Winter Court: Shiro no Shosuro

A One-Round Low-Rank Adventure for Heroes of Rokugan (Champions of the Sapphire Throne)

by Rob Hobart

A pleasant winter with the Scorpion Clan offers a variety of entertainments… and hazards.
A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing this game. The actual playing time should be about three and a half hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in **bold italics**. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

**GM's Information**

**THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!**  Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

This adventure is a Low-Rank adventure, and can be played by characters of Insight Ranks 1 or 2. Characters of Insight Rank 3 or higher will be too powerful for the challenges presented here, and should not be allowed to play.

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

Remember that family names come before personal names. Akodo Toturi is from the Akodo family and his personal name is Toturi.

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

**Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties**

This adventure contains suggested Glory and Honor awards (and penalties) for dealing with the challenges presented herein. However, at times the players may take extra actions which the GM judges worthy of additional reward – or punishment. The following may be considered as guidelines:

- Performing an act of selfless, sacrificial loyalty to one’s daimyo or clan: +1 point of Honor.
- Abiding by the tenets of bushido when one could gain an obvious advantage from breaking them: +1 point of Honor.
- Betraying or disobeying your duty, Clan, or family: lose 1-10 points of Honor and Glory, and possibly Status, depending on the severity of the failure. Gain the same amount of Infamy.
- Crying out in pain when injured: lose one point each of Honor and Glory.
- Using sneaky, underhanded, or treacherous methods when at an Honor rank higher than zero: lose 1-5 points of Honor. If caught, also gain 1-5 points of Infamy.
- Using poison: lose 1-10 points of Honor, depending on the circumstances (there is always an Honor loss for using poison). If caught, also gain the same amount of Infamy.
- Performing a socially acceptable public act of extreme courage and skill: +1 point of Glory.
- Drunk, insulting, or otherwise ill-mannered in public: lose 1-5 points of Glory. For extreme abuses, also gain an equivalent amount of Infamy.
- Playing entire adventure without doing anything of note: lose 1 point of Glory (this cannot reduce Glory Rank below Insight Rank).
- Made ronin: Status drops to zero.

**Adjusting for Party Strength**

This is an Low-Rank adventure, and thus can involve characters of varying capabilities at the same table. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Insight Rank 2.

Although the majority of the challenges here are role-play oriented and thus not dependent on party strength, a few changes can be made to adjust the adventure difficulty for low-end parties, as follows:

**Low End Party** (average party Insight Rank is closer to One than to Two):

- Skill roll TNs may be selectively lowered by 5, at the GM’s discretion.
- Kumade is Reflexes 5 and Defense 4.
Important Note: Two Winter Court Adventures

“Winter Court: Shiro no Shosuro” takes place simultaneously with the adventure “Winter Court: High House of Light.” It is impossible for the same PC to attend both Winter Courts – thus, players must run different characters in these two adventures. No exceptions to this rule are allowed.

Adventure Summary and Background

The PCs have been privileged to gain an invitation to attend Winter Court at Shiro no Shosuro, the seat of the infamous Shosuro family. This is a somewhat mixed honor, since the Shosuro are notoriously the most dangerous and menacing of the Scorpion Clan families. In this case, however, most of the Shosuro’s attentions are focused on higher-ranking guests than the PCs, who (if they are careful and smart) should be able to avoid any direct dangers.

However, a larger event is underway at Shiro no Shosuro which may well involve the PCs. A year and a half ago, a Lion agent burned several trees in Traitor’s Grove, freeing five angry spirits which the Scorpion had imprisoned there for centuries. The escaped spirits sought out and possessed the bodies of their descendents within the Scorpion Clan, wreaking havoc as they sought vengeance on the Clan which had punished them. In the time since, four of those spirits have been hunted down and dealt with, either by returning them to the Scorpion Clan or by their departure for their afterlife. The fifth and most potent spirit, however, remains at large. It is the spirit of Shosuro Kumade, a vicious traitor who plotted to overthrow the rulers of the Scorpion Clan. In centuries of imprisonment his urge to treason has given way to a simpler need – revenge – but he still possesses the intelligence and cunning which nearly made him successful the first time. While the other escapees from Traitor’s Grove quickly exposed themselves with violent acts or demented schemes, Kumade has followed the path of paranoid subtlety, carefully laying the groundwork for eventual vengeance on the descendents of those who sent him to the Grove. A truly ambitious vengeance, for one of those people was none other than the Scorpion Clan Champion.

Over the course of the winter, Kumade, occupying the body of his descendent Soshi Jusuke, will murder the descendents of all the people who helped expose and imprison him. These include not only fellow Scorpions but also a Kitsuki investigator. Kumade/Jusuke is a formidable killer, for he was trained in the secret school of the Soshi Deceivers.

The PCs will have several opportunities as the winter progresses to learn more about Kumade’s crime spree, especially after he kills a Dragon and forces the Scorpion to involve an Emerald Magistrate, Kasuga Gyuuho. Hopefully, the PCs will expose Kumade before he takes the life of the Scorpion Clan Champion.

Introduction

The scenario begins in the Month of the Boar (December to gaijin) as the PCs arrive at Winter Court. As relatively low-ranking samurai, the PCs have been invited to a secondary court at Shiro no Shosuro, a dubious “honor” which some of them may feel is more in the nature of a punishment.

The Scorpion lands are gray and bleak with the coming winter as you ride up the road toward Shiro no Shosuro, passing through a town whose inhabitants pause in their labors to bow politely at you. Beyond the buildings with their brightly painted panels and walls, the road climbs up the side of a low hill to the walled settlement of Shiro no Shosuro. You can see that in summer this route would be shaded with trees, making for a pleasant journey, but now the last of the autumn leaves have fallen and the trees stand bare, their claw-like branches dark in the winter sunlight.

At the great gates of the castle compound, polite guards check your travel papers and then wave you through, their expressions invisible beneath wooden mempo. Attentive servants meet you just inside, collecting your horses and gear, and ushering you toward the main building.

Each of the PCs is given their own room in the main palace of Shiro no Shosuro, opening onto either side of a long hallway which runs down the west side of the palace. Windows in each room offer views of the huge gardens that fill much of the palace complex. Servants scurry quietly through the halls, answering any samurai’s request within moments. The décor is in themes and variations of red, and many halls are lined with shoji screens and silk hangings of an intense crimson, creating an almost surreal effect as the PCs walk down luridly red-lit corridors.

The PCs will be allowed the opportunity to bathe, change their clothes, explore, and rest before the evening’s official welcoming ceremony.
Welcome to Shiro no Shosuro

The servants escort you into the main court chamber of the castle, where you find scores of other samurai circulating, smiling and bowing to each other behind fluttering fans. An expectant hush falls over the crowd as a thin, elegant man in black and red robes enters the room, his face concealed beneath a blank white mask pierced only by two small holes. He stands patiently and waits for the crowd to fall silent, then speaks in a smooth, melodious voice. “Welcome to Shiro no Shosuro, samurai-samas. I am Shosuro Adoka, hatamoto to our honored lord Shosuro Hido, and in his name I welcome you to Shiro no Shosuro. Please, be welcomed in our halls. Enjoy the hospitality of our beautiful gardens, and the talents of our actors at the Silken Smile theater, where performances are held every week for your entertainment. If there is anything we may do to make your time in our humble castle more enjoyable, you need only ask.” He bows as the guests applaud politely.

“It is of course our duty as your hosts to offer you games and diversions during your stay here. Lord Shosuro Hido has authorized me to announce a game which will last the duration of this winter court – a game of letters.” You can hear a smile in his voice as he waits out a brief murmur among the crowd before continuing. “You are all, of course, acquainted with the game that is played in court, by sending subtle letters to other guests. We propose to add a new ingredient to this game, for your entertainment and enlightenment. During this winter, your letters to your fellow guests will be read by the monks who attend the shrine to our founder, the lady Shosuro. The letter found to be the most enlightened, the most reflective of the wisdom of the Tao and the founding virtues of our Clan, will be proclaimed the winner for this winter court, and the Scorpion will offer gifts commensurate with this fine achievement. Of course, since these letters will be read solely by these enlightened monks, you need not fear for your privacy.” The guests applaud again, this time with a certain lack of enthusiasm, and you see many of them glancing at each other sidelong as they assess this announcement. Adoka continues, “In conclusion, permit me to express my… hope… that your stay here will teach you the true nature of the Scorpion Clan, free of any… unfortunate rumors.” He bows again, more deeply, and turns aside to speak with his fellow Scorpion, leaving the rest of you to consider his words.

The PCs will be free to socialize and meet the other guests at winter court. The GM should use this as an opportunity to introduce the most notable NPCs from Part One, below. The GM should also take this opportunity to have these NPCs speak of the latest gossip and news of the Empire, as listed here:

- In the aftermath of the Hare War, many samurai believe the long peace of Miya Shikan cannot be repaired. Although Shikan has made several diplomatic initiatives in recent months, including a treaty between the Lion and Dragon and an effort to foster Minor Clan children with the Crane Clan, most of the courtiers believe the leaders of the Crab and Dragon will launch new wars as soon as spring arrives.
- Word has it that the Clan Champion, Bayushi Tomoru, is heading up negotiations at Kyuden Bayushi aimed at bringing an end to the war with the Crab. Now that Shiro Usagi has fallen the Scorpion apparently have no interest in continuing the war. It remains to be seen whether the Crab share their sentiments.
- There are rumors of a Crab cross-border raid that inflicted severe damage on the Crane settlement of Jukami Mura, slaughtering the local garrison and hundreds of ronin who were in the town looking for work. The Crab deny that any such attack took place, but the Crane insist it was true.
- The Emperor is attending Winter Court in Crane lands this year. This is believed to be another move by Shikan to support those Clans who opposed Crab aggression last summer.
- There was no drought this year, and the harvest was much better, but the damage from the previous year’s heat-wave has prevented crops from matching their previous totals. The Phoenix, Lion, Dragon, and Crab are all known to still be suffering from modest shortfalls in their food supplies.
- There is a report circulating that a Dragon swordsman has challenged Kakita Saburashi, the master of the Kakita Dueling Academy, and he has accepted. The most reliable accounts claim that the duel is to be held in the High House of Light at the end of this winter.
- On the topic of duels, there is also a rumor that Shosuro Sora, the infamous Scorpion duelist who
Part One: People in Shiro no Shosuro

There are over 200 samurai at Shiro no Shosuro for the winter – about two-thirds of them the local Scorpion, while the remainder are guests from other Clans. The following specific NPCs will definitely be present, but since it is impossible to list all of the guests and residents of Shiro no Shosuro in the module, the GM should be prepared to improvise additional minor “flavor” NPCs as needed to flesh out scenes.

The Scorpions

Bayushi Akira: The young governor of Toshi Aitate, son of the previous governor Bayushi Kisan, has accepted Shosuro dominance of his city in exchange for help avenging his dead father. PCs who have played the adventure “Corrupt Officials” probably have Akira as a Sworn Enemy, and he will make a point of greeting each of those PCs by name.

Bayushi Tenmaku: A handsome, athletic young Scorpion bushi with a ready smile, smooth wit, and charming voice. Some PCs may have met Tenmaku in the adventure “Topaz Championship,” and he may have acquired Blackmail on some of them. His task at this winter court is similar – gather damaging information and blackmail on as many guests as possible. He is completely ruthless and utterly without scruple, but also is quite skilled at posing as a non-villainous Scorpion who is wounded by the reputation of his Clan.

Shosuro Adoka: The host of this winter court is a tall, slim man who always wears a pale, near-featureless *mempo* (mask) whose blank white surface covers his nose and upper face, save for small eye-holes. He is always smooth and cultured, speaking softly and with precision. Even if the PCs insult or provoke him, he will never do more than allow a faint waspishness to slip into his tone. However, he will mark such ill-mannered or troublesome PCs for future attention.

Shosuro Chizuri: A lovely maiden of the Scorpion Clan, tall and slim, with long legs which she accentuates with tight, form-fitting kimonos. She wears a delicate silk mask, enhancing rather than concealing her perfect features. Chizuri is not quite the ruthless Scorpion that some might assume – beauty, elegance, and talent are her preferred tools, and she seldom resorts to anything as crude as blackmail. PCs may have encountered her in the adventure “Unrequited Love.” She is tasked with distracting the guests as cover for the activities of other Scorpions.

4-Dan Shosuro Kaneki: A stoop-shouldered older man, well into his fifties, who walks with a cane and uses a peaked court hat to cover his balding, spotted scalp. Kaneki is a hardened veteran of over three decades in Rokugan’s courts, and a master at tripping up, outmaneuvering, and tricking anyone he speaks with. He has adapted well to his advancing age and infirmity, and uses it to project an image of harmlessness and distractibility, lulling others into being careless around him. In fact, however, he is extremely adept at rooting out others’ flaws and needs.

Kaneki will be the Shosuro’s primary agent in trying to get their hooks into their guests (including the PCs), and will approach each and every PC repeatedly over the course of the winter. On the other hand, he is also a skilled and dedicated Go player, and enjoys playing against opponents of many different skill levels.

Shosuro Mikio: A soft-spoken young maiden with pale skin, a clear, heart-shaped face, and very long black hair. Mikio is trained as a seductress, and Kaneki will assign her to try to win the favor of any PC who shows a marked weakness for female charms, a need to protect the innocent, or other vulnerabilities Mikio can exploit.

However, Mikio is not very happy with her role in the Scorpion Clan. Although she is not truly *junshin*, she dislikes her role for the Clan and secretly longs for a true and “pure” love affair that would not be tainted by the demands of Clan duties. If any PCs offer her the hope of this sort of relationship, she will plunge into it without hesitation.

Mikio is descended from the wife of Shosuro Kumade, who committed suicide in order to expose her husband’s plot. As a result, she will be the first target of his murder spree.

Shosuro Taikan: The Clan Magistrate who administers the castle and surrounding lands, Taikan is a plump, talkative man in his early thirties with a balding pate and a cheerfully cynical attitude. He takes a very pragmatic approach to law enforcement, using what works instead of what a rigid interpretation of the
law might require. He is not in the castle much during the day – he spends much of his time in his office in the town outside – but socializes with the other Winter Court guests in the evening. He enjoys sake but knows his limits and never loses control of himself.

**Shosuro Yosura:** A brisk, efficient bushi with the rank of gunso, Yosura is captain of the guard for the security of the wing of the palace where the PCs are staying. They will meet him several times a day as he checks on security and reviews his guards’ reports. He is unfailingly polite and comes across as an honorable and dutiful man. Unlike the guests, he does not wear formal court garb, instead wearing a fine-quality but practical kimono and hakama. He always carries his daisho set, even in court, and often wears arm- and shin-guards, although he usually does not wear any other armor.

Yusora is married, and when off-duty he will attend the courts in the company of his wife, a gentle, short, slightly mousy woman named Shosuro Maiko. Maiko is very much a home-maker and talks about little other than her children and her hopes for their future.

Yosura’s ancestor defeated Shosuro Kumade in a duel, proving his guilt. As a result, he too will be a target of Kumade’s murder spree.

**Soshi Jusuke:** This is the body occupied by the vengeful spirit Shosuro Kumade. Jusuke appears to be a skinny, stoop-shouldered young man with a self-deprecating smile. He comes across as a bookish, scholarly fellow, not very current on political matters, and not interested in becoming current. For PCs accustomed to the relentless pressure and scrutiny of the other Scorpion here, Jusuke should come as a relaxing change. He describes himself as “one of several Soshi assigned to this great castle,” and explains he is the only one low-ranking enough to avoid extensive duties. “Quite a relief, since I prefer reading books to anything else,” he says. If any of the PCs are of a scholarly bent, he will try to cultivate their friendship, and he will also try to gain the sympathies of any PCs who are actually Scorpion. “I am expected to gain useful information on our guests, but I fear such things are not my expertise,” he says apologetically.

PCs should not have any reason to immediately suspect Jusuke of any wrong-doing. He is possessed, of course, but Shosuro Kumade’s spirit has grown quite adept at concealing his presence, and spells or abilities which detect spirits, ancestors, or ghosts will not be able to sense Kumade’s presence without significant effort. (See Part Seven for details on this.)

**Soshi Takano:** The senior shugenja of Shiro no Shosuro, Takano is a thin, narrow-faced old man with a shaved head and deep-sunken eyes. He spends each day circulating through the dozen or so small shrines and temples located on the castle grounds, ending each night in the shrine to Shosuro where the monks are reading each day’s letters. (This allows him to learn everything the monks discover in those letters, of course.) Takano is a highly pious and spiritual old man, but also a dedicated Scorpion, and will not hesitate to exploit his position, and the trust which his age and piety engenders, to manipulate and blackmail others. PCs of a highly spiritual bent will be especially favored targets.

Takano knows Soshi Jusuke as a bookish young apprentice, and does not suspect there is anything wrong with him.

**Yogo Amasare:** The famous Scorpion playwright is attending Winter Court in the Shosuro palace in order to premier his new play at winter’s end in the prestigious Silken Smile, with the Clan Champion himself attending. Amasare is a slim man with a long, thin face, a narrow pursed mouth, and a reedy, nasal voice. His conversations are famous among the courts of Rokugan, but at this Winter Court he does not usually live up to his reputation – in fact he is absent-minded and easily distracted, since he is still finishing the play and is stuck on several scenes. If any of the PCs are artists or similar creative types, he will speak with them about the difficulties and challenges of creative work. If these conversations go anywhere, he will begin meeting these PCs for late-evening tea in the gardens, discussing art, theater, creativity, and theology.

Amasare is a genuine man – he is so deeply obsessed with his art that he is not really capable of anything else, least of all the normal Scorpion maneuvering. The rest of the Scorpion here treat him Amasare as something of a talented simpleton, indulging him for the sake of his artistic talent.

**Cranes:**

**Kakita Yotai** and his wife **Sensa** are a pair of elegant courtiers, epitomizing the Crane ethic of perfection, beauty, and nobility. They are both extremely skilled in courtly maneuver, etiquette, and deception. Unfortunately, they also ruthless and dishonorable, willing to use any sort of methods in order to succeed. They are not above employing blackmail and seduction. They are accompanied here by their first-born son, Toji, for whom they are seeking a good marriage,
preferably to an Imperial or someone of similarly high Status. They will target a suitable PC for such goals, if one is available.

Toji is a mild-mannered and somewhat hapless boy of thirteen, clearly overwhelmed and dominated by his relentless parents.

Doji Yuki: PCs who have played the adventures “Compassion” or “Broken Words” should recognize this gentle Crane maiden, who is quite pretty but suffers from mild albinism, giving her red-tinged eyes and an unnaturally pale complexion (even for a courtly Crane). Yuki has been sent here to find a husband, for she is a minor samurai of no note, with an affliction that renders her unattractive in the eyes of most Rokugani – marrying a minor Shosuro is all she can hope for. She finds this distressing, although she is trying to put a good face on it, and if any male PC seems actually interested in her for her own qualities, she will jump at the chance of trying to win them as a husband.

Dragons:
5-Dan Kitsuki Nobuto: A middle-aged courtier, with thinning hair, clear dark eyes, and a face creased with smile-lines. Nobuto is trained more in politics than in criminal investigations, but is nevertheless a skilled practitioner of the “Kitsuki method” and a man who believes in the importance of truth and factual evidence. He has thwarted more than one Scorpion political maneuver in the past, and they have invited him here in the hope of finding some way to neutralize him. He fully realizes this and finds it somewhat amusing, since he is, for the most part, an honorable man.

Nobuto has never married and lives a lifestyle which might be described as semi-ascetic. However, this is partly because he does not trust himself to resist temptations if he allows them into his life. He does not even drink sake, confining himself to tea, a habit the PCs may notice if they spend time with him. He is often found walking through the castle gardens – as a Dragon, accustomed to the harsh conditions in the mountains, he finds the Scorpion winter mild and walks the garden even on the coldest days. He is a talented Go player, and is somewhat quietly arrogant about his talent level – he will not play anyone with less than 3 Ranks in Games: Go.

Nobuto’s ancestor Kitsuki Jocho helped expose the crimes of Shosuro Kumade, and he will be the second target of Jusuke/Kumade’s murder spree.

Mirumoto Hideo, handsome bushi: A stunningly handsome and charming young swordmaster, with as much style and flair as any Kakita duelist. Hideo knows he is both attractive and skilled, and enjoys the attention this brings him. A decidedly shallow and unenlightened man, especially for a Dragon, he enjoys showing off, pursuing women (especially attractive women), and being the center of attention. He is not malicious or aggressive, however, and is good at staying out of trouble.

PCs may perhaps have previously met this handsome young bushi in the adventures “Tears of a Fox’s Heart” and “Bayushi Lineage,” where he narrowly escaped death at the hands of the infamous duelist Shosuro Sora. Hideo is very pleased to learn that Sora has been married off to a Ronin, and will comment at any opportunity on how deserving she is of such a fate.

The Scorpion have arranged for Hideo to visit this Winter Court in order to get their claws into him. He will be targeted by Shosuro Mikio, regardless of whether any PCs draw her attention or not, and if no PCs become involved with her, he will be the one to notice her absence during the First Snow celebration.

Lion:
Ikoma Taizu: A lean, sallow-faced man with deep bags under his eyes and an uneasy, shifting gaze. Taizu has spent three years in Shiro no Shosuro, and he is paranoid to the extreme, although he maintains propriety in public. He always assumes the worst about everything happening in the court, and claims that way he is never disappointed. He will trust fellow Lions but will treat all others as Scorpion dupes/agents, offering minimal courtesy and remaining fully on guard at all times. The Scorpion regard him as something of a joke, and amuse themselves by regularly going up to speak with him, offering him tea, etc.

3-Dan Ikoma Toya is a middle-aged woman with graying hair worn long and lightly-bound at her waist. She is widow, and enjoys copious free time now that her eldest son has come of age and married. A cheerful woman with a kindly, almost motherly air, she enjoys offering advice and guidance to younger people. At the Go board, however, she is a skilled and relentless competitor, and takes a quiet pleasure in her victories.

Mantis:
Yoritomo Makuro: The Mantis ambassador to Shiro no Shosuro is a plump, cheerful man with a wispy goatee beard and small, glittering eyes. He is very chatty and friendly, but also quite adept at speaking at length without ever committing to anything or even
showing what he really thinks. He will try to subtly warn any Mantis Clan PCs that they will be targeted by Scorpion blackmail and manipulation efforts, but will not assist other PCs who come in for Scorpion attention.

**Phoenix:**

**Shiba Yota:** A dour, serious man in his early twenties, with an unfortunate habit of speaking his mind even when it is politically inadvisable to do so. He has a generally dim view of Scorpions, but is intelligent enough to try to contain his opinions. Last year he killed a Scorpion in an authorized duel at Kyuden Bayushi (an event depicted in the adventure “Bayushi Lineage”), and he suspects, correctly, that the Scorpion have invited him to this winter in hopes of somehow destroying him. He is right, of course, although the Shosuro plan to take a subtle approach by slowly crippling him with poison.

**Isawa Tengen.** A shugenja who accompanied Shiba Yota to the castle to witness the duel with Bayushi Tamaji. Tengen is a more diplomatic man than Yota, and makes a point of staying at Yota’s side and doing most of the talking for both of them. He is a middle-aged man with thinning hair and a slightly world-weary air.

**Unicorns:**

**Ide Faizal:** The Unicorn ambassador to Shiro no Shosuro is a pleasantly bland fellow in his early thirties, with swarthy skin and a well-groomed moustache. He has been blackmailed by the Scorpion and functions as an agent for them – he will pretend to be an honorable man trapped in a snake-pit, and will offer friendship and conversation with any PCs from other Clans who seem lost or frightened. Naturally, anything they tell him will eventually find its way back to the ears of the Scorpion.

**Minor Clans:**

**Kasuga Gyuuhoh** A soft-spoken, good-natured, kind-hearted man, with a strong desire for justice and honesty. He dresses in drab, uninteresting clothing without any of the ostentation or display which characterizes most other samurai. He is an Emerald Magistrate and sees the duty of magistrates (Emerald and otherwise) as being primarily to protect those of lower social rank (peasants, etc), since they cannot protect themselves as samurai do. He is a former student of Kitsuki Nobuto, and believes strongly in the “Kitsuki method” of using accumulated evidence and logical deduction to solve crimes – he has seen too many samurai lie to trust their testimony.

**Usagi Nokamo:** The newly appointed daimyo of the Hare Clan is here as the guest of the Scorpion, which could be seen as a gesture of support aside from the fact that he is visiting Shiro no Shosuro rather than Kyuden Bayushi. Nokaji is a young man just a couple of years past his gempukku, with a thin face and a lean, skinny build. He is very serious and intense, his usual expression a grim frown. He is painfully conscious of his Clan’s vulnerable position, with its capital and most of its lands occupied by the Crab, and he will tread very carefully in court. He tries to avoid speaking with Crab or Lion PCs, but if forced to do so, will speak in the briefest and most minimal fashion he can without giving offense. He is hoping to win support from the Crane and Mantis to drive the Crab armies off his lands, and will try to subtly approach PCs from those Clans about such a possibility.

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**Part Two: Locations in Shiro no Shosuro**

The following offers a brief guide to the more prominent locations of the palace, places the PCs will doubtless wish to visit over the course of the winter.

**The Gardens**

Shiro no Shosuro’s famous gardens are, for the most part, open to their visitors. Carefully raked gravel paths and covered wooden walkways wind between trimmed shrubs, sculpted trees, koi ponds connected by chuckling streams, and beds of flowers arranged in artfully natural groupings. The gardens do not form a single large area, but instead wind and twist throughout the southern half of the castle complex, creating many small cul-de-sacs and sheltered corners. At night, this effect is enhanced by the skilful deployment of colored lanterns, just far enough apart to create many pools of dark shadow throughout the gardens.

Since it is winter, the gardens are not at their most impressive – the trees are without leaves, and most of the flowers are dormant. Nevertheless, the gardens are a stunningly beautiful location, and even in the coldest weather, guests find time to walk through here. Further, the Shosuro keep several areas of the garden...
warm by means of cunning designs, running hot water beneath the flower beds or even, in a couple of areas, placing flowers and herbs beneath sheets of gaijin “glass” to strengthen the sunlight.

PCs who roll Perception/Medicine (Herbalism) at TN 25 or Perception/Poison at TN 15, will realize that many of the plants in these gardens can be refined into deadly poisons. The Scorpion make no secret of this, and are quite unperturbed if the PCs mention it. “Oh, but of course, samurai-sama, we have permission from the Office of the Emerald Magistrates to grow these here, so that antidotes may be prepared for anyone who needs them,” they explain with smiles.

The Baths

The bath-house of Shiro no Shosuro is a large and luxurious building on the west side of the complex’s gardens, reached by one of the covered wooden paths. Unlike other parts of the gardens, this route is quite well-lit, so that guests need not stumble or get lost while seeking cleanliness and a warm soak.

Servants constantly stoke the bath-ovens, ensuring that a supply of steaming hot water is always available to soak a cleansed body. Other servants wait inside the bathhouse to assist weary samurai in scrubbing the day’s sweat and grime from their bodies. The bath chambers are gender-segregated to maintain propriety, although the entrance chamber is not.

The Silken Smile

Shiro no Shosuro’s famous theater is located on the eastern side of the gardens, opposite from the baths, and next to the outer walls of the castle complex. It is a tall wooden building with a shallow-sloped tile roof. The outer walls are covered with carvings of kabuki masks, and an abundance of colored lanterns decorate the place during the evening. Inside, most of the house is taken up with low benches where guests may sit while watching performances. The large stage fills the far end of the room, with shoji screens along both sides concealing the access to the dressing rooms.

Performances are held in the Silken Smile twice a week, and offer both Noh and Kabuki plays.

The Shrine to Shosuro

Located on the southern end of the castle complex, this temple is dedicated to the founder of the Shosuro family, and decorated in a dark, minimalist style. A simple statue of a cloaked, anonymous figure stands in the main shrine chamber, and shoji screens painted in vague, gray-scale landscapes line the walls. The monks here are dressed in clothing of dark gray, and seldom speak. All of them are retired Scorpion who now dedicate their older years to venerating the Shosuro founder.

The Main Court

Shiro no Shosuro’s main court chamber is fairly typical for a major castle – a large open room surrounded by an upper-floor balcony. Several discreet staircases ascend to these balconies, allowing courtiers to switch from observers to participants without drawing attention to themselves.

During the day, Shosuro Adoka will hold court here, and a couple of dozen courtiers will pass in and out, chatting on seemingly inconsequential topics as they feel out each others’ positions. PCs wishing to speak with Adoka will need to come here and present themselves for his consideration – he is not above letting petitioners wait for hours if he does not like them, or simply if he finds it amusing to do so.

The Castle Libraries

Like any major castle, Shiro no Shosuro has a large library, located on the castle’s second floor near the main court, where residents and guests may look through hundreds of books and journals in search of information, entertainment, or enlightenment. Since this is a “public” library it does not contain anything of a truly secret or sensational nature, and especially does not contain anything which might damage the Scorpion Clan’s own reputation. Otherwise, it is an excellent resource, and scholarly guests such as Ikoma Toya, Isawa Tengen, and Soshi Takano will often be found here.

Part Three: The Normal Activities of Winter Court

During the almost three months the PCs are here, they will become acquainted with the standard activities and
rhythms of winter court in Scorpion lands. Shiro no Shosuro is a quiet place, where everyone walls softly and speaks in low voices. It is also an exquisitely polite court. The Scorpion residents in particular will be at pains to always speak politely and use perfect etiquette, remaining well-spoken and unflappable even with guests who lose their tempers, and apologizing profusely if there is any problem, no matter how trivial.

However, the Scorpion NPCs will also employ a subtle method of psychological warfare against their non-Scorpion guests. Any time a Scorpion is speaking with a guest, he (or she) will bring out a cup and offer tea or sake, either from a bottle he is carrying or by making a request of a passing servant. PCs who roll Intelligence/Lore: Scorpion at TN 10 or Intelligence/Etiquette at TN 20 will know it is Scorpion custom in their own lands for everyone to carry their own cup at all times – if the PC does not make the roll, s/he does not have a cup, and the Scorpion will generously offer an extra one for their use.

Naturally, none of these drinks are poisoned – but the thought that at any time one of them MIGHT be poisoned should be more than enough to put the PCs on edge. (And the Scorpion will make a special point of offering drinks to anyone who has been rude, overtly anti-Scorpion, or otherwise drawn their ire.) It should be noted that PCs who refuse to drink are insulting their hosts – such PCs lose 1 point of Glory each time they refuse, and PCs of Honor 4.0 or better should also lose 1 point of Honor for violating Courtesy.

Scorpion Orders

Soon after the Winter Court begins, all the Scorpion PCs will be invited to a private breakfast in the gardens with Shosuro Adoka. The smooth and charming hatamoto enjoys rice, miso soup, and tea with the PCs while they watch the Sun rise and bathe the gardens in golden light. Eventually, Adoka explains their task for the winter. “Our guests here are folk who, while they may not be particularly famous at present, could be very useful assets to the Scorpion Clan in the future. Your task is therefore a simple one – find out things we can use to control them, or create such avenues of control if none exist as yet.”

Adoka will caution the PCs not to actually try to blackmail anyone at Winter Court – the goal here is to establish avenues of control for later manipulation. “Pushing our guests too far will make them push back, and that is not something we want. Better for them to imagine themselves safe… until the day we show them otherwise.”

He will mention that Shiba Yota has been targeted for revenge by one of the Clan Champion’s hatamoto. “We have made arrangements for a subtle curse to befall young Yota-kun. Your task will be to prevent him from arriving at any certainty about what is happening to him.”

Adoka will also drop hints that the Scorpion have important plans for the future. “My lord, Shosuro Hido, has labored for many years to bring the Scorpion to the forefront of the Empire. The war which seems certain to erupt next spring is the culmination of long planning. We must be prepared to make maximum use of it now that it has finally arrived.”

The First Performance

The Scorpion will make a point of inviting all their guests to attend the Silken Smile’s first performance of the season. Almost all of the guests crowd into the theater that evening, chatting by lamplight and fluttering fans as they await the beginning of the performance.

- During this time, if Bayushi Akira has not yet approached any of the PCs, he will make a point of coming up to any PCs who are Sworn Enemies and greeting them, inviting them to share drinks with him. He never says anything overtly hostile. If the PCs discuss the past incidents in Toshi Aitate, he will smile coldly and say, “The past lays a burden on all of us, samurai-san.”

- Shosuro Chizuri and Shosuro Mikio will both make their first moves to distract/romance PCs who seem like vulnerable targets. Mikio will also begin the process of approaching Mirumoto Hideo for romantic appeals.

- Shosuro Kaneki will begin the process of worming his way into the PCs’ confidence. He will also introduce himself to Kitsuki Nobuto and invite him to play a Go game. (Nobuto will accept). Kaneki is willing to play Go with any PC who will accept a challenge.

- Soshi Takano will speak with any shugenja PCs, inviting them to join him in prayers at the castle’s shrines after the play.
• Kakita Yotai and Kakita Sensa will scope out all of the guests for a woman of high Status who can marry their son, Toji.

• Shiba Yota will make a point of avoiding any more than the briefest discussion with any Scorpions, but will speak readily with others, and share the story of his sister’s shame and his own vengeance at Kyuden Bayushi last year. If the PCs give him a sympathetic ear he will quickly suggest his suspicion that the Scorpion have manipulated his presence at this Winter Court in order to assassinate him. His friend Isawa Tengen will be more cautious and will clearly be pained by his friend’s aggressive words.

• Kasuga Gyuuho will make a point of approaching any PCs who helped him with his investigation in Phoenix lands last spring (in the adventure “Tortoise and the Hare”), thanking them for their assistance, and offering to introduce them to his sensei Kitsuki Nobuto.

Eventually, a clapping of wooden slats announces the beginning of the play. The crowd seats itself and falls silent, fans stirring the warm air, as Noh actors glide out onto the stage. The opening night’s play is Yogo Amasare’s “Honor’s Breath,” his most famous work, a recreation of the Four Winds era which depicts the legendary Winds as fallible and imperfect human beings, rather than perfect heroes.

Activities of NPCs

It is probable (and certainly desirable) for the PCs to become involved with the NPCs in various ways, but regardless whether they do or not, some of the NPCs will become involved with each other.

Shosuro Mikio, in addition to trying to romance any suitable PCs, will pursue a romance with Mirumoto Hideo through the first month of Winter Court. PCs who pay attention will notice the two sharing walks in the gardens, shooting each other significant looks, and similar bits of flirtation. This is a calculated romance on Mikio’s part, rather than a true attraction – if any PCs have made a connection with her, she will complain about the misery of forcing herself to try to win the affections of a man for whom she feels not the slightest interest.

• If any PCs are genuinely close to Mikio, or are targets of her attentions who display a protective or chivalric attitude, she will confess to them that she has been feeling uneasy lately. “I wake up at night feeling as though someone is in my room, watching me, but no-one is ever there.” She is sensing the supernatural surveillance of Kumade/Jusuke.

After the first performance at the Silken Smile, Shosuro Kaneki and Kitsuki Nobuto begin a game of Go in a pagoda in the castle’s gardens, meeting each day to place stones on the board. They make only one or two careful, thoughtful moves each day, and other courtiers make a point of checking on the game, commenting on the moves, and speculating on who will eventually win. Ikoma Toya in particular will make herself a center of attention by offering intelligent commentary on the progress of the game.

If any PCs challenge Shosuro Kaneki or Kakita Nobuto to a Go game, they will readily oblige. Such a game will not attract the same level of attention, of course, but if a PC defeats either of these men in a Go game, s/he will earn 2 points of Glory and gain 1 Dan ranking as a Go player.

Yogo Amasare will spend the winter focusing on his new play – he knows it is premiering before the Clan Champion, and feels intense pressure to produce a good work. If any of the PCs have artistic talents or skills, Amasare will cultivate their friendship, attempting to gain inspiration for his play. A PC who rolls Intelligence/Storytelling (Poetry) at TN 25 or Intelligence/Lore: History at TN 25 can offer Amasare some inspiration for his work.

Shiba Yota’s Fate

Over the course of the winter, Shiba Yota will begin to exhibit signs of poor health and emotional instability. He becomes pale and a bit shaky, sometimes dropping his chopsticks or cups at meals, and snapping at anyone who says something he doesn’t like. The Scorpion are quite solicitous around him and offer to bring him medicines or shugenja assistance if he wishes it – offers which he refuses firmly and with increasing violence as the winter progresses.

Isawa Tengen will become more and more worried as winter continues. He is an Air shugenja and does not have any healing knowledge or magic. If any of the PCs have established themselves as friends or allies, he may approach them for help. “I fear that Yota-san is the target of some manner of Scorpion treachery, but I lack the skills to determine it with certainty. Perhaps you could assist me?” However, in order to convince the increasingly paranoid and unbalanced Yota to let them offer assistance, the PCs will have to make a well
role-played appeal and then roll Awareness/ Etiquette (Sincerity) at TN 25. Otherwise, he will assume they are “part of the conspiracy” and refuse to let them near him. Scorpion PCs cannot win his trust at all, no matter how well they role-play.

If the PCs do examine Yota, they can roll Perception/Medicine (Antidotes) at TN 30 to detect very subtle signs of poisoning, although they are not sure what poison is being used. In fact, Yota is being fed micro-doses of Kirei-ko (arsenic), along with hallucinogens. In order to correctly diagnose this, the PC will have to make an Intelligence/Medicine (Antidotes) roll at TN 45. However, there is no treatment or antidote for Kirei-ko, and no way to trace where it is coming from. The Scorpion will naturally deny everything, and express shock and horror at the mere suggestion that someone could be poisoning one of their guests. They offer to supply food-tasters and other such protections. Naturally, none of this prevents them from continuing to poison Yota, even as they behave in the most solicitous manner possible.

If one of the PCs is a shugenja with a spell such as Hands of Jurojin, casting the spell several times over the course of the Winter Court will purge enough of the poisons out of Yota’s system that he remains functional and survives to depart for Phoenix lands. If this happens, the PC(s) who cast the spell gain him as a 3-point Ally (1 point Influence, 2 points Devotion).

If none of the PCs are able or willing to help Yota with magic, he becomes steadily more erratic, paranoid, and unhealthy as the Winter Court progresses. This will result in his losing face and wreaking himself during the visit of the Scorpion Clan Champion (see “Conclusions” for details).

The Game of Letters
Most of the guests will make at least a token effort to participate in the Game of Letters competition which Shosuro Adoka has announced for the winter – to do otherwise is to insult their hosts. The guests who will make a concerted effort to win the competition will include Shosuro Chizuri, Shosuro Kaneki, Kakita Sensa, Yoritomo Makuro, and Isawa Tengen. Chizuri and Kaneki will each write poems praising the virtues of loyalty and duty, supposedly things which Shosuro was known for. Sensa will write anonymous love poems, designed to reflect the devotion between Shosuro and Bayushi (but also to entice any PC she is seducing as part of her effort to win a bride for her son). Makuro will write poems designed to cleverly undermine everything written by the other competitors (which could also be seen as an homage to Shosuro), while Tengen will write carefully-researched poems reflecting Shosuro’s achievements in life.

PCs who wish to compete in this game will need to make three rolls with Awareness/Games: Letters, although they can substitute Storytelling (Poetry) by calling two Raises. PCs who wish to enhance their efforts with skilled or beautiful writing can roll Intelligence/Calligraphy at TN 20 to get a Free Raise on their Games rolls, with an additional Free Raise if they hit TN 35 or better. Players who actually compose poems should be awarded 1 or 3 Free Raises on their Games roll by the GM, depending on the quality of the poems. Likewise players who come up with clever responses to the gambits employed by the other top competitors should be awarded 1 or 2 Free Raises.

In order to stay “in the running” for the competition, the PCs must hit at least TN 30 with their first poem (counting Free Raises as +5 each to the roll) and TN 35 with their second poem. If so, they can make the final roll to try to win the competition. This will have to beat the final rolls of the other five competitors, which are as follows:

- Shosuro Chizuri: 41
- Shosuro Kaneki: 36
- Kakita Sensa: 40
- Yoritomo Makuro: 43
- Isawa Tengen: 38

The Game of Letters has more roles, of course, than merely a competition. It is used to send messages back and forth through court, and to share (or distort) gossip and information. Even without the public announcement that the letters will be read by the monks at the Shrine of Shosuro, it is expected that all the letters will be read by everyone in court (since they are carried openly by servants who will not stop samurai from reading them), and those who do not read the letters themselves will quickly learn of their contents from others who have done so.

PCs who follow the course of the Game of Letters throughout the Winter Court may be able to pick up on a number of patterns and relationships. Allow each PC who pays attention to events and gossip in court to make a Perception/Courtier roll at TN 20. Success indicates the PC picks up on one of the social patterns showing up in the Game of Letters, chosen by the GM from this list:
• Shosuro Mikio and Mirumoto Hideo’s romance (or her romance with a PC, if such takes place).

• Shiba Yota’s growing paranoia and near-insanity.

• Anyone who is the target of Kakita Sensa’s seduction efforts.

• Bayushi Akira’s enmity toward any PCs who have him as a Sworn Enemy.

The First Snow Festival

The Scorpion will hold a special celebration on the night of the first full snowfall, about three weeks into the Winter Court. Colored lanterns are hung throughout the castle and a large silken pavilion is erected in the center of the garden, the ground beneath swept clear of snow and covered with clean tatami mats. Servants deliver invitations to all the guests, written on paper of a delicate creamy white: “Shosuro Adoka invites your presence in the gardens this evening to celebrate the first snowfall of the winter.”

If Shosuro Mikio is romancing a PC, she will deliver a letter with a poem suggesting that the PC can expect romantic success this evening. The poem can be accurately interpreted with a roll of Intelligence/Storytelling (Poetry) at TN 10. On the other hand, if she has formed a genuine friendship/connection to a PC, she will complain to that PC that she is expected to advance her romance with Hideo during this evening’s event. “I would far rather simply enjoy the celebration. Why must everything, every pleasure in life, be corrupted by such things?” She asks the PC to not hate her for what she must do tonight.

The First Snow celebrations are accompanied by musicians and acrobats, performing flawlessly in the chill air of the snow-shrouded gardens, while servants offer hot tea, hot sake, and grilled snacks fresh from charcoal braziers to the guests. At midnight, a thundering eruption of hanabi (fireworks) caps the festivities.

• If Mikio is supposed to meet with a PC, she fails to appear, and in fact the PCs does not see her at the celebration at all.

• If the PCs check to see if anyone is absent from the celebration, they can roll Perception/Investigation at TN 15 to notice that Shosuro Mikio is missing.

• If none of the PCs check for missing people, Mirumoto Hideo will eventually approach them, asking whether they have seen Shosuro Mikio this evening. He will try to “play it cool” and appear as though he is not particularly concerned about the answer, but any PC who rolls Awareness/Investigation at TN 15 can tell he is actually disappointed and a little bit worried.

Part Four: The First Murder

The first murder is, in fact, Shosuro Mikio. She will not appear at the First Snow festival and will fail to appear anywhere in the castle the next day. While she is making her final preparations for the evening’s festivities, Kumade/Jusuke uses his Deceiver magic to creep into her room, disabling her with a sleeping poison called Night’s Kiss and then arranging her body to resemble the suicide of Kumade’s wife.

The murder will be discovered by servants the next morning (unless an inquisitive PC discovers it first) and guards will be posted outside of her quarters. The magistrate Shosuro Taikan arrives within an hour, examines the scene, then meets with Shosuro Adoka. The hatamoto orders the situation covered up to minimize disruptions to the Winter Court – the body is removed by eta that evening, while the other guests are at dinner, and the next day it is officially announced that Shosuro Mikio has taken ill and left for her home in the countryside.

Before the body is removed, a guard is posted at the door to her quarters, and guests are told she is ill and has asked not be disturbed. The PCs will not be allowed into her rooms without permission from Shosuro Adoka or Shosuro Taikan. Any Scorpion PCs who inquire will be told, privately, that the matter is being kept quiet to avoid any embarrassment or trouble.

Learning More About Mikio

It is unlikely that all of the PCs will accept the public story about Shosuro Mikio, especially if some of them had formed emotional connections to her beforehand. The Scorpion wills stonewall them quite thoroughly on any possibility of visiting her room, but PCs who seek out information through channels of gossip or contacts can roll Awareness/Courtier (Gossip) at TN 25 to ferret out hints that the local magistrate, Shosuro Taikan, visited her quarters and that Mikio is actually dead, possibly murdered.
The PCs will not normally be able to learn more until after they become involved in the investigations into the later murders. However, dishonorable or ruthless PCs may decide to find a way to sneak into Mikio’s room—most likely via magic, but a PC might also be able to bribe/persuade the guard into allowing a visit by making a well role-played appeal and rolling Awareness/Deceit at TN 25. If so, they can discover the following scene:

Shosuro Mikio lies dead in the middle of the floor, her blood soaking the tatami mat. Her ankles have been bound together with a length of silk, in the manner of a woman preparing herself for jigai, and her hands clasp the hilt of the tanto which has been driven through her throat. Despite the gruesomeness of the scene, her face is calm, almost blank, and her eyes are shut as though in sleep. Bloody kanji are written across the back of her kimono.

The kanji written in blood on Mikio’s kimono read, “Shosuro Miyume.” The name is not recognizable to the PCs, and there is no one at the Winter Court with that name.

PCs who examine Mikio’s face/mouth can roll Perception/Investigation (Notice) at TN 25 to pick up hints of a strange odor. A roll of Intelligence/Medicine (Antidotes) at TN 25, or Intelligence/Poison at TN 20, identifies this odor as Night’s Kiss, a poison that causes the victim to fall into a deep sleep when its fumes are inhaled.

If a PC looks at Mikio’s body and rolls Perception/Etiquette at TN 15, he realizes her kimono’s obi (belt) is tied in the manner customary for a married woman, even though she is a maiden. The PCs can remember that she always tied her belt in the manner of a maiden.

There is no other direct evidence of Kumade/Jusuke’s presence. PCs who check the room for signs of forced entry or infiltration can roll Perception/Investigation at TN 20 to convince themselves that nobody broke in through the door or the window.

Magical Evidence

If a shugenja PC tries to Commune with the kami in this room, there are Air and Earth spirits available. The Scorpion will not Banish the spirits—they might need to speak with them later for themselves—so the PCs could potentially visit this room days or weeks later, when it is no longer guarded, to learn what happened. Shugenja PCs can learn the following:

- A man in dark clothing came into the room “through the darkness.” The spirits do not know how to explain it better than that, and become frustrated if asked repeatedly.
- The man placed a cloth with “smelly water” over the woman’s face, and she fell on the floor. He tied up her feet, rearranged her clothing, and then stabbed her in the throat.
- The man left in the same strange way he came.

What the Magistrate Learns

If the PCs later gain permission to look into this incident as part of their investigation into the subsequent murders, they may decide to speak with Shosuro Taikan about what he found in Mikio’s room.

The magistrate can describe the murder scene accurately (particularly the simulated appearance of jigai and the unusual arrangement of the kimono). He discovered the evidence of Night’s Kiss and deduced from that how the murder was probably committed. He also knows there was no physical evidence of how the murderer got into the room.

Part Five: The Second Murder

The second victim of Kumade’s murder spree will be Kitsuki Noburo. Two weeks after the death of Shosuro Mikio, Kumade/Jusuke will slip into Noburo’s room in the early morning hours. He doses Noburo with Night’s Kiss, the same disabling poison he used on Mikio, then carries his body out to the gardens and cuts his throat in front of the Go board where he is playing against Shosuro Kaneki. Shiba Yota finds him there while trying to focus himself with early-morning kata—if any of the PCs have adopted a similar custom, they will discover him as well:

Kitsuki Noburo sits slumped in front of the Go board beneath the pagoda where you have seen him on many other days. Morning frost has filmed his face and the ruffled, tangled green kimono he wears. His throat has been cut, and frozen blood coats the front of his garment and pools in his lap. A white Go stone rests in the open palm of his right hand.

The Scorpion will not be able to sweep this crime under the rug as they did Shosuro Mikio’s death, and the magistrate will quickly be summoned. He in turn will,
reluctantly, ask Kasuga Gyuuho to investigate the crime. “Since this crime involves a member of another Clan, a Clan with whom the Scorpion have the greatest friendship and who was killed while a guest of ours, it seems best to bring in an Emerald Magistrate in order to ensure there is not the slightest appearance of a lack of commitment to justice on our part.”

Kasuga Gyuuho will ask the help of any PCs with whom he has good relations, as well as any PCs who are Dragon Clan or Monkey Clan, who are Kitsuki-trained, or who are magistrates (Jade, Sapphire, or clan magistrate). At the GM’s discretion he may involve other PCs on his own initiative, and he will not object if the PCs ask to bring in others to assist with the investigation.

Gyuuho is trained as a Kitsuki, supposed to investigate facts and evidence logically. However, he is clearly emotionally shaken by the death of his sensei, and finds it difficult to carry out the investigation effectively (which is why he will seek help from the PCs). Left to his own devices, he will not be able to solve the crimes in time to save the Scorpion champion, although he will get close.

The Body

True to his Kitsuki training, Gyuuho will start by summoning eta to search the body carefully under his observation. (He will find this distressing and will initially not notice any of the clues, although he can see them if the PCs point them out.) The PCs are free to assist with this investigation as they see fit, though of course anyone who directly touches dead flesh should lose 1 point each of Honor and Glory.

Noburo’s face is calm, despite the grisly wound cutting open his throat, and there is no evidence of violence or struggle. He is dressed in a kimono, but closely examining the garment will perceive that it was put on loosely and hurriedly, and the obi belt is not properly tied. A PC who examines him closely can roll Perception/Investigation at TN 25 to detect a faint herbal, flowery scent from his face. A PC who rolls Intelligence/Medicine (Antidotes) at TN 20 or Intelligence/Poison at TN 15 can identify this as the odor of a poison known as Night’s Kiss, which is reputed to put its victims into a deep, drugged sleep that lasts two or three hours. Information on the poison is spotty, and mostly rumor – supposedly it was widely used a century ago, but there have been few accounts of its use recently.

The Go stone in his hand is white, but Noburo is playing black in the current game, suggesting that the piece has been taken as a prisoner. However, the most recent moves did not take any prisoners. A PC who examines the board and rolls Intelligence/Games: Go at TN 15 recognizes that the piece in Noburo’s hand was taken from the board, and the removal of the piece shifts the balance decisively in favor of his opponent, Shosuro Kaneki.

If the PCs examine the body without its clothing (most likely by having an eta do so), or specifically look for other injuries besides the wound in the throat, they can roll Perception/Investigation (Notice) at TN 20 or Perception/Medicine (Wound Treatment) at TN 20 to notice bruises on the arms, legs, and feet which suggest the body was dragged or otherwise moved about roughly.

If the PCs search the area around the crime scene, they can roll Perception/Hunting at TN 20 to detect some scuff marks on the pagoda floor and in the raked gravel around the pagoda, which suggest something heavy was part-carried, part-dragged into the pagoda. This is the main clue Gyuuho will be able to discover on his own, and based on the pattern of splatter and pooling from the blood, he will conclude that Noburo was somehow brought here and then his throat was slit.

Noburo’s Quarters

If the PCs search Noburo’s room, they find what appears to be a normal guest residence with a futon, writing desk, wardrobe, and sword-stand. By the time they arrive to investigate, the servants have already made up the futon and folded the coverlets (they do this routinely every morning, for every guest room), but if the PCs ask, the servants can explain that the futon appeared to have been slept in, and the coverlet was tossed aside in a heap. If the PCs specifically ask about the wardrobe, they mention that it was slightly open and Noburo’s yukata (sleeping robe) was tossed on the floor beside it.

If the PCs search the floor in or around where the futon lay, they can roll Perception/Investigation at TN 25 to detect two faint clues. There are some faint scuff marks on the floor, as though someone or something was dragged across it, and there is a faint odor in the air, an herbal, flowery scent. A PC who rolls Intelligence/Medicine (Antidotes) at TN 20 or Intelligence/Poison at TN 15 can identify this as the odor of a poison known as Night’s Kiss, which is reputed to put its victims into a deep, drugged sleep that lasts two or three hours. Information on the poison is
spotty, and mostly rumor – supposedly it was widely used a century ago, but there have been few accounts of its use recently.

If the PCs check the yukata, futon, or coverlet, they can roll **Perception/Investigation (Notice)** at TN 25 to discover the same scent of Night’s Kiss on all three. The location of the scent suggests the drug was placed on Noburo’s head or face.

If the PCs check the writing desk, they find an assortment of partially-completed letters, some of them poems for the Game of Letters, others personal correspondence. Clearly Noburo was a prolific writer.

PCs who are checking the desk can roll **Perception/Investigation** at TN 15 to discover Noburo’s personal journal, a set of heavy, durable pages stacked together and bound at the corner with heavy silk thread, beneath the desk. The journal mostly chronicles mundane events – travel, meetings with various people, the Go game with Kaneki, etc. The PCs will notice that Noburo often seems to write in a sort of short-hand or pseudo-code that avoids the need to write down anything too specific. However, if a PC can roll **Intelligence/Calligraphy (Cipher)** at TN 15, they can discover that Noburo learned about Shosuro Mikio’s death from Mirumoto Hideo and Shosuro Kaneki, and was intrigued by certain aspects of the crime:

- **“Hint from K that Lady M did not struggle. Poison or drug? Must check gardens.”** This entry is two weeks old.
- **“Lady M was placed in pose of jigai, and kimono was tied like wife not maiden. Also strange name, Shosuro Miyume, found at scene. Reminds me of case in great-grandfather Jocho’s journals. Must send back to Dragon lands for it.”** This entry is less than a week old.

If the PCs inquire, they can learn that Noburo has not sent any letters to Dragon lands. If they check the incomplete letters on the desk, one of them is the beginning of a letter written to his wife at Shiro Kitsuki, asking her to send him something, although he did not get around to saying what he needed.

**Witnesses**

There are not witnesses to how Noburo’s body came to be in the garden. However, if the PCs speak with the servants in the guest quarters, they can roll **Awareness/Investigation (Interrogation)** at TN 20 to find one servant who hesitates, then shakes his head. “No, samurai-sama, I saw nothing.” If the PCs pursue this, a Scorpion PC can get him to speak. Other PCs can get him to open up by either being gentle and persuasive (a roll of **Awareness/Etiquette (Sincerity)** at TN 20) or threatening (a roll of **Willpower/Intimidation** at TN 20). If the servant does speak, he explains that he was passing through the guest quarters very early in the morning (about 4am), emptying the chamber pots, when he saw something for a moment. He is not sure if it was real, but it appeared to be a figure in dark, close-fitting garments (he will not come out and say “ninja garb”) who was carrying some kind of long bundle over one shoulder. He saw it for only a moment. “It was almost as though he stepped into a shadow and vanished, samurai-sama.” The servant hesitated to speak not only because what he saw was strange and fantastic, but also because he is in a Scorpion castle, where mysterious happenings are to be expected.

**The Gardens and Poison**

If the PCs identified the poison, Night’s Kiss, used on Noburo as Night’s Kiss, they may decide to look for the plants which make that poison in the Shosuro gardens. A roll of **Perception/Medicine (Herbalism)** or **Perception/Poison** at TN 20 will identify the correct herbs and flowers in one of the garden’s warmed zones, the plants sheltered underneath a sheet of gaijin glass that is carefully swept clean each day by the servants.

If the PCs examine these plants closely, they can roll **Perception/Investigation (Notice)** at TN 15 to see that several sprigs have been cut off of the plants which are used to create Night’s Kiss. There is no direct evidence of who might have done this, and if the PCs ask around as to who has been seen in this part of the garden, they can easily learn that Shosuro Kaneki, Shosuro Chizuri, Soshi Jusuke, and Kitsuki Noburo himself have all visited this part of the garden regularly.

Clever PCs may decide to “stake out” this location, either physically by hiding nearby, or magically with spells like **Reflecting Pool**. If a PC stakes out the garden personally, that PC must win a **Contested Roll** of **Agility/Stealth (Sneaking)** against Soshi Jusuke’s **Perception/Investigation (Notice)**. If Jusuke/Kumade wins, he will simply avoid doing anything to expose himself. If the PC wins, s/he will see Jusuke cut some more sprigs of the plants and tuck them away under his obi. A PC who employs magical surveillance will likewise be able to see this.
Magical Investigations

Kasuga Gyuuho is well acquainted with Rokugani law and will remind the PCs that evidence acquired from the spirits is not considered valid. However, he will not otherwise discourage the PCs from using magic to assist their investigation, and may even point out that it can be useful in its own way. “Even if we cannot use magic to convict someone, it may point to the way to evidence we can use.”

The most obvious method of investigation is to question the spirits in Noburo’s room and at the murder scene, by means of the Commune spell. There are Earth and Air spirits available in Noburo’s quarters, and the murder scene has both of those along with Water spirits in the snow that blankets the gardens around the pagoda which is the crime scene.

- The spirits in Noburo’s room can say that a man dressed in dark garments came into the room and put a cloth with “smelly air” on Noburo’s face. Then he changed Noburo into a kimono and carried him out of the room.

- The spirits cannot describe how the man came in and out of the room. “He was not there, then he was there.” If a PC asks whether the man used the spirits to do this, the kami say he did not. A PC who hears this and rolls Intelligence/Lore: Shugenja at TN 20 will realize this means the magic used is not conventional spirit magic. The fact that the spirits cannot explain what happened, but do not seem disturbed by, suggests it is also not maho.

- If the PCs took Raises for clarity, the spirits describe the man as “angry” and “made of two, forged into one.” This should hint to the PCs that they are dealing with someone who is possessed.

- If the PCs question the spirits near the pagoda, they can learn that the same man brought Noburo here, placed him in the pagoda, then slit his throat and put the stone in his hand. If the PC Communes with a Water spirit (which will require at least one Raise for clarity, since the water spirits are trapped in the snow), s/he can get a visual image of a slim man in “ninja” garb, carrying the unconscious Nobuto to his fate. The ninja seems to appear suddenly out of the darkness, as though stepping from nowhere.

Researching in the Library

PCs may decide to research the name “Kitsuki Jocho” or “Shosuro Miyume” in the castle libraries, or to try to learn more about ninja magic.

If the PCs decide to research the name “Kitsuki Jocho,” they can roll Intelligence/Lore: Dragon at TN 20 or Intelligence/Lore: Law at TN 25 to recall hearing stories of a famous Kitsuki magistrate from over a century ago. Supposedly, Jocho was unusual for working closely with the Scorpion Clan, and assisted them with several important problems within their Clan, although no details are known.

PCs who research Jocho in the castle library can roll Intelligence/Investigation at TN 20, or Intelligence/Calligraphy (Cipher) at TN 25, to uncover a reference to a Kitsuki Jocho visiting Shiro no Shosuro in the winter of 1391. There is an obscure bit of text referring to his involvement in “a favorable solution to the problem raised by Shosuro Miyume’s death.”

PCs who look for the name “Shosuro Miyume” (either due to this discovery, due to the reference in Noburo’s journal, or due to learning about the name at Mikio’s crime scene) can roll Intelligence/Investigation at TN 20 to find a reference to her as a woman from the late 1300s, married to a “Shosuro Kumade.” Her fate is described as “died honorably in service of the Scorpion Clan” in the winter of 1391. There are no other references to “Shosuro Kumade” to be found anywhere in the library, which any PC will realize is rather strange, and suggests that he was deliberately removed. However, a PC who makes TN 25 or better on the Investigation roll will discover a reference to her funeral being attended by her “brother-in-law, Shosuro Makotaru.”

If the PCs research the genealogy of Shosuro Miyume, they can roll Intelligence/Investigation at TN 20 to confirm that Shosuro Mikio was her descendent. Likewise, if the PCs specifically search for any descendents of Shosuro Makotaru, a similar Investigation roll will trace his lineage to Soshi Jusuke.

PCs who read Kitsuki Jocho’s journal (see below) may come across the name “Shosuro Gaijutso.” Researching this name in the libraries (Investigation TN 25) identifies him as a senior guard in Shiro no Shosuro in the late 1300’s. Researching his genealogy (TN 20) traces his bloodline to Shosuro Yusora, the captain of the guard.
The Journal of Kitsuki Jocho

PCs who found Noburo’s journal may decide to send to Shiro Kitsuki for a copy of his ancestor Kitsuki Jocho’s journal. Getting the journal of Kitsuki Jocho will require either a request from Kasuag Gyuuho (as an Emerald Magistrate he can request the cooperation of Noburo’s family) or a request from a Dragon Clan or Kitsuki-trained PC. Gyuuho will make the request readily enough if the PCs explain the reason for it. It will take four weeks for the journal to arrive from Dragon lands, so the PCs will not be able to see it until after the third murder (see Part Six below), unless they apprehend Jusuke/Kumade before that happens.

The journal is an old and worn sheaf of papers, and consists mainly of lengthy recounting of various crimes which Kitsuki Jocho investigated during a long career as a Dragon Clan magistrate. He apparently had an unusual and close friendship with a Scorpion family from the Shosuro line, and they often called him in to assist them with internal problems they could not resolve themselves. In order to find the correct case, the PCs will have to roll *Intelligence/Investigation* or *Intelligence/Calligraphy* at TN 20. With a success, the PCs discover an investigation into the unexpected suicide of a young woman named Shosuro Miyume. Jocho eventually determined that Miyume had killed herself in order to expose a plot by her husband, Shosuro Kumade, against the Scorpion Clan Champion. Jocho describes Kumade as “a student of an obscure and secretive shugenja school, which I could not convince my friends to tell me more about, despite all my pleading.” Although Jocho was sure Kumade was guilty, he could not prove it in a court of law. Instead, he told his friend Shosuro Gaijutso, an officer in the Scorpion armies, who accused Kumade and challenged him to a duel, proving his guilt. The journal discussion ends with Jocho remarking, “Kumade was punished in the Scorpion way, which I have learned about from my friends. A punishment harsher than any mere hanging. May the Fortunes have mercy upon Kumade, for the Scorpion showed him none.”

**Part Six: The Third Murder**

If the PCs do not uncover Kumade/Jusuke on their own, he will commit a third crime about three weeks after Noburo’s death. This time the victim will be Shosuro Yusora, the captain of the guard, the descendent of Shosuro Gaijutso, the man who proved Kumade’s guilt by dueling him.

Kumade/Jusuke will lure Yusora to his doom by suggesting he knows something about the recent murders. He promises to meet Yusora in a far corner of the gardens in the early morning, claiming he has secret information which he can only share privately. When Yusora arrives, Kumade/Jusuke ambushes him, knocking him out with Night’s Kiss and then arranging his body to resemble the loser in a duel. Unfortunately for him, this crime does not go unnoticed – a patrolling guard stumbles across the scene just as Kumade/Jusuke is placing the finishing touches on the death scene. He is forced to kill the guard and then hurriedly drag the body away to hide it.

The crime will be discovered a half-hour later by servants who are cleaning and raking the gardens. They immediately report it to the Scorpion, who notify the magistrate. He, in turn, recognizes there is probably a connection with the death of Kitsuki Noburo, and brings in Kasuga Gyuuho.

- A PC is a Scorpion of the Soshi or Shosuro family. Such a PC can ask their family members for information and learn that the Scorpion are no longer officially maintaining the secret Deceiver school, having concluded that the magic it teaches is dangerous. The school was officially shut down over eighty years ago. The PC may suspect that the school is still being maintained covertly – the higher-ranking Scorpion will not discourage this belief.

- PCs who roll *Intelligence/Lore: Scorpion* (or *Lore: Ninja*) at TN 30 can recall obscure tales of a secret Scorpion school that taught magic similar to the sinister powers of the legendary Lying Darkness. Whether such a school ever actually existed is unknown.

- PCs who have Allies or Favors with the Scorpion Clan can “cash in” (erase) one of those Allies/Favors to learn the same information as for the Lore skills listed above.

**Ninja?**

Some PCs who have picked up hints of strange “ninja magic” from the case may try to learn more about this. For most PCs, however, this will be a dead end. The Scorpion are not about to share information about the secret Deceiver School with outsiders. The PCs can only learn something if they meet one or more of the following conditions:
PCs who are in the gardens in the early morning may stumble across some or all of this, starting with the screaming servant who runs through the garden to alert the guards. Regardless, Gyuuho will bring in any PCs who have been helping him to assist with this investigation as well.

The Murder Scene

The Scorpion will keep the murder scene untouched until Gyuuho can look at it. The PCs may be able to get there earlier if they hear what is happening, but regardless of when they arrive, the scene is the same:

*The body of Shosuro Yusora lies on the snow-crusted ground in a puddle of cooling blood. His torso has been split open from shoulder to hip, as though by a perfect dueling sword-strike, with an arc of blood stretching out across the snow from the hit. His own katana is drawn and lies in the ground next to his right hand. His face is frozen in an expression of surprise and anger. The snow and gravel around him has been scuffed and tossed up.*

Yusora is dressed in his usual garb – a fine-quality but practical kimono and hakama and his daisho – but is not wearing his arm and shin guards. (He typically wears these about half the time.) If the PCs examine Yusora closely, they can roll *Perception/Investigation* at TN 25 to detect a faint herbal, flowery scent from his face. This is, of course, the mark of Night’s Kiss, and the PCs will recognize it if they encountered it before with Nobuto. If not, a PC who rolls *Intelligence/Medicine (Antidotes)* at TN 20 or *Intelligence/Poison* at TN 15 can identify the odor of Night’s Kiss, reputed to put its victims into a deep, drugged sleep that lasts two or three hours.

PCs who examine the wound, blood spatter, and/or the posture of Yusora’s body can roll *Perception/Medicine (Wound Treatment)* at TN 20, or *Perception/Battle* at TN 25, to recognize that Yusora was cut while he was kneeling, and the blow knocked him backward onto his back.

PCs who examine the scuffed-up snow and gravel around Yusora’s body can roll *Perception/Hunting* at TN 20 to discover another blood splatter about fifteen feet away, partially obscured as though someone dragged their foot across it. If a PC makes a second Hunting roll, or makes TN 30 or better on the first roll, they also discover intermittent drag marks in the snow and gravel, leading across the garden to a drainage ditch behind a row of shrubs. Lying in the ditch is the body of one of the castle guards, dead.

The Second Body

If the PCs do not discover the second body, Kasuga Gyuuho will eventually locate it. He is dressed in the standard padded armor and straw cloak which the guards wear at night. In contrast to Yusora, he is dead from a ragged cut into his shoulder and two stab wounds in the torso. His own sword is gone, but he still has his wakizashi and tanto (both sheathed). A roll of *Perception/Medicine (Wound Treatment)* at TN 20, or *Perception/Battle* at TN 25, deduces that the wounds which killed him were caused with a sword, probably a katana. The PCs can also see a deep cut on the guard’s arm, suggesting that he was trying to ward off a blow.

If the PCs search the body, or have an eta search it, they can roll *Perception/Investigation (Notice)* at TN 25 to find a torn piece of dark gray silk fabric lodged on a severed edge of his arm, apparently torn off from whoever carried his body over to the ditch.

Asking Questions

The PCs will probably want to try to find out what Shosuro Yusora was doing in the gardens in pre-dawn. If they visit his quarters in the castle’s residential areas, they can speak with his grief-stricken wife Maiko. Tearful and trembling, she speaks in a soft, flat voice, stunned by the suddenness of her loss. The PCs can hear her children crying somewhere else in the residence, and the murmuring of a maidservant trying to comfort them.

Maiko does not know exactly why her husband left so early this morning. He came back late last night (“he always checked the guards one last time before returning each night”), and seemed excited about something. “He said he had learned something important, but he wouldn’t tell me what it was about. He always tried to protect me from worrying about his duties, so I could concentrate on managing the household.” She woke up when he left in the early morning, but he didn’t speak to her.

If the PCs speak with Yusora’s underlings, the castle guards, they can find his chief gunso (sergeant), Shosuro Choro, on duty. Choro does not know why Yusora would have been in the garden so early in the morning. The last time he saw Yusora was the previous evening, when he did a final round of checks on the guard posts. Choro recalls that Yusora seemed excited about something, but refused to say what.
• If the PCs ask, Choro will summon and interrogate the other guards who were on duty the night before. One of the guards remembers seeing Yusora speaking with Soshi Jusuke near the beginning of his evening rounds.

Magical Investigations
There are plenty of Air and Earth spirits in the area of these two crimes, and Water spirits in the snow.

• The spirits will say that a man dressed in dark garments hid in the gardens until the “strong man with the swords” (Yusora) came there. He jumped out and put a cloth with “smelly air” on Yusora’s face, then posed the unconscious man on his knees and made a dueling-style sword-strike to kill him.

• Just after Yusora died, another man (the guard) came through the area. The man in dark clothing immediately attacked him, killing him quickly, and dragged his body to the ditch.

• Water spirits will depict all of this with silent visual images. The PCs can clearly see that the killer is dressed in “ninja” clothing of a dark gray color.

• The spirits can show that the killer came from near the castle, and returned to it afterward. However, they cannot trace him farther than that. “He was not there, then he was there.” The Water spirits can show the killer melting in and out of the shadows, as though teleporting. Again, if a PC asks whether the man used the spirits to do this, the kami say he did not. A PC who hears this and rolls Intelligence/Lore: Shugenja at TN 20 will realize this means the magic used is not conventional spirit magic. The fact that the spirits cannot explain what happened, but do not seem disturbed by, suggests it is also not maho.

• If the PCs took Rais for clarity, the spirits describe the killer as “angry” and “made of two, forged into one.” This should hint to the PCs that they are dealing with someone who is possessed.

If the PCs recovered the piece of gray cloth from the murder scene, the spell The Ties That Bind can trace the cloth to Soshi Jusuke’s quarters.

Part Seven: Unmasking Soshi Jusuke

Eventually, the PCs should realize that Soshi Jusuke is connected to the murders. There are a number of clues which can point them in this direction, including Jusuke’s lineage, the guard’s witnessing his meeting with Shosuro Yusora, his presence in the portion of the gardens where ingredients are grown for Night’s Kiss, and the scrap of cloth from the third murder scene.

Once the PCs realize that Jusuke is a suspect, they may try to go back and trace his movements during the various murders. By rolling Awareness/Investigation at TN 25, they can confirm that he was not at the First Snow celebration until after Mikio’s murder would have taken place. The other murders took place late at night when he was supposedly asleep in his room, but PCs who think to speak with the servants, and make an Awareness/Investigation roll at TN 30, will find a servant who remembers seeing Jusuke outside his room in the early morning hours, shortly after Yusora’s murder would have taken place.

Kasuga Gyuuh will not be able to solve this case on his own – due to his obsession with material evidence and the “Kitsuki method,” he will focus solely on the physical evidence at each crime scene and ignores other avenues of investigation. However, if the PCs uncover the clues pointing to Jusuke, he will quickly agree with their analysis and summon the Scorpion magistrate, Shosuro Taikan, to arrange an interrogation and possibly an arrest.

Questioning Jusuke

Jusuke/Kumade will initially attempt to bluff his way through any investigation. He will be blandly and politely cooperative with Gyuuh and the PCs, and offers glib answers to their questions.

• He claims ignorance of any genealogical connection to past events, and expresses puzzlement that the PCs would be asking him about such things.

• He admits to speaking with Shosuro Yusora the night before his death, but denies it was anything of significance. “I make a point of maintaining good relations with the castle guards. After all, our safety may depend on their dedication and good will.”
• If the PCs mention the gardens and Night’s Kiss, he shrugs it off. “Many people enjoy the gardens here, samurai-san. Are you questioning them all?”

PCs can discern that Jusuke/Kumade is lying by defeating his Awareness/Deceit (Lying) with their Perception/Investigation (Interrogation). He will claim offense at the suggestion he is being less than truthful, and suggests the PCs are making him a scapegoat to try to wrap up their investigation. “I cannot imagine what I have done to make me your target, samurai-sans, but I assure you I am not the man you seek.”

Evidence in Jusuke’s Room
Smart PCs will search Soshi Jusuke’s quarters – if they do not do so at the same time as they question him, he will hide the evidence before they can return.

Assuming they do not allow him that opportunity, Gyuuho and the PCs can use the evidence they have found to justify searching his quarters. A roll of Perception/Investigation (Search) at TN 30 will be needed to locate the hidden compartment in the bottom of his closet. (Casting the spell By the Light of the Moon will also be effective.)

Inside the hidden compartment is Jusuke/Kumade’s “ninja” outfit, a garment and mask of dark gray silk, with a tear that matches the piece of cloth the PCs found in the gardens. There is also a knife and a katana, both sheathed, both with dried bloodstains on the woven thread of their hilts. Finally, there is a small bottle containing several doses of Night’s Kiss poison.

Magical Investigation of Jusuke
Once the PCs begin to suspect Jusuke, some of them may begin to look for signs of magical or supernatural interference in his behavior, especially if they picked up on the spirits’ references to “two persons in one.” PCs who have played adventures such as “Shadows of Beiden” or “Bayushi Lineage” may also make a connection between Jusuke and the incidents of possession in those adventures.

Kumade has possessed Jusuke for well over a year, and is quite skilled at concealing his presence and nature. Abilities and spells which can detect spirits or magical effects (such as an Inner Gift, a Kitsu casting Sense Ancestor, or a Moto Death Priest’s ability) will normally not be able to sense Kumade. However, a PC who uses one of those abilities and makes at least two Raises will be able to pick up a faint spiritual outline around Jusuke, as though a second person’s image is superimposed onto him.

A shugenja PC who Communes with the spirits around Jusuke and asks if there is anything strange or unusual about him will be told that he is “two people in one body.”

Kumade’s spirit is not Tainted or otherwise spiritually corrupted. Jade, crystal, and other spiritual substances will not trouble Jusuke, and spells such as Jade Strike have no effect on him.

Making the Arrest
If and when the PCs finally decide to arrest Soshi Jusuke, he will not go quietly. Instead, he will suddenly make an acrobatic leap backward as he attempts to flee. He will employ his Deceiver spells and abilities to best effect, attempting to get out of the area by any means possible and then hiding in the vast maze that is Shiro no Shosuro. If he does manage to get away, his Deceiver abilities will make him almost impossible to catch, although this will still prevent him from committing any further murders.

Although Jusuke/Kumade will fight and struggle to the very best of his ability, he is fundamentally a coward, and if the PCs manage to overpower or trap him, he will not commit suicide. (Having escaped from Traitor’s Grove, he is desperate to stay alive.)

If the PCs do manage to successfully arrest Soshi Jusuke and place him under interrogation, he will eventually crack and confess his true identity as Shosuro Kumade. He will babble at some length about how he was betrayed by his wife Miyume, how the “meddling Kitsuki” exposed him and he was forced into a duel with Shosuro Gaijutso. If the PCs ask how he came to be here now, he will tell the full story of Traitor’s Grove. “The Clan punished me in its own way, trapping my soul in a tree for all time. An eternity of torment! But then something happened, there was heat, flames, and I was free! Free! I could feel my bloodline, my descendent, and I claimed his body to take my revenge!”

Kumade will not release his grip on Jusuke’s body, no matter what happens. “If I am to die, I will take my loyal descendent with me! If I am to return to the Grove, he will share my fate!”

Kasuga Gyuuho will be somewhat uncertain of how to deal with the problem once Jusuke’s true nature is revealed, and will ultimately hand him over to Shosuro Winter Court: Shiro no Shosuro
Taikan for judgment. Taikan will take Jusuke/Kumade into custody and thanks Gyuuho and the PCs for their efforts in rooting out “a serpent in our midst.”

Part Eight: The Year’s End

When the end of year festival finally approaches, a huge and heavily-guarded caravan will approach the castle, grinding through the melting snow and slush of the winter’s end. This is the Clan Champion, Bayushi Tamoru, accompanied by the lead company of the Kyozou Theater Troupe.

The Champion will remain in seclusion until the actual night of the Year’s End Festival. However, any PCs who visit the Kyozou Troupe at the Silken Smile Theater will note a subtle improvement in the quality of their performances.

- Some PCs may inquire about Toturi Hisako, the Emperor’s daughter who was fostered to the Scorpion Clan. Although meeting with her will normally be impossible, clever PCs may find ways to have messages delivered to her, or even slip messages into the Game of Letters. Any PC who comes up with a method of delivering a message to Hisako receives the advantage, Noticed by Toturi Hisako.

The Year’s End Performance

On the evening of the Year’s End Festival, the Kyozou Troupe hosts a special performance in the Silken Smile, premiering the new play from Yogo Amasare. It is titled “The Price of Loyalty,” and recounts the tragic life and death of Bayushi Shouju, the man who lead the Scorpion Clan Coup. The play depicts Shouju as a tormented and tragic figure, driven to madness by his belief that he could only save the Empire by destroying the Hantei dynasty, and portrays him as achieving a moment of enlightenment and voluntarily accepting his death at the hands of Toturi I when the Clan Coup is defeated.

The play is attended by Bayushi Tamoru, a slim man with long lustrous black hair and a silken mask that sets off his handsome features. He sits at the front of the theater, alongside Shosuro Adoka, with two bodyguards standing quietly off to either side.

If any PCs were able to offer useful suggestions to Yogo Amasare, they will notice their ideas in the play. However, Amasare will not offer them any credit or thanks, and takes all the credit for the play himself. If any PCs try to confront Amasare on this, or to take credit for that part of the play themselves, the playwright will angrily condemn them as liars and jealous rivals. The PCs will have to win an Opposed Roll of Awareness/Courtier (Manipulation) against Amasare’s roll of 7k4+3 in order to convince anyone they are telling the truth. If they succeed, they gain +1 point of Glory, but if they fail, they lose 5 points of Glory for their public attack on Amasare. Either way, they gain Yogo Amasare as a Sworn Enemy.

The Assassination Attempt

If the PCs did not trace the murders to Soshi Jusuke, Kasuga Gyuuho and Shosuro Taikan will be unable to solve the crimes on their own, and Jusuke/Kumade will attempt to complete his vengeance by assassinating the Scorpion Clan Champion.

He will use his Deceiver magic to emerge from the shadows immediately behind Bayushi Tamoru, stabbing his victim in the back with a poisoned knife. In most situations, this will succeed – Kumade acts too quickly for the guards to respond. Having achieved his revenge, he stands laughing maniacally until the guards cut him down.

- If a PC is specifically watching the Clan Champion for danger, that PC can react to the attack. A roll of Reflexes/Defense at TN 30 will allow the PC to leap in and deflect the blow before it strikes home.

- A shugenja PC with an anti-poison spell such as Hands of Jurijin could potentially save the Clan Champion.

Conclusions

After the New Year’s Festival, the Winter Court is at an end, and the guests of the Scorpion can depart for their own lands. If the PCs managed to catch Jusuke/Kumade and prevent the assassination, the Scorpion will quietly offer their gratitude to the PCs – each PC who assisted with the investigation gains a Favor with the Scorpion Clan.

If the PCs did not prevent the assassination, the death of Bayushi Tamoru will severely disrupt the Scorpion Clan’s internal affairs. The Winter Court ends in confusion and chaos, and the guests – including the PCs – spend the remaining days of the winter largely ignored by their hosts.
Shiba Yota’s Fate

If the PCs did not purge the poisons which the Scorpion are slipping into Shiba Yota’s diet, he will finally succumb to his growing paranoia and hallucinations during the New Year’s Festival. In the midst of the celebrations, Yota suddenly draws his sword and begins shouting at all the Scorpions near him. “Stay away! I see you! I see you! You won’t get me! Stay away!” Isawa Tengen, appalled, tries to calm the crazed bushi, but Yota strikes at him, wounding him severely, then charges through the gardens of Shiro no Shosuro swinging randomly at any Scorpion he sees.

- Clever and quick-thinking PCs may be able to stop Yota’s rampage before it escalates to violence. Spells that hold or disable their targets are the most obvious solution here, but a PC with the appropriate skills might be able to Grapple or otherwise defeat Yota before he strikes Tengen.

- An eloquent PC may try to calm down Yota verbally. This will require a well role-played speech or dialogue with Yota. The approaches most likely to work are either (a) focuses on soothing Yota and calming him down, or (b) scolding him eloquently for his failure of etiquette and honor. If the PC makes a good effort, he can roll Awareness/Etiquette (Sincerity) at TN 30 to calm Yota down, ending the incident.

If the PCs do not manage to calm or stop Yota, he goes on his rampage, and continues in this behavior until either a PC stops him or the Scorpion manage to subdue him. The next morning, Yota will commit seppuku to atone for his crimes.

Akira Declares War

If any of the PCs have Bayushi Akira as a Sworn Enemy, on the last evening of Winter Court he will invite all of those PCs to eat dinner with him. The meal is a polite but tense and strained affair, with Akira greeting each of the PCs by name and chatting with them about their personal lives and interests. Nothing else will happen at the dinner, and if a PC breaches etiquette in any way, Akira will simply smile at them coldly.

At the conclusion of the dinner, Akira personally gives each of the PCs a small polished wood puzzle box. (He will go through the full ritual of gift-giving for this event, although the GM need not role-play this out if the players are tired or time is running short.) “Please, samurai-sans, allow these humble gifts to be a memorial for all the time we have spent together,” Akira says. “Oh, do not open them here. Please wait until you have returned home.”

Each puzzle box contains a wooden carving of the totem animal of that PC’s Clan. (Imperials get a chrysanthemum flower, ronin get a wolf.) The animal/flower in the carving is depicted an a pose symbolizing death.

Any PC who rolls Intelligence/Lore: History at TN 20, or Lore: Scorpion at TN 15, will recognize this peculiar event as a Scorpion declaration of war. By sharing dinner with his enemies and offering them symbolic gifts, Akira is proclaiming his intention of destroying them.

Winning the Game of Letters

At the end of winter, Shosuro Adoka and Soshi Takano will announce the winner of the Game of Letters. If no PC beat a total of 43 with their skill roll, the winner is Yoritomo Makuro.

The winner is showered with gifts from the Scorpion Clan, and gains the “Rewarded by the Scorpion” cert.

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

At the end of the scenario, any PCs with Shadowlands Taint must make a Simple Earth roll with a TN of 5 + (5 x Taint Rank). If the roll is failed, the PC acquires one additional point of Taint.

Experience Points

<table>
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<th>Experience Points</th>
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<td>Playing through the adventure</td>
<td>1 XP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good role-playing</td>
<td>2 XP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCs uncover Jusuke/Kumade</td>
<td>1 XP</td>
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</tbody>
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Total Possible Experience: 4 XP

Other Awards/Penalties

- PCs who help expose Shosuro Kumade before he can murder Bayushi Tamoru will gain a Favor with the Scorpion Clan.
- PCs who make an effective attempt to make contact with Toturi Hisako gain the Advantage: Noticed by Toturi Hisako.
- A PC who wins the Game of Letters gains the “Rewarded by the Scorpion” cert.
Appendix: NPCs

Only those NPCs whose statistics are likely to be relevant to the adventure are included.

The Scorpions
Bayushi Akira, Daimyo of Toshi Aitate

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<th>FIRE 3</th>
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<th>WATER 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Willpower 4</td>
<td>Perception 3</td>
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VOID 3

TN to be Hit: 20 (25 in light armor)
School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 2

**Rank One:** Roll additional Initiative dice equal to School Rank. Enemies cannot use Combat Reflexes to trade initiative with him. Adds +5 to his TN to be Hit against opponents with lower Initiative.

**Rank Two:** He may declare Raises on an attack. If successful, this forces all opponents attacking him before his next Turn to call the same number of Raises, or their attack fails. If an opponent attacks him and misses, he gains a number of Free Raises equal to Air Ring for any attacks made on that opponent before their next turn.

Honor/Status/Glory: 1.0/6.0/3.0
Skills: Athletics 2, Calligraphy 1, Commerce 1, Courtier (Manipulation, Political Maneuvering) 5, Deceit (Lying) 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Forgery 1, Games: Go 2, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation (Notice) 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: History 2, Lore: Law 2, Meditation 2, Storytelling 3, Theology 2.
Mastery Abilities: Add +5 to total of Contested Social rolls. May declare Full Defense when Initiative is rolled.
Free Raise with all skills at Rank 5 or higher. May focus an additional time in an Iaijutsu duel.
Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Position (daimyo of Toshi Aitate)/Driven (avenge his father), Lechery (2 points).
Equipment: Kimono, light armor (usually not worn), daisho set, 5 koku.

Bayushi Tenmaku

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<td>Willpower 3</td>
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VOID 3

TN to be Hit: 19 (24 in light armor)
School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 1

**Rank One:** Roll additional Initiative dice equal to School Rank. Enemies cannot use Combat Reflexes to trade initiative with him. Adds +5 to his TN to be Hit against opponents with lower Initiative.

**Rank Two:** He may declare Raises on an attack. If successful, this forces all opponents attacking him before his next Turn to call the same number of Raises, or their attack fails. If an opponent attacks him and misses, he gains a number of Free Raises equal to Air Ring for any attacks made on that opponent before their next turn.

Honor/Status/Glory: 1.1/2.0/1.0
Skills: Athletics 2, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 4, Deceit (Lying, Seduction) 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Forgery 1, Games: Go 3, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation (Notice) 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: History 2, Lore: Heraldry 2, Stealth 3, Storytelling 2.
Mastery Abilities: Add +5 to total of Contested Social rolls. May focus an additional time in an Iaijutsu duel.
Advantages/Disadvantages: Crafty, Heartless, Voice
Equipment: Kimono, light armor, daisho set

Shosuro Adoka, Hatamoto to Shosuro Hido

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TN to be Hit: 41 (Defense skill and School technique)

School/Rank: Shosuro Shinobi 3 (wears the school mon of a Bayushi Courtier)

Rank One: Roll and keep additional dice equal to School Rank on all Stealth rolls. Full Defense does not interfere with movement. May go into Full Defense at start of combat and still act normally on his Turn.

Rank Two: Raises on Stealth rolls and attacks against unaware opponents are not limited. No limit on Raises when using Athletics and Low skills which have Great Potential. May add Fire x 2 to TN to be Hit when not wearing armor.

Rank Three: May increase TN to be Hit by any amount up to Fire x 5 by taking an identical penalty to all TNS except Stealth, Defense, and Athletics. Sneaking no longer interferes with movement.

Honor/Glory/Status: 1.3/1.0/2.0

Skills: Acting 3, Athletics 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Commerce 2, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Deceit (Lying) 6, Defense 5, Etiquette (Sincerity) 6, Investigation 3, Ju jitsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Knives 2, Kyujutsu 1, Lore (History) 1, Lore (Imperial Families) 1, Lore (Law) 2, Medicine (Antidotes) 3, Ninja Ranged Weapons 2, Poison 5, Stealth (Sneaking) 3, Theology 2, Underworld 2

Mastery Abilities: May disguise himself as a member of another Clan, profession, or social caste, and can put on a female voice. Adds +5 to total of any Contested Social Rolls. Free Raise on all skills at Rank 5 or above.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (many, including Shosuro Hido), Crafty, Great Potential (Deceit)/Dark Secrets (several)

Equipment: Fine kimono, ornamental mempo, wakizashi, fan, 5 koku.

Shosuro Chizuri, Scorpion Clan Courtier

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TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 3

Rank One: When making a Contested Social Skill roll, gains one Free Raise for every 2 points of Disadvantages you know your opponent has, or one for every 4 points which the opponent has but you are unaware of. Any time you succeed in a Contested Social Skill roll, you gain a Free Raise on your next such roll against the same opponent.

Rank Two: Observe an opponent for one round, spend a Void point, and make a Contested Awareness roll to learn the opponent’s lowest Trait, and rank in that Trait (Void counts as a Trait for this technique). Raises on the Awareness roll can learn additional Traits, from lowest to highest. When an opponent attempts to use a skill or technique to learn your Traits, you may spend a Void point to give false information.

Rank Three: Once per day, while having a conversation with an opponent, may make a Contested Awareness roll to learn information about the opponent. Opponent must choose to reveal either two Disadvantages, all Advantages, his three highest Traits, or the ranks and emphases of all his Skills.
If the opponent chooses anything other than Disadvantages, or reveals information she already knows, he cannot re-roll 10’s on Contested Social rolls against her for one full day.

**Honor/Status/Glory:** 1.5/3.0/5.6  
**Skills:** Acting (Mimicry) 3, Artisan: Bonsai 2, Artisan: Ikebana 2, Courtier (Manipulation, Political Maneuvering) 7, Deceit (Lying, Seduction) 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Sincerity) 7, Perform (Biwa 3, Dance 2, Samisen 2), Storytelling (Poetry) 3, Theology 2.  
**Mastery Abilities:** May disguise herself as a member of another Clan/profession/social caste. May make her voice sound like a man’s voice. Adds +10 to the total of any Contested Social Skill Rolls. Free Raise with all skills at Rank 5 or higher.  
**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Dangerous Beauty, Voice.  
**Equipment:** Fine kimono, fine court dress, tanto, steel fan, 10 koku.

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**4-Dan Shosuro Kaneki**

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**TN to be Hit:** 15  
**School/Rank:** Bayushi Courtier 3  
**Rank One:** When making a Contested Social Skill roll, gains one Free Raise for every 2 points of Disadvantages you know your opponent has, or one for every 4 points which the opponent has but you are unaware of. Any time you succeed in a Contested Social Skill roll, you gain a Free Raise on your next such roll against the same opponent.

**Rank Two:** Observe an opponent for one round, spend a Void point, and make a Contested Awareness roll to learn the opponent’s lowest Trait, and rank in that Trait (Void counts as a Trait for this technique). Raises on the Awareness roll can learn additional Traits, from lowest to highest. When an opponent attempts to use a skill or technique to learn your Traits, you may spend a Void point to give false information.

**Rank Three:** Once per day, while having a conversation with an opponent, may make a Contested Awareness roll to learn information about the opponent. Opponent must choose to reveal either two Disadvantages, all Advantages, his three highest Traits, or the ranks and emphases of all his Skills. If the opponent chooses anything other than Disadvantages, or reveals information he already knows, he cannot re-roll 10’s on Contested Social rolls against him for one full day.

**Honor/Status/Glory:** 2.1/2.0/3.6  
**Skills:** Calligraphy 4, Courtier (Manipulation, Political Maneuvering) 5, Deceit (Lying) 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Sincerity) 5, Games: Go 5, Investigation 5, Lore: Heraldry 4, Lore: History 5, Lore: Law 3, Meditation 2, Storytelling (Poetry) 3, Theology 3.

**Mastery Abilities:** Adds +5 to the total of Contested Social rolls.  
**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Ally (Shosuro Adoka).  
**Equipment:** Fine kimono, fine court dress, tanto, fan, 10 koku.

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**Shosuro Taikan, Scorpion Clan Magistrate**

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**TN to be Hit:** 28
School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 3

**Rank One:** Roll additional Initiative dice equal to School Rank. Enemies cannot use Combat Reflexes to trade initiative with him. Adds +5 to his TN to be Hit against opponents with lower Initiative.

**Rank Two:** He may declare Raises on an attack. If successful, this forces all opponents attacking him before his next Turn to call the same number of Raises, or their attack fails. If an opponent attacks him and misses, he gains a number of Free Raises equal to Air Ring for any attacks made on that opponent before their next turn.

**Rank Three:** Gains a Free Raise when attempting a Called Shot, Disarm, or Knockdown. Opponents roll and keep one fewer die when resisting Disarm attempts. May make two additional Raises on a Disarm attempt to end up holding the disarmed weapon.

Honor/Glory/Status/Infamy: 2.0/4.5/4.0/2.0


Mastery Abilities: Adds +5 to total of all Contested Social rolls. May declare Full Defense when initiative is rolled. Wound penalties reduced by Skill Rank when using Kenjutsu, and may spend an additional Void on damage with Kenjutsu. Free Raise on all skills at Rank 5 or higher. May Focus an additional time in an Iaijutsu duel.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (several), Blackmail (several), Social Position (Clan magistrate)/Bad Reputation (honest magistrate).

Equipment: Kimono, light armor (usually not worn), daisho set, tessen (war fan), badge of office, traveling pack with notes and writing kit, 5 koku.

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**Shosuro Yosura, Captain of the Guard for the Castle’s Guest Wing**

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 VOID 3

TN to be Hit: 37 (42 in light armor)

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 4

**Rank One:** Roll additional Initiative dice equal to School Rank. Enemies cannot use Combat Reflexes to trade initiative with him. Adds +5 to his TN to be Hit against opponents with lower Initiative.

**Rank Two:** He may declare Raises on an attack. If successful, this forces all opponents attacking him before his next Turn to call the same number of Raises, or their attack fails. If an opponent attacks him and misses, he gains a number of Free Raises equal to Air Ring for any attacks made on that opponent before their next turn.

**Rank Three:** Gains a Free Raise when attempting a Called Shot, Disarm, or Knockdown. Opponents roll and keep one fewer die when resisting Disarm attempts. May make two additional Raises on a Disarm attempt to end up holding the disarmed weapon.

**Rank Four:** Make an extra attack per round. TN to be Hit bonus against opponents with lower Initiative increases to +10.

Honor/Glory/Status: 1.9/3.8/4.0


Mastery Abilities: Adds +5 to total of all Contested Social rolls. May declare Full Defense when initiative is rolled. Wound penalties reduced by Skill Rank when using Kenjutsu, and may spend an additional Void on damage with Kenjutsu. Free Raise on all skills at Rank 5 or higher. May Focus an additional time in an Iaijutsu duel. May recover 4 Void points from Meditation.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Position (gunso)/Dependents (his family)

Equipment: Kimono, light armor, daisho set, 3 koku.

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Winter Court: Shiro no Shosuro  
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### Soshi Jusuke, Possessed by Shosuro Kumade

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**VOID 3**

**TN to be Hit:** 40 (Defense skill ranks)

**School/Rank:** Soshi Shugenja 3/Soshi Deceiver 2

**Soshi Technique:** Gains a Free Raise when casting Secrets on the Wind, Reflective Pool, or Essence of Air. Gains a Free Raise on Stealth rolls for Casting with subtlety. Affinity to Air, Deficiency to Fire.

**Deceiver Rank One:** May cast Deceiver spells at current Insight Rank, and is considered to have an Affinity for Deceiver spells. Gain a bonus in rolled dice equal to Deceiver School Rank on all Deceit and Stealth rolls.

**Deceiver Rank Two:** Gain a bonus in rolled dice equal to Deceiver School Rank on all rolls to cast with subtlety. Rings are considered 1 higher for the purpose of how may Deceiver spells he may cast in a day.

**Honor/Glory/Status:** 0.0/1.8/1.0

**Skills:** Acting 5, Athletics 5, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Commerce 2, Courtier (Manipulation) 3, Deceit (Lying) 7, Defense 5, Etiquette (Sincerity) 3, Investigation 4, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Knives 3, Lore (History) 2, Lore (Scorpion Clan) 5, Medicine (Antidotes) 4, Ninja Ranged Weapons 3, Poison 7, Stealth (Sneaking) 4, Theology 3.

**Mastery Abilities:** May disguise himself as a member of another Clan, profession, or social caste, and can put on a female voice. Adds +5 to total of any Contested Social Rolls. Free Raise on all skills at Rank 5 or above. Subtract Kenjutsu Skill Ranks from Wound penalties, and may spend an extra Void point on damage with a sword.

**Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, Counterspell, (Air 1) By the Light of the Moon, Cloak of Night, Way of Deception, (Air 2) Benten's Touch, Secrets on the Wind, (Earth 1) Earth's Stagnation, Force of Will, (Fire 1) Burst, (Water 1) Path to Inner Peace, Reversal of Fortunes, (Water 2) Rejuvenating Vapors.

**Deceiver Spells** (see Appendix #2 or Masters of Court for details): Darkness' Blessing (Air 3), Edge of Darkness (Water 3), Silent Step (Water 3), Whispers of Nothingness (Air 2)

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Allies (many, including Shosuro Hido), Crafty, Great Potential (Deceit)/Dark Secrets (several)

### Soshi Takano, Senior Court Shugenja

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**VOID 4**

**TN to be Hit:** 27

**School/Rank:** Soshi Shugenja 3

**Technique:** Gains a Free Raise when casting Secrets on the Wind, Reflective Pool, or Essence of Air. Gains a Free Raise on Stealth rolls for Casting with subtlety. Affinity to Air, Deficiency to Fire.

**Skills:** Acting 3, Artisan (Painting) 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 6, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 6, Deceit (Lying) 4, Defense 2, Etiquette (Sincerity) 6, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 1, Knives 3, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: History 3, Lore: Shugenja 3, Meditation 3, Poison 1, Spellcraft 6, Stealth (Spellcasting) 4, Theology (Fortunes) 6.

**Mastery Abilities:** Adds +5 to total of Contested Social rolls. Free Raise with all skills at Rank 5 or higher.

**Spells:** Takano has access to any spells he might need.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Allies (many), Blackmail (many), Social Position (Shiro no Shosuro)/Bad Health.

**Equipment:** Kimono, sandals, tanto, scroll satchel.
Cranes:
Kakita Yotai, Courtier Duelist

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TN to be Hit: 29
School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 3

Rank One: Add twice his Iaijutsu skill to all initiative rolls. May use Iaijutsu skill in place of Kenjutsu, and may Focus one additional time in an Iaijutsu duel.

Rank Two: For every 10 points by which his Initiative score exceeds an opponent’s, he gains a Free Raise to attacks rolls on that opponent. In an Iaijutsu duel, if he has a higher Honor Rank, may add the difference in Honor Ranks to total number of times he can Focus.

Rank Three: When in an iaijutsu duel, gains additional Void points equal to Honor Rank that last only for remainder of duel. In a skirmish, if strikes an opponent with lower initiative, that opponent is +10 to hit him on his next attack roll that round.

Honor/Status/Glory/Infamy: 1.6/3.0/2.8/1.2
Skills: Athletics 2, Calligraphy 2, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 4, Games (Sadane) 2, Deceit (Lying) 4, Defense 4, Etiquette (Sincerity) 5, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 2, Lore (Heraldry) 2, Lore (History) 1, Lore (Law) 2, Meditation 1, Storytelling (Poetry) 2, Tea Ceremony 2, Underworld 2.

Mastery Abilities: Add 5 to TN of any Social rolls against him. May Focus an additional time in an Iaijutsu duel. Add Defense skill rank to TN to be Hit at all times. Wound penalties to attack rolls with Kenjutsu are reduced by skill rank, and may spend an additional Void point on damage with a sword.

Kata: The Empire Rests on Its Edge (keyed on Courtier skill).

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (many), Blackmail (many), Dangerous Beauty, Heartless, Perceived Honor (rank 1), Voice, Wealth/Bad Reputation (ruthless), Dark Secrets (many), Driven (win Hanagensai bride for son Toji).

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

Kakita Sensa, Courtier Seductress

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TN to be Hit: 10
School/Rank: Doji Courtier 3

Rank One: Adds twice her Honor to all Courtier, Etiquette, Heraldry, Oratory, and Sincerity rolls. May call on Favor Table (L5R Rulebook, page 123) 5 times a day.

Rank Two: Observe an opponent for one round, spend a Void point, and make an Opposed Awareness roll. If successful, the opponent must reveal one of their Advantages. Any time in the next day that the opponent uses this Advantage in a social situation, she gains 3 Free Raises on any Contested Social rolls against him. (If she already knew he possessed the Advantage, she gets an additional Free Raise.)

Rank Three: Adds twice her Honor to all Awareness rolls. When another person takes an action in her presence, she may spend a Void point and make an Awareness/Etiquette roll (at 10 times the target’s Insight Rank) to force the opponent to instead make the action a Test of Honor (but without any Honor gains or losses).
Honor/Status/Glory/Infamy: 0.8/3.0/3.7/1.5
Skills: Artisan: Origami 3, Calligraphy 5, Courtier (Gossip, Political Maneuvering) 4, Deceit (Lying, Seduction) 6, Etiquette (Conversation, Sincerity) 5, Perform (Dance 3, Samisen 2), Sleight of Hand 2, Stealth 3, Storytelling (Poetry) 4, Theology (Shintao) 3.
Mastery Abilities: Adds 5 to the total of any Contested social roll made against her.
Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies (many), Blackmail (many), Crafty, Dangerous Beauty, Heartless, Perceived Honor (rank 1), Voice/Bad Reputation (seductress), Dark Secret (many), Driven (win Hanagensai bride for son Toji).
Equipment: Fine kimono, fine court dress, fan, 15 koku.

Dragons:
Mirumoto Hideo, Charming Flirt

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TN to be Hit: 29 (37 w/swords drawn)
School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 3

- **Rank One:** When fighting with daisho set (both blades), add 5+School Rank to TN to be Hit. May substitute Kenjutsu skill for Iaijutsu skill. Adds Fire Ring to all attack rolls.
- **Rank Two:** May make an additional attack per round. Add Earth Ring to TN to be Hit.
- **Rank Three:** A number of times per day equal to School Rank, when attacked, may make a Contested Void Roll to force the opponent to lose their next attack. In an Iaijutsu duel, when focusing, may spend a Void point to reduce the number of times the opponent can Focus. Now adds twice Fire Rank to attack rolls. When targeted with a spell, may add or subtract 5 from the TN to cast the spell.

Honor/Status/Glory: 1.9/1.0/4.0
Skills: Athletics 3, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Games (Go) 2, Iaijutsu 3, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 3, Lore (Heraldry) 2, Lore (History) 2, Lore (Shugenja) 3, Meditation 3, Spears 3, Storytelling 2, Theology (Shintao) 2.
Mastery Abilities: May declare Full Defense when Initiative is rolled. May focus an additional time in an Iaijutsu duel.
Advantages/Disadvantages: Combat Reflexes, Dangerous Beauty/Lechery (4)
Equipment: Daisho, kimono, traveling pack, 2 Koku.

Phoenix:
Shiba Yota – Phoenix Yojimbo

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TN to be Hit: 35 (40 in light armor)
School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 4

- **Rank One:** When declaring posture for the round, may choose to add Void ring to either TN to be Hit, attack roll totals, or damage roll totals until next round. May spend as many Void points as desired on any action.

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Winter Court: Shiro no Shosuro
**Rank Two:** Gain Free Raises equal to School Rank on melee attack rolls, but these Raises may only be used to Guard an ally. With a successful Guard action, in addition to the normal effect, and bonuses to his TN to be Hit are also added to the ally. Raise or lower the TN of any spell cast on him by 5.

**Rank Three:** Make an additional attack per round. Adds twice Air Ring to TN to be Hit.

**Rank Four:** Void-based bonus from Rank 1 technique is doubled. If someone spends a Void point within fifty feet, may make a Contested Void roll against that person. If successful, regain one Void point.

**Honor/Status/Glory:** 2.7/2.0/4.8

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 4, Iaijutsu 6, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 5, Knives 1, Kyujutsu 2, Lore (Heraldry) 2, Lore (Law) 1, Lore (Shugenja) 4, Medicine 2, Meditation (Void Recovery) 5, Spears 3, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 4.

**Mastery Abilities:** Adds +5 to total of all Contested Social rolls. May declare Full Defense when Initiative is rolled. Wound penalties reduced by Skill Rank when using Kenjutsu, and may spend an additional Void on damage with Kenjutsu. Free Raise with all skills at Rank 5 or higher. May Focus an additional time and may roll an additional die when focusing in an Iaijutsu duel.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Social Position (magistrate)/Bad Reputation (unimaginative)

**Equipment:** Kimono, daisho set, light armor (not worn), tanto, 3 koku.

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**Minor Clans:**

**Kasuga Gyuuho – Tortoise Emerald Magistrate**

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| VOID 3        |

**TN to be Hit:** 10

**School/Rank:** Kitsuki Investigator 2

**Rank One:** Add Perception to all Attack rolls and to TN to be Hit. If an opponent attacks and misses, add double Perception against that opponent on next turn.

**Rank Two:** Gain a Free Raise on all Perception and Awareness rolls. If attacking an opponent who made an attack against you earlier in the same round, gain a Free Raise.

**Honor/Infamy/Status:** 2.9/3.5/1.0/4.5

**Skills:** Battle 2, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation (Search, Notice) 5, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 1, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: History 2, Lore: Law 2, Medicine 3, Underworld 2.

**Mastery Abilities:** May re-roll one Investigation roll. Free Raise with Investigation.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Clear Thinker, Different School (Kitsuki Investigator), Social Position (Emerald Magistrate)/Bad Reputation (Unconventional Methods), Driven (Prove the Kitsuki Method Right), Idealistic, Meddler.

**Equipment:** Daisho set, kimono and sandals, Kitsuki investigation kit, traveling pack, 4 koku.
Appendix #2: Deceiver Spells

**Darkness' Blessing**
- **Element:** Air
- **Mastery Level:** 3
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Range:** Self

The caster briefly takes the form of a shadow – immaterial and intangible. This form lasts just long enough to completely avoid a single attack. The next attack to strike the caster automatically misses, no matter how well it rolled, as the caster’s body briefly becomes shadowy and insubstantial.

**Edge of Darkness**
- **Element:** Water
- **Mastery Level:** 3
- **Duration:** 3 rounds
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Range:** Self

The caster draws in his chi, empowering his attacks to disrupt the pattern of reality in those he hits. While this spell is in effect, the caster’s attack and damage dice explode on 9’s as well as 10’s. Further, if the caster explodes two or more times on the same damage die, he and the target both lose one Void Point (if they have Void Points remaining). Inanimate objects damaged by the caster while under the effects of this spell seem to be melted or dissolved rather than simply broken.

**Silent Step**
- **Element:** Water
- **Mastery Level:** 3
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Range:** 200 feet

This spell allows the caster to travel through the realm of shadow, much in the way of the Goju. The use of this spell is controversial within the Deceiver school, since it seems to suggest that they are still calling on the power of Nothing. The caster must be standing in a shadow of his own size or larger, or a place of complete darkness, when the spell is cast. If the spell is successful, it transports the caster to another shadow or place of darkness within 200 feet. He must have been able to see the desired location when he casts the spell.

**Whispers of Nothingness**
- **Element:** Air
- **Mastery Level:** 2
- **Duration:** 5 minutes per Deceiver School Rank
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Range:** Self

The caster forces the air to gather tightly around him, muffling any sound that he makes. For the duration of the spell, the caster rolls extra unkept dice on all Stealth Skill Rolls equal to his Air Ring, and the number of Raises he may make with the Stealth skill is not limited by his Void or Skill Rank.