Champion's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clan: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Starting School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shadowlands Taint Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ronin?: \_\_\_\_\_ Servant of Fu Leng?: \_\_\_\_\_ Dead?: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RPGA #: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Champion's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Starting School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shadowlands Taint Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ronin?: \_\_\_\_\_ Servant of Fu Leng?: \_\_\_\_\_ Dead?: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Champion's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clan: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Starting School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shadowlands Taint Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ronin?: \_\_\_\_\_ Servant of Fu Leng?: \_\_\_\_\_ Dead?: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RPGA #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Champion's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clan: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Starting School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shadowlands Taint Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ronin?: \_\_\_\_\_ Servant of Fu Leng?: \_\_\_\_\_ Dead?: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RPGA #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Champion's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clan: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Starting School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending School Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shadowlands Taint Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ronin?: \_\_\_\_\_ Servant of Fu Leng?: \_\_\_\_\_ Dead?: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:**  
 Fill out this sheet and send to:  
 Robert Hobart  
 300 Foxcreek Rd  
 Rolla, MO 65401  
**Adventure Aftermath:**  
 How much Experience was handed out in this adventure?  
 List any person who was executed or became Ronin, and why:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Please include character sheet for any characters who were consumed by Shadow or became Servants of Fu Leng.