

The Blood of Family

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System: [Legend of The Five Rings](#)

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Requirements:

Honour, duty, loyalty. A samurai lives his life by a code, but sometimes that code isn't too clear. A fould murder has been commited using the darkest magics, and it's up to the party to find out who is responsible...and what to do when they find out. A Legend of the Five Rings scenario from Gaelcon 2000

“Hoju-sama?”

The guard hesitantly entered the garden, careful to keep to the narrow paths between the beds of exotic flowers. Crickets chirped from behind the carved stone figures, as if the ancient statues were chanting to each other, ancestral voices prophesying war. On a small bench by a still pond, there sat a figure who looked like a statue carved from driftwood and old leather rather than stone. The guard stepped closer.

“Hoju-sama? It is time to go indoors. You will catch a chill if you stay out at night.”

Greatly daring, the guard touched the old man’s shoulder. The corpse toppled forward into the ornamental pool. For a brief moment, blood swirled through the water, forming the kanji of death and rebirth.

For the Phoenix dies in ash, and is reborn in flames.

Backstory: It is six months before the Scorpion Clan Coup. The Lion Clan and their ancient rivals, the Crane, are at war.

Lord Akodo Hiruto is a minor Lion daimyo. His family holdings are on the north-eastern borders of the Lion territory, near the lands of the Phoenix. Three months ago, at Winter Court, Hiruto discovered that the Phoenix were secretly aiding the Crane. Hiruto’s son Gusai lead an army into the Phoenix’s land and destroyed the warehouses full of war materials destined for the Crane.

However, Hiruto was not able to prove that the Phoenix had been aiding the Crane. He was dishonoured for his apparently unprovoked attack on the peaceable Phoenix clan, and ever since then, a silent war has been fought between Hiruto and his Phoenix neighbours. The Phoenix have not attacked, but Hiruto’s troops have been shadowed and threatened by Shiba bushi, and his shugenja tell him the spirits will no longer listen to their prayers. Between the Crane and the Phoenix, Hiruto faces a war on two fronts.

One of Hiruto’s most loyal retainers is Akodo Hojiki. Hojiki was one of the samurai sent to destroy the Phoenix supplies. During the raid, Hojiki broke open a small, hidden shrine. This freed the spirit of a Bloodspeaker, O-Tamai, who had been sealed into the shrine a generation ago by several sorcerers from the Phoenix clan. Only one of these sorcerers still lived.

The evil Bloodspeaker hid inside Hojiki's soul, and plotted his revenge on the Phoenix household who had imprisoned him. When Hojiki's weariness overcame the samurai, O-Tamai stole his body and called upon the powers of maho. A hundred miles away, in a quiet garden, an old Isawa shugenja fell over dead.

The Isawa were quick to summon up spirits of the hunt, to track the taint of maho back to its source - the House of Akodo Hiruto. The Phoenix daimyo, Isawa Kamoto, summoned an Imperial Magistrate to bring justice. Crimes of maho must be punished severely.

O-Tamai is the big villain for the scenario. He intends to provoke the Lion into attacking the Phoenix, thus gaining his revenge on those who slew him. He can appear in any form he wishes, and still has limited magical abilities. However, his main strengths are trickery and slander. He can possess people, but this costs him dearly and takes time.

Scenario structure:

In the first part of the scenario, the characters encounter each other, and investigate the Phoenix claims of maho-use. Eventually, the guilt of Akodo Hojiki is discovered. Hojiki is taken into custody. The first part, basically, is a murder mystery. O-Tamai (the real killer) wants his host Hojiki to be found out, and to spread as much dissent as possible.

In the second part, the characters must deal with the repercussions of Hojiki's crime, while O-Tamai attempts to cause a war between the two houses. This section can either be an occult investigation (if the PCs work together), or a very messy mix of diplomacy and warfare (if they don't).

Shadow of the Clan Wars: The Empire of Rokugan is entering a time of great conflict. Due to various old grudges and new disputes at court, the Lion and Crane clans are on the verge of open war. The machinations of O-Tamai are the main plot of the scenario, but the Lion/Crane war is progressing "off-stage". Never let the PCs forget that they are in the middle of a war.

The Characters:

Akodo Hojato, Hiroto's eldest son. A quiet and contemplative samurai, Hojato spends many hours meditating. While he is a skilled samurai, he has no taste for battle.

Akodo Gusai, the brash younger son. Unlike his elder brother, Gusai glories in warfare, and wishes to take the battle to the Phoenix.

Akodo Ijako, their sister, trained as a Shugenja by the Kitsu family. She has been aware for some time of a spirit haunting the region.

Miya Yachiko, a Magistrate. Yachiko has the duty of bringing justice. Secretly, she is also an agent of the Emperor, sent to sow division among the Clans. The Lion are too strong, and must be goaded into pointless wars.

Isawa Kamasari, an Inquisitor. He is convinced of the Lion's guilt, and is furious that the Lion would use maho - and, worse than that, use maho to kill his beloved uncle. Kamasari hates the Lion deeply.

Shiba Ashimita, yojimbo. He has been ordered to protect Kamasari. Ashimita is a stoic bushi, but he realises that the Lion are the greatest warriors in Rokugan, and a war between Hiruto's house and the

Phoenix would likely result in the devastation of the House of Isawa Kamoto. Ashimita's grandfather was killed by O-Tamai, and can sense the spirit. However, the grandfather's ghost is insane and incoherent.

Current situation:

As the scenario begins, the Lion characters are in the castle of their Lord. A delegation from the Phoenix arrives (the other three characters). Miya Yachiko has sufficient rank to force an investigation of the Phoenix accusations of maho. The investigation begins...

Events in the scenario:

The characters meet. The Phoenix call for an investigation of the claims of maho.

The PCs investigate. O-Tamai starts dropping clues, to guide the PCs to Hojiki.

They discover and confront Hojiki, and find out about O-Tamai.

Investigations reveal a method to capture the Bloodspeaker.

O-Tamai is bound back into the shrine, or else he manages to start a war between the Phoenix and the Lion.

1. The Phoenix Arrive

Lord Hiruto's castle is a small but well-fortified keep on a low hill overlooking miles of gently rolling plains. The border with the Phoenix is marked by a lazily-winding river two hours' ride from the castle.

The scenario begins as five horsemen are spotted by the guards of Lord Hiruto's castle. The five riders are, of course, Miya Yachiko, Isawa Kamasari, and Shiba Ashimita, and two yojimbo. The guards will summon the other Lion PCs. Miya Yachiko demands entrance to the castle in the name of the Emperor and the Emerald Champion. If the Lion object to letting the Phoenix in, Yachiko can claim they're under her protection & authority.

If any of the players asks for a general description of the castle, mention that there's a certain air of unease and illness. O-Tamai's kicked most of the local spirits out, and the spiritual emptiness thus created is partly responsible for the troubles of

Lord Hiruto will quickly call a session of court, to welcome the Magistrate and hear any claims that are being made. The evidence that the Phoenix have is fairly limited - an elderly Phoenix shugenja was killed by a maho spell, and the divinations cast by the Phoenix pointed due west and invoked Lion spirits. The honour of House Hiruto has been called into question, so the Lion can't just ignore the possibility that someone within his House has been using maho.

As you've doubtless guessed, Lord Hiruto will command his children (the Lion PCs) to oversee the investigation.

2. The Game's afoot!

So, the characters are charged with looking for a maho-user who may or may not exist. The Phoenix can

use commune and sense spells to track down the sorcerer, and the Lion PCs have a list of samurai within the castle who they may question.

This section of the scenario is going to be fairly freeform. The characters have, between them, enough authority to question any of the Lion samurai. It's possible that one of the Lion PCs may try to interfere with the investigation in order to protect the House and/or Hojiki. If they do, let them. Intrigue and backstabbing is fun. Also remember that O-Tamai wants the Phoenix to provoke the Lion, so he'll drop clues if the PCs get stuck. O-Tamai will stay away from Kamasari (fearing that the Phoenix shugenja will sense the evil spirit's presence) but he might be noticed by the Kitsu-trained Akodo Ijako.

The investigation part of the scenario is organised as follows. First, there's a list of things the PCs might do. Secondly, there's a list of NPCs they can talk to. Thirdly, there's a timeline of events that happen during the investigation.

3. Activities.

3.1 Divinations and Sense/Commune spells

Sense spells allow the Shugenja to detect spiritual activity. Commune lets the Shugenja actually speak to the local elemental spirits. If Kamasari casts Sense, he'll detect that there's a spiritual wasteland around the castle - as if some more powerful shugenja had chased all the spirits away. The Target Number for all non-maho spells is now 5 to 10 higher. Communing with the few spirits that remain is possible, but all the spirits are terrified of the castle, saying that a great demon rose up in the night and devoured many of them. O-Tamai laid waste to the local spirit wars, to discomfit the Phoenix.

3.2 Speaking with the Dead

Akodo Ijako has the ability to sense and summon up ancestral spirits. She can use this ability to call upon the long-dead heroes of the Lion clan for help, but there are three recent ghosts who are "active" in the castle. Firstly, there is Shiba Ashimita's grandfather Ashimoshi. Ashimoshi was killed by a terrible maho spell cast by O-Tamai, and his spirit is caught half-way between the mortal realm and Jigoku. Ashimoshi manifests as a samurai caught in a silent hurricane. His sanity is long gone, and he shouts nonsense. He does know O-Tamai is still active - he can sense his killer.

The second spirit is Isawa Hoju, the elderly scholar killed by O-Tamai. Hoju is on his way to the next world, but if helped by either of the Phoenix, Ijako can summon him back. Hoju is a kindly, sleeper old man, who was engaged in writing a history of the family which was to be given to Kamasari when he took the title of daimyo. This history would record the battle with the evil O-Tamai for the first time.

The third spirit is, of course, O-Tamai himself. If O-Tamai is spotted by Ijako, he'll take the form of a peasant's ghost and pretend that he was murdered by a Lion maho-tsukai, Akodo Hojiki.

3.3 Exploring the castle

The characters can just wander around the castle looking for clues. All the maho spells were cast in Hojiki's room, so there are no signs of them elsewhere. However, O-Tamai wants the characters to find evidence of maho, so he'll be deliberately dropping clues. Listen to the players, and play on the theories they come up with. If they suspect that the rituals are being done in a tower room looking towards the Phoenix lands, then O-Tamai's ghost will murder a small animal and leave its blood in the room.

Clues that might be discovered:

Hojiki (see section 4.9) bound a jade stone into a wound. O-Tamai replaced the stone with a fake. The real stone O-Tamai couldn't touch, so he psychically influenced Hojiki to throw the stone away. The stone is currently on the floor of the bathhouse.

Ozaki (section 4.3) has a small statue he looted from one of the Phoenix shrines. Either of the Phoenix characters could identify it as a representation of Isawa himself, and property of their family.

4. NPCs of the castle.

4.1 Akodo Sono: Sono is the chief advisor to daimyo Hiruto. He's an old samurai approaching the age of retirement. Sono spends every waking hour with his daimyo or planning the war with the Crane. He'll be extremely angered and insulted if anyone suggests he could possibly be responsible for the use of maho, and will challenge a non-Lion who insults him so to a duel. Anyone poking around Sono's room or the war room will notice that his plans include a strategy where Lion troops attack Shiro no Kamatori (the Phoenix castle) to force the Crane to divert troops to break the siege.

Roleplaying Sono: He's old and used to being obeyed. His first and only loyalty is to his daimyo Hirotu.

4.2 Akodo Umezono: Sono's nephew and protégé. Umezono spends his time with

Sono, and will be Sono's champion in any duels. Umezono is far more concerned with the Crane threat than any silly rumours of maho. He has no desire to fight a war on two fronts, though, and will not insult the Phoenix or refuse to co-operate - he's far less touchy or cantankerous than his uncle. Umezono secretly thinks Gusai is an idiot, and will try to keep the brash Lion away from any position of authority.

Roleplaying Umezono: Young and eager, but competent.

4.3 Akodo Ozaki: Ozaki is a cousin of the Lion PCs, and is jealous of their branch of

the family. During the raid, Ozaki ordered several of the samurai (Hojiki and Ukita) to attack various small shrines and temples. Ozaki wants to provoke a war - he believes that by excelling in battle, he can garner enough Glory to force Hirotu to name Ozaki as his heir rather than Hojato or Gusai.

Roleplaying Ozaki: Ambitious and occasionally slimy, but he's not a cartoon bad guy.

4.4 Akodo Ryuzoji: Ryuzoji is Hojiki's brother. Their family is a vassal family to Hirotu, and they hold a fort on the Phoenix border. Ryuzoji was injured in a skirmish with the Phoenix, and his sword-arm is heavily bandaged. He was supposed to accompany Gusai on the raid, but Hojiki took his place. Ryuzoji feels embarrassed by his weakness, and won't admit to being injured or incapacitated to a superior.

Roleplaying Ryuzoji: Quiet and stoic.

4.5 Akodo Ukita: The commander of Hirotu's cavalry contingent, Ukita

accompanied Gusai on the raid, and helped Hojiki and Ozaki attack the temples. At the time the scenario begins, though, Ukita is out scouting along the front with the Crane. Ukita will not lie, and will admit helping to destroy the shrine. He obeyed Ozaki's orders. Ukita tries to live in full accordance with bushido.

Roleplaying Ukita: He tries to be the archetypal Lion samurai, but there is something strange and fey about him. One of his ancestors was a Kitsune fox-spirit.

4.6 Matsu Nagai: A visiting samurai from the Matsu family, Nagai can normally be

found in the castle dojo. He will soon be returning to his daimyo, once war with the Crane begins in earnest, and he's looking forward to the battles. Nagai knows little about the whole dilemma with the Phoenix.

Roleplaying Nagai: Matsu samurai tend to be brash and proud. Nagai is a respected sensei, and holds himself in check in most circumstances. However, if provoked in the slightest, he falls back into the classic Matsu attitude.

4.7 Ikoma Yoshii: Yoshii is a diplomat visiting the castle to consult with lord Hiroto.

As discussed on Ijako's character sheet, Yoshii's wife recently died, and Ijako was called upon to visit the spirit world and ensure she was at peace. Both Ijako and Yoshii have agreed not to discuss this spiritual matter with anyone else.

Yoshii is basically a red herring. He keeps to himself, and hangs around the castle at odd hours. He performs religious rituals in the privacy of his own rooms, which might seem like a cover for maho to a suspicious player. Yoshii also spends a lot of time in private meetings with Hiruto.

Roleplaying Yoshii: A quiet reserved man, who carries a great burden of melancholy.

4.8 Kitsu Togawa: Another Kitsu sodan-seizo like Ijako, Togawa is pleasant and

approachable. He's interested in the philosophical beliefs of the other clans, and will try to talk to the Phoenix characters. Togawa spends most of his time in the castle chapel.

Roleplaying Togawa: He's inquisitive and friendly, and more than a bit naïve.

4.9 Akodo Hojiki: Finally, Hojiki, the maho-tsukai himself.

During the raid on the Phoenix, Hojiki followed Ozaki's commands and burnt

down several small shrines and temples near the warehouses. One of the shrines he destroyed was the prison for the spirit of O-Tamai. The evil spirit followed Hojiki back to Shiro no Hiruto, and took control of his body as he slept. He then used a powerful maho spell to kill Isawa Hoju. The spell overextended O-Tamai's control over the body, and Hojiki woke up.

Since then, Hojiki has been trying to understand what happened to him that night. He awoke with a bloody knife in his hand and his blood forming arcane symbols on the floor. He's not stupid, and realised that something had stolen his body that night. He bound a piece of jade onto the wound, but was too fearful to speak to anyone else about the incident.

O-Tamai has been more careful. Although he still enters Hojiki when he is sleeping, he merely re-opens the cut on Hojiki's hand rather than causing a new injury. He replaced the jade stone with a pebble cloaked in an illusion-spell. He is also clouding Hojiki's mind, flooding it with guilt and confusion. At the time the scenario begins, Hojiki doesn't know that the spell O-Tamai cast killed Isawa Hoju. When

he finds out, his guilt and confusion are going to be intolerable.

5. Events during the investigation.

Most of these events can happen at any time - run them when the investigation lags or the characters are spending too much time squabbling. A few are time-dependant, and are marked as such.

Kitsu Togawa senses “something”: Togawa, like Akodo Ijako, is capable of sensing ghosts and ancestors. He notices O-Tamai flitting about the castle. Togawa will initially investigate on his own, looking for more signs of spiritual intrusion. This may make the PCs suspicious.

Riders return to the Castle: Lord Hirotu has scouts out on the border with the Crane clan. These scouts are being led by Akodo Ukita. One of the scouts returns to the castle, bearing news that Crane troops have been seen close to the border forts. The tension in the castle rises considerably with this news. Hirotu orders many of his troops to prepare to leave for the border. This gives the investigation a new urgency, as many of the possible suspects will be leaving within a day or so.

Kitsu Togawa is killed: O-Tamai kills Togawa in the castle chapel. The evil spirit enters Togawa’s body, then chokes him from the inside. If any of the PCs happen on the scene, O-Tamai flees, and Ijako or Kamasari will catch a glimpse of a spirit exiting the body. Use Togawa’s death to impress upon the players can nasty stuff is indeed going on in the castle.

Matsu Nagai attacks the characters: If the PCs are closing on O-Tamai, or if they’re just being too friendly and it doesn’t look like a Lion/Phoenix war is in the offing, O-Tamai will take action. He’ll possess Matsu Nagai, the visiting sensei, and have Nagai attack the Phoenix PCs or Yachiko. If defeated, but not killed, Nagai will only remember a red-tinged vision of Hojiki saying strange words to him.

Ukita returns to the castle: Akodo Ukita was one of the samurai who went on the raid with Gusai and Hojiki, and is the only one of Ozaki’s men who will speak openly about what happened. If questioned, he’ll tell the PCs that Ozaki ordered the samurai on Gusai’s raid to attack the local shrines and temples once they had burned down the warehouses.

Ukita reports to Lord Hirotu: The situation on the Crane border is serious enough to warrant Hirotu sending the mustered troops. If the PCs were not involved in the investigation, they would be sent along also. The troops gathered the previous day are ordered to reinforce the Lion army guarding the Crane border.

If the characters haven’t identified Hojiki as the maho-tsukai by this point, O-Tamai gets tired of waiting and possesses Hojiki again. In Hojiki’s body, he finds the Phoenix PCs or Yachiko and attacks using blatantly maho spells. Go wild with the special effects here - O-Tamai isn’t trying to kill the PCs, he’s trying to make it bloody obvious that the Lion are using maho. He’ll try to make it look as though the attack was aimed at killing the Phoenix, and that they managed to heroically foil the attack and identify their assailant.

6. Confronting Hojiki

By now, the players should know that Akodo Hojiki is somehow involved with the use of maho. Hojiki won’t fight back unless physically attacked. He’s scared and confused by his recent activities, but he is still an honourable samurai and is loyal to Lord Hirotu. He’ll describe the events of the night Isawa Hoju

died in a neutral and calm fashion (although his control will slip occasionally, and his terror will show though.) Try and play for sympathy here. Don't make Hojiki evil or pathetic - he's a good and honourable man whose body was stolen by an evil force.

Technically, Hojiki is guilty. While no-one saw him cast the maho spell, his own testimony strongly suggests he was responsible. The Phoenix PCs should be demanding custody of Hojiki at the very least. Play up the divisions within the party.

If the PCs have realised that something else (O-Tamai) is involved, then they'll probably start trying to track down the spirit. Hojiki can be of little help, although he can describe the shrines he destroyed on the raid.

7. Investigating O-Tamai:

7.1 Shiro no Kamatori

Obviously, the best places to find information on O-Tamai is back at the Phoenix castle and the shrine. Shiro no Kamatori is about two and half hours ride from Shiro no Hirotu. Any characters crossing the border will see that all the small border forts are fully manned, and the whole countryside is preparing for war.

Shiro no Kamatori is a small, elegant castle; far less fortified and less imposing than the Lion fortress. Five small towers surround the central keep, and the walls are sheathed in a thin layer of glaze and edged in copper, so the castle seems to be built of fire in the sunshine.

The library has a wealth of information on spirits and maho, but no mention of O-Tamai. One possibly interesting scroll related to Iuchiban, and is recorded as handout #1.

If anyone thinks to check Isawa Hoju's rooms, they discover the history of the family he was writing, which is handout #2.

While the characters are at the Phoenix castle, they will encounter Doji Furako, a Crane courtier visiting the castle. Full-scale war is about to break out on the Lion border, and Furako is here to ensure that the Phoenix will support their Crane allies. If no Lion PCs are present, he will politely pump the Phoenix PCs for information on the Lion and the current situation.

7.2 The Shrine

The burnt-out ruins of the warehouses on the banks of the Magonojo river are ugly wounds on the landscape. The river is still choked with ash and fallen stones. A small village, abandoned now, surrounds the warehouses. Just south of the village is a little temple to the Fortunes, and in the gardens of this little temple are four shrines. All four of the shrines bear the mon of the Kamatori family - and all four shrines have been broken open and despoiled.

All four of the shrines look identical from the outside - they're small marble pillars supporting small tabernacle-like structures. Three of the shrines were simple family shrines, containing icons to household spirits. The fourth once held the skull and ashes of the Phoenix possessed by O-Tamai, wrapped in sanctified cloth and tied with chains of jade.

If either Ijako or Kamasari touch the ashes, they'll get a momentary glimpse of the battle between the

Phoenix and O-Tamai a generation ago.

The jade chains were enchanted by Hoju specifically to hold O-Tamai's spirit. The lock of the chains grows colder in proximity to O-Tamai, and can be used to hunt down the invisible spirit.

8. War!

While the characters are investigating Hojiki and O-Tamai, the troops mustered by Lord Hirotu are sent south to the Crane border. Battle is joined, and the Crane armies are beaten back. A hundred samurai die in the skirmish - a mere taste of the bloodshed that is to come. However, at the moment, the Lion are winning.

The skills of samurai like Gusai and Hojato are needed on the battlefield. Lord Hirotu will make it clear that the Hojiki problem must be resolved soon.

Anyone still in Shiro no Hirotu will see his troops marching off to the war. There's a palpable sense of crisis and urgency in the air. The scent of blood hangs over the castle.

9. Ending the Scenario

Depending on the current situation, and how much the players have discovered, there are three possible climactic scenes that can be used. No matter which solution is used, O-Tamai must be bound. If you're running short of time, then just run the binding part.

9.1 Binding O-Tamai

Armed with the chains of jade from the shrine, as well as Hoju's account of initial binding, the characters can attempt to bind O-Tamai's spirit to the physical remains. The Phoenix had a living body with which to cage O-Tamai, but the PCs don't. Their two choices are either having one of them volunteer to be a host for the spirit, or use Hojiki.

O-Tamai won't go easily. He'll summon up a host of minor Oni to protect him if drawn into the mortal world. These Oni are the same ones that killed Ashimita's grandfather and Hoju. They manifest as red shadows with gleaming horns and fangs. When they strike their foes, they do no physical damage, but they injure the soul directly. To bind O-Tamai, the PCs will have to summon him into a body (using a summon spell and his name), then wrap the jade chains around the body & defeat the Oni.

The other two possible climaxes will take a bit longer to resolve, and are a bit more dramatic. The first one brings in the Crane war, and hinges on a question of honour. The second one is a more conventional race against time. Use the first one if the players are working together, and the second if Clan rivalries have driven a wedge between the characters.

9.2 A Duel

Gusai's raid on the Phoenix warehouses cut off the main artery of supply to the border forts of the Crane, and the Crane armies have been defeated by Hirotu's troops. The Crane need time, a delaying tactic, while they reorganise their defences and regroup.

Under a flag of truce and accompanied by an honour guard, a Crane samurai, Kakita Mizochi, will arrive at Shiro no Hirotu. Mizochi is a proud young scion of the Crane, trained at the elite Kakita Duelling

Academy. He's here for one purpose - to challenge the Lion to a duel, striking directly at the commanders of the Lion army. When brought before Lord Hirotu, Mizochi offers concessions - the Lion may keep the border regions they have already captured if they win; the forts must be relinquished and the Lion armies retreat if he wins. However, Mizochi is an expert duellist, and is almost sure to win. If he gets the opportunity, he'll challenge Hojato or Gusai as champions of their family.

O-Tamai will seize this opportunity to strike at the Phoenix. He will possess Hojiki once more, and call the PCs. Pretending to be Hojiki, he'll claim that he remembers enough of the spells O-Tamai used to cast them, and can use a maho spell to ensure the Lion's victory in the duel.

If the PCs go along with it, then O-Tamai will wait until the two duellists are about to strike, then unleash the Oni described above on the Crane. O-Tamai hopes that this will confirm the rumours that the Lion are using maho, force the Lion into a war with the Crane and Phoenix, and eventually result in the Phoenix getting destroyed by the superior Lion armies. However, while the duel is going on, the PCs have a good chance of catching O-Tamai in Hojiki's body and binding the evil sorcerer.

9.3 The Slayer of his Father...

With the Crane border guard defeated, the commanders of the Lion army return to the castle to consult with Lord Hirotu. The PCs are called to the court. Hirotu plans to extract a promise of neutrality from the Phoenix. However, while Ukita describes the battle with the Crane, Kamasari sees a red shadow creep across the wall and approach Hirotu.

O-Tamai plans to possess Lord Hirotu.

Ideally, Kamasari is the only one to see O-Tamai, but you could let Ijako notice him too a few moments later. The characters have to stop the spirit using the bindings described above before Hirotu is taken by the spirit. If O-Tamai does steal the daimyo's body - well, probably the only way to convince the spirit to leave would be for the Lion to promise to destroy the House of Kamatori.

10. Resolutions and repercussions

By the end of the scenario, O-Tamai should have been bound again in the jade chains, and identified as the murderer of Isawa Hoju. Depending on the actions of the PCs, the Lion may or may not be at war with the Phoenix. The best possible ending for most of the PCs (apart from deceitful Yachiko) is a pact of non-aggression between the two Houses.

However, as the Clan Wars loom over the Empire, such treaties are unlikely to hold back the tides of blood...

Appendix 1: NPC stats

There's relatively little combat in the scenario. However, the PCs might get into a fight with any of the following:

Matsu Nagai:

Earth: 3 Air: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 2

School Rank: Matsu 3

Skills: Kenjutsu 4, Iaujitsu 2, Battle 3, Athletics 3, History 2

Kakita Mizochi:

Earth: 2 Air: 4 Fire: 4 Water: 2 Void: 4

School Rank: Kakita 4

Skills: Kenjutsu 3, Iaujitsu 4, Courtier 4, Law 3, Sincerity 3

Minor Oni Spawn of O-Tamai (6):

Earth: 3 Air: 2 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 0

Attack: 4k3

Damage: 3k2

The Oni take 1k1 damage from jade stones, and double damage from any Jade weapons.

Wounds:

10: 0

20: -1

30: Dead

Appendix 2: Major NPCs

O-Tamai: For the purposes of this scenario, O-Tamai is the big bad guy. He's not really a personality, any more, not a whole one anyway. He exists as a disembodied spirit of vengeance. He thinks in an almost animalistic fashion, although an animal exists to survive - he exists to revenge. He communicates only with difficulty, although rants about injustice and the power of the blood are second nature to him.

Lord Hiruto: Fundamentally, he's a practical man. The role of the daimyo is to be the tranquil, strong centre of the House, and Hiruto performs his role well. He always acts through his samurai. He loves each of his children, but does not let his emotions influence his judgement. He burdens them with this delicate investigation not because they are the only ones he can trust, but because they must learn to deal with situations not faced by common samurai.

Lord Kamatori: The head of the Phoenix families in the scenario, Kamatori is an old man more concerned with trivial matters of obscure sorceries than mundane matters like war and diplomacy. For several generations, the vassal Shiba family have been dealing with most affairs of state. When Kamatori actually pays attention to the world around him, though, his intelligence is matched only by his pride in his heritage.

Appendix 3: The Military Situation

There is unrest across the Empire. Soon, the Scorpion will strike at Otosan Uchi, and war will pit Clan against Clan. Lord Hiruto's lands are at a crossroads - to the west lie the bulk of the Lion estates; to the east, the quiet lands of the Phoenix; and to the south-east, the shining plains of the Crane.

As the scenario begins, the Crane are pressing on Lord Hiruto's border. Up until recently, they were being supplied by the Phoenix. These supplies allowed the Crane to maintain a much larger army on the border than would otherwise have been possible.

The Lion army can defeat the Crane forces, but at a high price. The Shiba forces which guard the Phoenix aren't strong enough to stop the Lion for more than a day or two. However, if the Phoenix and Crane armies are allied and openly supporting each other, the best the Lion could hope for would be mutual destruction.

How to run The Blood of Family in Five Minutes

The Lion Clan (the premier military Clan in the Empire) and the Crane Clan (honourable courtiers and duellists) are on the brink of war. The first battle of this war will be fought on the lands of Lord Akodo Hiroto, a Lion daimyo whose estates border on both the lands of the Crane, and the Crane's allies the Phoenix.

Recently, Lord Hiroto's son Gusai led a secret raid on the Phoenix, to destroy a set of warehouses from which the Phoenix were supplying the Crane armies. During the raid, the Lion accidentally freed an evil spirit, O-Tamai, who hates the Phoenix for imprisoning him a generation ago. O-Tamai possessed one of the Lion raiders, Akodo Hojiki. In Hojiki's body, O-Tamai uses evil maho blood-magic to kill Isawa Hoju, an elderly Phoenix and the last survivor of the heroes who stopped O-Tamai before.

The scenario begins as a pair of Phoenix samurai arrive at the castle of Lord Hiruto to demand justice. The PCs are

Hojato, Hiruto's eldest son

Gusai, Hiruto's psycho younger son

Ijako, Hiruto's daughter, who's a spirit medium

Isawa Kamasari, the son of the Phoenix daimyo and pissed off about his uncle Hoju's death by maho

Shiba Ashimita, who's haunted by the ghost of his grandfather who was killed by O-Tamai.

Miya Yachiko, an Imperial diplomat who secretly wants the Lion and Phoenix to go to war.

O-Tamai's plan is to drag the Phoenix fully into the Lion/Crane war, thus revenging himself on those who imprisoned him. The first part of the scenario is an investigation into the Lion, trying to find out who was responsible for the use of maho. O-Tamai wants his host, Hojiki, to be discovered.

The Lion PCs have a list of samurai in the castle. The key clues are that Hojiki was actually on the raid (his brother Ryuzoji was supposed to go, but was too badly hurt); that the Lion attacked a temple, not just the warehouses; and that Hojiki has been acting rather strangely. O-Tamai will be dropping clues all along anyway.

The second part of the scenario deals with the PCs investigating what the Phoenix did a generation ago, in order to bind O-Tamai again, or else dealing with the progressing Lion-Crane war, or both...

The Emerald Empire

One thousand years, the kami, the children of the Heavens fell to Earth. One, Fu Leng, was lost, falling far into hell and becoming a lord of pain and darkness. The other children forged an Empire, joining their fates to the mortals. The kami had a contest to see who would rule their Empire. Hantei won the contest, and founded the Imperial Dynasty. Akodo formed the Clan of the Lion, the army of Rokugan and Hantei's right hand. Lady Doji founded the Crane clan, merchants and courtiers. Shiba founded the sorcerous Phoenix clan, Togashi the enigmatic Dragon of the northern mountains. Bayushi gathered the tricksters and liars, and called them the Scorpion. Hida took his Crab warriors to the south, to defend the Empire against the terrible demon minions of their brother. Finally, Lady Shinjo led her Unicorn

followers out of Rokugan to explore the lands beyond. It would be 800 years before her children returned, and they would learn strange ways from the gaijin outsiders.

A thousand years have passed since the kami brought order and honour to Rokugan. A thousand years, some prosperous, some lean, some peaceful, and many filled with bloodshed and war. The Clans still follow the precepts of Bushido, interpreted in their own manner, but rivalries and hatreds have formed between some of the Clans, noticeably between the strongest and most influential: the Lion, the Crane, the Crab, and the Scorpion.

Honour: The kami taught Bushido to the mortals. Act honourably at all times. Your word must be your bond, your promises sincere, your courage must be unquestioned, your loyalty to your family and Clan absolute, your actions just, your soul pure. All the Clans follow Bushido to a greater or lesser extent, from the absolute rigidity of the Lion and Crane to the deceitful and opportunistic Scorpion.

Some have fled from honour's demands to become Ronin, masterless men. While some Ronin do still follow bushido, having become Ronin in unusual circumstances, most Ronin are nothing more than bandits.

Justice: In Rokugan, honour is everything. Evidence counts for nothing in the face of the words of an honourable man. Whatever an honourable man says must be the truth. Magistrates enforce justice throughout the land.

Magic: Spirits are everywhere and in everything. The holy Shugenja can speak to the spirits, beseeching them with prayers and chants to perform tasks or miracles. Some dark sorcerers use maho (blood magic) to draw on power without invoking the spirits. Maho is banned, and the Kuni Witch-hunters of the Crab hunt down Maho-Tsukai (maho users).

Ninja: are a myth. Childrens' tales. While the Scorpion do have spies and assassins, they are not supernatural shades.

The Shadowlands: Fu Leng, the youngest of the Kami, fell through the earth and into hell. There, he raised an army of oni (demons), goblins, trolls and other horrors, and has made war on the Empire. Once, a thousand years ago, he almost won. He was defeated by Shinsei the wise monk, and the seven thunders, the embodiments of the virtues of the Clans. Now Fu Leng rules the Shadowlands, the domain of hell on earth. The Crab guard the border against him. The Dark One (whose name must not be spoken aloud) taints those who walk his lands. Jade is the only defence against the taint of shadow.

The Great Clans:

The Lion are the greatest tacticians and warriors, and are famed for their strict belief in bushido. The Akodo lead the Clan, but the fierce Matsu are the strong arm of the Lion.

The Crane are courtiers and artisans - but the duel is also a form of art... The Kakita duelling academy is famed for producing the best swordsmen in the Empire. The Doji rule the courts, while the Daidoji are bodyguards and warriors.

The Scorpion are the Emperor's eyes in the dark. They are villainous and underhanded.

The Crab defend the Empire from the Shadowlands, but a thousand years of war has made them brutish and uncultured.

The Unicorn are outsiders, masters of the horse and bow.

The Phoenix are the greatest sorcerers and priests, but their mighty magics are held in check by their pacifism.

Finally, **the Dragon** are mysterious and otherworldly, cut off from the Empire by mountains.

Handout #1

In the five hundred and tenth year of the Empire, certain samurai uncovered a plot within the very walls of Otosan Uchi itself. The foul necromancer, Iuchiban, had made his lair beneath the city, and was raising up an army of the dead. The armies of the Emperor descended on the sorcerer and his Bloodspeaker acolytes, and the army of the dead was destroyed.

Iuchiban, however, could not be killed. His dark magics had rendered him utterly immortal. Sword and spell were equally unable to kill him. A great tomb was constructed, and Iuchiban was placed within. His body was chained by jade and the mightiest warding spells, and the tomb was filled with traps to prevent his Bloodspeakers from freeing their dark master.

Two hundred years later, however, Iuchiban walked the Earth once more - not in a physical body, but as a disembodied spirit of blood. Iuchiban leaped from body to body, overwhelming the souls of his hosts and using their blood to power his magics. At the Battle of Stolen Graves, he was defeated a second time. While a host of samurai clashed with an uncountable horde of the dead, a tattooed monk from the north crept into Iuchiban's camp and captured the sorcerer spirit within his own body. The monk held the spirit captive until the shugenja of the Empire could remake the tomb. Once again, Iuchiban was imprisoned, his spirit bound to the very living rock of the tomb.

In recent times, there have been many tales of blood-spirits, of living ghosts who steal bodies and work maho. Some fear that Iuchiban has arisen once more, that the master bloodspeaker is again raising an army of the dead. If such a spirit were abroad, though, surely signs of this calamity would have been seen. No, surely there is some other origin for these tales. Iuchiban had many acolytes and lieutenants to whom he taught his evil magics. Chief among these was the master artificer Yajinden, who was ruined during the first war, but there were others. If Iuchiban could divorce his spirit from his rotting flesh, then surely his lesser servants could do the same.

Do the elder Bloodspeakers walk amongst us, invisible and imperceptible, taking on physical form only when needed? Is this why, despite the efforts of the Phoenix Inquisitors and the Kuni witch-hunters, the Bloodspeaker cult endures? Are their hands at our throats, though we see them not?

Handout #2

Ashimoshi informed us of his discovery. None of us could countenance the thought that Kaiki's heart had turned to darkness. It seemed clear that an evil spirit had taken the young shugenja's form. We resolved to defeat the spirit in the hopes of freeing Kaiki. Our first attempt was a disaster. We tried to banish the spirit, but it laughed at us, saying "Fools! I am O-Tami, beloved of Iuchiban! You are nothing to be". Still, we drove it forth from the castle. Saigori fell to the sorcerer's magics, his mind ruined, and

we were all injured.

We pursued O-Tamai to the cave, and there we fought him again. He summoned a host of evil demons. Ashimoshi fell to them, dragged into the netherworld. We fought on, but no magic could drag O-Tamai's spirit out of Kaiki. Finally, we made a terrible sacrifice, and bound O-Tamai even more tightly to his host.

Then we killed Kaiki's body with O-Tamai trapped inside him. We bound the skull with jade, and burned the body. O-Tamai, trapped within the skull, was entombed in a small shrine. We defeated the Bloodspeaker, but at great cost - and we cannot yet reckon that cost. O-Tamai had nearly two years to work his evil from within Kakai. Who knows what dark schemes he wrought in that time?

I am old now, and tired. He still haunts my dreams, and I am wearied by my memory. It is a hard thing to do, to kill a man. A samurai is always ready to die, but to take on the karmic burden of a killing is another thing.

Still, in writing this history, the burden is somewhat lifted. Now others will know what we did, all those years ago. In confronting the truth, perhaps we will be delivered of its burden.

Isawa Hoji.

SHIBA ASHIMITA

A thousand years ago, the founder of your family, Shiba himself, knelt before Isawa. Shiba was a kami, a child of the Sun and Moon fallen from heaven, while Isawa was but a mortal man. Never before, and never since, has a divine being bowed to one born of earth. Shiba humbled himself because the magics of the Isawa were needed. The alliance of Shiba and Isawa created the Phoenix clan. For a thousand years, your family has honoured Shiba's sacrifice. You have protected the Isawa from their enemies, from war, from hardship, and occasionally, from themselves.

You were born with the voice of your grandfather, Shiba Ashimoshi, thundering in your ears. His spirit has always been haunting you. Most ancestral spirits bring guidance to their descendants, but you can rarely understand your grandfather's words. It is as though he is shouting over a terrible storm, and his words are distorted. You have studied meditation and mysticism deeply in order to live with the constant shouting of your grandfather. Others think that you are a quiet samurai with a calm and contemplative soul. In truth, it is sometimes all you can do to stay sane in the face of your grandfather's spiritual anger.

Your family serves a branch of the Isawa, who own lands on the border with the Lion territories. The Lion clan, the greatest military force in the Empire, will soon be at war with the Crane clan. The Phoenix are allied with the Crane. The Shiba have been secretly supplying the Crane armies along the border, in the hope that the brunt of the Lion assault will fall upon the Crane.

Two weeks ago, a surprise attack destroyed many of the warehouses holding these supplies. The Lion must have been responsible, but no witnesses survived the attack. Now the brother of your daimyo, Isawa Hoju, has died, and the Isawa have sensed the use of maho, forbidden blood magic. If the Lion are using maho, then the threat to the Phoenix is far greater than you suspected.

Perhaps dying in the service of the Isawa as your grandfather did will finally bring you peace.

Character: Ashimita has been weighed down by the burden of his grandfather's soul from birth. He is forced to be the perfect samurai, because any failure unleashes a torrent of psychic abuse and anger. He sometimes wishes he could be freed of this spirit, but such thoughts are disrespectful to the honoured ancestors. He is only half in this world, a shadow of the man he could be.

Isawa Kamasari: The son of your daimyo, Kamasari will soon inherit his father's lands and position. He is a powerful shugenja (sorcerer-priest) but lacks humility or diplomacy. He has brought you to the Lion lands, to investigate the possibility that the Lion used maho to kill Isawa Hoju.

Miya Yachiko: An Imperial magistrate sent to help with the investigation. She seems skilled enough, but seems to always be watching you. This makes you uneasy.

AKODO GUSAI

You are a samurai of the Lion Clan. Although you are young, only a few years past your gempukku coming-of-age ceremony, you are well on the path to glory. You have mastered both the tactical skills of the Akodo family and the Matsu family fighting techniques. One day, you know you will be among the honoured ancestors, and inspire a thousand generations of Lion to follow your example.

You are the second son of Lord Akodo Hirotu. Your family's estates border on the lands of both the Crane and Phoenix clans. The Lion and the Crane have been at war for some months now. Recently, your father's agents discovered that the Phoenix had been supplying your Crane enemies, despite the Phoenix's vows of pacifism and neutrality. Your father ordered you to stop the flow of supplies. Heroically, you lead a small army deep into the Phoenix lands, and laid waste to their warehouses as commanded - as well as any other Phoenix holdings you could find. They were made to pay for interfering with a Lion's war.

With the loss of their supply lines, the Crane have fallen back. It is time to take the war to them! Your father must be convinced of this.

A samurai's place is on the battlefield. The path of honour and glory is marked with the blood of your fallen enemies.

Character: Gusai is a gung-ho bushi who lives for war. While his skills are formidable, he is somewhat overconfident, and has never really had to overcome any setbacks. He takes after the Matsu side of his family - and the Matsu are known for fanatical devotion to warfare.

Your family:

Hirotu: Your father, Lord Hirotu. His is your daimyo, and as such, must be the calm, serene centre of the Household. You obey him in all things, but the household samurai will look to his warlord for leadership. You must be that warlord.

Hojato: Your elder brother. Hojato is a strange man. He spends long hours in both the dojo and the temple, mediating on various philosophical texts on bushido, the warrior's code. You too have studied the texts, and debated them with your brother - but a warrior's place is on the battlefield, not in the library. He lacks the fire and determination of a true Lion samurai.

Ijako: Your sister. When you were both children, you tormented her mercilessly. She left to be trained by the Kitsu priests far away, for many years. She recently completed her training and returned to your father's castle. She has changed much, and you don't really know her. She seems much too quiet and monk-like for a Lion.

AKODO HOJATO

You are the eldest son of Lord Akodo Hiruto, a minor noble of the Lion Clan. Your family rules over an estate on the north-eastern border of the territories of the Lion. For a thousand years, the Lion have been the strong right hand of the Emperor, defending the Emerald Throne against all evils and forming the invincible armies of the Empire. In your veins flows the blood of three hundred generations of samurai. There are no greater warriors than the children of Akodo.

However, Akodo was no simple wandering swordsman. He codified the teachings into bushido, the way of the sword. Your soul is inspired far more by meditating on Akodo's writings than anything else. You have spent long hours alone in the dojo and the temple. You know others whisper that you lack the charisma and determination to lead your family once your father retires, but these things do not disturb you. You find tranquillity and meaning within the katana's arc.

The Empire is troubled. There is war between the Lion and the Crane clans. Your family's holdings border on those of the Crane - and also of their Phoenix Clan allies. The Phoenix have been secretly supplying the Crane armies, despite the much-famed Phoenix vow of pacifism. Your brother, Gusai, always eager for battle, led an army to destroy the Phoenix warehouses. You objected to this, believing provoking the Phoenix would only create a war on two sides.

Continued war with the Crane is inevitable. Although the Crane have fallen back due to the loss of their supplies, the war is not yet won. While the others pore over maps and strategies, you know that only bushido and honour are required. You are a samurai, and you cannot fail.

Character: Hojato has an immensely deep and strong faith. If he had been born to a lesser family, or in more peaceful times, he might have become a priest, philosopher or monk. However, he was born to the Lion, and his belief is centred on the teachings of Akodo. He's fairly quiet, and seems naïve and even simple to others. He knows little of the world outside the dojo, of the world outside the flawless motion of the sword and the idealised samurai of bushido.

Your family:

Hiruto: Your father and daimyo. His commands must be followed absolutely. Filial loyalty is a virtue of a samurai.

Gusai: Your younger brother. He is a valiant fighter, but he lacks the calm acceptance of the certainty of death a samurai requires. He needs tempering.

Ijako: Your sister. She lacks the martial virtues, and was trained by the Kitsu ancestor-priests for many years. She is but recently returned to your father's castle, and is still a child in your eyes.

AKODO IJAKO

You are the third child and eldest daughter of a Lion daimyo, Akodo Hirotu. Your mother died bearing you, an ill omen. Still, it was expected that you would be given in marriage to some samurai to secure an alliance with another house. However, you proved to have a rare gift. You are a sodan-seizo, born with the power to speak to the ancestors. The spirit world is open to you. The vast majority of the sodan-seizo are from the Kitsu family of the Lion, but occasionally the gift manifests elsewhere.

Ten years ago, you left your family and travelled across the Lion territories to the Hall of the Ancestors, to be trained in the Kitsu shugenja school. You learned to craft a mask from reeds and mud, and how to walk into the Lands of the Dead wearing this mask and consult with the dead. You learned how to sense and commune with departed spirits, and how to placate angry ancestors. You felt somewhat excluded at the school because you were not a Kitsu like all the other students, but your dim memories of home helped you endure.

Now, you have passed your gempukku coming-of-age ceremony and been allowed to return home. You left a young child, you return as a fully trained sodan-seizo. It was a strange homecoming. Your brothers were playing with toy swords ten years ago, by now they are skilled and experienced warriors. Although your family welcomed you, they are still strangers to you. Furthermore, your family is at war with your Crane neighbours. Although you are not trained in the arts of war, you hope to prove yourself a loyal daughter of House Hiruto.

Character:

Ijako is a quiet and serious young woman. Forced to leave her family, she has been focussed on her studies for much of her life, and knows the Land of the Dead better than she knows the mortal realm. She is still trying to reconcile her idealised childhood memories of her family with the reality, and wishes to prove herself to her father & brothers.

Your family:

Hirotu: Your father. He has always been somewhat distant. You secretly fear he blames you for your mother's death...and you sometimes worry about meeting her spirit in the Land of the Dead.

Hojato: Your elder brother. He was kind to you when you were young, but now he seems as distant as Hirotu.

Gusai: He bullied you when you were young, and he doesn't seem to have changed much. You have heard stories of his martial skills.

ISAWA KAMASARI

To be of the blood of the Phoenix is to walk in two worlds at once. You consort with spirits and speak to the living Elements as easily as lesser men speak to their fellows. You are, like four hundred generations of your family before you, a master shugenja, a sorcerer-priest.

Like your ancestors, you have sworn a vow of peace. You will not use your mighty magics against other Rokugani, save in self-defence. The fires of the Phoenix must be restrained lest they consume the world.

The lesser family of the Shiba are by tradition yojimbo (bodyguards) to the Isawa.

You are the eldest son of Isawa Kamatori. Your father is aged, and past the age of retirement to a monastery. You were away studying with the Elemental Masters, so he retained the position of daimyo of your Household until you could return and take up your duty. He has not yet stepped down, for a crisis is brewing and there is no time for changes. For many years, the Phoenix clan has been allied with the noble Crane Clan. Now, your allies are moving towards war with the martial Lion clan. A time of great unrest is coming. Warehouses belonging to your family were burned by invaders two weeks ago, and the Shiba suspect the Lion Clan.

Two nights ago, your uncle, Isawa Hoju, died. Hoju was a great scholar and historian, and well loved by your family. His death seemed due solely to his advanced age - but the household spirits were uneasy. Divination spells cast by you and the other shugenja found that Hoju had fallen victim to a maho spell, an evil sorcery of forbidden blood-magic. Maho-Tsukai (maho users) are the worst kind of criminal.

What alarmed you was the direction from which the spell came. Someone to the west hurled that bloody incantation from afar. To the west are the territories of the Lion. The war between the Lion and Crane has come to your door, borne by the darkest magics.

It is not the way of the Phoenix to go to war - but maho cannot be ignored. Your father has brought an Imperial Magistrate, and you will accompany him to the Castle of the Lion daimyo, Akodo Hiruto. There you will find the guilty part, and demand justice.

Or else the Lion will be consumed in the flames of the Phoenix.

Character:

You are a powerful shugenja, and the eldest son of a noble and respected family. You're highly skilled and extremely knowledgeable. You're also fairly arrogant. Most of your life has been spent in temples and libraries, you have had little contact with war or courtly life. However, it can't be that hard...

Shiba Ashimita: Your yojimbo (bodyguard). Ashimita has served your family since birth, and his family has been loyal to your for generations. Still, he's nothing more than a yojimbo, and can't be relied on for anything other than fighting.

Miya Yachiko: The Imperial Magistrate. You and she must find the maho-tsukai and ensure the guilty Lion are brought to justice. She is supposed to be a well-known magistrate, although you've never heard of her.

MIYA YACHIKO

At the apex of the Empire is the Imperial Family, the Hantei. All things on Earth serve his Imperial Divinity. Between the Hantei and the Great Clans of samurai, though, are the lesser Imperial Houses - the Otomo, the Seppun, and the least of these Houses, the Miya. Your family are the heralds, messengers and magistrates of the Emperor. You are the gate between the divine wisdom of the Hantei dynasty and their devoted servants, the Great samurai Clans of the Empire.

At least, that's the theory. You know that the seven Great Clans hold the power in the Empire, and the

Imperial Houses must perform a careful balancing act to ensure that no Clan grows too dominant. An overly powerful Clan could challenge the dominance of the Hantei.

You are an Imperial Magistrate. You arbitrate disputes between the Clans, investigate allegations of crime, and bring the Emperor's justice upon the guilty. However, you also secretly ensure that tensions between the Great Clans are kept high. With your power and authority as a Magistrate, this is a relative easy duty.

Recently, the Crane Clan's fortunes were unacceptably high, and a war with the Lion was arranged. This war needs a flash point - and you've found one. The Phoenix Clan, allies of the Crane, claim that a neighbouring Lion family is using maho, forbidden blood-magic. While you doubt this is true, you can possibly use it to goad the Lion into striking back at their accusers, dragging the Crane into a war which will drain their resources and end the danger to the Hantei's pre-eminence in Rokugan.

It's a dishonourable job, but loyalty to the Emperor outweighs all other concerns.

Character: You're a pleasant, good-natured noble-woman, equally at home in the elegant courts or rough border forts on the fringes of the Empire. You enjoy your work, and believe that you are normally a fair and even-handed Magistrate.

However, your first loyalty is to the Emperor, and that loyalty takes precedence over all else. You dislike acting in a dishonourable and deceitful manner, but duty demands the sacrifice of honour.

The Phoenix:

Isawa Kamasari: He seems convinced of the Lion's guilt, and is undiplomatic enough to force the issue. He's perfect for your needs.

Shiba Ashimita: Kamasari's yojimbo (bodyguard). He's suspiciously quiet. You've learned to watch and distrust quiet men.