

# Challenge, Focus, Strike!

## Adventure Hooks for Legend of the Five Rings

### VOLUME II: CFS OF THE WEEK #14 THROUGH #26

Written by Jsawa Nazomitsu (Scott Stockton) • Compiled & Edited by Pirate Spice (Sean C. Riley)

## Foreword

Following is the second volume of a series of documents collecting the esteemed Isawa Nazomitsu's "CFS of the Week" feature in the L5R RPG GMs section of AEG's gaming forum ([www.alderac.com/forum](http://www.alderac.com/forum)).

For the sake of further organizing these, I have attempted to give each hook a title (also taking inspiration from suggestions on the forum). The hooks themselves are presented in the order that they were originally posted, edited for brevity and typography.

– Sean C. Riley (a.k.a. Pirate Spice)

### 14. Letters of Intrigue

*We have a story of intrigue this week. Intrigue and mayhem, and even some violence.*

#### CHALLENGE

The characters find the bodies of two samurai from rival clans dead in an alley. Even without the skills of a Kitsuki it is apparent that the two men killed each other, as they both hold bloodstained weapons and have been severely wounded in a struggle. On the ground near the bodies lies a traveling pack, which has been torn open, revealing a disguise kit and several scrolls, including a letter.

#### FOCUS

*My Lord,*

*My mission has been a success. I have discovered the spies in our midst and learned the identities of two of them.*

*Furthermore, I have learned that they will meet with a hired assassin in the Green Plum Teahouse on the night of the Full Moon.*

*Be wary, my lord. Enemies are everywhere.*

*I will attempt to locate their safe house within the city and report to you when I know more about their plans.*

*Ever at your service,  
Your Humble Servant*

#### STRIKE

It is not possible to tell which of the dead men wrote the message, as it bears no names or mon. Noble emissaries from both clans are present in the city, as well as samurai, courtiers, and merchants. Any one of them could be a conspirator, or a target, in this plot. The characters must decide who they will tell, if anyone, and depending on which clan sent the spies and which clan uncovered them, the characters could end up thwarting or aiding dark plans.

*I always decide which clan the spy was from and which clan the spy hunter was from before the characters do anything, but you can also choose to leave such details undecided until the players choose which noble they will give the message to.*

*If the characters do nothing or turn the scroll over to some higher authority, feel free to have them jumped by thugs the next night. Hired by the second spy, the mercenaries demand to know where the message is, and will not be convinced by simple claims of ignorance on the part of the characters. The spy's planned long and hard for this chance, and he's not about to let some loose end samurai screw things up.*

#### ALTERNATE VERSION

*Instead of finding two dead men with a warning message of unknown origin, the PCs find two groups of dead men at a battle site next to an overturned wagon. Inside the wagon is an ornate sword, and a letter to the daimyo of one of the two groups.*

*My Lord,*

*We have reclaimed the blade from the thieves who stole it. Luckily, they were not aware of its true nature, so we were able to wrest it from their grasp with little trouble.*

*However, I fear that others of their ilk will soon be coming after us. I do not know when I will be able to send you this message, but I intend to follow the route we discussed until I am able to contact you.*

*I promise you I will do everything in my power to keep the blade away from our enemies and prevent their vile plans from reaching fruition.*

*Ever at your service,  
Your Humble Servant*

*From there on out the scenario is just like the one above, but instead of having a secret message to deliver/protect, the PCs have a mysterious sword of unknown power. A stolen mysterious sword that belongs to someone else. Plus they will have to deal with the possibility that both clans involved will be willing to go to extreme lengths to get the sword for themselves.*

### 15. Civil Blood Makes Civil Hands Unclean

*Life is easy when you're a follower; your enemies are whoever your leader says they are. For a samurai hero, however, choices are not so simple.*

#### CHALLENGE

A magistrate arrives in the area, searching for a group of bloodspeakers that is rumored to be active in the region. Although his intense scrutiny and probing questions are off putting to many, refusing to cooperate in his investigation is tantamount to treason.

#### FOCUS

After a few days of invading everyone's privacy, the magistrate settles on a likely suspect: a rival of one of the PCs. Two days later, he uncovers evidence and makes a formal accusation, using his authority to command the local magistrates to take the suspect into custody.

#### STRIKE

The "magistrate" is actually a bloodspeaker collaborator seeking to remove several figures who have caused his cult trouble in the past. If no one steps forward to defend the accused or check the veracity of the magistrate's claims, the rival is executed (dishonorably, of course), and the magistrate continues to search for "other bloodspeaker agents."

Given enough time and success in "rooting out bloodspeaker influences," the magistrate may declare the entire area at risk and call in "assistants" to help him. Of course, by that time he may already have started investigating the player characters...

*Of course, a number of CFS scenarios end with a twist ending, so your players may be suspicious of the magistrate from the start. If that happens, feel free to have the accused be an actual bloodspeaker. With lots of friends who are willing to help him escape. And a variety of new abilities to use on those who have wronged him.*

## 16. Tides of Chaos

*The weather's getting hotter and hotter here in Osaka, and people have started flocking to the beaches. Wouldn't your gaming group like to take a relaxing trip to the seaside as well?*

### CHALLENGE

A section of ocean that is normally calm and well-traveled suddenly becomes dangerous. Shifting tides, freak giant waves, waterspouts, and whirlpools appear without warning. Tales of sea monsters also begin to circulate, and more than a few ships suffer heavy damage...or worse.

### FOCUS

The cause for this drastic change can be found through either divination or old fashioned investigation. About one week before the area became dangerous to enter, a tainted artifact was lost at that location. Legends say that the artifact's corruption can influence its very surroundings, and is only held in check by the light of the sun.

### STRIKE

Unless the artifact can be recovered the problem will only grow worse, with the area of effect slowly expanding and the horrors within growing stronger and stronger. Not only will a recovery mission have to deal with the effects of the artifact, but the strange and alien depths of the ocean must be taken into account as well.

*The ocean is a strange and dangerous place, and the influence of the Shadowlands can make it even more so. Don't hesitate to use whatever strange creatures or encounters you can come up with.*

*Naga or Mantis Clan characters would have a personal stake in this adventure, but just about every clan depends on the ocean in one way or another—a fact the characters' daimyo can impress upon them if they are hesitant to go.*

**Editor's Note:** *As was discussed on the forum, there is also a great possibility for a dangerous aftermath to this plot, as potentially tainted seafood could already be making its way to kitchens and markets around Rokugan!*

## 17. Love and Marriage

**Editor's Note:** *This CFS was inspired by Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew."*

### CHALLENGE

After a long period of negotiations, two families from different clans have agreed to an important trade agreement. In order to cement the bargain, a cross-clan wedding is arranged. The prospective groom is Shiba Toshihisa, a young village administrator who is looking forward to settling down with a beautiful Crane wife. The bride to be is Doji Mizuho, a friend of the PCs.

### FOCUS

Mizuho is already deeply in love with a poet from the Kakita family. However, the wedding must proceed as planned in order for the two families to finalize their transaction. The only other eligible member of Mizuho's family is her elder sister, Hikaru. However, Hikaru has set aside her family name to embark on a musha shugyo pilgrimage, and she has not returned home for two whole years.

### STRIKE

Hikaru is safe and sound, although it may take some time for the party to track her down. She is currently enjoying the care-free life of a ronin and perfecting her swordsmanship. It will take a good deal of effort to convince her to return to her former responsibilities, and even more to persuade her to marry a man she has never met. If she did agree to return and marry Toshihisa it would mean that Mizuho would be free to pursue her own love, but it would also mean the end of her independent lifestyle.

*A possible complication lies in the differing personalities of Toshihisa and Hikaru. Can Hikaru learn to respect a man whose strength lies in knowledge rather than in the sword? Will Toshihisa accept a bride who is not the demure flower he expected? Even if the wedding occurs as planned, can these two people find happiness on their own? Or will the PCs have to intervene once again?*

*The course of true love never did run smooth.*

## 18. Sins of the Father

*Here's another adventure idea inspired by a Shakespeare play (this one loosely based on Macbeth). Enjoy!*

### CHALLENGE

A famous soothsayer with a knack for reading the omens of the future visits the household of Lord Takanobu. Takanobu is the lord of a major province, but there are rumors that his health is failing. His two sons and his seven grandsons have all returned to the family estate in order to help him manage the daily affairs, and everyone wants to know what advice he will elicit from the fortune-teller.

### FOCUS

Lord Takanobu grants the soothsayer a private audience, and only two of his most trusted servants are allowed to remain while his fortune is told. Even his two sons, Washi and Kuma, are excluded from the reading of the omens.

Soon after the soothsayer departs, the body of Kuma's eldest son is found murdered in a nearby forest. Two days later, Kuma's second son falls prey to a sudden sickness and dies.

If they have not already taken it upon themselves to do so, the PCs will be asked for aid in protecting Kuma's two remaining children (a daughter and a son) and Washi's three children (two sons and a daughter).

### STRIKE

Although the PCs may be able to guess what is going on by themselves, asking one of the servants who was present for Lord Takanobu's consultation with the fortune teller what transpired there will make things much clearer. When asked "How can I ensure the prosperity of my family for all time?" the soothsayer replied "Compare not the eagle and the bear, but choose between the fledgling and the cub." If pressed, the servant will also grudgingly reveal that he passed the same information to Washi as well.

Interpreting the omen as advice for his father to choose an heir from among his grandchildren, Washi has begun a campaign of murder against his brother's children in order to guarantee that his line be given leadership of the family. If he is not stopped, his murderous rampage could continue until it claims his brother, his brother's wife, and even his own father.

*If you want to involve more combat, all three of Washi's children can be willing accomplices in the slaughter of their cousins. Or, if the PCs are too fast to finger a particular suspect, you can also change the identity of the murderer. Perhaps Washi is innocent, but his ambitious young son (or daughter) is the culprit. Or maybe Kuma is sacrificing his own children in an attempt to frame Washi and have him expelled from the Clan. After all, a healthy man can always have more children.*

*Also, if you have any prophecies or omens of your own that you wish to include in your campaign, the soothsayer's visit provides an excellent opportunity to do so. You can give clues about upcoming adventures, foreshadow challenges for specific characters, or simply give some cryptic prophecy and let the players figure out what it means.*

## 19. The Shot Heard 'Round the Empire

*As there have been a number of threads concerning gunpowder and historical firearms lately, here is an adventure seed for all you gun nuts out there. Try not to blow your fingers off.*

### CHALLENGE

A number of strange incidents have made a political rival of the Crab Clan suspicious that the Crab are violating the ban on trade with foreigners. The Crab are keeping a very tight lid on things, but some accidents (the explosion of a small amount of mishandled powder, a Crab bushi getting drunk and killing a ronin with a "magic stick", a wounded Shadowlands madman getting past the wall and reaching a city before succumbing to his "strange injuries") seem to support his theories. He asks the PCs to investigate "for the good of the Empire."

### FOCUS

The Mantis sailors who brought the crates to the Crab are ignorant of the contents. Their job was simply to bring about a trade meeting between a Yasuki Trader and some gaijin merchants and help the Trader bring back his cargo. Their orders specifically forbade them from getting involved further.

If the characters dig a little deeper and risk incurring the wrath of the Crab, they can find that the Crab are indeed using gaijin pepper weapons against the Shadowlands (and have gained a significant advantage by doing so). If the Crab find out that the PCs have discovered this, there will be dire consequences. Depending on how the PCs entered Crab lands they might be set up for an "accident" or even be hunted as spies.

### STRIKE

The proper thing to do in such a situation is to inform the superior of the samurai who have broken the decree so that they may administer the proper punishment. However, if the characters attempt to do so they find that the commander of the bushi who are using firearms is a willing participant in the deal. And his daimyo is also involved. And the Champion of the Crab as well!

If the characters try to bring the matter to public attention, they are approached by a servant of the Emperor who demands they desist. It seems that the Crab are acting with the permission of the Emperor himself! Rather than see the proliferation of guns across all of Rokugan, he has allowed the Crab to import a small amount in secret. While this bargain has enabled the Crab to continue their sacred duty, it has also given them an incredible military advantage over the rest of the Clans, and the PCs must decide what they will do in the face of this revelation.

*If you want to give things a really wicked twist, the servant of the Emperor could secretly be a Tortoise Clan conspirator whose job is to keep news of the Crab Clan's treason from reaching the Emperor's ears. The Crab are still guilty! The game's not over!*

*Or, if you dislike giant conspiracies, the scandal can go up as far as the legion commander, forcing the Crab Champion to discipline an entire legion of badly needed troops.*

*For those who like having history repeat itself, the Crab could take their new toys to the Imperial Capitol. The amount of weaponry they have currently is sufficient for a coup, but they need a Crab Emperor on the throne in order to get permission for the supplies they really need. Of course, their treason is guided by noble intentions, for they seek the complete destruction of the Shadowlands. Or, the Crab could continue to serve the Emperor, but use their new might to bully the other clans. With trained ashigaru riflemen on the Wall, the Clan's bushi are free to make war and seize territory from those nearby.*

*Note that if you want to keep the Crab blameless, another Clan could also be used. The Unicorn, Dragon, and Phoenix all have conflicts with the Yobanjin tribes. The Scorpion could be hunting a new type of Lying Darkness spawn that is immune to the weapons of samurai. The Mantis might be fending off an invasion of gaijin from another nation. Only the Crane and the Lion would be difficult to implicate, and you would probably have to use an inter-clan conflict to justify either of those Clans using firearms.*

## 20. To Know My Enemy

*Following last week's theme of new weapons, here's a quest that you can use to give your players some new goodies.*

### CHALLENGE

The homes of the player characters are threatened by a band of unstoppable villains. They could be oni, kansen spirits, a new type of Living Shadow spawn, strange monsters, enchanted maho-tsukai, or even bandits with some sort of dark blessing. These "adversaries" are completely invulnerable to normal magic and weapons, and all who have tried to stop their bloody rampage have failed.

### FOCUS

There are stories of weapons that might give one a fighting chance against these adversaries. Forged long ago, they were used by great heroes to defeat an "undying evil." If they could be found there might be hope, but in order to claim one of these weapons an individual must face numerous challenges.

### STRIKE

Even if the characters manage to get the weapons they seek, the danger is not finished. The bond between the weapons and the adversaries they are intended to fight is a powerful one. It allows the wielder and the adversaries to sense each others' location and movements. Furthermore, it allows both the wielder and the adversaries to sense what is important and precious to the other. In the case of the adversaries, this is most likely their own safety and comfort. For the characters, however, their homes, families, friends, and lovers will all be subject to the adversaries' predation unless they act quickly.

*The exact nature of the challenges the characters face on their way to retrieve the weapons is up to you. It could be a riddle, combat versus a guardian, a trial to convince the guardian of their sincerity, or even all of these combined. If you're feeling symbolic, you could have each of the characters face a challenge which they are especially suited for, or one that forces them to overcome their weaknesses.*

*If you want to be even more symbolic, send a number of adversaries equal to the number of player characters, making each a "dark reflection" of one of the heroes. The burly Hida could face a violent inhuman brute, while the quick and sneaky Bayushi might fight a shadowy assassin. Perhaps the experiences they had in gaining the weapons may give them some insight into defeating their counterparts.*

## 21. Yoshimoto's Legacy

*We've got more weapons this week. Nothing as exotic as last week, but challenging nonetheless.*

### CHALLENGE

The esteemed sensei Yoshimoto is retiring to a monastery, and wishes to distribute his worldly goods among his children, students, and friends.

### FOCUS

Yoshimoto has a large collection of swords and weapons, several of which are remarkable. One is the katana which was handed down to him by his grandfather. Another is the katana which was given to him by the Emerald Champion. There is also the katana that he forged himself in memory of his late wife. He has a mysterious wakizashi of unknown origin that he found during the adventures of his youth. The ornate tessen he accepted from his daimyo could be used either on the battlefield or at court. And he still has the wooden practice sword that he used when he was a student so very long ago.

### STRIKE

Yoshimoto does not select a gift for each character himself. Instead, he calls everyone together and asks them to decide amongst themselves. He listens to their discussion with interest, but he does not openly show favor or approval. If asked for advice he will remark that he is interested in knowing why each character chooses the item they desire simply because he wishes to know how his legacy will live on in the future. The final decision is up to the party members.

*As always, you should change the name and background of Yoshimoto to fit your campaign. A figure who has ties as both a mentor and a family member to two or more of the player characters is ideal, but a close ally would also be sufficient. If your players' characters have no such ties, you can present Yoshimoto as an opportunity for them to gain such connections.*

*Hopefully your players will recognize that this is more than just a chance to "score some kewl loot," and make the most of the role-playing opportunities the situation presents. Giving bonus experience points for particularly inspired, in-character arguments for why one deserves a certain weapon is one way to do this. If you give the bonus experience points right then and there in front of the other players it could serve as a good motivation. If you want to make things a little more difficult you can make each weapon a minor nemuranai with an awakened spirit who demands the new owner justify their worthiness to wield the weapon.*

## 22. Tarnished Promise

*This week we take another look at the topic of weapons in the world of Rokugan. Over the last three weeks we've seen a lot of opportunities to give your players new weapons, but one should never forget the value of one's own blade. Your sword carries the soul of your ancestors, and it will guide you to victory.*

### CHALLENGE

After using or inspecting a treasured weapon that has been in the family for generations, one of the characters notices that the weapon is quite tarnished and has lost its sharp edge. Having an ill-maintained sword is both a social stigma and a serious liability in combat, so the natural course of action would be to have the sword sharpened and polished.

However, even after the character does so, the sword quickly becomes dull and tarnished again.

## FOCUS

If a servant or professional sword-polisher cleaned the sword for the character, he may be the first to fall under suspicion. However, this is not the case, and the sword-polisher offers to clean the sword again (free of charge, of course) under the PC's watchful eye in order to prove the quality of his work.

If the player character cleaned the sword himself or had another NPC do it for him, his suspicions may be spread even wider. Although numerous figures could have been responsible, further investigation rules them out.

No matter what course of action the character takes in maintaining his blade and finding or stopping the culprit, the sword becomes dull and tarnished again within a few days.

## STRIKE

If a shugenja or character with mystic awareness examines the blade and communes with the spirit inside the answer becomes clear. The sword's spirit is consumed by a deep despair. When the blade was forged, a promise was made between the sword and the character's ancestor. In recent years that promise has been forgotten, and the sword has lost its will to be wielded by members of that family. Unless the sword's spirit can be appeased, it will remain dull and useless forever.

*The promise that the sword speaks of could be almost anything, from "I will give thanks to the elemental kami each morning and night" to "No liars or swindlers, bandits or monsters will prey on the people of my homeland and go unpunished." For a personal touch, you could choose an aspect of bushido that the character has consistently neglected, or an action that runs counter to the character's usual behavior. For example, a stingy samurai might have trouble with a vain blade who desires a new tsuba, handle and saya every month.*

*If the character's own actions have been above reproach, the sword might maintain an empathic link with all who have wielded it, or even with all members of the character's direct family. Has one of them done something dishonorable recently?*

*Finally, if the entire party has been involved in some dishonorable deed or failure of duty, they could all be refused the aid of their ancestral weapons until they make the situation right.*

*Although samurai should never expect any reward for their actions, it certainly wouldn't be inappropriate to bestow some new enhancement or ability on the newly awakened weapon upon completion of this adventure.*

## 23. Ancestral Duty

*This month marks the Obon season in Japan, when the spirits of the departed are said to return to Earth. As such, the theme for this month's CFS scenarios will be ghosts and ancestors. Now you and your players can enjoy the spooky side of summer in Japan...er, Rokugan.*

### CHALLENGE

In celebration of the bon festival, a Kitsu Sodan-Senzo blesses the characters and other members of the community. He calls upon the wisdom and guidance of the ancestral spirits to bring prosperity to the devout among their descendants and families.

### FOCUS

By the following evening, all of the PCs and NPCs who were blessed are contacted by an ancestral spirit, effectively gaining the Haunted disadvantage for the next week. The exact nature of the haunting is up to the GM, and may range from a constant spiritual presence to intermittent visits.

### STRIKE

The ancestors demand a variety of things from their descendants, calling on them to seek out misplaced heirlooms, build political alliances, and expand their holdings. The spirits are insistent, and have little care for how inconvenient or costly their missions may be for the characters. While these tasks may seem daunting and difficult, those who can complete them will indeed gain prosperity.

*GMs may want to prepare a variety of backgrounds for the ancestral spirits to visit their players. Having all the players receive a visit from the founders of their respective families could strain credibility a bit, so it might be a good idea to include a mix of ancient heroes, great great-grandparents, and recently departed relatives.*

*Likewise, a variety of tasks can also be helpful in highlighting the differences between different characters. The ancestors know a great deal about their descendants strengths and weaknesses, as well as many other*

*secrets. They can provide advice on successful military maneuvers, beneficial alliances, and even which members of the court will be most responsive to romantic advances...if the characters have the courage to listen and take action.*

## 24. A Spirited Night Out

*This week we continue the Obon theme and take another step into the world of ghosts and spirits. This week's adventure idea is a little on the risqué side, but most mature groups should be able to handle it. You have been warned!*

### CHALLENGE

While staying in a large city, one of the characters experiences horrible dreams. The details of the dream are forgotten upon waking, but he or she remembers a loud clicking noise, and is tired and disheveled in the morning, as if having tossed and turned a great deal during the night.

### FOCUS

If the character does nothing the dreams get worse and worse, until sleep brings no rest. Eventually the character's health begins to suffer. Finally, the matron of a shady geisha house comes to confront the character about unpaid bills.

If the character tries to investigate or has others stand watch, it is discovered that he or she spends several hours each night in a geisha house in a disreputable part of town. While the character interacts with others somewhat normally, he or she has no memory of the night's events when the morning comes.

### STRIKE

The character is being repeatedly possessed by a spirit from Gaki-do. The gaki is using the character to rouse passion and desire in others, which it feeds upon each night. (This doesn't need to be anything graphic—simply flirting is enough to satisfy the gaki's appetite.) While the gaki takes the form of an insect during the day, it is able to feed more effectively by using a sleeping mortal as a host at night.

Any interaction with the spirit reveals a further surprise. The spirit is a former comrade of the character in question. Trapped in Gaki-do after his death, the spirit sought out the character in an attempt to reconnect with his former life. He is desperate to escape Gaki-do, and claims that the character once pledged to help him in any way he or she could. Now that he is in his moment of greatest need, the gaki intends to take the character up on that offer.

*Depending on how the interaction with the gaki goes, the adventure could end with a difficult moral dilemma, or a dramatic combat scene. Being possessed by the gaki inflicts no permanent physical harm, but it could cause a character's reputation to suffer and have significant negative social effects. Of course, there's also the psychological torment that may come from having to condemn a former friend to decades of insatiable hunger after he refuses to take no for an answer.*

*You could also use this adventure with an NPC in the role of the possession victim, but it would lose some of the punch that comes from having a personal connection between the gaki and the PCs. One choice is to make the victim the wife or lover or one of the characters, and have the gaki be one of his former rivals for her affection. The character's reaction could have a major impact on their long-term relationship.*

## 25. An Unexpected Guest

*Here in Japan we're right in the middle of the Obon season right now. There are a lot of amazing festivals and events going on to guide the spirits of the dead both to and from the mortal world. Of course, some spirits don't need that much help...*

*This scenario works best if one of the PCs already has the Haunted Disadvantage. If no one in the group has that particular problem the Bon festival is certainly a fine excuse to foist that Disadvantage onto a PC.*

### CHALLENGE

One of the PCs receives a sudden visit from an ancestral spirit, who requests permission to stay as a guest for the next week. While completely visible and audible, the spirit remains unable to interact with physical objects. As the arrival of a ghost would cause great panic and alarm, the spirit deeply wishes to conceal his or her ghostly nature from those who are not members or allies of the family, and asks the character for aid in doing so.

## FOCUS

Keeping others from noticing that the spirit lacks a solid physical form is far from easy. Eating, drinking, engaging in swordplay, riding a horse, opening doors, and handling physical objects are all impossible for him or her. Furthermore, when the ancestor is nearby, animals may become agitated, and shugenja may feel a sensation that is normally associated with otherworldly spirits. Despite these limitations, however, he or she is determined to spend each day as normally as possible.

## STRIKE

The returned ancestor actually has an agenda of his or her own. Being able to influence events in the mortal realm, even if unable to take action directly, is a refreshing change from the spirit's normal role as a source of advice and guidance. The mortal realm is full of nostalgia, and holds a powerful allure that is difficult for the shiryō to resist. If the character can give the ancestor a pleasant visit, good karma will most certainly follow. If the character allows the ancestor's secret to be discovered, however, the ancestor will be gravely embarrassed and may leave the mortal realm forever.

*A great deal can be added to this scenario by fleshing out the personality of the ancestor who comes to visit. A loud braggart may attract a lot of negative attention or even be challenged to a duel. A flamboyant or debonair courtier may be invited to attend a noble lord or lady in private, while a rowdy and vivacious troublemaker will have to be watched closely in order to keep him from giving himself away.*

*It gets even more difficult if you remain true to the images of spirits as they are traditionally presented. Japanese ghosts have no feet! If the ancestor is wearing a long kimono when he or she arrives this might not be too noticeable, but many clans have different ideas of fashion, so this might not be a given. And an intangible ghost can't change clothes! A magical disguise might work, but it would certainly require more ingenuity and attention than if cast on a living being...*

## 26: The Spirit's Son

*As summer draws to a close, we bid farewell to the spirits and ghosts who have visited us this Obon season. While their time in this realm is short, they continue to watch over us and protect us from beyond. Or, in some cases, from even closer...*

## CHALLENGE

While traveling at night, the characters come upon a woman dressed in white. The woman is weeping and calling out for "Keisuke" (or "Keiko," if you prefer). Most characters should have no trouble recognizing the woman as an ubume—the spirit of a woman who died during childbirth. However, unlike most ubume spirits, she has no infant with her.

## FOCUS

The ubume is distraught, but the characters can piece together her story if they are persistent. Once the geisha lover of a brave and honorable samurai, she was left without a patron to support her when her lover died in battle. After several difficult months on the road, she too died when complications set in during childbirth and there was no one to help her. Unable to leave the place where she died, she waited for someone to come and take her child so that she could rest in peace.

Finally, at long last, someone did come, and he did indeed agree to take and care for her precious son Keisuke.

It was only too late that she realized that the man she had entrusted her baby to was the infamous villain called Kurushii.

## STRIKE

In order to free the ubume from her torment and sorrow, the characters will have to locate Kurushii, recover Keisuke from him, and deliver the boy to the spirit so that she can tell him the truth about his father and his heritage. Once she is certain that Keisuke will receive a proper upbringing, the ubume will be able to move on to the next stage in her existence. Otherwise, she will be trapped in a state of suffering forever.

*Depending on how much time has passed between the time when Kurushii took the baby and the present, Keisuke might be an infant, a child, or even a young man. Furthermore, the length of time Keisuke has spent under Kurushii's influence may have had a profound effect on his outlook and character, and he could either be willing to accompany them or bent on their destruction.*

*The exact nature of Kurushii's villainy is up to you to decide. If you want to go the easy route, he can be simply one of the numerous bandit lords that plague Rokugan. If you want to give things a political spin, he need not be an actual villain, but could simply be a ronin guerilla who is opposed to the current local authority. And if you want to be really evil, he could be a member of the Lost, intent on taking Keisuke into the Shadowlands and raising him there.*

*This scenario could also be used to introduce a new player character and give details about his background. How Keisuke (or Keiko) will react to learning about his true heritage, and the difficulties in securing that heritage could provide an interesting motivation for a player who joins the campaign mid-way through.*