
Legend of the Five Rings
ROLEPLAYING
BEGINNER GAME
READ THIS SECOND
Adventure Book

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For more information about the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* line, free downloads, answers to rule queries, or just to pass on greetings, visit us online at **www.FantasyFlightGames.com/en/Legend-of-the-Five-Rings-Roleplaying-Game/**

# Welcome to the Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game!

You are about to take on the role of a young samurai of the Emerald Empire, the grand domain of His Imperial Majesty Hantei XXXVIII. You are born as samurai, and you will serve the Emperor with your skill at arms, your courtly graces, your religious knowledge, and most of all, your unbending honor. For in Rokugan, honor is stronger than steel. Exemplifying the ideals presented in the Code of Bushidō is the goal of all samurai, even if not all samurai succeed.

## What is a Roleplaying Game?

A roleplaying game is a collaborative storytelling experience. Each player takes on the role of a character in a fictional universe—in this case Rokugan, the setting of ***The Legend of the Five Rings***. Players work together to tell a story in which those characters unite to overcome challenges, do battle with dangerous enemies, and secure glory and honor for themselves and their families.

Players use custom dice to add an element of randomness to the game, so the outcome of the story isn't known beforehand. Each character also has unique characteristics and game rules detailing their strengths and weaknesses.

## Before you Begin

The *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game* is designed for 3–5 players. With the contents of this box you can get straight to the action, but first you'll need to assign some roles.

### One Player is the Game Master

The **GAME MASTER**, or the GM, serves as the guide and the storyteller. It's their responsibility to present an exciting and compelling situation to the other players and to help determine what happens next when those players respond. The GM also takes on the role of every character in Rokugan not controlled by another player. We call those characters non-player characters, or NPCs (even though the GM is a player, too!).

If you are playing as the Game Master, keep this book in front of you. It contains everything you need to know to run a fun and exciting game.

### The Other Players are Hero Players

The other 2–4 players are the hero players and take on the role of individual characters in Rokugan. There are four pregenerated **PLAYER CHARACTERS** (also called PCs) included in this box for use by the hero players. If you are a hero player, read the text on the back of each folio to help you choose one of the characters. Over the course of the game you will choose what your hero does and says (using the dice and game rules to determine whether you succeed or fail) plus learn ways to gain new skills and abilities.

If your group has more than four hero players (or players wish to play other characters), additional character folios for three additional different characters are available at www.FantasyFlightGames.com/en/Legend-of-the-Five-Rings-Roleplaying-Game.

## GAME MASTER ONLY!

***IF YOU ARE A HERO PLAYER, CHOOSE A PLAYER CHARACTER FOLIO AND GIVE THIS BOOKLET TO THE GM.***

Only the GM should read the rest of this book.
It contains secrets and surprises for the course of the adventure,
and reading ahead can spoil the fun!



# Contents of this Box




## The "Read This First" Booklet

As suggested, everyone should read through this booklet first! Not only will this get your group prepared for the game, it also tells you about Rokugan, the setting you're playing in.

## The Adventure Book

This is the book you're reading right now. It contains the adventure *The Topaz Championship*, and introduces the rules to you and your players in a fun, learn-as-you-play format.




## Character Folios

Each character folio tells the player everything they need to know about the character they chose. Through the folios, players can learn their character's motivations and gain tips on how to play them to best effect. There are two character sheet spreads in each folio: one for the character at the beginning of the game, and the other for after the character gains experience during the game. Players will use these sheets to record their character's progress and determine how they perform actions, as well as tracking their character's progress in the contests they undertake during the adventure.



Players should read over the back page of the folios to help them decide which character to pick. As the GM, you should read over the selected folios before starting play to better understand the characters who will be the focus of the story.

## The Rulebook

The rulebook contains all of the *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game* rules. It's best to play through the adventure contained in this adventure book once to learn the rules, then use the rulebook as a reference for future play sessions.




## Character Tokens

The game includes a sheet of punchboard tokens to represent the heroes and other characters in the game during the adventure. Players can use these with the maps provided to show where their characters are located.



## Map

The four-fold poster features three distinct map images: a large map of Rokugan, a map of the village of Tsuma (where this adventure takes place), and a map of the Emerald Champion's palace. The latter is the location for the free follow-up adventure, *In the Palace of the Emerald Champion*, downloadable at www.FantasyFlightGames.com/en/Legend-of-the-Five-Rings-Roleplaying-Game.



## Custom Dice

The *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game* includes ten custom dice used to resolve skill checks and generate random results. Players may also wish to use the *Legend of the Five Rings Dice App* for this; see www.FantasyFlightGames.com/en/Legend-of-the-Five-Rings-Roleplaying-Game for more information on downloading this app.



## You Will Also Need

Pens or pencils and some sheets of scratch paper.

# Legend of the Five Rings

The *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game* is a complete, stand-alone product and contains everything 3–5 players need to roleplay in Rokugan. Players can enjoy many hours of entertainment with the contents of this box, first by playing the included adventure, then by continuing to the free downloadable adventure available at our website, or by inventing their own adventures.

Players who are ready for a more complex, in-depth roleplaying experience should purchase the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* Core Rulebook. This book is the starting point for a complete line of roleplaying products, including pre-written adventures, sourcebooks with more content and options for hero players and GMs, and much more.

The *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game* uses a simplified version of the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* rules, and thus is a great way to learn how to play the full game.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

We wrote this adventure to teach you how to play the game as you play through the adventure. Rules concepts are introduced as they come up, and that way you can learn new rules as you need to know them, and not try and figure everything out beforehand.

If you're a new GM, keep the following advice in mind as you play. The **GM Tips and Advice** on page 34 has some useful guidance for new GMs as well.

### Keep the Game Moving

If you're ever in doubt about what to do, you (as the GM) should make a decision and move on with the story. You can look up the "right" answer in the rulebook later. The important thing is that everyone has fun and behaves honorably (even if their characters do not!).

### Read the Adventure Beforehand

You should read through the entire book before playing to get a feel for the adventure plot. If you're an experienced Game Master or you just want to expand the adventure, we've provided some extra encounters on page 33 that can be woven into the adventure as well.

### Read Some Text Out Loud

As you play through this adventure, you will see blocks of text like this:

> The text in this block is intended to be read aloud to the hero players by the GM. It normally describes the scene or the characters, and it might include an important clue or hint!
>
> Each of these blocks of read-aloud text has instructions for when to read it aloud to the hero players. This may be when a scene begins, or when the PCs ask a certain question or perform a certain action.

### RULES TEXT

Sidebars like these contain rules text. You can refer to these sidebars to figure out how to resolve the actions in a given encounter.

Not every page or encounter has its own rules sidebar. Although new rules are introduced the first time the players are expected to use them, they remain in effect throughout the adventure.

For instance, the rules for determining the dice to use when making a skill check are on page 10. On future pages, it is assumed that the players know how to assemble the dice to perform a skill check.

## The Player Characters

There are four player characters: Akodo Masako the Lion Clan Warrior, Doji Ren the Crane Clan Courtier, Isawa Aki the Phoenix Clan Shugenja, and Togashi Yoshi the Dragon Clan Monk. (Remember that in Rokugan, the family name comes first, followed by the given name.) There are also three additional characters available for download at the Fantasy Flight Games website at www.FantasyFlightGames.com/en/Legend-of-the-Five-Rings-Roleplaying-Game: Hida Sugi the Crab Clan Warrior, Bayushi Kyo the Scorpion Clan Ninja, and Shinjo Takuya the Unicorn Clan Warrior. Folios for each character are included in the box (or online). Depending on the number of hero players in your game, not all of these PCs are necessarily present.

### GM SUPPORT SIDEBARS

These sidebars contain supplementary information and asides to assist the GM in running the scene. Sometimes these sidebars discuss game concepts; at other times they provide advice.

To start, here's a guide for pronouncing some of the names of the characters and places in the adventure:

Aki: AH-kee
Akodo: ah-KOH-doh
Bayushi: bah-YOO-shee
Doji: DOH-jee
Hantei: HAN-tay
Hatsuichi: HA-tsoo-ee-chee
Hida: HEE-dah
Hitoshi: hi-TOE-shee
Isawa: ee-SAH-wah
Kami: KAH-mee
Kyo: KYOH (as in OWE)
Masako: MAH-sah-koh
Ren: REN (as in KEN)
Shinjo: SHIN-joh
Sugai: SOO-guy (hard "g")
Sugi: SOO-gee (soft "g")
Takuya: TAH-koo-ya
Togashi: toh-GAH-shee
Tsuma: TSOO-ma
Yoshi: YOH-shee
Yuikimi: YOO-ee-KEE-mee

# Welcome to Tsuma!

The adventure takes place in Tsuma, a small village located within lands controlled by the Crane Clan. Tsuma is a small fishing village on the Tangu River, with only a few dozen homes, barns, storehouses, and artisan shops. It has enormous cultural significance, however, as the site of the Topaz Championship, the most celebrated coming-of-age ritual ceremony, or *gempuku*, in the Emerald Empire.

As the story begins, the PCs are young samurai-to-be traveling to Tsuma for their coming of age. Samurai in Rokugan are minor nobles who serve the Emperor and their Clan in a variety of ways. Most samurai are further divided into several broad roles in the Emerald Empire. ***Bushi***, or warriors, serve as soldiers, bodyguards, duelists, commanders, and in many other roles. ***Courtiers*** serve as diplomats, couriers, administrators, and in other bureaucratic roles. ***Shugenja*** are priests and scholars who can speak with spirits to perform what we would consider to be magic. Finally, ***Monks*** can be peasants or samurai who have dedicated their lives to spiritual contemplation and a monastic lifestyle (which is important and respected in Rokugan).

If the PCs can pass most of the tests that compose the tournament, they earn the right to be considered samurai in the Empire, giving them the privileges and responsibilities of minor nobles. The most exceptional samurai will also earn the title of Topaz Champion, bringing great honor and prestige to their clan. Naturally, each clan sends only their best and brightest to compete in the Topaz Championship. That includes the PCs!

## THE MAP

You will use two maps in this adventure; the map of Rokugan and the map of Tsuma. Use the former to point out where Tsuma is located, and allow the players to see where their character comes from. This map can also be used in other adventures across the Emerald Empire. Use the map of Tsuma throughout this adventure to indicate locations the PCs want to explore and where various scenes take place. The character tokens can be placed on the map to show the current locations of characters (both PCs and NPCs).

## THE ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

We present this adventure as a series of encounters called **SCENES**. These are numbered and presented in the order that they occur during the three days of the Topaz Championship. Because we introduce individual rules gradually, we strongly encourage you to proceed in the order presented here. Though this means the adventure is less flexible than most roleplaying game adventures, it also lets us teach new players all about *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying* and about Rokugan!

In between scenes, the GM may wish to improvise some transitions. These transitions can be as simple as "that evening, you proceed to the Kakita estate for dinner," or as complex as small sub-encounters in their own right. They're also a great opportunity to mix in some of the color and variety of Rokugan, or mention the other contestants at the Topaz Championship.

# The Adventure Begins

Once all the hero players have their character folios, it's time to start the game and enter the world of Rokugan!

## ARRANGING THE PLAY AREA

The available dice should be placed somewhere within easy reach of all players. The Map of Rokugan can also be placed between all players, so everyone can get a sense of how far they have had to travel from their clan's home to Tsuma. Each hero player should find their character token from among the available cardboard tokens and keep it near their character folio; later they may wish to use it to represent their character on the game map during a fight scene! It would also be helpful for each player to have a pencil or pen and some paper to take notes.

## RAISING THE CURTAIN

When everyone is ready to begin, read the following text aloud to the hero players.

> ***The Topaz Championship***
>
> It is the twentieth year of the reign of the divine Emperor, Hantei the 38th. The Emerald Empire has stood for a thousand years, thanks to the guidance of the kami and the wise benevolence of the Hantei emperors. Each of the seven Great Clans vies eternally to be first in the Emperor's favor while safeguarding Rokugan from its many enemies within and without.
>
> The Topaz Championship is a chance for each clan to test their best and brightest against one another. Though all contestants can pass the tests and become samurai, the winner claims glory for themselves and their clan, and may even earn a high-ranking position in the Empire.
>
> As contestants, you are all traveling to the village of Tsuma, where the Championship will be held at the Kakita Dueling Academy. Who knows, maybe you will win it all and become the Topaz Champion...

Having set the stage, now is a good time for the players to share some details about their characters with the rest of the group. If they want to keep details secret, they can, but everyone should share the name, clan, and school of their PC.

After this is done, you may now proceed to Scene 1. Flip the map to show the village of Tsuma, and begin!

# Scene 1: The Cart and the Peasant

In this encounter, the PCs come across a peasant named Ryu struggling with an upended cart. The meeting gives them an opportunity to get into character and ask any questions they might have about the Topaz Championship, Tsuma, or their competition. It also helps highlight the social structure of Rokugan, and the stark difference between the samurai and peasant classes. (It also provides a clue that proves useful later in the adventure.)

As the PCs approach Tsuma (see the Gate of Tsuma location on the map), read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> Despite coming from different clans, since meeting each other, you have been traveling together on the road, occasionally encountering other travelers and peasants transporting goods. You can now see the village of Tsuma just ahead through the blossoming trees. Soon you'll have arrived and can rest yourselves before the contest begins tomorrow!

If they haven't already, this is a good opportunity for the players to get in character by chatting with each other about their characters' clans and other information they likely passed along during the trip. The players might also include their character motivations and what their PCs hope to gain from the contest, beyond attaining legal adulthood and becoming samurai.

Once they are done, continue reading or paraphrasing the following aloud to the players:

> As you walk down the road beside the Tangu river, you find your way blocked by a cart upended across the road ahead. To your right, the river laps up against the edge of the path. To your left, an artfully-crafted stone wall blocks off a broad and flooded field of rice. There is no way to proceed without either getting wet or setting the cart to rights.
>
> An elderly peasant is struggling to do just that as you approach, but when he notices you, he hurls himself to the road at your feet, his forehead pressed to the dust. "Honored samurai," he cries. "One thousand pardons for blocking your path! I will move the cart directly."
>
> You could wait, but compassion is a virtue of a samurai. Besides, maybe he knows something useful about the village or the Championship.

Samurai and peasants are in completely different social orders. Peasants must be completely subservient to members of the samurai caste, even young ones like the PCs. In turn, samurai are expected to protect the peasants under their charge.



## WHERE ARE MY DICE?

You may notice that this encounter doesn't require dice or ask anyone to roll for anything. Not to worry! That's coming later. The purpose of this encounter is to get used to the idea of playing a character and settle in to the setting of Rokugan a little bit.

The players may now have their characters speak with the peasant, ask him questions, or offer to help. They could also examine the cart and its contents, pick their way around the obstacle, or do whatever they like—this freedom is central to roleplaying games!

Whatever the PCs choose to do, the GM should do their best to respond as is appropriate for the situation. Some likely choices and suggested responses are listed in the pages that follow.

### Who are you?

The peasant is happy to answer this, as he continues bowing:

> "My name is Ryu, and I was honored to be the servant of Doji Satsume, the great Emerald Champion who enforced the law across the Empire. But sadly, my master died some weeks ago. Now I bring his personal effects to his brother-in-law, Doji Toshimoko. Toshimoko-sama is the honored head of the Kakita Dueling Academy in Tsuma."

### Where are you traveling from?

Ryu is traveling from the Emerald Champion's castle near Otosan Uchi to Tsuma. The Emerald Champion is the foremost magistrate, judge, and officer of the law in the Empire, as well as the Emperor's bodyguard and the commander of his legions. He is second only to the Emperor himself in all matters of law. His lieutenants, the Emerald Magistrates, investigate and punish crimes against the Emperor and the state. After the Emerald Champion's death, Ryu has been one of many servants attending to his things, and now he is bringing some of these items to their new home in Tsuma.

### What happened here?

With many additional apologies, Ryu explains.

> "Ten thousand thousand pardons, honored samurai! I became startled when I thought I saw someone standing in the middle of the river. A gust of wind caused me to fall into the river and knock the cart over on its side!"

Ryu is quite damp from the knees down, supporting his story that he fell into the river.

**Scene 1 continues on the next page.**

### You saw someone standing in the river!?

Ryu claims that it must have been a trick of the light, since the man he thought he saw, the Emerald Champion Doji Satsume, has been dead for several weeks. Ryu remembers his master fondly, and still mourns his death.

### What do you know about the Topaz Championship?

Ryu knows that this is not the only coming-of-age ceremony, but it is the most famous, and the Great Clans send their best aspirants each year. He recalls that it spans three days, and features challenges in sumai (a form of wrestling), heraldry, athletics, horseback riding, and conduct on the first day; weaponry, poetry, law, Go (a tactical board game), archery, and hunting on the second day; and ends with a dueling competition on the third and final day.

### What do you know about the other competitors?

Ryu was overtaken on the road by a few of the other samurai traveling to Tsuma, including the current Topaz Champion, Kitsuki Yuikimi of the Dragon Clan, who impressed him with her kindness, keen intellect, and effortless grace. He also recalls seeing an aspirant whose clan colors and emblem he did not recognize, but he did remember the colors were sea-green and black.

(This was Hitoshi of the Mantis Minor Clan, whom the PCs will meet in the next scene.)

### What do you know about Tsuma?

Ryu grew up in Tsuma and is happy to extol its many virtues to any samurai who asks.

> "Honored samurai, I spent my youth in this lovely village. It is home to the famous Kakita Dueling Academy, of course. The samurai who study there are unmatched in their skill with the blade. May I also humbly suggest the Red Lotus tea house, if you are of a mind to take your ease? Or were you looking for something else?"

If asked for more details and less praise, the peasant explains that Tsuma is mainly a fishing and farming village, but the river and the presence of the Kakita Academy mean many visitors and merchants pass through. If you want to tell your PCs more, see page 30 for more locations in the village.

### Set the cart to rights.

Ryu is almost speechless with gratitude if one or more of the PCs offers to help set his cart to rights. The PC does this easily (and without a check), and once finished, Ryu pulls the cart to the side of the road and prostrates himself once more.

### Go around.

Stepping around the fallen cart is trivial, but any PC who does so will unavoidably become somewhat soiled with mud from either the river or the rice field. Arriving in Tsuma so besoiled, on the eve of the Topaz Championship, damages their reputation: **the PCs must each lose 1 glory to do this**. Let the PCs know that this will be the consequence for their actions, and then see if they would prefer to do something else instead. If not, have that player write down their new, lower glory value in their folio (glory is flagged by the reference number "9" in the folio). Note that this is not an "incorrect" solution, merely one that has a negative consequence.

### Wait.

Finally, the PCs can just wait for Ryu to move the cart. This has no further consequences, besides Ryu becoming more and more panicked about creating this delay. He constantly apologizes as he finally hauls the cart upright, looking terribly exhausted and on the verge of tears.

However, after another ten minutes, the road is clear and the PCs can proceed on their way.

### As they leave...

Once the PCs proceed onwards to Tsuma, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

> As the peasant stoops to gather his things, a sudden gust of wind scatters papers from the cart into the air. One sheet dances away from the others and directly into your face!
>
> As you snatch the paper away, you notice the writing upon it. "You have often told me you are a better father to my children than I am. I can only hope the Fortunes bless you—or curse you—with children of your own one day, that you could see the true challenges of fatherhood." It appears to be addressed to the writer's brother-in-law, Kakita Toshimoko.

The PCs can keep the paper, or return it (if they keep it, Ryu doesn't dare to argue with them), and then continue on to Tsuma.

**Complete Scene 1 before moving on.**

# Scene 2: Honored Guests

In this encounter, the PCs arrive at the House of the Laughing Carp, their home during the Topaz Championship, and hopefully defuse a tense situation between one of their rivals and the local authorities.

As the PCs enter the village of Tsuma, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> The village of Tsuma buzzes with activity today, as peasants and samurai move along the street on their business. The peasants all bow and wait for you to pass, while the samurai rush by you without a second glance. Streamers are affixed to trees, paper lanterns in the colors of the Great Clans hang from posts, carp kites fly in the air, and glass chimes sing in the breeze, all welcoming contestants, observers, and other visitors to this year's Topaz Championship.
>
> You quickly make your way to the town magistrate's estate to formally register for the tournament, then you're directed to the House of the Laughing Carp, the tea house and inn housing the contestants. As you step into the courtyard of the inn, a loud voice catches your attention.
>
> "This is unacceptable!" bellows a lean, tall young man, still dusty from the road. His sea green attire and unfamiliar family crest mark him as a samurai of a Minor Clan. The samurai is in mid-argument with the innkeeper, an utterly implacable peasant woman.
>
> "Forgive me, honored samurai," she says, very dryly. "All my rooms are spoken for. If I should give you a room, I must displace another samurai, one who made these arrangements in advance. Perhaps you could try another boarding house in the village?"
>
> "They are all full," the samurai hisses, struggling to regain his composure. The innkeeper notices your arrival, and quickly turns to you and bows.
>
> "Honored guests," she says, apparently recognizing you by your clan crests. "Your rooms are waiting."

## PERFORMING CHECKS

This encounter introduces checks, in which the hero players (or sometimes the GM) roll dice to determine whether a character is able to achieve their desired outcome in a task. This adventure only calls for a check when the character could fail and the outcome of that failure has narrative consequences—you should employ this same guideline when running your own adventures. If a hero player asks to perform a task and failure wouldn't add anything to the story, or the task is so commonly accomplished that there is no chance of failure (such as to walk down a street), don't have them make a check.

The Minor Clan samurai is Hitoshi, of the Mantis Clan. Tell your PCs that they recognize his Clan crest (*mon*) as being from the Mantis Minor Clan. Like the PCs, he is a contestant at the Topaz Championship, not yet a full-fledged samurai.

This situation is on the edge. Hitoshi is on the cusp of an unacceptable outburst, one that could cost him considerably in terms of both honor and social standing. Being dismissed by a peasant is an insult to that same honor, though, and being forced to sleep rough in Tsuma will not help his chances in the contest. If the PCs cannot defuse the situation, they could be caught in the fallout of whatever happens next. On the other hand, this could be an opportunity to hurt a rival's chances of winning the tournament, if they just push Hitoshi one step closer to the edge.

It's time for the PCs to choose a course of action and perform their first checks. The sidebar on page 10 describes how checks are made; note that the PCs can use their School Abilities in checks where applicable, as well as their character's Advantage. Note that **Opportunity** and **Strife** results on the dice won't be used just yet, so players need to only look for **Success** and **Explosive Success** results in these first checks.

## HITOSHI'S SECRET

Hitoshi doesn't know it, but he is a pawn in a covert conflict between the Scorpion and Crane Clans. Hitoshi is a bastard son of the famed Crane duelist and master sensei of the academy, Kakita Toshimoko. Neither Hitoshi nor Toshimoko know this, however. Certain members of the Scorpion family do, though, and have arranged to invite the Mantis youth to Tsuma for this event. (It is extremely unusual for someone from a Minor Clan to be invited to participate in the Topaz Championship.)

The Scorpion would like to stage some sort of unsightly conflict between Crane and Mantis, up to and including Hitoshi's death at Crane hands, and then reveal the truth of his parentage. Hopefully that embarrasses the Crane and poisons the Crane-Mantis relationship further. Meanwhile, the Crane judges, aware that Hitoshi is here because of the Scorpion Clan, want to see him fail and go home in disgrace.

Scene 2 continues on page 11.

## SELECTING SKILL AND APPROACH

When the GM decides to call for a check, the GM and player must work together to determine the skill and approach that are relevant to the check based on the narrative action the character is attempting. The following steps outline the process:

1. **Determine Skill Group:** First, determine a category of expertise for the character's stated goal from the five skill groups:
   - If the character is trying to make or create something, use an **Artisan** skill.
   - If the character is trying to overcome an opponent (or themself) use a **Martial** skill.
   - If the character is trying to remember, observe, or learn something, use a **Scholar** skill.
   - If the character is trying to influence a person, use a **Social** skill.
   - If the character is trying to acquire resources or do work, use a **Trade** skill.
2. **Determine Skill:** Next, determine the body of knowledge the character will use. Usually, this is a skill from the chosen group, but sometimes the GM might decide to treat a skill from a different group as if it was part of the chosen group (such as using Smithing as a Scholar skill to know about the making of swords or using Theology as a Social skill to make proper appeals to a spirit).
3. **Choose Approach:** Finally, choose the elemental approach the character is using based on how the hero player described their character going about the task. Each skill group has five approaches (one for each elemental ring), which are described in **Chapter 2: Skills** of the *Beginner Game Rulebook* starting on page 14. Sometimes, multiple approaches are viable, but one might be easier than another.

In this adventure, each major check either specifies a skill and one or more suggested approaches or, if it does not specify, allows any approach. When running your own adventures, consult the *Beginner Game Rulebook* as noted for more guidance on determining which skill and approach fits best for the situation and the player's desires.

## DETERMINE TARGET NUMBER OF SUCCESSES

The Game Master decides how hard the task is, reflected by the **target number of successes** (called "**TN**" for short) the check requires. The more challenging the task, the higher the TN of the check. The checks in this adventure list their TNs, and the GM can consult **Sample Target Numbers** on the back cover of this adventure when deciding on the TN of a check of their own devising.

Except in special cases, the Game Master should tell the player the TN of a check the player is making.

## ROLLING, KEEPING, AND INTERPRETING DICE

Once approach and skill are selected, the hero player (or the GM, for an NPC) picks up a number of Ring dice (■) equal to the character's ring for the selected approach, a number of Skill dice (⬠) equal to the character's ranks in the selected skill, and **rolls** them.

The hero player then looks at the dice and decides which ones to **keep**; these dice are the ones that count when resolving the check. The player can keep a number of dice up to the value of the ring their character used, and they must keep at least 1 die. Any dice that are not kept are **dropped**, and do not contribute to the results of the check.

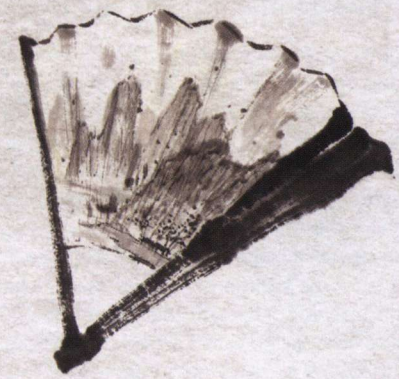
The results showing on kept dice inform whether the character succeeds in the task, how much they must struggle in the attempt, and if they seize opportunities in the process. Dice results are resolved as follows, in this order:

: **Success** () results represent the character's effectiveness on the check. If the total number of  results on kept dice are greater than or equal to the TN of the check, the character succeeds. Each  beyond this is a **bonus success,** which can confer additional benefits on some types of checks. Remember that  results also count as  results when tallying up your  results!

: The **explosive success** () result means that the character is able to get an extra burst of power, cleverness, or charisma in their attempt and surpass their usual limits. Each one counts as a  result, and additionally, for each kept die with an  result, the player may roll 1 additional die of the same type and then choose whether to keep or drop this die. If they keep a new die that contains an  result, they can repeat this process, chaining  results into further  results as long as their luck holds out. These additional dice do not count towards the maximum number of kept dice—think of them as being connected to the first die with the  result that started the additional rolls.

: The **opportunity** () result does not contribute directly to success or failure, but instead represents positive, incidental narrative effects of the character's actions. Don't worry about this for the moment; it'll be explained in the **Spending Opportunity** sidebar on page 17.

: The **strife** () result reflects the character's emotional state and how it changes during the task. Strife can represent negative emotions like frustration or fear, or positive emotions like joy or the thrill of a challenge. It always appears alongside other symbols, creating an interesting choice for the hero player: whether they wish to keep a positive result if the cost is gaining strife. It will be explained in greater detail in **Scene 3** (see page 13); for now, just know that more  results on the check mean that the character is growing more flustered narratively.



## Checks to Resolve the Situation

Because the PCs are likely making a check to influence a person in this scene, they will be using their Social skills.

Some of the strategies and approaches the PCs may attempt to use are detailed here. Of course, if they come up with their own idea, you can allow them to try it! If the PC is proposing something that seems clever, or appropriate to the situation at hand, the target number (TN) of the check is 1. Otherwise, the TN is 2.

### "I am happy to share my room."

This simple and logical solution allows everyone to save face. If a PC suggests this, they need to make a **TN 1 Courtesy (Earth) check** to get Hitoshi to calm down. If this check is successful, then Hitoshi is grateful and the situation is defused. If it fails, then Hitoshi and the innkeeper are both too entrenched in their conflict to listen to reason at the moment.

This also works for any other sensible solution (finding lodging with a local peasant family, volunteering to sleep outdoors themselves, etc.).

### "There must be a mistake; surely this man was intended to be on your list."

A **TN 2 Courtesy (Water) check** persuades the innkeeper to check her list again in deference to the request of her guests. She studies her list more carefully and shares it with the PCs, revealing that Hitoshi's name was placed on the list at the same time as all the other contest attendees. It was since removed. The innkeeper is somewhat surprised to discover this.

This does not magically create a room in which to lodge Hitoshi, however, but it does defuse the situation and lets the PCs suggest another course of action without passing a check. Hitoshi feels somewhat vindicated, and the innkeeper feels embarrassed. If the PCs don't suggest a solution, she may suggest letting Hitoshi have her room while she stays with relatives.

### THE FIVE RINGS

The Five Rings are integral to Rokugani religion and philosophy, and also to this game! Whenever a character attempts a task, they can be said to be doing so in accordance with one of the five rings, which determines what dice they roll. There are specific examples elsewhere, but for a rough rule-of-thumb understanding…

**Air** is precise, distant, and analytical. Air does not approach the matter directly, but with care, subtlety, and planning.

**Earth** is firm, grounded, and cautious. Earth prefers to act decisively, but only after due consideration.

**Fire** is passionate, inventive, and direct. Fire acts swiftly and with overwhelming force.

**Water** is flexible, responsive, and powerful. Water acts with confidence, flowing around the problem until it finds a solution.

**Void** is the element of no element, the mind of no mind. Void does not think, plan, or react. Void simply acts, moving in accordance with instinct and the natural path of the cosmos.

### "A peasant has no right to turn a samurai aside; find this man a room!"

The innkeeper is resistant to such bluster, for reasons she has already shared with Hitoshi. Depending on the tone used, this is either a **TN 2 Command (Fire)** (to threaten her) or **(Earth)** (to remind her of her place in society) **check**. If successful, the innkeeper surrenders her own room to Hitoshi and stays with her relatives.

### "This house is not for you; this house is for the Great Clans."

If the PCs can goad Hitoshi into a shameful outburst, he will be forced to leave and seek lodging elsewhere. This is a direct insult in the form of an order and requires the PCs pass a **TN 2 Command (Fire) check**.

If the check is successful, then Hitoshi is pushed into an outburst. Read or paraphrase the following:

> "I will not stand here and be insulted like some peasant!" the samurai shouts, his face turning red. He takes a single, threatening step toward the innkeeper.
>
> "If you wish to be treated as a samurai, behave as if you are one," a sharp voice snaps. You turn to find a man thin as a sword blade in a kimono of elegant blue and grey silk standing at the door to the courtyard. He wears two swords in his obi sash at his hip, and his grey hair is loose in the Crane fashion. "Hitoshi-san, you may find lodgings elsewhere. Should you find yourself sleeping in a haystack, recall that fortitude is a virtue."

**Scene 2 continues on the next page.**

With that, Hitoshi storms out. The elder samurai, Kakita Toshimoko, is the host of the Topaz Championship and comes up again in **Scene 4** on page 15. For now, he exchanges a few private words with the innkeeper and gives a stern frown to everyone else in the room before departing.

**"Tell me about yourself, samurai."**

PCs may be curious about Hitoshi and his clan. He introduces himself as Hitoshi, of the Mantis Clan. He is reluctant to share much of his background, acutely aware that he is of lesser station than all the Great Clan samurai in the room, but says he served on a number of Mantis ships in his youth (*Fortunate Turtle* and *Susano-O*) and that he's "capable" with a bow. He admits he was surprised to be invited to the Championship, but says he's eager to prove that he is as worthy as a Great Clan samurai.

**"I believe I saw an inn with some available rooms as I was entering town."**

A lie to get Hitoshi to leave could work, although he has already been throughout the town looking, unsuccessfully, for lodging. A PC must make a successful **TN 2 Courtesy (Air) check** to lie to him. If he does leave, he soon discovers whatever lie the PCs told him and harbors resentments that may cause problems later.

**Say nothing, study the situation instead.**

PCs may decline to get involved. This is their first opportunity to study their competition, so perhaps they would like to get a sense of who Hitoshi is, or a sense of any of the other contestants lingering in the courtyard. Because this reflects a PC trying to remember, observe, or learn something, they will use a skill from the Scholar skill group (or another skill as if it was in this group, at the GM's discretion).

For example, a PC who wishes to determine what is motivating Hitoshi to be so belligerent would make a **Sentiment (Fire) check** to theorize about his attitude. However, a PC who wants to discern if Hitoshi is skilled with a sword could make a **Martial Arts [Melee] (Air) check** to analyze his stance and the way he carries himself. A PC who wishes to get a quick impression of the relative status of the contestants might make a **Government (Water) check** to survey the situation. The TN of any such check is 1.

## Moving On

If the PCs resolve the situation favorably for Hitoshi, he thanks them with a deep bow. If they do nothing, or fail in at least two attempts, Hitoshi eventually becomes agitated as described earlier and Kakita Toshimoko arrives to send him on his way.

Either way, the innkeeper then shows the PCs to their rooms. Unless they wish to speak with the various other contestants (see **The Other Contestants** below) they can retire at their leisure and proceed to the next scene.

## THE OTHER CONTESTANTS

This inn has been set aside for the use of the contestants in the Topaz Championship, and many of them are on hand to observe this altercation. A list of the contestants is presented here; you may use these NPCs to color this and all future scenes as seems appropriate. Like the PCs, all are young and eager to complete their gempuku (coming-of-age). Note that while many are described as having expertise with swords or other actual weapons, in the tournament they (like the PCs) use practice weapons.

**Shiba Tōya**—male Phoenix bushi. Tōya is tall and grave, his face stretched into a perpetual frown. He is confident in his abilities, and more interested in learning from the other competitors than in showing off or even winning the tournament. He is extremely proficient with the spear.

**Mirumoto Hinata**—female Dragon bushi. Hinata is broad-shouldered and broad-faced, with the rough features of a farmer. She is eager to challenge herself against what she hopes is the best Rokugan has to offer. Her two-sword *niten* style of fighting is exotic and effective.

**Kakita Riku**—female Crane bushi. She dyes half her hair white, then weaves the result into a striking black-and-white braid. She is confident that she, as a student of the Kakita Dueling Academy, will easily win the tournament. She may be right. Riku is staying in her quarters on the campus of the Kakita Academy, not at the Laughing Carp.

**Hitoshi**—male Mantis bushi. He is tall, lean, and flexible like a bō staff. He isn't sure why he was offered a position in the Topaz Championship, but is eager to use the opportunity to make a name for himself and his clan. He is an expert archer.

**Kitsu Tsubasa**—male Lion shugenja. A slight young man with enormous, soulful eyes. Tsubasa has been instructed to successfully become samurai, or commit ritual suicide to atone for the shame. He is understandably nervous.

**Moto Batbayar**—female Unicorn bushi. Batbayar's quick smile, dark skin, and curly hair make her seem like a gaijin, even more than her fur-lined leather vest. She regards this entire experience as a fascinating chance to learn more about the Empire. She is unbeatable on horseback, but even on foot, her scimitar is deadly.

**Bayushi Mei Lin**—female Scorpion bushi. She wears a red mask covering the left side of her face. She is determined to secure the Topaz Championship for the Scorpion Clan, at any cost. Her swordsmanship style is tricky and lethal.

**Yasuki Jun**—male Crab courtier. Jun is short and already balding despite his youth. He considers the Topaz Championship a bit of a farce, but is committed to making as many connections and new friendships as he can so that he can call on those contacts later in his career. He's a bit of a fast-talker, but not much of a fighter.



**Complete Scene 2 before moving on.**

# SCENE 3: MIDNIGHT TEA

In this encounter, the PCs receive a visit from the ghost of Doji Satsume, the dead Emerald Champion. The PCs will have to successfully appease the ghost if they want to get a good night's sleep before their first day of the tournament!

After the PCs retire for the night, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> You awaken with no clear sense of why, and find that light is shining in the courtyard outside the paper screen door of your room. Emerging, you find a stern-faced older man kneeling by a formal tea set at a low table in the center of the courtyard. Moonlight shimmers on his blue-and-emerald silk kimono as he gestures for you to join him.
>
> "Sit by me," he says. "Who will pour the tea?" You realize with a shock that this is Doji Satsume, the dead Emerald Champion. It appears he wants you to perform a tea ceremony, and it may not be wise to argue with a ghost.

The tea ceremony requires a **TN 1 Performance (Void) check** (to properly evoke the transcendent nature of the practice). On a success, Satsume sniffs with approval and consents to speak. If the performer secures at least 1 bonus success (i.e., a success in excess of those needed to pass), then Doji Satsume is pleased and offers the subtlest hint of a smile. If the PC performing the tea ceremony fails, Satsume's disapproval causes the air to acquire a literal chill: all PCs suffer 2 strife, and should mark this on their character folios. He still speaks with the PCs afterward, but is more disapproving when he does.

The PCs can now speak with Satsume and try to figure out how they can get back to sleep. Some of their likely questions and possible answers are described here.

## STRIFE AND FEAR

Samurai are supposed to restrain their emotions and keep their expressions masked. Strife represents emotional highs and lows, the joys, frustrations, and sorrows that make it hard to do that. When making a check, each 🌀 result on a kept die causes a character to suffer 1 strife, and certain narrative events (such as an tea ceremony with a dead man!) can cause a character to gain strife directly. As strife accumulates, a character becomes more agitated, and less able to contain their emotions.

When a character's strife exceeds their composure value, the character has an **unmasking** (like the outburst Hitoshi may have had in the last scene). Unmaskings will be described at greater length in **Scene 5**.

Strife subsides slightly at the end of each scene (dropping to half the character's Composure, if it is higher).

Activities that put a character at peace, such as tea ceremonies, pursuing their ninjō, or spending several hours meditating, can remove all of their strife.

From now on, resolve 🌀 results from checks. Hero players should record this next to their Composure on their character folios, or on a piece of scratch paper.

### Nevermind, I'm going back to bed.

Anyone who tries to return to bed (or otherwise leave before Satsume is satisfied) meets with some misadventure. If they've already entered the courtyard, then the door refuses to open. If they have not yet left their room, they turn to find Satsume sitting on their bed with his tea set (and can have the entire conversation with Satsume there, calmly sitting in two places at once).

If they attempt to leave the boarding house, they find the gate locked. And so on. It quickly becomes evident that some supernatural force is at work; each PC suffers 1 strife each time they try to leave.

### Who are you?

> "I see that you are not a frequent visitor to the Imperial Court. I am Doji Satsume, the Emerald Champion."



### Aren't you...dead?

"If I am dead, then who is enjoying this tea?" He holds the cup to his nose and sniffs. "Ah, a lovely brew."

### We found a letter you wrote to your brother-in-law...

Satsume confirms that Kakita Toshimoko is his brother-in-law. He is reluctant to speak of his own children (a **TN 2 Courtesy (Water) check** is required to coax it out of him), but if pressed admits that his relationships with his children (Hotaru, Kuwanan, and Shizue) are not all that he could wish. "*It is a difficult thing,*" he says, "*to raise not only a child, but an heir. My children are not mine; they belong to the Crane Clan.*" He will not speak of his wife at all. Shrewd PCs may guess that Satsume had something to do with the message just "happening" to land in their faces. Satsume will only grunt in response. "*The Fortunes are ever mysterious,*" he says if pressed.

### What do we know about ghosts?

A PC can make a **TN 1 Theology (Earth) check** to see what they can remember from their studies about ghosts. If they succeed at this test, they determine that ghosts are the spirits of ancestors unable, for some reason, to move on to the afterlife of *Yomi* or *Meido*. Helping the ghost resolve its unfinished business can help it pass on to take its place among the ancestors. They also remember that ghosts are traditionally at least a little cryptic, and there is likely more to the story than Satsume's shade is letting on.

### What do you want from us?

Satsume sighs, and explains:

"I want you to ensure Hitoshi, the young Mantis, survives the Topaz Championship. I want to see that he becomes a samurai worthy of his father."

Doji Satsume refuses to state outright why he wants Hitoshi to live, or what danger he thinks the young man may be in. Doing so would require him to admit that his brother-in-law had a bastard child, which would bring shame on his brother-in-law and his clan. If the PCs ask further questions, he answers with riddles, such as "*The fallen blossom can never return to the bough, yet all can see from whence it came*" and "*Words, like cuts of the sword, can never be called back once spoken.*"

These comments might seem cryptic to the players, but the important thing is that they understand that Satsume really wants Hitoshi to survive and succeed. They don't have to understand why, although they may figure out the reason later on in the adventure.

### Very well, spirit, we will do as you ask.

If the PCs agree to do as Satsume asks, he finishes his tea and departs after saying the following:

"You have my thanks. May Lady Doji favor you with eloquence and courage in your task."

## The Ghost Departs

If the PCs are friendly and polite to the spirit, it departs after a time, whether or not it extracts a promise from them—the PCs will be able to get a good night's sleep after all. If they are hostile or rude (or if they fail several checks), the spirit lingers even after it vanishes, causing strange lights to appear and disappear, making objects fall, and generally disturbing their rest.

In any case, when the spirit departs, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

When you look again, your visitor is gone. You reach down to put away the tea set and discover that the tea pot is cold, and the tea cup belonging to your guest still sits, undisturbed and dry, on the tray.

### REST AND RECUPERATION

If the PCs successfully appeased the ghost during the night, they remove all of their strife at the end of the scene thanks to their peaceful rest. If not, they are tormented throughout the night and do not remove any strife at the end of the scene.





**Complete Scene 3 before moving on.**



# Scene 4: The Competition

In this scene, the PCs participate in the first five contests of the Topaz Championship. This scene will be a bit more abstract than the others, with the PCs making a single dice roll in each contest. However, this is necessary to make sure the PCs can get through the Championship in a timely manner.

When the PCs awaken the next morning, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> The next morning dawns, as pure and golden as the voice of the lark. You make your way across the river to the sandy courtyard and training field of the Kakita Dueling Academy, where the gray-haired sensei Kakita Toshimoko gives a brief speech reminding all present that the eyes of their clans, the eyes of their ancestors, and the eyes of the Empire are upon them. He introduces the current Topaz Champion, Kitsuki Yuikimi, and last year's runner-up, Bayushi Sugai, and instructs the contestants to direct any questions they have about the tournament to the two samurai. A white-clad priest then emerges to bless the assembly, and the contest proper begins!

## The Championship Structure

Each event of the tournament is presided over by a judge from one of the Great Clans, who rates the participants on their proficiency. Most, but not all, of the contest events are also competitive, with contestants being paired together by drawing tiles from a clay pot. (The tiles, the pot, and the structure of the tournament are all centuries old.)

Contestants gain contest points in the following ways:

- If a contestant satisfies the judge that they are proficient in the skill being tested (succeeding on the required check), they earn one point.
- If a contestant succeeds in a way that wins the judge's approval (using the specified approach) they earn an additional point (for a total of two points).
- If a contestant beats the listed front-runner (succeeding and getting a specified number of bonus successes) they earn an additional point and gain 1 glory. This is cumulative with earning points by using the correct approach.

**A contestant must earn at least contest eight points to make their gempuku** and be invited back for the final *iaijutsu* competition on the third day.

### Hero Players in the Championship

Each PC participates in each contest. Because they must only demonstrate proficiency, the PC doesn't have to win or beat their opponent. They merely have to succeed.

## The Master and the Former Contestants

**Kakita Toshimoko** is the master sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy. Sometimes called the "Grey Crane," he takes relatively few students himself. Toshimoko spends more time in the capital of Otosan Uchi than in Tsuma, but he has ultimate responsibility for everything that happens in his school, and by extension at the Topaz Championship.

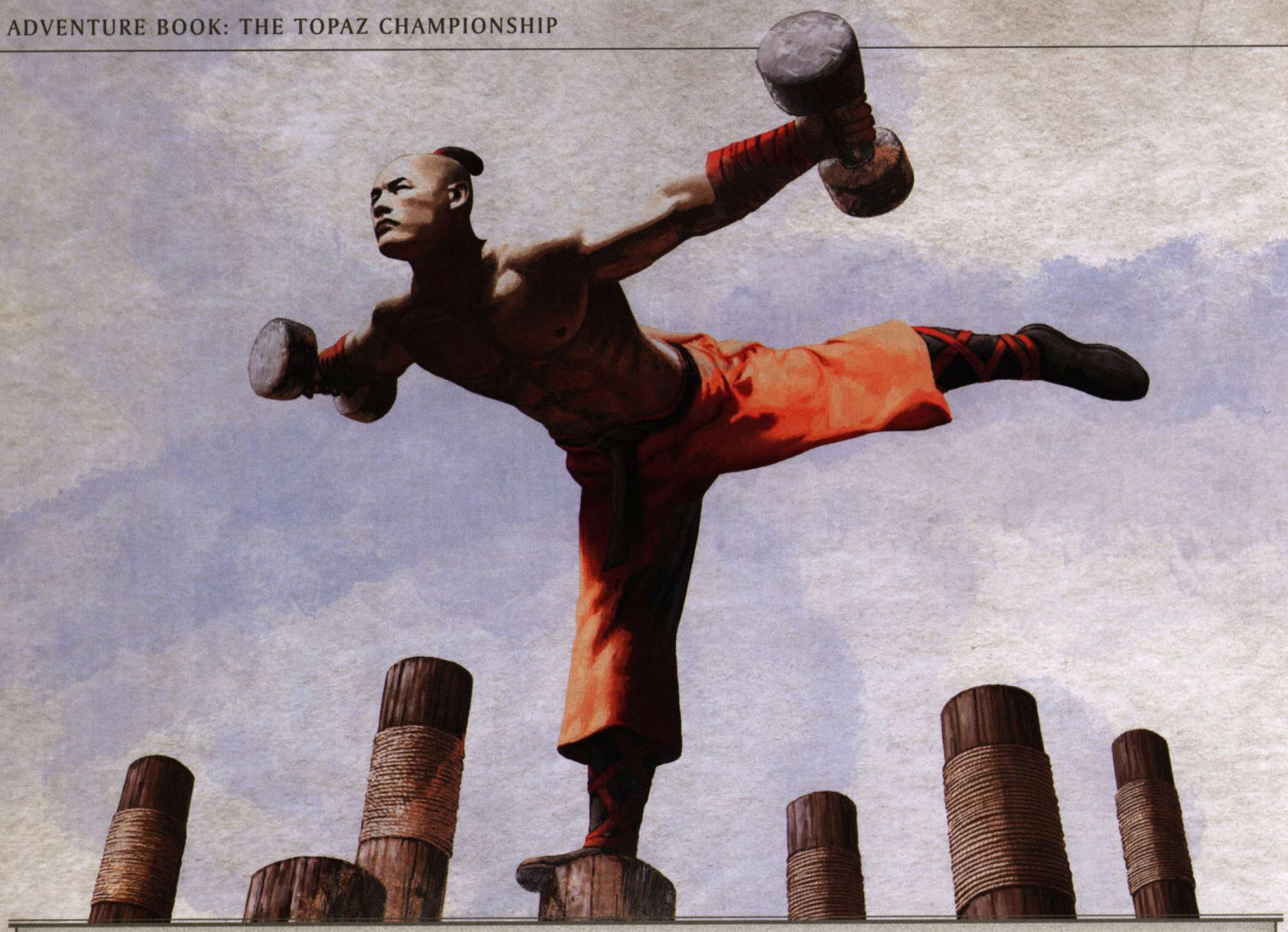
Toshimoko is nearing fifty, but his long hair has been grey for decades. He has a sarcastic sense of humor, an abiding love of sake and beautiful women, and the ultimate arrogance of a master duelist.

The current Topaz Champion is a Dragon bushi named **Kitsuki Yuikimi**. Resplendent in her blue and gold armor, she has come to witness the events of the current Topaz Championship and ceremonially pass on the title when a new Champion is chosen.

Yuikimi is, in all respects, the model samurai. She will be happy to lend advice and encouragement to any PC who asks for it. Her only goal is to ensure that the Topaz Champion is someone worthy of the title.

**Bayushi Sugai** was the runner-up in last year's Topaz Championship and the Scorpion is still extraordinarily bitter about his failure. His hatred and resentment have poisoned him entirely; Sugai will take any chance he sees to ruin the Championship, embarrass the Crane, or take personal revenge on Kitsuki Yuikimi.

Scene 4 continues on the next page.



## APPROACHES

During the tournament, your PCs will need to make checks to see if they pass or fail each of the eight contests. Unlike the previous checks, during the contest your PCs get to choose their own approach to how they make the check. This means that while the contest determines the skill your PCs use, the PCs get to select the ring they use with the skill (this is under "Approaches" in your PCs' folios).

The approach the PCs choose reflects the way they seek to perform the task. No approach is wrong, so your PCs can choose to use their highest ring and maximize their chances of success (basically, they would be playing to their strengths). However, as the contest rules describe, some of the judges may favor certain approaches over others, and using the right approach can give the PCs bonus points in the contest.

An **air approach** is evasive and clever, looking for workarounds and indirect paths. In a physical task, a character using an air approach stays light on their feet and flexible, while in a social situation, a character might refuse to commit to any position while probing their opponents for weaknesses.

An **earth approach** is cautious and grounded. It is thorough, and makes sure not to leave any obvious gaps or weaknesses. In a physical task, a character using an earth approach stays sturdy and braced. In a social scene, a character speaks slowly and thoughtfully, making sure not to overstep with their words.

A **fire approach** is creative and fierce, bearing down on the opposition in an intimidating manner. In a physical situation, it often reflects an all-out effort to overwhelm a problem in one burst, while in a social scene, it might mean that the character is trying to excite and impress an audience with their audacity and flair.

A **water approach** is fluid and reactive, giving the character maximum flexibility. In a physical situation, it often means the character is staying mobile and shifting to apply their strength from many directions. In a social situations, the character is gregarious, seeking to please and ingratiate to keep as many options open as possible.

A **void approach** represents a character in the flow state. Unclouded by thought, a character can react instinctively to any problems. In a social scene, it reflects cryptic mysticism and an aura of wisdom beyond one's words.

## SPENDING OPPORTUNITY (✵)

Opportunity ✵ on kept dice can now be spent in several ways.

### WAYS SPECIFIC TO A CHECK

Sometimes, a check has a specific way to spend opportunity. Whenever a PC has the option to spend ✵ for an effect, it is marked in text in one of two ways:

✵: This means the character may cause the listed effect to occur once. They cannot activate it again during this check.

✵+: This means the character may cause the listed effect to occur once per ✵ spent this way.

### WAYS UNIVERSAL TO ALL CHECKS

All PCs can spend ✵ on any check to do the following:

✵+: Remove 1 strife per ✵ spent this way.

✵: If the check was a failure, the PC demonstrates their determination and skill even in the face of adversity, suffering no embarrassment or shame for failing.

✵: If the check was also successful, the PC accomplishes it in a particularly satisfying and impressive way, gaining the admiration of the crowd.

✵: Learn an interesting detail about one of the contestants or other individuals in the tournament. The PC should choose a character, and you should read the appropriate detail as described in the **Spotting Details** sidebar.

To participate, the PC makes a check. The skill used in the check (and the TN the PCs need to succeed) is listed in the contest. However, your players get to choose which approach their PCs use (or in other words, what ring they pair with the skill). See **Approaches** on page 16 for more information about what each approach may look like in action. Since the PCs can choose whatever approach they want, your players are welcome to play to their PCs' strengths and choose the approach that would use their PCs' highest ring (maximizing chances for success). However, each judge can award discretionary points for contestants who perform tasks in a way they appreciate. This means that each contest has a specific approach tied to it. If a PC uses that approach and succeeds, they gain an extra contest point. Your players should track contest points on their folio (reference number "10").

## THE EVENTS

There are five contest events on the first day: sumai (traditional wrestling), heraldry, athletics, horseback riding, and conduct. The contests on day two will cover weaponry, poetry, knowledge of law, Go (a traditional strategy game), archery, and hunting.

Before each contest begins, you should read the judge's advice aloud to give your players the clue as to what approach will gain extra appreciation (and points) from the judge.

## SPOTTING DETAILS

Players may also spend ✵ to notice an interesting detail about a character of choice from the following list:

- The Mantis contestant, **Hitoshi**, seems to be failing any event with a Crane judge. (And also any events where horseback riding is involved.)
- **Hitoshi** has the tall, graceful demeanor that reminds you of most Crane Clan members.
- **Kakita Riku** of the Crane Clan is quite unsatisfied with any less-than-perfect result.
- **Bayushi Mei Lin** from the Scorpion Clan is very interested in how Kakita Riku is doing.
- **Mirumoto Hinata** of the Dragon Clan defers to others, sometimes even servants.
- The Phoenix bushi, **Shiba Tōya**, seems to be nearsighted.
- **Moto Batbayar** from the Unicorn Clan is doing her best to hide how uncomfortable she is.
- **Kitsu Tsubasa** of the Lion Clan retreats to the closest shrine to devoutly pray between every event.
- **Yasuki Jun** of the Crab Clan keeps sneaking sips of sake between rounds.
- **Bayushi Sugai**, the Scorpion Clan runner-up from the previous Topaz Championship, is bitter about losing last year, and seems to particularly resent Toshimoko.
- **Toshimoko** , the Crane master sensei of the Dueling Academy, seems particularly disdainful towards Hitoshi.

### Sumai

"Remember," the judge says, "In sumai, as in life, a steady stance creates a solid foundation for success."

The first event is a traditional wrestling match known as *sumai*. A priest draws a circle in the sand of the training yard and marks it with rope, then invokes blessings on each pair of wrestlers as they strip down to their undergarments. The winner of each bout is the one who throws their opponent out of the circle. This competition is a **TN 2 Martial Arts [Unarmed] check**.

This competition is judged by Hida Goroharu of the Crab Clan, who appreciates the **earth approach**. The front-runner is Bayushi Mei Lin; one bonus success is required to beat her. Kitsu Tsubasa and Yasuki Jun both fail to earn their marks here.

Scene 4 continues on the next page.

### Heraldry

"Consider," the judge says. "That the design of each heraldic emblem contains clues as to its origins that can be unlocked with careful study."

The contestants are shepherded, one at a time, into a small gallery in the Kakita dōjō for the heraldry competition. Each contestant is shown five pieces of heraldry of increasing difficulty (a Great Clan, a family within a Great Clan, a Minor Clan, an individual of great status and renown, and a relatively minor samurai) and asked to identify them. Partial answers earn partial credit. A contestant must be able to identify four outright, or give partial answers on all five, to be rated proficient. This competition is a **TN 2 Culture check**.

This competition is judged by Doji Murashige of the Crane Clan, who favors the **air approach**. The front-runner is Kitsu Tsubasa; two bonus successes are required to beat him. Hitoshi and Moto Batbayar fail to earn their marks here.

### Athletics

The judge nods. "The best way to overcome the obstacles of your fate is by being flexible enough to adapt to them."

An obstacle course has been erected in the forest outside the school, and the contestants are expected to run it two by two. The course is a winding path through the forest, beginning and ending near the Kakita gardens. The obstacles include a log laid across a rushing stream, a pit of mud with hanging ropes to swing across, and a tall-but-uneven wall to climb. The competition is a **TN 2 Fitness check**.

This competition is judged by Kakita Naomori of the Crane Clan, who favors the **water approach**. The front-runner is Mirumoto Hinata; one bonus success is required to beat her. Hitoshi fails here, despite a respectable performance.

### Horseback Riding

The judge grins at you. "To tame a steed, you must be as fierce and bold as the horse. Good luck!"

Adjacent to the obstacle course for the athletics trial, a long series of ropes and flags have been erected on a cleared field for the horseback riding trial. Contestants must mount one of the provided horses, ride to the end of the field, collect a flag, ride back, then take an offered spear and collect rings on it from where they hang at various points across the course. Contestants are judged both on speed and grace. The competition is a **TN 1 Survival check**.

This competition is judged by Utaku Oichi of the Unicorn Clan, who favors the **fire approach**. The front-runner, surprising no one, is Moto Batbayar; two bonus successes are required to beat her. Hitoshi and Mirumoto Hinata both fail here.

### Conduct

The judge studies you doubtfully. "I hope that you recall the lessons of your parents well when comporting yourself as a samurai should."

The conduct trial is held in the same gallery as the heraldry contest, and features a panel of three judges. Each judge asks the contestant a question of etiquette, courtesy, or ceremony, with possible follow-up questions if they find the answer inadequate. Contestants are also graded on their conduct during the test. The questions range from the deceptively simple ("who receives the last cup in the tea ceremony?") to the excruciatingly specific ("the Topaz Champion meets an Emerald Magistrate at a bridge wide enough for only one samurai to cross; who must bow and defer to the other?"). This trial uses either **Culture** or **Courtesy**, chosen by the hero player, and is **TN 2**.

The judges for this trial are Shosuro Tomoe of the Scorpion Clan, Doji Murashige of the Crane Clan, and Ikoma Ikehata of the Lion Clan, all of whom favor the **earth approach**. The front-runner is Kakita Riku; one bonus success is required to defeat her. Hitoshi is the only NPC contestant who fails here.

## The Day's End

After the conduct competition, Toshimoko gives another brief speech and encourages the contestants to rest and relax this evening. There is a certain suggestive tone to his remarks that seems almost improper, and most of the contestants proceed directly to the nearest sake house to get thoroughly drunk in celebration or misery.





**Complete Scene 4 before moving on.**

# Scene 5: High Spirits

In this encounter, the PCs find themselves (willingly or not) at a *sake* house where their honor will be repeatedly impugned. Should they somehow manage not to erupt into a brawl, they will be instead accosted on their way home.

After they finish the trials for the day, read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

> You don't remember choosing to visit the Poisoned Water Sake House, but here you are nonetheless, carried there by a loud and triumphant crowd of your fellow contestants. Most of the other contestants are drinking nearby, save only the Minor Clan contestant Hitoshi, who sits sullenly near one wall and refuses to engage in your merriment.

There is an opportunity here to indulge in as much or as little additional roleplaying as you desire. Perhaps the PCs wish to chat with the other contestants, or learn more about Toshimoko, Yuikimi, or Sugai. Feel free to provide roleplaying prompts for the PCs, such as Jun beginning a game of Fortunes & Winds (a popular dice game that he is suspiciously good at), Riku and Hinata engaging in a series of subtle boasts about their respective swordsmanship schools, or Batbayar and Tōya leading the assembly in song.

Whenever you're ready to proceed, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> Your revelry is interrupted by the arrival of a group of poorly dressed ruffians with swords—rōnin, no doubt. These masterless samurai demand wine, and as they rudely take their seats, they begin to lob insults at the contestants!

## UNMASKINGS

When a character's strife exceeds their composure, the character has an **unmasking** (like the one Hitoshi may have had in Scene 2). Each of the PCs has a **personal unmasking** listed in their folio, which gives guidance on how they react to extremes of emotion. Hero players should use this as a roleplaying aid, describing their character's emotional reaction.

Notably, a player doesn't lose control of their character during an unmasking—the player still decides what their character does—but the outpouring of emotion should have an effect on the scene and help guide the story. Oftentimes, this will leave a PC in a position of disadvantage, but sometimes a character can capitalize on an unmasking to say something they otherwise could not or to temporarily overcome a weakness.

During a conflict scene, a character checks their strife at the beginning of their turn. If their strife exceeds their composure, they suffer the unmasking and resolve its effects, then immediately remove all of their strife. At the end of each scene, each character reduces their strife until it is equal to half their Composure (if it is higher).

There are as many ruffians as there are contestants in the sake house (in other words, 7 plus 1 per PC), each of them a thoroughly disreputable rōnin of low character. Their leader, a dark-eyed man with the lean and hungry look of a wolf, goes by the name of Hatsuichi, and he has a cruel sense of humor and no honor to speak of.

Hatsuichi and his minions are deliberately insulting the young samurai contestants in an effort to start a brawl. Their goal is to rough up the youths and leave them too battered to perform well tomorrow. They have been well-paid to do so by a mysterious man whose identity they do not know (Bayushi Sugai, of course).

During the fight, a PC may spend ✲ to notice that Bayushi Mei Lin is nowhere to be seen. (She is resting comfortably in the boarding house, having been forewarned about this incident.)

### Insults and Honor

Hatsuichi has a variety of insults prepared, some of them with a degree of specificity that might indicate a detailed knowledge of the target's history. The **Insults!** sidebar has some suggestions, but feel free to invent your own to ensure each PC gets their own unique insult or two.

Hearing one of these insults in public without responding causes a loss of face. Each time a PC is the subject of an insult, they suffer 1 strife. To ignore an insult without responding at all, a PC must forfeit 1 glory. They can either tolerate the insults, or fight.

## INSULTS!

The following are some insults you may have the ruffians use. Some work on all PCs, while others are specific to a clan.

(Any): *What a motley assortment. These must be the ugly children, the ones the clans marry away as soon as they can.*

(Any): *What is this, fine clothes, but no swords? Are you samurai, or merchants?*

(Any): *It is growing late; shouldn't you return to your rice fields?*

(Crab): *I wasn't aware that the Crab were recruiting ogres to their ranks. Or is it possible that you are a troll?*

(Crane): *Have you heard the true reason Lady Doji chose the crane as her symbol? It was because of her enormous beak!*

(Dragon): *Are you some kind of criminal? Why else would you be covered in tattoos?*

(Lion): *What is that you are drinking, little kitten? Nothing harder than milk, I hope!*

(Phoenix): *Are you afraid of us? Why don't you ask your invisible friends to do your fighting for you!*

(Scorpion): The ruffians do not make any insulting remarks toward Scorpion PCs.

(Unicorn): *Friends, be sure to speak more clearly, so that the gaijin can understand.*

Scene 5 continues on the next page.



### Fists!

If a PC throws a punch, well, that was the rōnins' goal all along. The PC who throws the first punch must forfeit 1 honor to do so (as this defies *rei*, the virtue of courtesy and propriety), but receives a glory award of 2 (for they have shown their mettle). Refer to **A Brawl!** should this happen.

If a PC instead challenges the rōnin to a formal duel, they laugh and point out that the PCs are not samurai and thus have no standing to issue such a challenge. This reminder itself counts as another insult that the PC must counter appropriately.

### Nothing!

The PCs might manage to keep their cool. Maybe. If they do, one of the other contestants (probably either Hitoshi or Mirumoto Hinata) loses their cool and throws a punch. Whatever the trigger, the outcome is the same: a brawl.

## A Brawl!

The brawl, when it breaks out—and it should break out!—quickly consumes the entire sake house. The staff all expertly remove themselves from the battlefield, and the longer-term patrons settle into seats with a good view.

For the purposes of this conflict, we presume that the other Topaz Championship contestants pair off with their respective ruffians and each functionally removes the other from the fight.

**Mechanically, this encounter should consist of the PCs fighting against one ruffian each.** None of the ruffians draw their swords, as they don't wish to get into trouble for killing anyone. The PCs have their fists, *bokken* (wooden practice swords), and staffs.

This is the first full fight (or **conflict scene**, as we officially call it) the PCs have faced. During this scene, PCs take turns over a number of rounds (four in this case, but fewer if they win quickly or greater if the players are having fun). Each character acts once in each round.

### Initiative

The brawl is a specific type of conflict scene called a **skirmish**, and during a skirmish, characters act in order of initiative each round, from highest initiative to lowest (breaking ties in favor of PCs, and honor value breaking ties between PCs).

At the start of the encounter, all PCs make an Initiative check to learn about their environment and gauge their foes: this also generates their initiative value. For this brawl, it is a **TN 1 Tactics check**. The PCs may use whatever ring they like for this check; this will also determine the stance they start the battle in.

Each PC who succeeds observes something about their environment based on the ring they chose:

- **Air (Weaknesses):** One of the ruffians seems to have a limp, and could be an easy target. Reduce the TN of the first check against that NPC by 1.
- **Earth (Defenses):** The PC sees that one of the contestants is in trouble, and can push them out of the way if they choose. This contestant is not harmed during the fight, and might feel a debt of gratitude toward the PC, granting the PC a glory award of 1 at the end of the scene.
- **Fire (Intentions):** The ruffians are being cautious not to harm the contestants too badly, to the point where it seems suspicious. The PC makes the important realization that perhaps the rōnin were paid to make a scene.
- **Water (Environment):** The low tables in the sake house could be used as an obstacle—the PC may move to them, increasing the TN of the first check the ruffians make against that character by 1.
- **Void (The Supernatural):** There are no supernatural presences at work in this scene. This appears to have nothing to do with their ghostly visitor the previous night.

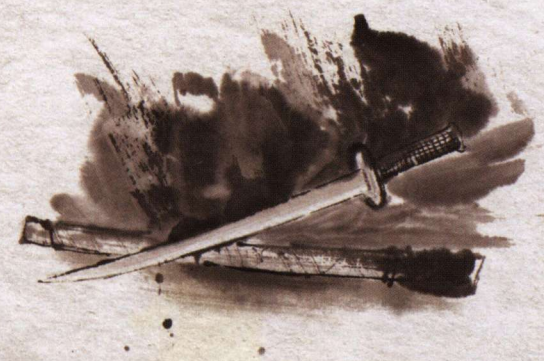
Then, determine the initiative values as follows:

- If the rōnin started the brawl, each PC's Initiative value is equal to their Vigilance plus their bonus successes.
- If a PC launched the attack, each PC's initiative value is equal to their Focus plus the bonus successes from their Tactics check.
- The ruffians all have an initiative value of 4 (their Focus), as they were expecting this fight. Do not make an Initiative check for them, just use this value. All ruffians begin in a Void stance.

In the case of ties in initiative values, PCs act before ruffians, and PCs who succeeded their Initiative check go before PCs who failed.

### Rounds

Each round, characters take turns in order of initiative (which the GM should record on a piece of scratch paper), starting with the highest and descending in sequence until all characters have acted. Once all characters have acted, a new round begins, starting again with the first character in the order.



### Character Turn

During their turn, a character first chooses a stance. Then they may move and perform one action, in either order. Everyone can reach everyone else in the cramped sake house by moving once, and each PC starts within arm's reach of a ruffian.

First, a character chooses one of the elemental stances from the **Stances and Effects** table. They do not need to keep the same stance during the encounter, and may change it at the beginning of each of their turns. If this is the first round of the skirmish, they may also pull out one of their weapons and get ready to use it.

Then, a character performs one action. As an action, a character may attack one of the ruffians with a punch, kick, or even an improvised weapon found in the sake house. They use the Strike action to attack (see page 22). Instead of attacking, a PC may ready a weapon, Assist another character, or use some other skill like Medicine.

Finally, a character can move, either before or after they perform their action. The sake house is small, so when the PCs move, they can reach any other character in the scene.

### STANCES

Stances are traditionally used in **conflict scenes**. The stances match the five elements (Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Void), and a character can only perform checks with the matching ring while in a stance. Each stance represents the approach the character is taking in the fight (as described in Approaches). However, each stance also has a unique mechanical benefit as well. For more on the mechanical and thematic effects of stances, see the table on page 21.

### Stances and Effects

| NAME | DESCRIPTION | EFFECTS |
|---|---|---|
| Air Stance | You move into a stance that favors mobility, circling around your opponents gracefully while their attacks slide harmlessly past you. | Increase the TN of checks targeting you by 1. |
| Earth Stance | You concentrate on your foundation, employing tactics that keep you rooted and defended while you await the exact right moment to act. | When making Attack and Intrigue checks that target you, other characters cannot spend ✲ to inflict critical strikes, conditions, or persistent effects on you. |
| Fire Stance | You go on the attack, bearing down on your foes and trusting your momentum to carry you forward to victory. | When you succeed on a check against a foe, you count as having 1 additional bonus success for each ↻ result on your check. |
| Water Stance | You remain flexible, ready to adapt as the situation demands or turn your opposition's force against them. | During your turn, you may perform 1 additional action that does not require a check. |
| Void Stance | You assume a centered stance in which you clear your mind of distractions and allows the universe to act through you. | While in a Void stance, you do not suffer strife from ↻ results. |

Scene 5 continues on the next page.

### Ruffian Turn

On their turn, a ruffian NPC enters the Fire stance and then attacks a PC. They also use the Strike action, but in this tavern fight they can only use the Sit Down, Child! NPC Ability when spending ✵. All NPCs have **Skill Group Ranks** instead of individual skills, indicating they have that many ranks in each skill of that type. The ruffians, for example, have Martial (1), and so have 1 rank in all Martial Arts, Fitness, and other skills in that group.

After acting, a character's turn ends and play proceeds to the next character.

***Strike***

**Description:** You make an attack against a single foe.
**Activation:** As an Attack action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts check** using the appropriate skill for the weapon (such as Unarmed for fists) targeting one character within the range of the weapon. In this scene, your foe will always be within range.
**Effects:** If you succeed, you deal damage to the target equal to the weapon's base damage plus your bonus successes. You may also spend ✵✵ to deal a critical strike on the ruffian! For this minor brawl, this means the target increases the TN of all of their checks by 1 for each critical strike they have suffered this scene.

### DAMAGE AND FATIGUE

When an attack is successful, it typically deals damage to the chosen target equal to the base damage of the weapon or mystical ability used in the attack, plus the number of bonus successes on the check. If the target is wearing armor with a resistance value, subtract that number from the damage and then record the result as fatigue. Fatigue is compared to Endurance. When a character suffers a number of fatigue greater than their Endurance value, they are Incapacitated and cannot perform actions.



### Ruffian

Hatsuichi and his fellow honorless rōnin seem to merely wish to cause trouble with the contestants. There could be other motives to their actions, however.

| SOCIETAL | | PERSONAL | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | HONOR | ENDURANCE | 5 |
| 22 | GLORY | COMPOSURE | 6 |
| 21 | STATUS | FOCUS | 4 |
| | | VIGILANCE | 2 |




| ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 1 | TRADE 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**WEAPONS AND GEAR**

**Fists:** Damage 1; Range 0

**Gear:** Daishō, grimy kimono, sake jug (half-filled).

**NPC ABILITY: SIT DOWN, CHILD!**

A ruffian may spend ✵ from a successful attack to knock the PC down. The PC must use their movement on their next turn to stand up, and they suffer 1 strife from embarrassment.

### Ending the Encounter

The rōnin fight until at least half of them have been **Incapacitated** (when they have suffered fatigue exceeding their endurance, or suffered their fourth critical strike) or until four rounds have passed. In either case, the rōnin gather their injured and run away before the town watch arrives.

If any PCs suffer fatigue during (or after) the fight, they can be healed through the First Aid action. As a Support action, once per scene, a character may make a **TN 2 Medicine (Earth) check** targeting any character at range 0–1 (including themselves) to heal 1 fatigue plus 1 additional fatigue for each bonus success on the check. The healer may spend ✵✵+ to affect one additional target per ✵✵ spent this way.

At the end of the scene, each PC removes fatigue (and strife, as explained in Scene 3) until the remainder is equal to half their Endurance (or Composure for strife). PCs also heal their fatigue completely if they get a good night's sleep.

All of the other contestants manage to defeat their opponents as long as the PCs do so. If any PCs are defeated, one of the other contestants that was present (except Hitoshi) is injured enough that they must withdraw from the tournament.



**Complete Scene 5 before moving on.**

# Interlude: Experience, Techniques, and the Void



You've now learned the basics of how to play the *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game*. This is a suitable stopping point to pause game play, perhaps to resume on a different day, or perhaps just to break for food and chit-chat. Take the time to review the mechanics you've covered so far, and when you're ready, add these new ones:

## Spending Experience Points

As the player characters continue their adventures and overcome new challenges, the GM will award them experience points, or XP. This typically happens at the end of every game session. The players may then spend XP to purchase new ranks in skills, talents, and other upgrades for their characters.

### Players Turn the Page in Their Folios

Now that the PCs have completed the first portion of the tournament and dealt with the ruffians, it's time for the players to turn to the next page of their character folios! First, they should note their current strife and fatigue, the koku they possess, their contest points, and other character changes, then record that information on the new pages. They will use these new pages for the rest of the adventure, with their newly upgraded characters.

Unlike the previous page, your players will notice that the skill and ring entries on these pages are blank. This is because the character sheet can be used as players level up their characters in this and future adventures! We'll talk about leveling up in a minute. For now, have your players copy the values for their rings and skills from the first spread of the folio to the second. Also, make sure they use a pencil, as these values may change later!

### Players Spend XP to Improve Characters

Now give your players 4 XP. How the players spend that XP is explained in the upper-right corners of their folios, but in summary, they have three options for spending XP: buying an additional rank in an existing skill, buying a rank in a new skill, or buying a technique. Each has an associated XP cost, so they must decide which to buy as they can't afford them all! Increasing a Ring value, for example, will be outside of their current purchasing power until they play more adventures and gain more XP.

## Techniques

The players now have the opportunity to use techniques. These represent advanced training that lets a character act in unexpected ways or exploit opportunities others would overlook.

After turning to the next page in their folios, players will find rules for the techniques that they can purchase with their XP. Each ability will describe when it can be used, what is needed to activate it (such as spending ✿), and what effect it has for the user.

## Void Points

In works of samurai fiction, force of will is often a deciding factor at crucial moments. Void points are a resource that allow characters to tip the scales in their favor, tapping into their strength of character to persevere in situations that seem insurmountable.

A character begins each game session with 1 Void point, and can accrue a maximum number of Void points equal to the value of their Void Ring. If a character's current Void points equal their Void Ring, they cannot gain further Void points. Void points unspent at the end of a game session do not carry over to the next game session.

### Spending Void Points

When a character spends a Void point for an effect, their player is encouraged to take the opportunity to offer a brief explanation about why the character chooses to draw a line at this moment and what parts of their core beliefs and motivations factor into it.

Void points can be spent to **Seize the Moment**. When assembling the dice pool for a check, a character may spend 1 Void point to roll 1 additional Ring die and subsequently keep 1 additional die when resolving the check.

### Gaining Void Points

A character gains Void points equal to half their Void Ring at the start of each game session, and can accrue a maximum number of Void points equal to the value of their Void Ring. If a character's current Void points equal their Void Ring, they cannot gain further Void points.

**Complete the Interlude before moving on.**

# Scene 6: The Competition, Day Two

The next morning, the competition resumes, less any NPC contestants who were injured too badly to continue last night. Read the following aloud:

> The next morning, the contest resumes. However, contestants who were injured too badly in last evening's brawl are unable to continue and have to bow out from the competition. Regrettably, this means that they will not finish their gempuku, and have to return home in shame.

As before, this day is a series of trials and the previous rules for the events apply here as well.

## The Events

There are six events on the second day: weaponry, poetry, law, go, archery, and hunting.

### Weaponry

> The judge seems to be particularly focused on your footwork as you attempt to adapt to your opponent's technique.

The weaponry trial has two stages. First, contestants select a weapon from among those offered (sword, spear, club, or staff) and demonstrate their form. Then, they pair off and spar to first palpable hit, as called by a judge. The weapons are all wooden practice varieties, so no one will be seriously injured in the event (although being hit still hurts!). This competition is a **TN 2 Martial Arts [Melee] check**.

The judges for this trial are Akodo Eiko of the Lion Clan and Kakita Toshimoko himself; both prefer the **water approach**. The front-runner is Kakita Riku; three bonus successes are required to defeat her. Yasuki Jun is the only NPC to fail to make their mark here, and he grumbles a bit about it.

### Poetry

> One of the judges takes a puff on his pipe as you enter. "It is not we who are the poets, it is the universe itself," he says.

After a brief opportunity to change out of their sparring outfits, contestants are ushered two by two into the garden, where each pair is given a theme upon which to compose a poem. The themes tend to be based on virtues of Bushidō, or abstract concepts such as "impermanence" or "hope." Each contestant has only a few moments to think, and then must recite their poem for the judges. This contest is a **TN 2 Composition check**. You can ask your players to make up an actual haiku as well.

The judges for this trial are Bayushi Moriko of the Scorpion Clan, Kitsuki Tai Yu of the Dragon Clan, and Hida Goroharu of the Crab Clan. They all favor the **void approach**. The front-runner is Shiba Tōya; one bonus success is required to beat him. A sheepish Yasuki Jun fails to make his mark here, complaining that the only poetry he excels at is "the bawdy stuff."

### Law

> Just before you enter the room, a judge brushes by you with an armful of scrolls. "I hope you spent time studying for this," she says.

Returning to the gallery where the oral trials are normally conducted, contestants are quizzed on a variety of matters of law, the Tao, and Bushidō. Once again, three judges are present, and each contestant must answer a question from each judge. Because the law of Rokugan is intimately connected to the Celestial Order, this is as much about theology as law, and thus requires a **TN 2 Government** or **Theology check**.

The judges for this trial are Akodo Eiko of the Lion Clan, Asako Himeya of the Phoenix Clan, and Bayushi Kiriko of the Scorpion Clan, and they favor the **earth approach** (except for Kiriko, who finds memorizing laws painfully boring and has no particular preference). The front-runner is Bayushi Mei Lin; two bonus successes are required to defeat her. Moto Batbayar fails here.

### Go

> The judge studies the board with an almost eager intensity. "Just like on the battlefield, bold tactics bear results," he rumbles.

A large interior hall has been cleared and set with a number of game boards, where contestants do battle in silence. The judge roams about, indicating disapproval, curiosity, or satisfaction with a series of small grunts and sighs. As there is a time limit, slow play is punished with a sharp rap on the knuckles. This contest is a **TN 2 Games check**.

The judge is Ikoma Ikehata of the Lion Clan, who prefers the **fire approach**. The front-runner, after a titanic struggle with Bayushi Mei Lin, is Yasuki Jun; one bonus success is required to beat him. Mirumoto Hinata and Kitsu Tsubasa fail.

### Archery

> The judge bows serenely. "True archers understand that the arrow knows the way to the target."

Archery butts are placed in a long row at one side of the training field, and three lines are drawn in the sand in intervals, leading away from each butt. Contestants collect a bow and three arrows, line up at the closest line, fire, then retreat to the next line and repeat, so that each shot becomes more difficult. "Proficient" archers must hit two of the three shots, and the closer to the center of the target the better. This is a **TN 2 Martial Arts [Ranged] check**.

The judge for this competition is Kakita Naomori of the Crane Clan, who favors the **void approach**. The front-runner is Hitoshi by a wide margin; three bonus successes are required to beat him. Nearsighted Shiba Tōya fails to make his mark here, as does Yasuki Jun, who complains that he trained with the crossbow.

### *Hitoshi's Success or Failure*

Hitoshi needs to win this contest (not just succeed) to achieve his gempuku. If he does not, he fails the championship with only 7 points. You should point this out to the PCs, saying: *Hitoshi still hasn't quite reached 8 points. A strong showing here is likely vital for him.* Remember, a player can choose not to keep dice with extra successes, to ensure they don't beat Hitoshi.

## Hunting

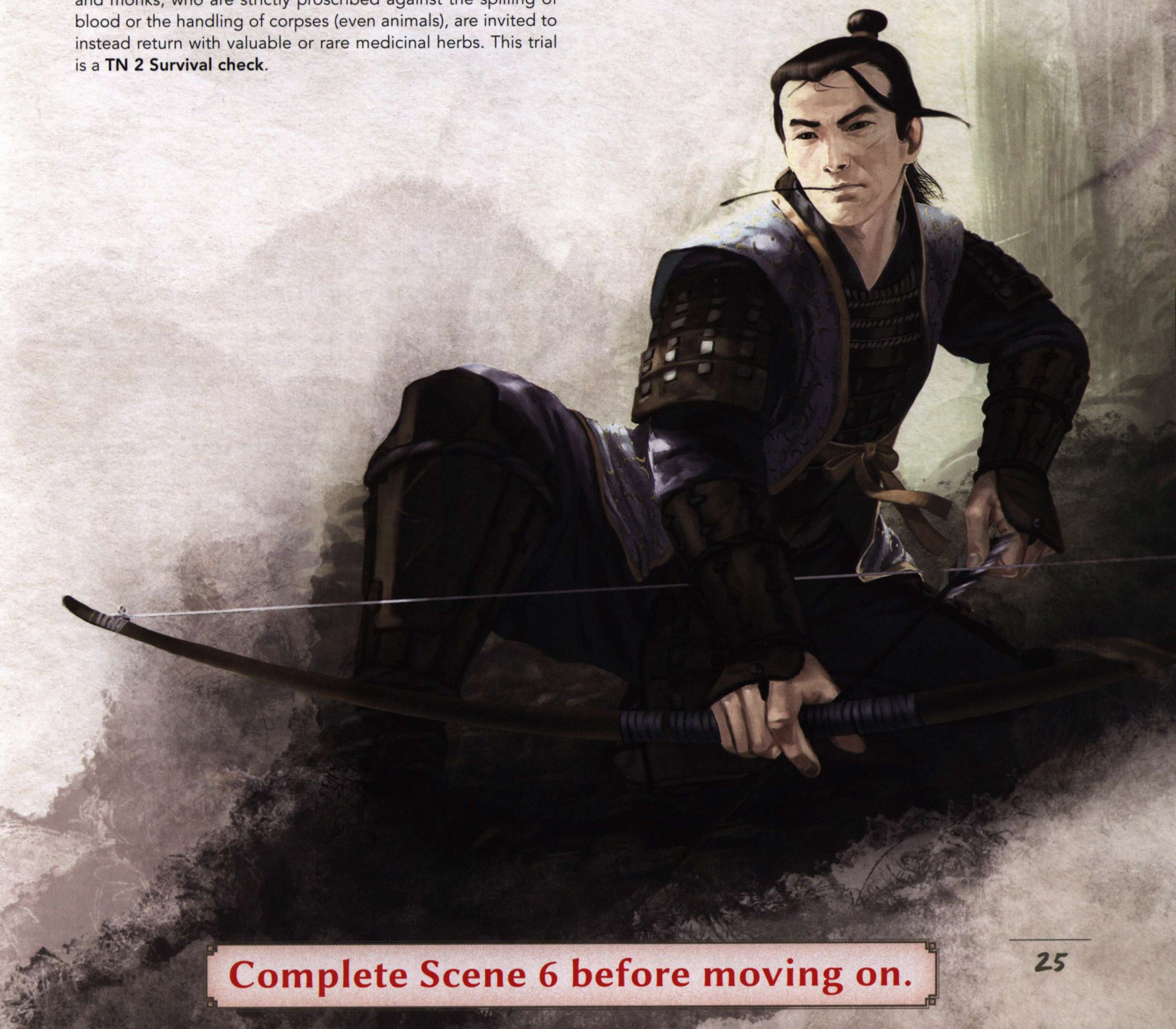
"Keep alert," the judge says. "The hares and bucks are quick to flee, so you'll have to spot them first."

The last trial of the day is hunting, and it is also the longest. Contestants are instructed to make their way into the forest behind the school with either a bow or spear and bring back the most impressive game they can find by sundown. Shugenja and monks, who are strictly proscribed against the spilling of blood or the handling of corpses (even animals), are invited to instead return with valuable or rare medicinal herbs. This trial is a **TN 2 Survival check**.

This trial is judged by Hiruma Kagehiro of the Crab Clan, who favors the **air approach**. The front-runner is Moto Batbayar, who brings back a splendid silver-furred fox; two bonus successes are required to defeat her. Mirumoto Hinata and Shiba Tōya fail to make their marks here.

## After Sundown

After the end of the hunting trial, the judges meet to compare notes and tabulate the final standings. The contestants return to their lodgings to change into their finery and prepare for that evening's feast at the Tsuma magistrate's estate.



**Complete Scene 6 before moving on.**



# Scene 7: The Feast

The evening of the second day of the Championship is marked by a feast held in the Tsuma magistrate's estate, celebrating the success of the young samurai who are soon to become legal adults. In this encounter, the PCs must navigate the treacherous waters of a formal event, and perhaps help honor the wishes of Doji Satsume's ghost.

As the PCs arrive at the feast, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> The magistrate's estate is an elegant home overlooking the village, currently festooned with lanterns and packed with servants and guests. The house has its doors thrown open to the warm spring evening, transforming its interior into one massive feast hall around a central garden.
>
> A servant bows to you as you enter and escorts you to your seats at a long table set aside for the contestants. At the head of the table is Kakita Toshimoko, flanked on either side by town magistrate Kakita Kaetatsu and the priest from the contest. Kitsuki Yuikimi and Bayushi Sugai sit across from him as honored guests, and each favors you with a glance as you reach your seat—a friendly one from Yuikimi, and a dour glare from Sugai.
>
> Most of your fellow contestants are already here and enjoying the sake as well. Hitoshi, in particular, seems to be muttering darkly into his cup.

Once the PCs are all seated, it is time for the formal presentation of gifts to the host, Kakita Toshimoko. Even if a contestant has not scored high enough to succeed in the contest, honor demands they still present gifts from their clan.

The gifts are presented in a traditional order based on the Great Clans: first Dragon, then Crab, Unicorn, Scorpion, Phoenix, Crane, and Lion. (No allowance is made for Minor Clans, which will become relevant shortly.)

### But I didn't get you anything!

The PCs, of course, have long since selected their gifts and made arrangements for them to be delivered here, but it's up to the players to decide what those gifts are, precisely. Rokugani gifts are chosen not based on value, but on history and personal meaning. Presume that the PCs can give whatever gifts they like, within reason. (A horse would be fine. An entire herd, though, is excessive.)

As each PC contestant selects their gift, they should also choose the skill and ring that best represents the rationale that went into the decision and the impression they are hoping to make: perhaps **Aesthetics (Fire)** for a bold, creative choice of fashion, or **Commerce (Water)** for a desirable commodity to win friendship? Almost any skill and ring can be used if the rationale seems to make sense to the GM. Then, the PC should present their gift and roll dice to see how it is received. The check is **TN 2**, but the GM can adjust the TN down or up based on a particularly appropriate or unfortunate choice of gift, respectively.

## THE GIFTS

Here is a list of gifts given by the other contestants, in the order they will be offered:

**Mirumoto Hinata:** A book of stories and philosophies of some of the greatest Shinseist thinkers of the Dragon Clan, with the note that "you will need this in times to come."

**Yasuki Jun:** From the Crab, a cask of Friendly Traveler Sake, arguably the best sake in Rokugan.

**Moto Batbayar:** A caged songbird the Unicorn found in the western lands beyond Rokugan.

**Bayushi Mei Lin:** The Scorpion offer incense and perfumes known to come from the Spice Islands of the Mantis. Toshimoko does not seem pleased by this gift.

**Shiba Tōya:** A poem from the Phoenix, written in honor of the host in stunning calligraphy.

**Kakita Riku:** The Crane presents a broken bokken, which is clearly worthless but makes Toshimoko laugh out loud and smile warmly.

**Kitsu Tsubasa:** An elegant jeweled fan that once belonged to one of Toshimoko's ancestors who married into the Lion Clan.

**Hitoshi:** A finely made Mantis boat.

Each PC who succeeds on the check gains 2 glory and some respect from Toshimoko. If the check fails, the gift is received politely but without much warmth. If the gift is some form of alcohol, Toshimoko favors the PC with a slight smile in addition to any other results.

### An Unsightly Outburst

After Kitsu Tsubasa offers up his gift from the Lion Clan, servants bring more drinks and the first course of the meal. But before anyone can enjoy it, Hitoshi explodes out from his seat!

> "Enough!" Hitoshi shouts, standing and knocking a jar of rice wine from the hands of a nearby servant. "I am not to be ignored, passed over, insulted at every turn! I, too, have a gift for you, Kakita-sama!" He points one accusing finger as the hall rings with silence. "I challenge you to a duel!"

Total silence reigns in the wake of this pronouncement. Mention to the players that for a moment, the PCs see the ghost of Doji Satsume sitting at the high table and looking intently at Hitoshi—though they are the only ones to see the ghost.

The PCs have a chance to intervene, to remind the assembly that Hitoshi is not yet a samurai and lacks the standing to make such a challenge, perhaps. They could also suggest that Hitoshi has had an exhausting day and too much to drink, and everyone should ignore this gaff.

This requires a **TN 3 Courtesy** or **Government (Earth) check**. If they helped Hitoshi in the past (perhaps by getting him a safe place to sleep), the TN of the check is 2, instead.

Although the PCs may be tempted to reveal the truth of Hitoshi's parentage (if they have guessed it), revealing it would dishonor Toshimoko and the Crane, and by extension would dishonor the PCs. If a PC chooses to do this, they lose 3 honor. However, doing so shocks both Hitoshi and Toshimoko, and thus ends the stand-off.

#### All's Well

Should the PCs manage to talk Hitoshi down, he stammers out an apology and offers up his gift of a Mantis-made boat currently tied up in the wharf in the village. He then returns to his seat to pass the rest of the evening in shamefaced silence. Hitoshi is aware that he has suffered a massive loss of face for himself and his clan, and his last chance to redeem himself is by winning the dueling contest tomorrow.

During the rest of the evening, a marvelous dinner is served and the final standings are announced. The contestants, buoyed by youthful enthusiasm and a modest amount of liquor, are abuzz with discussion of the rankings and boasts of their inevitable victory on the following day. Kakita Riku and Mirumoto Hinata, in particular, are keen to debate the merits of their rival dueling schools.

#### A Disaster

If the PCs fail to de-escalate matters, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> "Very well," says Toshimoko after a painful silence. "I normally charge for lessons, but since you're so eager, I'll make an exception." He stalks forward, and you realize for the first time that he has the same lean and angry grace as Hitoshi. "Riku-chan!" he bellows. "Bring two practice swords."
>
> Kakita Riku leaps from her seat at your table and sprints out of the room, her feet pattering into the night. After a few tense minutes she returns carrying two bokken. Toshimoko tosses one to Hitoshi. "A child's weapon for a child's tantrum," he sneers. Hitoshi says nothing, his face flushed with shame and rage.
>
> The two take their positions, bow, and then suddenly the duel is over in a single blur of motion. Toshimoko holds his bokken above his head; Hitoshi slumps to the ground, grabbing his wrist and struggling to keep from crying out. "Here's your free lesson, child: be faster."
>
> For just a moment you think you see Doji Satsume's spectral form out of the corner of your eye, slowly shaking his head in sadness.

Two servants come and try to escort Hitoshi away for medical attention, but he waves them away and storms off. An awkward and strained dinner resumes.

**Complete Scene 7 before moving on.**

# Scene 8: One Cut

The next morning, the remaining contestants gather for the final stage of the Topaz Championship. It is a single-elimination iaijutsu dueling competition, fought with blunted steel swords. After each round, half the contestants are eliminated, until only one remains: the Topaz Champion. Note that all of the contestants who are allowed to enter the tournament must have attained enough points to complete their gempuku—the duels are only to determine who gains the honor of becoming the new Topaz Champion.

There is also a parallel competition for shugenja, known as *taryu-jiai*. If the winner of this magic-oriented competition has amassed more total points than the winner of the iaijutsu dueling competition, then the shugenja is named Topaz Champion—a very rare occasion to be sure, but one that has happened in the past.

However, in this specific encounter, neither competition will get very far, as in the second bout Kakita Riku will nearly murder Hitoshi with a live (sharp) sword, planted there by Bayushi Sugai in an effort to discredit the Crane and have her disqualified and her clan disgraced.

If Hitoshi has withdrawn or failed to achieve eight points, then Mirumoto Hinata takes his place; but even if injured last night, Hitoshi will be present to attempt to regain lost honor.

As the PCs enter the tournament grounds the following morning, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> The tournament grounds are thronged with spectators, but the crowd seems subdued after the events of last night. A mild pallor hangs over the Topaz Championship and from the brusque instructions of the judges you get the impression they'd rather just get the whole event over with.
>
> You gather outside the assigned arena as the first contestants select blunted swords for the bout to follow. Bayushi Mei Lin steps forward confidently against Moto Batbayar, and both ready themselves. With a bellow, the Lion judge Akodo Eiko announces the first duel of the day.

The duel is over quickly, as Mei Lin quickly dispatches the slower Unicorn bushi. They bow and exit the arena. Mei Lin looks quite pleased. The next duel will be between Kakita Riku and Hitoshi (if he made his gempuku) or Mirumoto Hinata. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> Kakita Riku is the first to the rack, picking what you presume is her favorite weapon with a distinctive white and blue wrapping on the hilt. Akodo Eiko then roars for them to begin.

They draw, and disaster follows. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> The two contestants proceed to the center of the ring, bow stiffly, and assume their stances. You think you see Doji Satsume's sad face amidst the observers, then the two strike at each other.



Riku's sword is a real blade, honed to razor sharpness. It cuts through the unprotected flesh of her opponent exactly as if Riku's goal was murder. Blood sprays on Riku's face and across the sand of the dueling ring, leaving the Crane stunned and her opponent badly injured.

As healers rush to the fallen youth and chaos breaks out across the dueling grounds, you step back and notice a slender figure passing through the gate of the school with a sword slung over their back. A sword with blue-and-white wrapping on its hilt—an exact double of Riku's blade. It seems that Kitsuki Yuikimi has noticed something odd about the figure as well. What do you do?

Presumably, the PCs rush after the figure (who is, of course, Bayushi Sugai). They may try to offer assistance to the healers, but the healers brush them aside as the PCs are mere youths.

If they don't give chase, Kitsuki Yuikimi will do so and orders them to follow after her. If they do, Kitsuki Yuikimi goes with them, pleased by their initiative.

### Adult Weapons for Adult Business

As the PCs take off after Sugai, they run past a rack of "live" weapons on the training ground. Given whom the PCs are chasing, they should definitely grab real weapons instead of bringing along their practice swords!

If the PCs don't think of it, Kitsuki Yuikimi points at the rack and shouts at them to "grab something useful!" PCs may have noted that their character folios now list real weapons instead of practice weapons. These are the weapons they grab from the rack.

## The Chase!

Sugai runs away from the Dueling Academy for the village across the river. His goal is to find a quiet place on the edge of the river to dispose of the sword, and then to circle back and approach the competition from the opposite direction. If he is cornered by the PCs, he attempts to kill them and then stash their bodies on the Mantis boat Hitoshi gifted to Toshimoko.

If Kitsuki Yuikimi is with the PCs, she parts ways with them after the bridge, claiming that she will circle around to intercept their quarry. If Kitsuki Yuikimi catches up to Sugai, he will do everything he can to murder her, even if it means exposing his villainy.

Sugai has allies in the town: Hatsuichi and his ruffians. They aren't above a little murder if the pay is right, and they join him in battle should anyone catch him when he runs off.

As mentioned earlier, at the start of each character's turn, they first decide on a stance, then they can move and perform an action. As there is more space outside, movement and range bands now come into play.

### MOVEMENT

At any point during their turn, a character may move 1 range band. As an action, a character may move up to 1 additional range band. Remember, a Water stance allows a character to perform an additional, different action that does not require a check—such as this movement.

### RANGE BANDS

Instead of measuring specific units of space, the *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game* handles the concept of distance between two people or objects abstractly, using **range bands**. Range bands are a set of numbered, approximate distances that can be used to define spatial relationships between two points when that information is needed.

Note that range bands increase in scale as they increase in number—the difference in the distance between range 0 and range 1 (from touching to arm's reach) and between range 5 and range 6 (from a hundred or more paces to the edge of perceptible range) is quite substantial. This is meant to reflect the difficulty inherent in maneuvering to close with or escape a foe, while allowing characters to reposition on a strategic level more easily when they are not being impeded.

There are seven range bands, five of which will be used in this adventure:

- **Range 0 (Touch)** represents direct contact—from the character person out to their arm's reach. Closing to range 0 with someone in a social context is generally considered impolite, or at least a bit off-putting.
- **Range 1 (Sword)** represents the optimal range for a sword and other weapons of similar length—about 1 or 2 paces away. A character can generally interact with people and objects at range 1.
- **Range 2 (Spear)** represents the range at which pole weapons such as spears and *naginatas* have the greatest advantage—a distance of 3–4 paces away.
- **Range 3 (Throw)** represents the range at which thrown missile weapons are most effective—a range of 5 to 10 paces.
- **Range 4 (Bow)** represents the midrange for missile weapons like bows—a dozen to a hundred paces. Generally speaking, this range coincides with the edge of earshot for most characters.

Scene 8 continues on the next page.

## TRACKING RANGE BANDS

The GM can use the character tokens with the map of Tsuma to indicate where the various characters are located during this scene, and also to indicate the relative range bands between the characters and locations to which they wish to travel. By placing tokens closer together or farther away from each other to indicate relative range, you can give the players a clearer picture of the scene and remind everyone where the combatants are.

### Running the Chase

Sugai begins the chase by pouring on raw speed, using his **Fitness (Fire)** to put distance between himself and his pursuers. Once he's across the bridge and into the village, he uses **Skullduggery (Air)** to attempt to vanish into the alleys, crowds, and paths of Tsuma. If the PCs keep up with him, he makes one last attempt to outrun them with a **Fitness (Earth) check** to put his endurance to the test.

Each check is a competitive check with TN 1. This means that Sugai makes the check, and then the PCs make the same check. To keep up with Sugai, at least one PC needs to score as many bonus successes as Sugai does (if he fails the check, the PCs automatically keep up with him).

If Sugai gets more bonus successes than all of the PCs on one check, he increases his lead. If he gets more bonus successes than all the PCs on two checks, he vanishes, with Kitsuki Yuikimi hot on his heels.

If Sugai escapes, Kitsuki Yuikimi catches up to him. The sounds of Sugai and his ruffians fighting her draw the PCs to the scene—where they find him standing over her corpse.

Otherwise, the PCs corner him on the docks in Tsuma…along with several of Hatsuichi's ruffians. A fight ensues, and in this one the ruffians don't mind drawing their swords.

### The Fight

There are as many ruffians as there are PCs, plus Bayushi Sugai. Sugai fights until he is incapacitated. His ruffian hirelings flee as soon as it seems likely they will lose (including when Sugai is defeated).

The profiles now include **DEMEANORS**, which illustrate an NPC's personality. There are two rings associated with each, indicating which Social skill checks against that NPC can be easier and which can be harder. The ruffians have the Intimidating demeanor, for example; in general, the TN of Social skill checks against them using Fire are 1 higher, while those using Air are 1 lower (to a minimum of TN 1).

Kitsuki Yuikimi, if she is still alive, arrives at the end of the third round of the fight. When she arrives, she immediately dispatches one of the ruffians and causes the rest to flee. At the end of the fourth round, she incapacitates Bayushi Sugai (if the PCs have not already done so), then thanks the PCs for their help, calling them "true samurai."

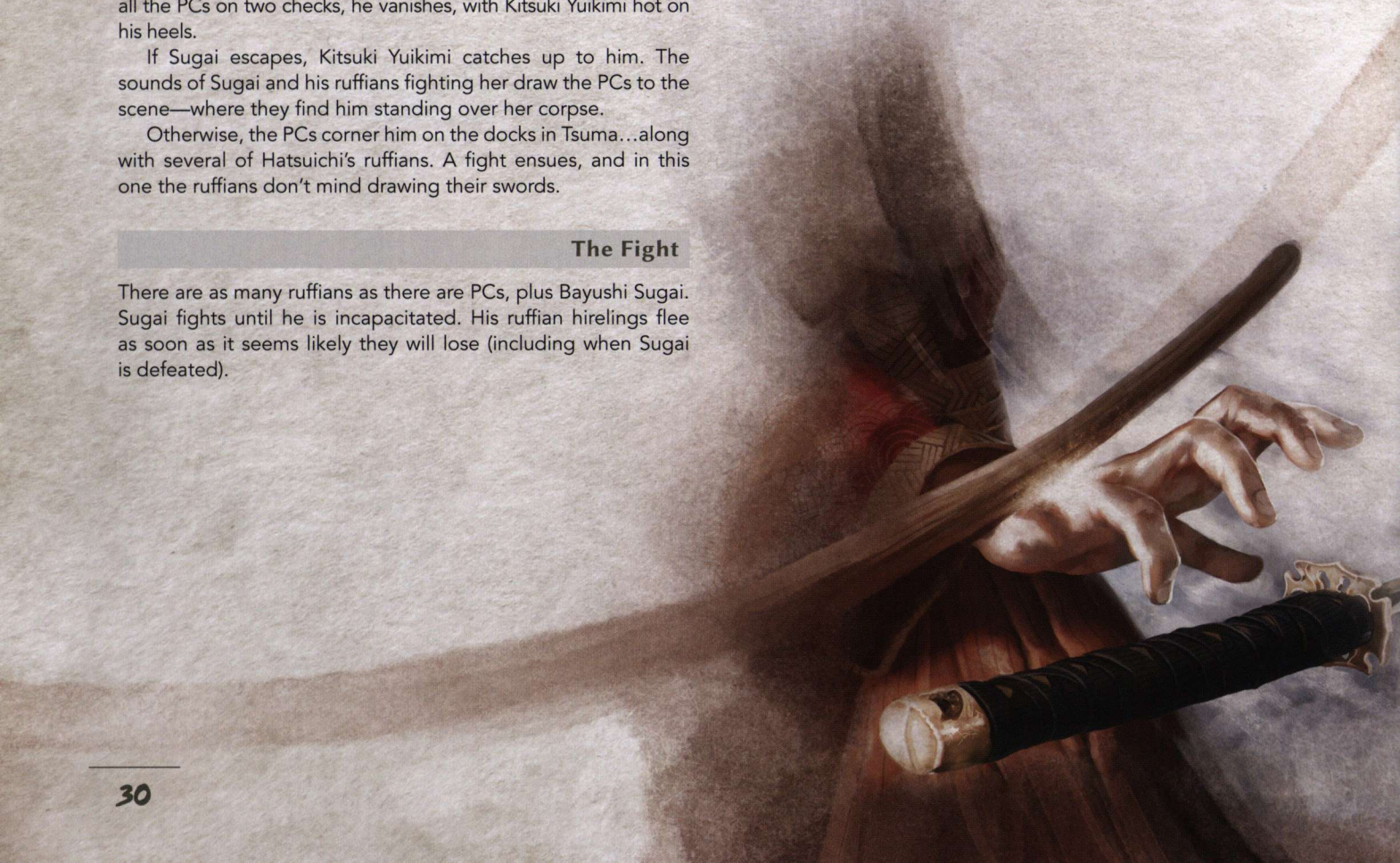
### Attacks

The player characters have the katanas they picked up; their folio sheets include the rules for these weapons. They can also use their new techniques, should they have purchased any during the Interlude. Details for how this is done are included in their character folios.

Sugai and his ruffians both use the Strike action (see page 22), and ruffians can spend ✿ from it to inflict critical strikes on the PCs or use their Sit Down, Child! ability if the GM desires.

### Critical Strikes

As this is a full-blown skirmish with deadly weapons, the full rules for critical strikes are now used. See **Critical Strikes** on the back cover for details.



## Bayushi Sugai

His scheme to dishonor the Crane, the Topaz Championship, and Kitsuki Yuikimi seemingly foiled, Sugai now flees in hope of escaping the city. He won't mind eliminating anyone who stands in his way first, though.



| SOCIETAL | | PERSONAL | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 24 | HONOR | ENDURANCE | 12 |
| 50 | GLORY | COMPOSURE | 6 |
| 39 | STATUS | FOCUS | 4 |
| +2, –2 | DEMEANOR - AMBITIOUS | VIGILANCE | 3 |

| ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 2 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 1 | TRADE 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

WEAPONS AND GEAR

**Katana:** Damage 4; Range 1.

**Gear:** Daishō, elegant clothing, fine mask.

### NPC ABILITY: CUTTING WIT

Sugai may spend ✵ ✵ from a successful attack check to also inflict 2 strife on the target.

## Ruffian

Having come to the aid of Bayushi Sugai, the rōnin are ready to defend him against the inexperienced children chasing him—unless things start to go poorly, in which case the ruffians will eagerly flee the combat.



| SOCIETAL | | PERSONAL | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | HONOR | ENDURANCE | 5 |
| 22 | GLORY | COMPOSURE | 6 |
| 21 | STATUS | FOCUS | 4 |
| +1, –1 | DEMEANOR - INTIMIDATING | VIGILANCE | 2 |

| ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 1 | TRADE 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

WEAPONS AND GEAR

**Katana:** Damage 4; Range 1.

**Gear:** Daishō, grimy kimono, sake jug (empty).

### NPC ABILITY: SIT DOWN, CHILD!

A ruffian may spend ✵ from a successful attack to knock the PC down. The PC must use their movement on their next turn to stand up, and they suffer 1 strife from embarrassment.

# AFTERMATH

If Bayushi Sugai is defeated, the PCs can return to the dueling arena and explain things, saving Kakita Riku from being forced to commit seppuku for her action. Read the following aloud:

> You return to the tournament grounds with a bloody and defeated Bayushi Sugai in tow, only to find Riku grimly preparing to commit ritual suicide for accidentally injuring her opponent. Toshimoko stands nearby. His face looks as if it was carved from stone.
>
> When he sees you, his expression changes to surprise. "Hold!" he commands to Riku. "Clearly there is more going on here than first appears!"

The PCs can explain that they found Riku's training sword on Bayushi Sugai. Although the Scorpion admits nothing, the existence of the real sword lays his plot bare (and Kitsuki Yuikimi, if she lived, backs up their story). This vindicates Riku, and also greatly pleases Toshimoko, who gains control of himself before thanking you gruffly.

The PCs also see a glimpse of Doji Satsume again; read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> As you turn away from Toshimoko, you again see Doji Satsume's face. He looks on with approval, then turns a challenging gaze directly at you before becoming lost in the crowd. You can see in his eyes that his story isn't complete, and you'll see him again.

If Sugai escaped, the PCs return only to see Riku performing the ritual suicide, with a grim-faced Toshimoko acting as her second. Doji Satsume's countenance is equally grim, and he looks on the PCs with disappointment instead.

### Continuing the Tournament

This is a good place to end the adventure. However, the PCs may want to play out the tournament, just to see who ends up becoming the Topaz Champion.

If so, find out which PC scored the most tournament points. That PC faces Kakita Riku (or Bayushi Mei Lin, if Riku is dead) in a duel, making a single competitive **TN 1 Martial Arts [Melee] check**. The character with most bonus successes takes the lead in the tournament. To represent Kakita Riku or Bayushi Mei Lin, use the Experienced Bandit profile on page 42 of the *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game Rulebook*, but give them a blunted sword (Damage 2, Range 1).

Then, any other PC who has not fought can challenge the character in the lead to the same contest. We assume that the other duels occur without incident, and do not affect the outcome (you can describe them narratively). The last character to hold the lead after all PCs have fought (or passed) is crowned as the new Topaz Champion.

# Wrapping Up and Rewards

After the Topaz Championship is over, each of the contestants who earned a passing grade (eight points or more) participates in the gempuku ceremony. During this ceremony, the newly-made samurai adopt their adult names, receive the swords that are their marks of status, and make their oaths of loyalty to their families, clans, and the Emperor.

The ceremony is held in the Temple to the Seven Fortunes. Each samurai approaches the shrine, where the temple priest purifies and blesses them. Each then recites aloud their oath of loyalty. One of their elders presents them with the wakizashi (and sometimes other weapons, for bushi), accepts the oath, and announces to all in attendance the new samurai's name and achievements. The PCs are presented with the weapons they took when they pursued Sugai; a mark of honor for their actions.

After the gempuku ceremony is complete, the new Topaz Champion is anointed. Kitsuki Yuikimi (or Kakita Toshimoko if Yuikimi is dead or too badly injured to participate) addresses the assembly and describes the role of the Topaz Champion, to live as an example of all that a samurai can be. Yuikimi then dresses the champion in the armor that had been, until recently, hers, and presents them with a splendid katana forged by Kakita artisans.

### What About Hitoshi?

Even if Hitoshi was wounded by Riku, as long as he passed he is present, barely able to contain his pride at completing the championship.

Even if the PCs discovered Hitoshi's identity, they may have realized that revealing it would disrupt the ceremony and bring shame to Toshimoko and the Crane (exactly what the Scorpion want). If they remain silent, they have done both the contest and the Empire a great service. If the PCs discover Hitoshi's parentage and keep silent, each gains 5 honor.

### Material Rewards

The Topaz Champion receives the Topaz Champion Armor (Resistance 5; Ceremonial, Wargear) and katana (Damage 4; Range 1; Ceremonial), and 5 koku.

The runner-up receives a well-crafted katana (Damage 4; Range 1; Ceremonial) and 3 koku.

(The *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game Rulebook* contains rules for the item qualities Ceremonial and Wargear.)

### Emerald Magistrates

If the PCs successfully captured Bayushi Sugai and uncovered the treachery that nearly ruined the Topaz Championship, a messenger comes for them after the ceremony. The messenger brings them to the magistrate's estate and introduces them to Agasha Sumiko, the acting Emerald Champion. She offers the PCs tea and then a job: Emerald Magistrate. *"You showed quick thinking and a commitment to justice,"* the Dragon explains. *"Both are qualities an Emerald Magistrate must possess."* She explains that as Emerald Magistrates, the PCs would be expected to investigate breaches of the Emperor's Law and keep the peace between the clans. This is an extremely prestigious position.

Presumably, the PCs will accept…and embark upon a career of adventure and intrigue! This can lead them into the adventure *In the Palace of the Emerald Champion*, which can be downloaded for free at www.FantasyFlightGames.com/en/Legend-of-the-Five-Rings-Roleplaying-Game. This adventure picks up where *The Topaz Championship* ends, as the PCs journey to the Emerald Champion's castle to continue their training. Once there, though, they find themselves pulled into court intrigues and the mystery of Doji Satsume's death. It also includes examples of adult names for the PCs, new ways to spend XP, and more for players to continue their exploits in Rokugan!

### Failing but Succeeding!

A PC who fails their gempuku but aids in apprehending the villain can still become a samurai! The GM can have the visiting judge of the PC's clan have a talk with Kakita Toshimoko, and declare that the PC has displayed true samurai spirit and competency, and thus gains their wakizashi.

### Awarding Experience Rewards

The GM should award experience points after every session. The amount awarded is typically 4 XP for a session of two or three major encounters and a handful of minor ones. In this game, with the completion of the contest the GM should award another 4 XP to each player. The GM can grant an additional 2 bonus XP when the PCs reach key milestones or complete story arcs. The GM is encouraged to consider awarding an extra point or two for exceptional roleplaying or clever thinking. Playing to their advantages should also be cause for awarding a bonus point of XP.



# Other Encounters in Tsuma

While the Topaz Championship will fill much of the PCs' time in Tsuma, the following are some side encounters that the GM can use during scenes or if the contestants decide to explore the city further. These can also be used in other adventures set in Tsuma, or other locations where applicable.

## Fire!

As the PCs take in a meal between events (or even before the tournament has begun), a small fire breaks out in one of the many warehouses. They can aid in containing and extinguishing it, or concentrate on the contests for the day. This could also occur during the hunting contest in Scene 6, where the PCs detect a growing fire in the forest that might threaten Tsuma if not stopped quickly.

## Gaijin Smuggling

The PCs visit the Merchant House of the Exotic for some gifts to take back to their families, but uncover a cache of gaijin ceramic statues containing opium smuggled in from Slow Tide Harbor. Reporting this to the Tsuma magistrates would be the correct thing to do, but could also draw the attention of local criminals.

## Temple Prayers

The PCs might visit the Temple to Amaterasu before the contest begins, especially if they seek spiritual guidance concerning their visitation in Scene 3. Other NPC contestants are here as well, allowing for more social interaction opportunities between the aspiring samurai.

## Tsu Fish

The forest where the PCs go hunting in Scene 6 is rumored to also contain the rare Tsu fish. These large, koi-like creatures leave the water to lay their eggs in nests. The eggs are a great delicacy, and the PCs overhear a young chef who was assigned to get some of them for the dinner on the third night in Scene 7. Her stock has spoiled, and she is desperate to get more or she will lose face (and probably her job). The eggs also have a special ability whereby they can be used to create a solution that removes ink from parchment—a useful ability for a variety of reasons, not all of them legal. Will the PCs help her, or perhaps just find some eggs to use for less honorable purposes?

## Street Brawl

One night, violence erupts in the Poisoned Water Sake House when gamblers discover their losses are due to a rigged dice game of Fortunes and Winds. The brawl spreads outside, and soon encompasses a wide area. The PCs might get involved to vent frustrations from the day, or perhaps to come to the aid of innocents caught up in the fighting.

## Recommended Tea

The PCs might want to visit the House of the Red Lotus to seek out the tea they smelled during Doji Satsume's visit in their first night in Scene 3. Here they can find a brand that has that smell—his favorite, according to the proprietor. The tea could be useful in their future adventures in resolving the former Emerald Champion's death.

## POINTS OF INTEREST IN TSUMA

The GM can use the information below for important areas in the village to answer PC questions throughout the adventure.

**The House of the Laughing Carp:** A tea house and inn. Many contestants (and clan observers) stay here during the tournament.

**The Poisoned Water Sake House:** A brewery and sake house. The sake served here comes in small, black-clay bottles, and the potency is infamous—to steadily rise to one's feet after several bottles is a rare feat!

**The Kakita Dueling Academy:** Tsuma's largest and most prominent location, this dōjō is a compound of buildings linked under a shared roof. A high wall prevents onlookers from watching the training exercises. There is a large basin inside, the Pool of the Perfect Stroke, which is at least as old as the academy.

**The Merchant House of the Exotic:** A place where items imported from outside Rokugan can be found. It features an unusual gaijin architectural style. Most of its goods come from Taimana Choryu, or "Slow Tide Harbor," a port near the Imperial City.

**The House of the Red Lotus:** A tea house, newly opened and with a reputation for the high quality of its sake and entertainment.

**The Maneki Neko Brewery**: A sake brewery named for the ceramic bobtail cat sitting just within the main entrance. Their sake is renowned throughout Rokugan.

**Little Khanbulak:** A small bazaar of shops and stalls tucked away in a quiet corner that offers items from foreign lands (none of which violate the Imperial decrees concerning such goods). Still, it is possible some of these gaijin items might have rare or supernatural abilities.

# GM Tips and Advice

The GM has the hardest job at the table, since they are trying to manage many characters at once and keep the session moving. Here are a few pieces of advice to make the GM's job easier and ensure a better game for everyone:

## Don't Let the Story Stop Just Because of a Failed Check

One of the most common mistakes made by new GMs is concealing too much information from the other players and assuming that the PCs will always succeed. The story can slow down, for example, if they keep trying to learn more about the former Emerald Champion but continually fail their checks.

The simplest solution to this is to not call for checks that must be passed for the story to continue. However, sometimes the players expect to make a check at a climactic moment of the story, and automatically succeeding may feel like a letdown. Therefore, another option is to have an alternative means of progressing the story. For example, the PCs might instead gain the information from an unexpected source—possibly supernatural! They might overhear other contestants discussing the recent death, perhaps offering their suspicions as to its cause and even why Hitoshi was invited to participate.

## Delegate!

The GM has a lot to keep track of, especially during busy scenes like combat or a complex chase scene. It's okay to delegate some responsibilities to other players. For example, one player could keep track of initiative and call out the next initiative slot each time a player finishes a turn. It's also reasonable to let the hero players keep track of their own XP, money, and gear.



## Say "Yes" and "Yes, but..."

Roleplaying games are collaborative, improvisational storytelling experiences. It can be helpful to look at traditional improvisational theater for inspiration—specifically, the rule in improv of "say 'yes.'" When someone invents a portion of the scene that enhances the story or moves the plot forward, and it could just as easily be true as not, saying "yes" is usually the right thing to do. Often hero players are inventive because they're looking for a way forward in the plot, so working with them to build or discover that way forward keeps the story moving.

Of course, that doesn't mean that everything should always go their way all the time.

Perhaps the PCs desire to find out more about who organized and directed the ruffians who insulted them early in the tournament. They may also not trust local authorities to conduct a truthful investigation, given how the Crane have behaved towards Hitoshi. This will be very difficult, if not impossible, for them to accomplish during the tournament given how busy they will be in the contests. However, the GM might say they could find some peasants to do some snooping around (for a suitable reward). Now the PCs have a way forward—devise a plan to surreptitiously recruit several inconspicuous peasants to learn where the ruffians were staying and who they were seen with, and learn of their findings between contests—but also several complications to overcome. They'll need to consider their options, and they may run into all sorts of challenges, but they have a clear objective and a way to accomplish it.

## Treat the Other Players Like Allies

Remember that all the players at the table have the same goal: to tell a fun story. It's okay to admit you don't have total mastery of the rules—the group can work together to resolve a rules dispute in the way that is best for the story. It's also okay to admit to being caught flat-footed by a decision the PCs make, and to ask for a break to plan out the next few scenes. And feel free to throw questions to the table: "What happens next? Where do you think that stray arrow went during the hunting contest?" The answer to the question "Does my character know anyone in Tsuma?" can be "I don't know; does she?" Playing a roleplaying game is a collaborative project, and you're all on the same team.

Lastly, and most importantly: if everyone is having fun, then you're doing it right!

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## Sample Target Numbers

| TN | Sample Tasks with Example Skill and Approach |
|---|---|
| 1 | Calming someone with a reminder about propriety *Courtesy (Earth)*<br>Reciting a popular poem to win over an audience *Performance (Water)*<br>Performing a basic divination to determine whether an action is ill-omened *Theology (Void)*<br>Identifying the best piece of cover nearby *Martial Arts [Ranged] (Water)* |
| 2 | Composing a new poem *Composition (Fire)*<br>Intimidating an average person of lower status *Command (Fire)*<br>Knowing whether a proposed action is legal or not *Government (Earth)*<br>Sneaking past the average person *Fitness (Air)*<br>Intimidating the average person with your fighting prowess *Martial Arts [Melee] (Fire)*<br>Finding enough food in a forest to sustain yourself for several days *Survival (Water)* |
| 3 | Fitting a blade onto a new hilt *Smithing (Water)*<br>Determining the significance behind an unfamiliar cultural practice *Culture (Void)*<br>Detecting a subtle tell in someone's countenance that indicates they are bluffing *Sentiment (Air)*<br>Developing tactics that obscure your identity from an enemy commander you know well *Tactics (Void)*<br>Removing all evidence that you broke into a room *Skulduggery (Void)* |
| 4 | Weaving a subtle message into a painting *Aesthetics (Air)*<br>Combining ingredients in a unique way to treat a disease *Medicine (Fire)*<br>Picking off a single sentry from outside a camp without alerting the camp *Martial Arts [Ranged] (Air)*<br>Intentionally convincing yourself of a lie *Meditation (Air)*<br>Finding an inconsistency in an individual's accounting records *Commerce (Earth)* |
| 5 | Rigging a game in front of a crowd *Games (Air)*<br>Discerning the best way to defeat a single foe in unarmed combat *Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Void)*<br>Designing a more efficient irrigation system *Labor (Fire)*<br>Building a raft or small rowboat *Seafaring (Fire)* |

## CRITICAL STRIKES

When a character suffers a critical strike, they suffer ill effects based on the number of critical strikes they are currently suffering from. Each critical strike persists until it is healed (see page 38 of the *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game Rulebook* for more information on healing and recovery).

- **First Critical Strike:**
  **A Painful Blow**—The character immediately suffers 3 strife, but there is no ongoing effect.
- **Second Critical Strike:**
  **A Minor Injury**—The character increases the TN of the next check they attempt by 1, but there is no ongoing effect.
- **Third Critical Strike:**
  **A Disabling Injury**—The character increases the TN of all checks they attempt by 1 until the critical strike is healed.
- **Fourth Critical Strike:**
  **A Serious Injury**—The character suffers the Incapacitated condition until the critical strike is healed.

## DICE AND SYMBOLS

**Skill Die**  **Ring Die** 

**Success** results represent the character's effectiveness on the check. If the total number of ◯ results on kept dice is greater than or equal to the TN of the check, the character succeeds. Each kept ◯ beyond this is a **bonus success,** which can confer additional benefits on some types of checks.

**Explosive success** results count as ◯ results; additionally, for each kept die with an ◯ result, the player may roll 1 additional die of the same type and then choose whether to keep or drop this die. If they keep a new die that contains an ◯ result, they can repeat this process, chaining ◯ results into further ◯ results as long as they continue to roll ◯. These additional dice do not count towards the maximum number of kept dice.

**Opportunity** results do not contribute directly to success or failure, but instead represent positive, incidental narrative effects of the character's actions. This might mean the character notices an interesting detail, performs the task in a particularly deft manner, or gets a hint about a different solution that might work.

**Strife** results reflect the character's emotional state and how it changes during the task. Strife can represent negative emotions like frustration or fear, or positive emotions like joy or the thrill of a challenge.