

PART TWO: PAST MISTAKES

AND NOW, A LITTLE ASPIRIN

Have you ever complained about inconsistencies in time-travel stories?

Good. 'Cause now you're gonna try to create one, and we'll see how *you* do it.

The plot is non-linear in this section for a reason. The PCs can sink themselves into extreme trouble (which may be amusing but will waste much time) just by opening their mouths. Smart PCs will come up with a cover story that doesn't require evidence ("Oh, Benificent Sun! We were mugged by ronin and I had to steal this strange purple kimono off a wash line! All I ask is that you help me find this criminal who has dishonored me and bring him to justice!") but it might take your average player some time to come up with a working method. So here are a few consequences if they start telling Those Wild and Unbelievable Tales About a Future World.

1) "Not a little thing like that! Not a butterfly!"

In Ray Bradbury's classic story "A Sound of Thunder" (available on the Web) time travelers who hunt dinosaurs accidentally kill a butterfly, and return home to find their world irrevocably changed. The same idea holds true here: if a player knocks a vase over, an entire artistic style based on that vase will never exist; if they interrupt two lovers talking, they might never consummate their relationship and have a child that becomes a great general; if they start making out with some handsome samurai, they are doomed to the awful fates reserved for Greek tragedy and country-western songs.

Characters may try to give themselves or their Clan an advantage in coming years by deliberately telling secrets to prominent historical figures. But since you, the GM, are the ultimate arbiter of the time-stream, you can easily turn this action into an object lesson.

The most immediate way to panic the players is to have the new historical consequences radically change a PC (or two, or all the PCs in one Clan) after they have done something... *anything*...that could disrupt future events. While it's nice to have an idea of how the action and consequence are linked, it's not entirely necessary; the phenomenon will probably get the players coming up with their own theory in short order.

Changes include:

- * Their family mon changes or disappears.
- * Their eyes change to or from Crane blue, or their features to those of *gaijin*.
- * They change sex.
- * They and all the PCs in their Clan are suddenly dressed like *heimin*, carrying bales of hay on their backs. ("Gee, I guess with a few secrets, your clan got all naughty.")
- * Start switching stat numbers, Advantages, and Disadvantages among the party. ("Yes, you are your own grandpa, and inbreeding made you dumber.")
- * They become Shadowlands (tainted or creature), a Naga, or a Ratling (this will ruin their chances to

talk to anyone, so have this change correspond to a quick and reversible action unless it's near the end of the adventure).

* Tell a player that he's starting to speak differently, and try to get him to roleplay with an accent until things are set right again. (Southern, upper-class English, Californian, New York, Bizzaro, Caveman Rokugan, and Romanian/Dracula are serious possibilities.)

2) "Surely these strange newcomers are some kind of test."

The savvier court politicians have had to deal with inbred Otomos "touched by the Sun" before. Generally, they smile, they nod, and they figure the PC is up to something. Either the PCs are testing the waters of gullibility, or are ronin, lying about being descended from samurai. ("I'm from this strange far-off people you've never heard of, see, but their ancestors were from the Ki-Rin Clan.") The practical effect is to get them ignored, quickly, by anyone important. If they don't know who your father was, they don't want to know who you are.

3) "What do you mean by, 'Holy & \$#@!' Isawa-sama?"

It is possible that the PCs may want to secure a way home by running to the Master of the Void or someone else who knows Great And Powerful Magics That Will Solve All My Problems. Well, gosh, he's not at Otosan Uchi, he's not receiving visitors at home, and he'll want to do research for a few years before he messes around with anything involving time magic anyway.

Or maybe he's ten years old and thinks this kind of thing sounds *sooooo cool* he's ready to try it *right now*. Volunteers?

4) "All Right, You Primitive Screw-Heads, Listen Up."

If...

...God forbid...

...the PCs start whacking away at the Emperor's guards and declaring themselves the new shoguns of Rokugan, you may be utterly without a thing to say other than "SHWACK! New character."

The intuitive way to slap down your over-powered munchkin rabble is to give them the logical consequences of their actions -- wave after wave of Seppuns, soon to be followed by Scorpions, Phoenixes, and any loyal citizen within the city until the troublemakers are a red smear in the rock garden. You can even rule that the primordial martial arts of the kami have been better retained in this time period than their weak, watered-down descendants, and everybody from this time period gets an extra roll-and-keep die against the PCs.

But frankly, if your players don't recognize that attacking the Emperor's guards, no matter where or when, is stone-cold moron material, it's too late to save the serious and dramatic game you had in mind. You may want to go the route of the cheesy American B-movie and say their future kung fu from the year 1120 is super-mighty compared to the clumsy fumbings and inferior metal-work of the year 400. Rule that no local is higher Rank than the PCs and subtract 1k1 from all actions against our heroes. As soon as our heroes whack some "unkillable" Seppun, the shocked court bows before their bigness, and lets 'em get away with saying whatever they want. This lets the players concentrate on the real simple part -- finding Akuro -- and lets them be all Glorious when they charge the *gaijin* hordes.

I mean hey...it's a *fantasy* game, right?

RIGHT PLACE, WRONG TIME

For those characters who have traveled through Kakita paintings before, the jump through Kumpei's painting is terrifyingly different. The time travelers will find themselves hovering in a breathless, lightless limbo. Nothing they can do gives them any form of sensory input, for they are outside of time. The samurai will feel an irrational fear, even those with Death Trance, but their conscious selves probably won't understand why. (The part of their brain controlling time perception from one moment to the next is freaking out: first from lack of input; then as they return to the time stream at a different point, it gives resistance, like a spacecraft re-entering the atmosphere.)

Then comes a stunning light (the sun; the samurai were just in a cave), and their vision clears into a blur of greens, browns, blues and black. The land and sea beneath them slow to a few hundred rotations of the globe per second until...

...Rokugan whips up and they arc through the streets and buildings of Otosan Uchi. (Nothing is solid yet.) But the exact view the painting portrayed does not come up.

Below them -- in a nicely stylized three-quarters perspective proper for a Rokugani court painting -- walks a young lord, maybe fourteen years old, in an ornate green kimono. He is accompanied by two older, armored bushi as they head through a picturesque cherry blossom orchard.

Suddenly, while the characters are still held motionless between two realities, *one bushi moves on the other and while his back is turned, strikes him down with a perfect iaijutsu*. As the victim crumples, blood fountaining from his collar, the attacker cuts him aside and goes for the terrified boy. As the screams ring out, the PCs are dropped from stasis and fall about seven feet into this scene.

What do they do?

Presumably most groups will leap to the boy's defense. They are fighting Seppun Ushimo, a Rank 4 Seppun Imperial guard, who is assuming anyone near him is hostile.

Seppun Ushimo

Rank 4 Seppun Imperial Guard

EARTH 4, FIRE 3, Agility 5, AIR 3, Reflexes 4, WATER 4, VOID 3.

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Obiesaseru 3 (+10 to his TN to use on PCs in this illegitimate situation), Heraldry 2, History 2, Law 3, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3, Yarijutsu 3.

Honor: 4.4 (apparent; actual 1.4)

Glory: 5.2

Advantages: Perceived Honor, Strength of the Earth (1)

Disadvantages: True Love, Dark Secret (hates Hantei).

School Techniques: May add School Rank to Willpower or Honor to avoid seduction away from duty. For the first round of combat, may add Perception (4)k1 to all rolls, including initiative. Can roll Perception vs. 5 x target's Honor to avoid ambushes. Can roll Honor to see through disguises and illusions. Two actions per round.

TN to be Hit: 20 (27)

Equipment: Excellent tachi (Str + 3k3), Fine Light armor.

Ushimo is undoubtedly outnumbered and should fall, but remember the PCs still have any wounds and penalties incurred at the end of Part One. The real trick for the magistrates will be to keep Ushimo alive to interrogate him (as would be a good idea). Once he realizes his assassination attempt has failed, he tries to die, throwing himself at the characters' swords, or onto his own if necessary.

Once the players have the situation under control (or at the end of two rounds if they're struggling) four more Imperial guards (use Ushimo's stats, except *their* Honor is real) catch up, and each round after that, four more until the PCs find themselves surrounded. In all likelihood, the guards will assume *they* are the attackers, and demand immediate surrender.

If the PCs respond with anything but utter submission, the guards will let loose with deadly force. Guilty or innocent, they just got found standing over a dead Seppun (or two) next to his charge. If the PCs comply long enough to let the boy speak, he commands the guards to arrest Ushimo if he's alive and tells them the PCs saved his life.

The captain of the guard then turns and bows low to the characters, thanking them for saving the life of his Imperial Majesty, Hantei Kusada.

Hantei VI (Hantei Kusada)

Rank 1 Kakita Bushi

EARTH 2, FIRE 2, Agility 3, AIR 3, WATER 2, Perception 3, VOID 3.

Skills: Archery 1, Athletics 1, Battle 1, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 1, Obiesaseru 3, Heraldry 2, History 2, Investigation 1, Law 3, Poetry 1, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3.

Honor: 4.1
(practice)

Glory: "10" (about 8 in

Advantages: Social Position, Benten's Blessing

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Puppet),
Gullible

School Techniques: Adds 2 to Initiative roll; can
use Iaijutsu in place of Kenjutsu.

TN to be Hit: 15

Equipment: Mostly some lavish outfits; in
extremis, he may request access to *Akkai-uo*, the
Hantei ancestral no-dachi that delivers damage as
if Strength 6 (doubled result if used on those
outside the Celestial Order).

Gosh, He Looks Much Younger In Person

Give the players time to adjust as they slowly realize their characters have traveled not just in distance, but in time. The clothes are different, the swords are different, and very few people openly wear mons.

It may be helpful to let the characters make History tests, with a TN of 10 to get "in the past," and Raises for more specificity (before the return of the Unicorn...before Iuchiban...) Otherwise, let them fumble trying to come up with a subtle way to ask, "Uh, what year is it?"

Hantei Kusada (that's Hantei the Sixth) doesn't look much like the withered septegenarian Hantei from their own time, but he's not the wild ten-year-old Hantei Sotorii, either. He's an thoughtful, inquisitive teenager...but (just to be kind to the players) he will take no for an answer. The Hantei has been conditioned into being polite and proper to keep him out of trouble; he suspects he's a puppet, but has no idea how much, and to change his position would require him to be a lot ruder than he's capable.

HEROES OF THE HOUR

The PCs' mysterious appearance and miraculous rescue of the Son of Heaven is the most exciting thing to happen in Court in years, and the Great Families are eaten up with curiosity about where this pack of unknowns came from and what favors they will beg. The characters are showered with praise and gratitude from the guards and courtiers and invited back to the Imperial Palace for a dinner in their honor.

Security Note: The gateways to the inner city, according to *Otosan Uchi*, are enchanted so that they fry Shadowlands-tainted beings, the better to prevent them from getting to the Emperor. For our purposes, these gates have yet to be built, and anything that says otherwise was a historian's back-dating. Also, as mentioned in *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, standard etiquette when visiting a daimyo is for the bodyguards to secure the visitors' weapons. The Seppun, deep in shame, will not request this of the PCs, but the Clan daimyo's guards **will** before they enter the main audience halls, **and the Hantei, shockingly enough, will not contradict the wishes of the Clan daimyo.**

As they walk back, following a scenic route through a rock video's worth of beautiful gardens and expensive rooms, the characters are approached by a variety of curious nobles, including the Hantei himself. They politely (but insistently) inquire about the PC's families and backgrounds.

Hopefully, your players will realize that the truth will have nothing but negative consequences. Rolling History or Appropriate Clan Lore, TN 15, with one Raise for each additional piece of information, to figure out the time period (about the year 400) and help them avoid appropriate gaffes. *We will be kind and not suggest linguistic drift will make it difficult for the PCs to talk to anybody.* If you want to simulate this, adding +10 to their social TNs is a lot quicker than starting to gamemaster in Renaissance Faire speech.

Things unfamiliar to the time period include: the **Emerald Magistrates** (they haven't formed yet); the **Unicorn Clan** (who haven't returned); the **Tortoise and Wasp Clans** (don't exist); the **Asahina** family (don't exist; they'll meet Isawa Asahina later); the **Kitsuki** family (peasants); Otomo *seiyaku* (they're vestigial nobles now, not power-players); the **Kaiu Wall** (smaller, and known as Hida's Wall); the **Kuni Witch Hunters** (barely heard of before Iuchiban); **Hiruma Castle** (alive and well); and the **Mantis** (who are a Clan and have the family name "Gusai" right now).

A Crab and Crane together will also be commented on: it is only a hundred years since the Yasuki break, and anyone who has sympathies with the other side conceals it; to do otherwise ruins chances for promotion. ("Are you now or have you ever been a sympathizer to the Hida family?")

Another History roll, TN 15, lets the characters remember the general political situation of the time. It is shortly before the Battle of the White Stag, during the era where the Hantei were married off as children to sit on the throne for a few years as puppets before being retired to make way for the next. The memory of this time has been deliberately downplayed by modern Rokugani, who believe the power of the Hantei has always and should always be inviolate. The real power at the moment are the three Great Families -- the Crane, Scorpion and Phoenix -- who run the *gozoku*, or three-branch government, a clan-driven bureaucracy whose daimyo control everything from who sits on the throne, to when Clans go to war, to who gets rich off the lucrative trade with the gaijin. (See *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun* for more details.)

Even those characters whose Clans and families are unaffected should quickly realize the problems in claiming to be a prominent member of an important Clan when no one alive in that clan has ever heard of them. Remember, lying to a daimyo is almost exactly as dishonorable as claiming to be from a samurai family when all records prove you are not.

So how can they possibly fit into this snake pit?

For characters whose family names aren't known, it may be possible to pass themselves off as members of minor families that are so insignificant as to be overlooked, but the Dojis and Akodos among your group will probably have to claim to be ronin (in which case those kimonos prominently displaying their family mon might be considered offensive) or be subject to an embarrassing and impossible-to-answer interrogation. (And that Moto, with the white robe and face paint? Obviously a Scorpion who ran away from his seppuku.)

One trouble with their explanations may be their swords. The majority of samurai at this time carry tachi, swords of comparable size and quality to katana, but with straighter blades, an easier design to produce. Due to the lack of a curve, tachi have slightly less cutting area during a stroke and do a base of 2k2 damage, though many high-Glory samurai have Fine equipment. Katana, while rare, do exist, and

are the mark of an extravagant daimyo. (Figure them at five times their normal value in koku.)

Wilder stories of kitsune abduction or time lost in the Shadowlands ("We are unclean and beg to be purified before we may pollute your august Presence!") may be believed with enough supporting details, as may simpler explanations such as having taken a vow of silence about their backgrounds. Whatever explanation they give, the questioning will start all over again at the first anachronistic slip of a PC tongue.

Both bushi and shugenja may also get themselves in trouble if they show off their spells or fighting styles too closely. Teaching techniques have changed in 600 years, and spell research has progressed greatly. Many things the characters take for granted (the Scorpion Feint, Path to Inner Peace) may not yet be known in this time, and can gain the PCs (un)welcome notoriety.

Had they only been carrying a history text...

So, What Can We Learn?

On the way back, a combination of History rolls and gossip can give the characters the following information:

- 1. About four months ago, there was an Imperial edict which officially banned all gaijin from Rokugani soil forever.**
- 2. Hantei had officially given the gaijin two years to adapt to Rokugani culture before the edict. Once the announcement was made, there were several purges of gaijin merchants in and around Otosan Uchi. Some might even call them massacres. The last one was a week and a half ago.**
- 3. The three main families generally maintain their power in the following ways: the Crane are the mothers and wives of the Hantei and thus have Imperial authority on their side; the Scorpion are the richest clan and control the iron trade on which all bushi are dependent; and the Phoenix play the other two off against each other and ally with each in turn, keeping it constantly up in the air.**
- 4. Nobody's seen an ise zumi in the castle for months.**

At this time in history, the Crab have little or nothing to do with the Imperials, and have no representatives at court. The Lion are present mostly in the Imperial Guard and Emerald Legions; their daimyo stays in his own lands, and his representatives in court have little power (Glory 5 and below). There are a few resident Dragon in Otosan Uchi, but almost all are low-Glory, young-buck Mirumotos looking to make a reputation dueling Kakitas.

EVENTS OF PART TWO

Part Two of *Hindsight* is fairly non-linear, with three main plotlines the PCs can follow in whatever order they choose. We present the events of each plotline mixed up with the others, in the most likely order for the story to occur, but gamemasters should read this section carefully. Once the search for Akuro reveals where he's been most recently, the clock starts ticking.

The three plot lines are:

- 1. The three Great Families each try to find a way to use the player characters in their own power**

struggles.

2. The characters find out why Seppun Ushimo tried to kill the Hantei.

3. The characters track down Togashi Akuro, as they came to do.

But our heroes are smooth and cool, right? They can ask a few dozen questions and take political positions without screwing history up *too* badly, right?

See, that's why they call it an adventure.

THE DINNERS

Once the characters have been welcomed to Ootosan Uchi, and given baths and beautiful, elaborate rooms assigned by the Hantei himself, they receive three dinner invitations, one right after another. Each is brought in a beautiful gift box with a delicate, hand-painted flower on the top, delivered by a servant dressed in fine silk kimono. Each is for the hour of the Dog (8 p.m.). There is one from Bayushi Atsuki, the daimyo of the Scorpion, one from Doji Tomeko, the daimyo of the Crane, and one from Shiba Katsutoshi, the daimyo of the Phoenix.

Whom to offend? Will they snub a daimyo, or cover all three by splitting up in a strange place and time, where they know no one except each other...and trust their compatriots not to destroy history?

Have We Met?

If you need a quick bunch of characters to flesh out the following dinner scenes, remember that every person currently alive in Rokugan is the reincarnated soul of someone in the past. Feel free to draw on the important storyline characters, Ancestor advantages, or Kharmic Ties to provide the personality of the clan members of the past. Sodan-senzo characters can even recognize specific people ("Hey, isn't that Kachiko's spirit in the little geisha tart over there? And isn't that my mother's spirit she's ordering about?")

Prop Hint: Grabbing some L5R cards with famous Rokugani personages on them and taping a new first name with only a one-or-two letter difference onto the card can provide a visual reminder of who sits where around the table.

Bayushi Atsuki

Bayushi Atsuki, the current Scorpion daimyo, is a far cry from Kachiko's seductions and Shoji's villainy. A corpulent, decadent, Roman-Emperor-style daimyo, he is content with the social order, and more inclined to bribe than blackmail his way out of trouble. Behind a simple mask that is little more than a stylized headband and a nose piece, Atsuki is bright, with a mind well-honed to intricate, old-fashioned political games. (He should be: he ran this Hantei's father before him, too.) Though always polite and soft-spoken, he jumps at the slightest hint of a hole in their story, and never lets them drop or duck a question.

Privately, he believes they are a band of ronin, using an impressive cover-story to try to get ahead. Fortunately, he doesn't mind -- the less legitimate they are, the more they will owe him.

He thinks the PCs may have some pull with the impressionable young Hantei who's showing signs of

hero-worship for the bushi who miraculously saved him. Atsuki wants the characters to use their influence to introduce the Hantei to a nice Bayushi girl, Miwako.

Is there a catch? Of course not, Atsuki assures them. It's just that the young emperor is hanging out with Cranes a lot lately, and his responsibilities to the Empire should be balanced among the clans. Atsuki isn't asking for the two of them to do anything indecent (the Emperor is married and has a six-month-old son, after all) but he wants Miwako to have, um...access.

In return, he'll set them up with "what befits their station," which includes a nice house as long as they're staying in town...maybe some spending cash...

...invitations to the Kakita artisan concertos...

...appointments with Imperial swordsmiths...

Will this change history? *Yes.*

An Intelligence + Manipulation, Scorpion Clan Lore or History roll (TN 15) will let anyone paranoid for the Emperor's political safety realize that access to a teenage Hantei is all a Scorpion seductress needs.

Kusada will have a son, raised by the Phoenix, and a daughter, Yugo-zohime, who will be raised by Togashi Yokuni and the Lion. After his death, there will be a contest for the throne between these two, and the daughter will win, breaking the *gozoku's* hold and becoming the first Empress in Rokugan's history. An illegitimate son of the Emperor would have the right to enter into these duels and make it a three-way contest. An illegitimate *daughter* might marry Doji Usan, the future husband of Hantei VII, and thus throw different wrench into Yugo-zohime's works.

With a Raise, you can let the players know that even if none of this actually occurs, Hantei "dishonoring" Miwako can give her Scorpion father significant leverage in demanding compensation for his shame. That means land. Or it might mean something as cheap as a few hundred laborer peasants, which Atsuki demanded from someone.

With two Raises, you can let them know that Atsuki, late in life, attempted to dig a secret tunnel beneath the Spine of the World mountains to create a second Beiden Pass. The only reason the Lion were able to discover it in time was because the tunnel project was significantly delayed due to a cold winter and a lack of manpower. (This is a different secret pass than the one hinted at in *City of Lies*, and oh, *yes* could it change history.)

If the PCs are recalcitrant, Atsuki starts asking questions he knows they can't answer about their families, backgrounds, and where they come from (he's already got a staff who checked the Imperial birth registries and records of all minor family names). If they outright defy him, he threatens, politely, to expose them as peasants impersonating samurai of the great families as part of his duty to the Emperor. He may even have picked up on their Flaws during conversation.

This is tricky stepping. Making an enemy of the Scorpion daimyo is never a good idea, but being his friend could be even worse. And if they've split up, do they feel comfortable offering *anything*, not knowing what their teammates are saying to the other daimyo?

It is possible to slip the noose by offering a lesser favor, such as to introduce the Hantei to the girl but ensure there are chaperones from other Clans, such as setting a date at a public event. ("I certainly see

the wisdom of your proposal, Bayushi-sama, but it would bring great misfortune to guess at the schedule of the Son of Heaven.")

Of more interest to devoted magistrates, Atsuki controls much of Ootosan Uchi's silk trade and knows most of the Mantis merchants and diplomats. If they ask him about Gusai Iami (a name they may learn later in the text) he immediately senses the depth of their interest and tries to get a promise from them about the girl before saying anything. When negotiations are completed, he can tell them that Iami was not hurt by the purges; he got out with most of his goods and was last seen headed south.

Troubleshooting: You should be able to spot this brewing already; a Scorpion daimyo threatening a brash PC, overtly or not, may end up with the PC going for the daimyo right then and there. This is why to have Atsuki meet with the least violent PC, with several witnesses present such as Shosuro Matsuo (below) and to have his bushi enforce the sword etiquette recommended a few pages ago.

Bayushi Atsuki

Rank 4 Bayushi Courtier

**EARTH 2, Willpower 4, FIRE 3, AIR 4,
WATER 3, VOID 3**

Skills: Commerce 5, Courtier 5, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 4, History 2, Iaijutsu 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 2, Law 4, Lore: Scorpion 4, Lore: Imperial Family 4, Lore: Crane and Phoenix 3, Lore: Other Clans 2, Lore: Gaijin 3, Poison 4, Seduction 4 (well, he thinks so, and no one has the Glory to tell him otherwise), Sincerity 5, most other High Skills at 2.

Honor: 1.8 **Glory:** 9.1

Advantages: Gentry, Social Position, Blackmail, Allies

Disadvantages: Spoiled.

School Techniques: Gets a Free Raise in social rolls for every 2 points of Disadvantages the other person has; can make a contested Awareness roll to learn someone's lowest Trait and can spend Void to find the next lowest; can make a Contested Awareness roll to learn someone's disadvantages; can roll Awareness + SR and spend an hour with someone, and can get 1 point of Blackmail on them.

Meeting Doji Tomeko

The daimyo of the Crane is the daughter of the former daimyo Doji Raigu, a young, not-yet-married woman who relies heavily on the aid of her Champion Seikidera. Lest players jump to any samurai-tragedy conclusions, Seikidera is married and old enough to be her father, and his son is one of Tomeko's suitors.

Tomeko is very curious about the visitors, particularly those not of Scorpion or Crane backgrounds. Uncertain in her power, having only inherited the position a few months ago, she is looking for allies among the other clans, hoping that bringing the Lion, Crab or Dragon into politics on her side would give her an edge against the other families.

She would particularly like the characters to use any influence they have with their clans to help turn opinion on the gaijin issue. Though the Crane initially supported the sanctions against the gaijin, they do not approve of the brutality the other clans have used to accomplish it. Tomeko would actually prefer the edict to allow limited trade; since the Crane are currently allied with the Mantis and have access to the coasts, a thriving sea trade would give them a chance to gain economic power over the Scorpion.

Seikidera is present at the dinner, and a Perception + Sincerity test, TN 20, lets the characters tell that while Tomeko disapproves of the purges, she does little because she is sheltered from their brutality, while Seikidera has had to follow the Emperor's orders and drive the gaijin out himself, and he is appalled by the treatment they are receiving.

A History test, TN 10, lets the PCs recognize the name Seikidera as the Crane Champion who was the pivotal figure in the Battle of the White Stag/Raging Seas. They are sitting across the table from the man who is considered the main reason Rokugan is not a gaijin colony. Seikidera has that "star quality" you expect from a Crane champion: you know, he's chivalrous, bold, righteous, has dreamy eyes that look right out of his portrait in the history text and straight into the hearts of young maidens centuries later...that kind of thing. He's like Sir Lancelot with *anime* hair.

None of the dinner guests seems to realize how close they are to war, and any mention of the possibility reveals that the clans have not had a major war for a generation. Few people think that anyone would be so barbaric as to start one now. Seikidera is particularly committed to the idea of reform among the Otosan Uchi police, and becomes very quiet and brooding at any mention of possible gaijin attack.

Doji Tomeko

Rank 2 Doji Courtier

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

Skills: Commerce 4, Courtier 4, Etiquette 5, Heraldry 3, History 2, Iaijutsu 2, Law 3, Lore: Crane 4, Lore: Imperial Family 4, Lore: Scorpion and Phoenix 3, Sincerity 3, most other High Skills at 2.

Honor: 3.8

Glory: 8.8

Advantages: Gentry, Social Position, Allies,

Clear Thinker

Disadvantages: Small

School Techniques: Can call upon eight favors from the court per adventure; can influence people by talking to them for five minutes.

Doji Seikidera

Rank 5 Kakita Duelist

EARTH 4, FIRE 3, Agility 4, AIR 3, Reflexes 5, WATER 4, VOID 5.

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 3, Bard 2, Battle 4, Courtier 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 4, History 2, Iaijutsu 5, Jujitsu 3, Lore: Bushido 3, Lore: Crane Clan 5, Lore: Imperials 4, Lore: Gaijin 2, Sincerity 3, Yarijutsu 4.

Honor: 4.2

Glory: 8.1

Advantages: Quick, Voice, Gentry, Inheritance (*Shukujo*: Crane Ancestral Sword. Announces true wielder with joyful ringing, can only be held by Doji or Kakita, makes Seikidera effectively a Doji Courtier at Rank 5, and can always strike first in an iaijutsu duel.)

Techniques: Can use Iaijutsu in place of Kenjutsu, can add Iaijutsu to Initiative; can Raise by any amount in an Iaijutsu duel, not just 5; can spend up to maximum Void in one shot in Iaijutsu duel; two attacks a round; before Initiative is rolled, can make Void vs. Void roll to make 1 attack before combat begins.

Equipment: *Shukujo* (Str+4k3), Excellent wakizashi (Str +3k3), Excellent heavy armor (no TN penalty to wear).

Meeting Shiba Katsutoshi

In Katsutoshi's entourage is a young, gifted, pre-gempukku shugenja named Isawa Sanro. Katsutoshi arrives late, giving the characters time to get to know Sanro. The boy is an avid student of air magic, and will ask plenty of questions to any shugenja PC. He's trying to figure out how to use it so that anyone can get a little "wind" to blow and awaken the spirits in objects for just a little time.

A Shugenja Lore test, TN 20, will reveal this is the theory that Isawa Asahina used to invent *tsangusuri* at about this time period. A Crane Lore test, TN 5, lets a character recall the story of Isawa Asahina, the Phoenix shugenja who made war on the Crane before surrendering to the beauty of a Crane maiden and founding the Asahina family. "Sanro," as every Rokugani knows, is the name given to the third child in a family before his *gempukku* allows him to choose his own.

Isawa Sanro (Isawa Asahina)

Rank 1 Isawa Shugenja

**EARTH 2, Willpower 3, FIRE 3, AIR 4,
WATER 1, Perception 3, VOID 4.**

Skills: Meditation 3, Shintao 3, Tea Ceremony 1, Courtier 1, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 1, History 1, Lore: Phoenix 1, Lore: Imperial Family 1, Sincerity 1, most other High Skills at 1.

Honor: 3.5 **Glory:** 4.5

Advantages: Gentry, Social Position, Elemental Affinity (Air).

Disadvantages: Small, and has no spells of his own, but he can add his talents to rituals.

School Techniques: May spend multiple Void on shugenja spells; free Raise for rituals with other shugenja.

And what of Katsutoshi himself?

Well, therein lies a story. Rokugani lords are supposed to maintain composure. Rokugani samurai are supposed to never criticize their lords. Shiba Katsutoshi's etiquette instructor was one of his samurai.

This is why you can hear Shiba Katsutoshi coming down the hall.

A gruff, aging man, Katsutoshi is not the Phoenix champion, who resides at Kyuden Isawa, but serves as the voice of the Phoenix in the Imperial Court. He was told by the Isawa four months ago that a grave crisis is at hand for Rokugan, and is avidly watching for any such signs. (Mysterious strangers appearing from the mist to save a Hantei qualifies.) But he never cries "apocalypse" before he's got the solution well in hand.

Shiba Katsutoshi is the boss you have always hated. He curses people under him, blames others for his mistakes, and is a constant irritation in every room he's in. Insinuating that there are always plenty of other people willing to work for him, he bamboozles people into doing so. Worst of all, he can back it up with just enough moderate talent to convince higher-ups he's one of those hardasses who are brutally honest, not just brutal.

Katsutoshi's net effect is to raise an impenetrable social shield around him that no logic can penetrate. One gets the impression that if one were to sit in a room with him and watch for an hour, absolutely anything could pop out of his mouth, none of which could be distinguished between a joke, a pathological lie, or an actual life-and-death order. However, ignoring his orders is the one thing guaranteed to bring his ire. This is why the court vastly prefers the company of the Scorpion daimyo.

This is not to say that he's crazy, or even that he's always shouting. It's his conversational style that throws people off. This "Logic-Proof" advantage adds 10 to the TN of any social rolls made on Katsutoshi, including lying with Sincerity or trying to figure out his motivations. This penalty can be circumvented if the speaker substitutes Void + *nazodo* for their social skill rolls.

History rolls, no matter how high, tell the characters that Katsutoshi was a noble and wise man who subscribed to all Phoenix virtues. A roll of 20 or higher on Scorpion Clan Lore indicates that the PC read the Scorpion histories which revealed him to be a thug who used shugenja spies to eliminate reports to the contrary. Katsutoshi ordered the purges of the gaijin with Phoenix and Crane troops, and when fighting broke out, he ordered in the Emerald Legions. A bloodbath ensued, but the gaijin have largely withdrawn further down the coast.

The Quotable Katsutoshi:

"What do you mean the Scorpion don't know who they are? They paid good money to have spies in our Clan."

"Don't tell me you're sorry. If you were really sorry, you'd disembowel yourself and hack off your own head like a normal person."

"You're new, huh? So, the Bayushi. Fat ugly moron or what?"

"Spare me heroes who save the Emperor and then think they're in the big time."

"Rule? The Emperor doesn't rule. Haven't you ever ruled? It'd dishonor him!"

"Sanro? Yeah, he's super. He's turning twelve next week. So are his kids."

"The gaijin? What's to say about them? They're impotent cowards who will steal our women, and ignorant savages with strange magic we know nothing about."

"The Mantis! Of course they'd be behind it. They're gaijin tools, behind every scheme to assassinate the Emperor except for mine. Sanro! Go stop my assassination plot, it's over budget anyway."

"Of course that was a joke. What are you, stupid? I don't mean what I say, and someone should have told you that."

"When I said I never mean what I say, I didn't mean this, and you should have known it. What, you're not ready to forgive me? I thought compassion was supposed to be one of your virtues."

"Did I say you could speak? No, go ahead, interrupt us at any time. Yes, I mean

that, otherwise it wouldn't be interrupting, now would it?"

"Wait, I changed my mind. Only interrupt me at specified times, okay? I want you to send a letter every time you're going to interrupt us, warning us of the time and place. And it should have good calligraphy appropriate to your station."

"Are you ignoring me? Was I speaking here? Sanro, follow this monkey home and put a poison dart in his bed."

"You know what will happen if you do that? You will SINK this Empire. Are you ready to sink the Empire? He's ready to sink the Empire, get him out!"

Chances are, when the PCs first get within earshot, Katsutoshi will be yelling to an aide about the Crane and Scorpion. ("Monkeys could make a decision on those gaijin faster than the Crane could. Sanro! Get two monkeys and send them to the Emerald Champion. Wait! That's stupid, teach them to bow.")

Once he's gotten the PCs to dinner, his main concern is to feel out whether the other families have already gained the characters as allies, because he knows there are no neutral parties in a pinch. If he sees a Crane shugenja in the party, they will receive his unwelcome attentions. The Crane Clan's lack of magic is the primary reason they still have to strike deals with the Phoenix and Scorpion instead of ruling outright.

If the characters don't bring up the assassination, he asks them about it, for he is concerned that the Crane or Scorpion might grow bold enough to try to control the dynasty with murder. ("And then they will have no respect for the rule of law, and they will SINK this Empire.") Depending on how the characters play it, Katsutoshi can be either an ally or complication. He can easily be convinced to the PCs' side...as long as they are willing to kill and die to keep the gaijin out, do nothing that could give any of the other Clans leverage, and don't seem like nancy boys.

At dinner, he makes no attempts to hide his hatred of the gaijin, whom he believes are sullyng the purity of Rokugan. If the characters mention anything about Ushimo's confession on the possibility Gusai Iami is behind the assassination, he eagerly seizes on the idea, considering the Mantis little more than mongrels and gaijin tools. If they give any definite connection to the attack, Katsutoshi's ready to send a legion of troops to the Islands of Silk immediately. (Changing history? Yup.)

Shiba Katsutoshi

Rank 3 Shiba Bushi

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

Skills: Archery 2, Commerce 3, Courtier 4,
Defense 2, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 3, History 2,
Kenjutsu 2, Law 3, Lore: Phoenix 4, Lore:
Imperial Family 4, Lores: Crane and Scorpion 3,
Manipulation 5, Meditation 3, Naginata 2,
Shintao 3, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 3.

Honor: 2.8**Glory:** 9.4**Advantages:** Gentry, Heartless, Logic-Proof**Disadvantages:** Insensitive**School Techniques:** May add Void Rank to hit or damage roll. May spend up to maximum Void in one action. May spend Void point to increase or decrease TN of spell targeting him by 5. May spend Void to gain extra action.

INTERROGATING SEPPUN USHIMO

If they managed to keep him alive, the characters will probably want to interrogate Seppun Ushimo; after all, the first duty of any samurai is to protect the Emperor, and protecting their modern Emperor means protecting his ancestor. And behind any bodyguard-turned-traitorous-assassin, there's usually someone who did the turning.

If they take the attitude of "let the ancient people handle their own problems" and don't want to get involved, you can prompt them during the dinners that night by showing that the three Great Families resent the Seppun (who hate them for usurping the Hantei's proper authority). If the characters don't do something, the families will take advantage of Ushimo's assassination attempt to argue that soldiers of their own Schools should comprise the Imperial guard, while the Seppun should be made into a minor clan somewhere outside of Otosan Uchi where they can't cause trouble.

It shouldn't take a roll to show that this would *screw* Rokugan's history. If you want to have them roll Imperial Lore or History, TN 10, you can begin listing the number of times a Seppun guard has saved the life of a Hantei.

Getting to see Ushimo Without Permission

Let's hope the PCs have finagled their way through the nobles, because Ushimo is confined in a cage within a cage within a cage in a very clean, well-lit, very secure Imperial chamber. He's surrounded by a layer of three Kakita bushi, overseen from a higher window by three Shiba bushi with bows. There's no cover from the bows in the room, and none of them, unless ordered otherwise, believe strangers have the authority (or the best interests of the Crane and Phoenix at heart) to talk to him.

The three locks are TN 20 to pick, the bars are TN 35 to bend out of place enough to get in a hand, and using a fire-based spell to melt through metal is at least 45 Wounds per bar and will create a heck of a smell.

Subtler ways, such as forged orders, have a greater chance of success. The guards are bushi drafted from noble entourages, not security specialists the way the Seppun are: figure they are Rank 2 bushi with 3s in all Rings, 3s in relevant combat skills, and an Investigation of 1, for a total of 4k3 to be matched

against the Stealth or Forgery of the PCs. Unfortunately, PC Forgery rolls may use no more dice than the forger's History if the characters haven't seen what family crest Seikidera uses to seal his orders.

The Questioning

Ushimo, for his part, claims he doesn't know why he attacked the Emperor. Getting him out of his morose depression and towards talking requires a Sincerity, Intimidation, or Torture test, at a TN of 20.

This will get Ushimo to say he felt an irresistible compulsion, as if day had turned into night, and all his life were a lie, keeping back the inherent evil impulses he kept harbored for so long. He says it must have been unknown Phoenix magic that twisted him to treason, and begs for a chance to commit seppuku so the Son of Heaven might forgive him. Further questioning, especially if the characters appeal to Ushimo's guilt and talk about the consequences to his family, will break his spirit. He'll admit he was trying to kill the Hantei to start the families feuding (the Hantei's heir is six months old and has no arranged bride). If this were to occur, it would be likely no one clan would have enough troops in the capital to enforce the edict against the gaijin when the others would be at their throats.

Casting Accounts of Shorihotsu, or a Spellcraft test, TN 20, will let shugenja characters tell there is no scent of shugenja magic on him. A Sense Earth spell will detect no Taint. While what he has said is all true, he has not told the reasons why. Raises on the interrogation or threatening his family can achieve this result.

The Real Story

What drives a Seppun guard to turn around and attack the Emperor? The answer is, a lot of bottled-up emotions and one determined *ise zumi*.

Ushimo has a lot of guilt. He got born into a prestigious family, and then told he was no good by Seppun sensei after Seppun sensei until he was doing exactly what they wanted. He gets watched for disloyalty every day by dozens of other Seppun, most of whom he doesn't like, and the one bright spot in his life was a marriage that worked out pretty well for the first few years. He liked his wife Tsumime's family better than his own.

But you give a moment's happiness to a couple in Rokugan and Fate intervenes. Tsumime became sick; faint, pale, shivering, and coughing, sometimes so much that blood came forth. They think she caught it from the gaijin, but to add insult, the only thing that keeps her from being in severe pain as she wastes away to her death are medicines from gaijin merchants.

It's a certainty that she will die. Besides Path to Inner Peace spells only helping her a little, her death is listed in some obscure history books: Imperial Lore, TN 25.

Togashi Akuro scoped those books. He does that, you see.

And the evil thing about Akuro is his "Chameleon" tattoo.

Akuro showed up looking like Tsumime's doctor about two weeks ago, treating her and telling Ushimo the truth at a little sake house just down the way. With a little *mitsugusuri* in the sake to sap his will, Akuro implanted a suggestion. The suggestion was, "you're at the end of your rope, buddy." Ushimo took it from there.

Now, Ushimo is a Seppun guard, and if specifically asked if anything seemed different about the way his doctor spoke or what he knew, he'll remember a few more funny things about that meeting. The doctor moved like a much healthier man, and he said he had to go. He had other patients.

Somebody named Iami?

Troubleshooting

If Ushimo dies, his wife becomes the source of info. She knows her husband reasonably well, and he might do something to ease her pain, but can't imagine why he'd actually swing at another Seppun, let alone anything *else*. That's not like him. Tsumime will remember the doctor visiting and Ushimo telling her they went to a sake house and talked, but she can't imagine why he'd be in on this. It's funny, she says. The doctor doesn't usually drink sake. She thought it was bad for his liver.

The doctor, if found, says he didn't visit that day, and he's telling the truth.

Given All That, What Else Do We Know?

Dragon Clan Lore, TN 20: Some ise zumi have a tattoo, the Chameleon, that allow them to take on the appearance of other people.

Intelligence, TN 10: Akuro wasn't anywhere in sight when the PCs came into this time. Given the vast number of years traveled, it's certainly possible he arrived two weeks before them.

History, TN 15: Gusai Iami was a Mantis diplomat whose family owned a few Mantis islands, a lot of ships, and traded heavily with the gaijin.

Investigation, TN 10: The palace gossip is that Gusai Iami disappeared from Otosan Uchi around the same time as one of the purges, shortly after Ushimo's little talk. Imperial Legion records will also have his "chop" stamped on a sheet for all the ships leaving the city that day, heading to the Mantis islands. Bayushi Atsuki also knows him (see Atsuki's character introduction).

LOOKING FOR TOGASHI AKURO

Crafty groups will never fully lose sight of this goal, no matter the distractions. After all, there is an insane, maho-using monk on the loose, who can muck about with history, and unless they find him, they have no chance to get home.

Crazy Tattooed Guy, About This High, Poison Skin...

You'd think it would be easy.

Asking around for someone who looks like Akuro gets them little. No one has seen an ise zumi around Otosan Uchi in years ("Togashi Tosen-sama does not allow them to leave the mountain any longer. All their time is spent in drills with the Mirumoto troops, preparing for some future disaster."). All the local Kakita artisans are present and accounted for.

On the other hand, if the characters explore the Imperial palace, they can roll Perception, TN 15, to recognize an *exact duplicate* of the painting they stepped through hung on the wall by the south entrance.

This painting, however, to all tests, is not magical, just extremely well-crafted.

Kamigyo (the chief of staff among the palace servants) or a wandering art fan among the previous incarnations of the PCs' friends can tell the magistrates that the painting was completed recently, by Kakita Miyoshi, and only hung up here a few days before. Kamigyo is a dignified heimin man, with a strong sense of responsibility, and seems accustomed to somewhat more respect and trust than most servants from the characters' time.

Get Me An Art Expert, Stat!

It is simple to find the painter, Kakita Miyoshi, a nervous, elderly woman who has been a long-time permanent resident of the Imperial palace. Though scrupulously polite, she's an introvert who's uncomfortable around bushi player characters, particularly ones of other Clans. She'll stumble over words and explanations, and say she really doesn't know much in order to try and cut the conversation short.

If treated gently (Sincerity, TN 15), she relaxes and tells the PCs that the painting was commissioned a few weeks before by Shosuro Matsuo, a well-known Scorpion courtier, who gave her lavish, exotic gifts and begged her to finish the picture as quickly as possible. He said he intended to present it as an anonymous gift to the Emperor, and was very specific as to what the painting should show, even giving her sketches and instructions on precisely what parts of the palace and gardens to include.

The gifts he gave, if they ask to see them, are a set of modern combs and mirrors made of glass backed with silver. A History or Unicorn Clan Lore test, TN 10, lets the characters know that neither the glass (a gaijin invention, and not these gaijin) nor the mirror's style are appropriate to this century.

Matsuo, she tells them, is a scholar, and can often be found in the palace libraries.

Shosuro Matsuo

The characters find Matsuo copying scrolls in the Imperial Histories section of the library. He is a youngish man, short, rude and suspicious, with a shaved head and bear-shaped mask that covers almost his entire face. On a History roll, TN 25, characters can remember seeing his image in many portraits from this time, usually at the right hand of Bayushi Atsuki (those who attended the dinner with Atsuki remember him being present).

If questioned, he has seen the painting before, but he didn't commission it. Matsuo will be genuinely surprised at the subject: he has no interest in art, and barely remembers what the picture looks like; he certainly seems unlikely to have given as elaborate a set of instructions as Miyoshi claimed. If the characters actually brought the written orders from Miyoshi, Matsuo proclaims them forgeries with a single look.

Hopefully, the players will get it. Akuro has been impersonating Matsuo, and ensured that this painting exists, giving Kumpei a model to work from. The face-concealing mask made Matsuo an easy person to impersonate, and a Dragon Clan Lore, TN 20, can reveal that some *ise zumi* have a magical tattoo called the Chameleon.

Though Matsuo claims to have been at home with his wife the night the painting was commissioned, others around the palace remember seeing him. Doji Seikidera in particular, remembers having a strange conversation with him. "Matsuo" asked him for directions to Izumida, a summer palace south of Ootosan

Uchi, which Seikidera found odd, since they rode there together just a few months ago. (If your players fail to ask around about the activities of the false "Matsuo," the real Matsuo certainly will, trying to find out who's been imitating him, and may enlist a Scorpion PC to come help him mess this guy up.)

SHIRO IZUMIDA

As anyone in Otosan Uchi can tell the characters, Shiro Izumida is a small winter palace on a ridge perhaps ten miles south of the city. It's just a few rooms larger than a hunting lodge, and is used by lesser Imperial sons and daughters who want to play at hosting their first Winter Court. At this time of year, it is almost always empty except for the four or five groundskeepers and their families who live there year-round.

Izumida is about a forty-minute ride from Otosan Uchi, along a fairly well-traveled road. When the characters arrive there, they find all is not well.

No one comes out to greet them.

There are muddy tracks everywhere, mostly made by boots, not geta.

There are drag marks on the ground.

And there are flies around the door to the hunting lodge.

The groundskeeping peasants, all twenty or so, have been slaughtered down to a year-old child. Inside the hunting lodge proper, there is a fire pit, and the bottom of the fire pit is a lot of freshly thrown dirt on old, charred wood. A hand sticks up, and the shapes of the dirt mounds are unmistakable.

That's where the skeletons start, charred by a fire not hot enough to burn all the way through their flesh. It is also clear that the food stores were pillaged. Perception + Investigation (TN 15) will reveal that a lot of people encamped here, slaughtered the peasants, then threw dirt on the bodies so as not to have to look at them. With a Raise or with a Perception + Explosives test, TN 15, they can also find traces of a strange black powder and the presence of small iron balls (musket balls) in the bodies of the slaughtered peasants or nearby walls.

Remember, directly handling dead bodies may drop PCs an Honor point.

A Void + Shugenja Lore or Spellcraft test, TN 10, will tell a shugenja that the spirits here are in great pain. **If a shugenja Communes** with Air, Earth or Fire, they will discover that the spirits are nauseous and frightened, making low moans into the ether. They can describe the arrival of a large group of people with yellow hair and strange clothes, as well as a man with tattoos and a man wearing green and brown (Mantis colors). Depending on the questions, they can also tell the characters that the tattooed man gave one of the strangers a book.

At the mention of the book, the spirits will moan in pain. "It wrote! It wrote US! Words that change! Paper that became, popped like bubble! Make it back! Take it forward! Make it un-be!"

Searching for physical evidence turns up some burned paper fragments in the fireplace; if picked up, the spirits will flee from anyone holding said fragments. Piecing them together, and rolling History, TN 20, or Lion Clan Lore, TN 15, lets the characters recognize the writings as a battle plan for the Battle of the White Stag, taken straight out of the Ikoma history books.

There is fresh ink on a few pieces -- markings for new places to put gaijin troops. The fragments won't help the Rokugani PCs plan a battle, but **with three Raises on a Commune spell (TN 25) the sickened spirits of Air and Fire will be twisted enough to scream the answer.**

The wind will start to wind up inside the lodge, suddenly gusting so hard it will tear the paper from the shoji screens. Sparks will fly from the ashes in the pit. Fire will light on the tatami mats shoved into one corner, burning twists of reeds and casting them into the whirlwind growing in the center of the room. The dirt begins to fly into the air, landing, making contours on the floor, which by now is catching fire.

It burns hot and fast, more than is natural, and the screams of the fire spirits cease when their pain is fully vented into the floorboards of the cottage around the fire pit. Scarred into the wood will be an exact copy of the map. The scattered scorch marks form the Mantis islands; crumpled paper from the shoji form shapes that look like ships. Dirt blows down into contour lines -- many, many troops on land and sea. The stone rim of the fire pit, full of dirt and charred bodies, forms the border of Ootosan Uchi.

There are a lot of troops.

There are a lot of ships.

ONE IF BY LAND...

Ideally, the characters will recognize that the best thing to do is to get someone back to Ootosan Uchi and warn the Emperor of the coming attack. If they haven't figured out one is coming yet, they will when they head outside.

See, Shiro Izumida is nice, high, ridge-front property with a great view of the northern valley toward Ootosan Uchi and the southern valley, which would be gorgeous rolling hills except that the gaijin battalions are starting to block the PCs' view.

Coming out of some light trees, about a half hour's march south of them, are a few advance infantry battalions, marching north up the coast.

A Perception + Battle, TN 20, will tell them it's a few thousand troops. A lot of them look to be swordsmen. Others are carrying strangely-shaped spears -- gaijin spears, short metal poles with one fat wooden paddle-like end and one skinny end that has a jutting blade.

Not to worry. Those spears look pretty short.

Gaijin Soldiers

EARTH 3, FIRE 3, AIR 2, Reflexes 3, WATER 3.

Skills: Archery 1, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Commerce 4, Craft (Shipwright) 2, Guns 3, Intimidation 3, Hand-to-Hand 2, Sailing 3, Rokugani 1, Stealth 2, Sword 3.

Advantages: Strength of the Earth 1, Large

TN to be Hit: 15

Weapons: Gaijin saber (Str + 2k2), bayonet (Str +4k2), or firearm (4k4, 3k3 at long range, +5 to the TN for medium and long range, Fear effect TN 10) or cannon (7k7 or 3k3 for canister, +10 TN to hit individuals with ball ammo, Fear effect TN 15).

If your players want to go Rambo on the armies, remind them that there are *thousands* of troops and they're a good half-hour march or fifteen-minute run away (Earth + Athletics, TN 20, or Horsemanship, TN 10, or suffer -2 dice due to fatigue).

If the PCs want to sit in the woods and play bow-hunter, they may, but the gaijin don't find this too unexpected. They will react in blocks of 10 troops, which will dive to the ground after the first shot. Some will wave a signal, some will crawl into the tall grass (+10 TN to Be Hit) to try and get toward the sniper's position, and the remaining ones will bring up a wagon. **See Appendix I for firearm rules.** Using the wagon as cover will add +10 to their TN to Be Hit. A few will start firing back (roll for Fear, and include any PCs' horses, who may spook), and if they can narrow down where the bow-hunter is (roll their 6k3 Perception + Battle, TN 5x the sniper's Perception + Hunting), they'll bring up a cannon with a canister round, which has a comparable range to a Wasp PC with a bow. Again, roll for Fear.

There is no way the PCs can stop a gaijin column, nor is it particularly important at this stage how far they get. If at least half the heroes dash off to warn the Emperor and get help, great. If not, you can always have their samurai clothes start to fade off of them the longer they stay.

Running back to the city at top speed is an Athletics or Horsemanship test (TN 25 or 15) and will hit the PCs with another -2 die penalty until they take at least ten minutes to rest. The first authority figure they find is Seppun Seiyuri, a high-ranking samurai-ko among the Imperial Guards. She insists the characters state their business before entering the Imperial Palace, especially if they look sweaty, frightened, or like they've been in a fight. Any mention of an army, or even a request to speak alone with the Emerald Legions, and she immediately does as she's been instructed: she reports every word to the Captain of the Imperial Guard, and to the daimyo of each of the Great Families.

Bayushi Atsuki calls an immediate war council. Katsutoshi and Doji Tomeko arrive as soon as possible, as do the Imperial Legion commanders and the Hantei.

Doji Sekidera, Crane Champion, does not show.

It doesn't take much to convince Bayushi Atsuki and Shiba Katsutoshi that war is the only solution. Neither of them cares much for the gaijin, and they quickly order the city gates closed and Imperial Troops ready. Doji Tomeko, though, seems terrified and out of her league. She asks hesitantly if it might be possible to send an Imperial Herald to ask the gaijin for their terms and stall them while they assemble troops and the Phoenix shugenja scattered throughout the city. Then more and more Seppun start coming in, asking the characters precisely what they saw, and Tomeko's voice gets lost.

That danger should be obvious here: the room full of high-Glory people will handle it and do what they think is right, shout down people in their way, and they have no idea what's about to hit them. Nor do they know, unless the PCs tell them, that the gaijin know exactly what their defense strategy will be.

This is where those socially adept PCs get to shine.

A Missing Champion

If none of the PCs notice that the Crane Champion destined to save Rokugan is nowhere to be found, Tomeko asks the most reliable PC to do her a favor and go get him. Sekidera, oddly enough, is not in his rooms, nor in Tomeko's rooms, and nowhere in the halls where preparations are being made.

It is not hard to find Shoen, his personal maid, dusting a small shrine. A very old woman with a raspy voice and bad palsy, she says that last she knew, Sekidera was heading for the stables, and that was some hours ago. Talking with the stableboy (who's about fifteen, low-voiced and surly) quickly establishes that Sekidera was headed out of the city.

If they tell Tomeko he's missing, she immediately guesses that he knew about the troop movements, and has gone in secret to try to talk peace with the gaijin. Whether she confesses this to them is another story, but if they have seemed sympathetic to Crane interests, she will promise them all her position allows if they will track him down and convince him to come back.

If that doesn't get them going, start turning PC kimonos into wool jerseys and trousers. Make their ancestor spirits scream, and their hair slowly fade to blonde.

Then grab their character sheet and write down "Disadvantage: Syphilis."

TWO IF BY SEA...

The pressure is on as the characters race to follow Seikidera's trail. With a roll of Investigation or Hunting, TN 15, they can quickly learn that it does not lead toward the massing armies, but rather toward the ports, some several miles east.

The trail ends at a run-down Mantis shipyard. As they arrive, they can just see the white sail of a boat, about to disappear into the fog as it sails dangerously out into the night sea. A few peasant shipwrights are still working, tying down a late-docking Phoenix silk-barge. If asked, they tell the characters that their other ship left about half an hour ago. The sailors had been preparing it when they arrived, as if the journey had been planned. A man in an ornate blue kimono had boarded right before it set sail, along with a stableboy. *If the players ask*, the stableboy looked just like the same one they just spoke to moments ago.

The Phoenix sailors are willing to let the higher-Glory (or at least higher-Glory-looking) samurai commandeer their boat for a chase, especially if those samurai invoke the name of the Emperor or Empire. In any case, don't let a drawn-out negotiation interrupt the pacing of the climax -- they arrive, they hop in the boat, *presto*, they're off to save our historical hero.

Well, At Least We Found Him

With both Akuro's ship and their own relying on the same winds, the PCs have to find another way of catching up. The spell Wind-Borne Speed will do the trick, as will a Commune spell with three Raises to convince either Water or Air spirits to speed the boat along. It takes a Sailing test, TN 20, to control the boat when under magical influence.

If they do so, the characters get into sight of the Phoenix ship just in time to see it meet with a Mantis

craft. If not, they're just a little too late.

Seikidera's ship pulls alongside the Mantis craft, both waving flags of peace. They throw ropes to lash themselves together, and Seikidera seems to be saying something to Gusai Iami, who captains the other ship; there are also gaijin on board the Mantis vessel. (This would be a nice point for the players to realize that if Seikidera *does* negotiate an emergency peace treaty with the gaijin, he's going to screw history by letting them stay in Rokugan.)

But just as our heroes get within hailing distance, the stableboy comes up from the cabin. He doesn't like the looks of the PC boat, and neither do Gusai Iami, the gaijin, or the Mantis sailors. Then, one of the gaijin goes for a weapon.

What happens next will likely do so on the first round of Initiative, as players will no doubt have their own ideas of what to do.

As the cannon ports on the Mantis ship fall open, the Mantis on deck and their gaijin allies whip out an astonishing variety of hidden weapons. The Crane samurai go for theirs, and even the stableboy pulls out a kama. Doji Seikidera shouts for the weapons to be put away -- this has some effect -- and he grabs a flag to signal the PC boat to identify itself.

Then the stableboy steps behind Seikidera (where the PCs cannot hit him) and with his other hand, fires his pistol point-blank into the back of the Crane's head.

Choreography

The stableboy is actually Akuro, who is all out of mind-whacking cocktails and has cut a deal with the gaijin so Seikidera can be assassinated. Given the size of the murder squad, his death is effectively a plot point they cannot prevent; even if the PCs recognize and shoot Akuro immediately, one GM fudge on a "to hit" roll and a gaijin cannonball will end him right there.

But this doesn't mean the PCs can't have a satisfying fight. As muskets and cannon resound on the ships, the Cranes try to fight back with bow and sword. Akuro will take cover from PC wrath and go after Seikidera's companions, while the player characters' ship will still be maddeningly far for kenjutsu-happy samurai.

At normal hailing distance, the PCs' ship will get within ramming or boarding distance at the end of round 5. Characters can get there faster if they dive over the side, take two rounds of swimming from the PC ship to the gaijin, and spend a third round climbing up onto the ship of their choice. If supernatural means provide a direct path, it takes only one full round of travel before the characters can reach the enemy.

Swimming is a Strength + Athletics roll, TN 10, each round, +10 or +15 for light or heavy armor. Failure means the character starts to drown (1k1 cumulative damage per round).

Fighting while climbing requires two Raises for the climber to strike, and gives their attacker two Free Raises on them. If a climbing character is struck, they must make a Willpower + Athletics test with a TN equal to the damage scored or fall. If a character is willing to take an action climbing into the rigging, they may find themselves with a height advantage over other melee combatants (providing an extra die of damage to those below and subtracting one roll die from those below), but their TN to Be Hit by missile weapons may use no more Reflexes than their Athletics skill. (Note that the Mantis sailors

among the gaijin squad will be quite ready to do this, and are quite willing to fight with anything that is not nailed down, including anchors, boat hooks, belaying pins, and rope.)

Lastly, there's the powder room. If the gaijin ship is at any point blasted by an intense fire spell that reaches below its decks, roll 1d10. On a 9 or 10, its gunpowder stores will detonate. This is not good: it will sink the gaijin ship and send flaming shrapnel raining as far as the PC's ship. Those at the epicenter of the blast take 10k10 damage; the gaijin deck, 6k6, the Crane deck, 4k4, and the PCs' deck, 2k2. Making a raft to get home before the ship burns is a Craft: Shipwright skill roll, TN 15.

Togashi Akuro

Rank 5 Ise Zumi

EARTH 4, **Willpower** 6, **FIRE** 4, **AIR** 3, **Reflexes** 4, **WATER** 3, **Perception** 4, **VOID** 5.

Skills: Courtier 2, Craft (Shipwright) 4, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand (Kaze-do) 5, Heraldry 3, History 5, Knife 4, Lore: Gaijin 4, Lore: Imperial 4, Meditation 3, Mitsugusuri 5, Nazodo 4, Shintao 5, Sincerity 4.

Honor: 0.3 **Glory:** 0.8

Advantages: Carrying blood of Togashi (see text)

Disadvantages: Enlightened Madness, Nightmares.

Tattoos: Chameleon: roll Willpower + School Rank to look like someone else (TN based on familiarity with person). Lasts up to SR days. Can't use more Void than SR in other form.

Crab: Absorbs a number of wounds per hit equal to SR x 2. -1 Reflexes for duration; does not affect TN to Be Hit.

Wasp: Additional action per round, a number of times per day equal to SR. Cannot spend Void while using it.

Pine: Ignore all Wound Penalties, including Down and Out. Strength can never exceed 5.

Spider: Poisonous touch, does 5k1 damage. Must spend Void to shut it off. **If plot Option D is used, replace with "Baku,"** a tattoo allowing the

bearer to steal one School Technique and the Skill to use it from a sleeping victim. Roll Void + Meditation, TN of (5x the Rank of the technique +5x the Rank of the skill). The Technique disappears when the victim wakes. During this time, jade, crystal and obsidian do double normal Wounds to the owner.

TN to be Hit: 20

Gusai Iami

Rank 3 Mantis Bushi

EARTH 4, FIRE 3, AIR 3, WATER 4, VOID 3.

Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 3, Battle 4, Commerce 4, Courtier 1, Craft (Shipwright) 3, Defense 3, Iaijutsu 1, Jujitsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Nofujutsu 4, Sailing 3, Sincerity 2.

Honor: 1.1 **Glory:** 2.3

Advantages: Quick

Techniques: May fight with any weapon with a skill of 1; Ignores penalties for unsure footing or imbalance; may spend a Void point can make Full Attack without penalty. May attack with each hand, separate Initiative for each.

TN to be Hit: 15 (25 in armor)

Weapons: Tachi (Str+2k2), Kama (Str+2k2)

Mixed Gaijin and Mantis (12, plus 6 more below decks)

EARTH 3, FIRE 3, AIR 2, Reflexes 3, WATER 3.

Skills: Archery 1, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Commerce 4, Craft (Shipwright) 2, Guns 3, Hand-to-Hand 2, Intimidation 2, Nofujutsu 3, Rokugani 1 (gaijin), Sailing 3, Stealth 2, Sword 3.

Advantages: Large (gaijin)

School Techniques: May use any weapon with a skill of 1, takes no penalties for unsure footing (Mantis).

TN to be Hit: 15

Armor: 0

Weapons: Gaijin saber (Str + 2k2), sai or belying pin (Str + 1k2), fishing gaff (polearm initiative, Str + 2k2), thrown anchor (Str + 1k3), chain (Str +1k2), bayonet (Str +4k2), pistol or musket (4k4, 3k3 at long range, penalties to the TN for medium and higher range, Fear effect TN 10) or cannon (7k7 or 4k4 in 10' radius for canister, 2-Raise penalty to hit individuals with ball ammo, Fear effect TN 15).

Crane Soldiers (6)

Rank 1 Daidoji Bushi

EARTH 2, FIRE 3, AIR 3, WATER 3, VOID 2.

Skills: Archery 1, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 2, Navigation 2, Sailing 3, Sincerity 1.

Honor: 3.5 **Glory:** 2.5

School Techniques: May use Honor in place of Earth rank for determining wounds.

Equipment: Fine tachi (Str +3k2), bows with Fine arrows (Str +3k2).

Akuro will most likely be killed in this scene, but it is possible the PCs could capture him, and could certainly be motivated to if they need to know all the damage he has done. Do keep his poisonous skin in mind for those who would tie him up.

It may take Akuro a moment to register that the people chasing him are from his own time. He did not know that would be possible, but as far as he's concerned, there's nothing the magistrates can do. He's already won.

Without Seikidera, and with the Imperial battle plans given to the gaijin, the Mantis will side against the Empire. Without Mantis help, the gaijin will fight the Rokugani to a draw, if not worse, and will stay in Rokugan for several more centuries.

Why, the PCs may ask, did Akuro want this? What was his vision?

He'll talk pretty freely about it. After all, he thinks he's Rokugan's greatest hero.

"Our little emerald needs poison," he says. "That was what I was shown. A little poison, each day, it makes you strong.

"The son will become the dark brother, the shadow, the throne. The jade clan will go black, and unimagined plague leaves no graves fully filled. The dead will rule, and out of all hope, seven mortals will rise. One of them will be HER. Is there more? No, no, the outcome is too dark to see.

"What could you do when your emerald is lost? Why not lose more, and by losing win? Let the sons of the storm make thunder. Let the Wall roar, let peasant hands work steel. Let Lady Sun see lovers and let her sweet new tears be lead."

Hey, we said he'd talk. We didn't say he'd *explain*.

Togashi Akuro's vision was of Rokugan's possible future. He saw the Scorpion and Crab betraying the throne, he saw plagues killing his friends and family, the Akodo destroyed, every old prophecy coming true, Shinsei returning and Fu Leng sitting on the Emerald Throne with Kachiko one of the Empire's last hopes.

What's a few lives and the cost of Akuro's soul compared to that?

The gaijin are his wild card. Letting gaijin magic and gunpowder stay in Rokugan would mean any peasant with little or no training could put a musket ball in a samurai. That sure would change things, wouldn't it? Maybe the Crab wouldn't need their Wall if they had cannons... maybe a few gaijin would marry Scorpions and Kachiko would never be born...

For what actually happens if Akuro succeeds, see **Appendix II**.

I Think This Is Our Ticket Home

In a tight-fitting pocket inside Akuro's kimono is a metal jar containing a strange, multicolored liquid. It resembles the rainbow sheen of oil on water, but it is deeper and richer in its variety of colors than the human eye can absorb. This is the extract of the blood of the *kami* Togashi.

If you are using option A, a shugenja of any kind will be able to tell there is something deeply powerful about it, but also something puzzling, as if it only exists when it is not thought about too hard. The local spirits are confused by it.

If you are using option B, C, or D, Akuro will have Corrupted the blood, and spirits will refuse to *touch* Akuro, adding +10 to any TNs of casting spells on him. To a Rokugani, the sight of this blood is deeply shocking, as if you had lived a long and happy religious life, hoping each day that you might see God, and then when the creator of the universe finally sits you down to deliver eternal wisdom, He says "I get turned on by eating feces."

Anyone who views this fundamentally wrong substance must make a Willpower test with a TN of 30 or be unable to spend Void for the next hour, incapable of thinking about anything but the horrid properties of that strange, wriggly substance. The spiritual resonance surrounding the painting and the pages that

altered time were weak and dry compared to this.

It's as if it could get into *anything*.

In either case, the reason Akuro is holding on to the vial varies. **If Akuro struck a deal with Kumpei**, his motivation is that neither of them trusted one another, and they kept the blood and painting talent separate so that neither could get home on their own. They plan to meet again once the Mantis ships reach Otosan Uchi. **If Kumpei is an unwitting dupe**, Akuro will have the blood because the timing on his nightly visits to Kumpei and his murders of the *ise zumi* got awkward; Akuro made as much as he could and never let it leave his sight.

There's only enough time-ichor left for one full-size painting. (It is, however, the *maya* that allows for actual travel -- drinking the stuff is merely poisonous.)

Troubleshooting

If everyone ends up beaten, drowned, or stuck on flaming timbers trying to float to shore, it may be time for some judicious bailing out by the Cranes on board the ship, who may turn out to be Seikidera's personal bodyguards. Crank up their Ranks and have only a few, bloody and battered, survive the knock-down fight with the gaijin. But they know how to lash a raft together, and send flaming arrows into the air to signal for a rescue ship.

GLORY, HONOR AND EXPERIENCE

As ought to be obvious, there are no Glory awards for Parts Two and Three of the adventure that are relative to the characters' permanent daimyo, whose great-grandparents will probably be born in a few centuries. So let's talk about perceived, temporary Glory.

Saving the Hantei means the characters are treated as if they had a Glory of 5 for this time period among the nobles of the court. If they play it correctly and seem like the Hantei's mysterious trump card, they may even be treated as if they had Glory 7. Of course, it is easy for them to open their mouths and step right in, knocking themselves down to about a 3.

The characters can also add to their temporary status in all the usual ways such as giving and receiving gifts, acting honorably, and performing High Skills at court. Those who warn Otosan Uchi about the approaching army receive 3 Glory points each.

For some characters, the unbalanced feeling of living in their own pasts will prevent any Honor gains, while others may see it as a chance to see and preserve all that is good about Rokugan's history. As a rule of thumb, actions taken to save the regular timeline will probably be worth an Honor point or two, while time-changing mistakes (such as waking up speaking Portuguese) will be a loss of between two and five points.

Award Experience Points as follows:

Saving Hantei	2 points
Letting Ushimo die	-1 point
Successful alliance with ancient	1 point per

daimyo	daimyo
Losing favor of ancient daimyo	-1 point per insult
Failure to warn of gaijin attack	-1 point
Defeating Akuro	2 points

[Part I](#) | [Part III](#)